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and Employers
Research

Making the grade

Does involvement in activities
with employers impact the
academic achievement of
young people?

Research Summary

By Elnaz T. Kashefpakdel, Jordan
Rehill and Anthony Mann

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Education and Employers is a UK charity created in 2009 to ensure that every state school and college has an effective partnership with employers to support young people. As well as undertaking research into the impact and delivery of employer engagement in education, the charity manages innovative programmes to enable schools and colleges to connect efficiently and effectively with employers including www.inspiringthefuture.org. The charity works in close partnership with the leading national bodies representing education leaders, teaching staff and employers/employees.

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As well as publishing new research, Education and Employers provides a free online resource making easily available high quality materials investigating the impact and delivery of employer engagement in education. Resources include a library of relevant articles and reports, many of which have been summarised to pick out key findings, papers and videos from the Taskforce research conferences and free London seminar series as well as Taskforce publications and a regular e-bulletin of relevant research announcements: www.educationandemployers.org/research-main.

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About the authors

Jordan Rehill is Research Assistant at the Education and Employers. He graduated from the University of Manchester with a BA (Hons) degree in Modern History and Politics, focusing particularly on issues of youth homelessness. Prior to joining Education and Employers he worked for the youth violence charity Redthread, where he assisted in research on trends in youth violence and gang-related violence in central London. He has co-authored recent projects on employer engagement in education with Elnaz T. Kashefpakdel and Anthony Mann including *Contemporary Transitions: Young Britons reflect on life after secondary school and college* and *How to make the most of careers events with employers*.

Dr Elnaz T. Kashefpakdel is Head of Research at the Education and Employers. She is a trained quantitative analyst, completed her PhD from the University of Bath for a study on higher education policy. Elnaz has co-authored many works on employer engagement in education and school to work transitions including "Career Education that works: an economic analysis using the British Cohort Study" in the Journal of Education and Work. She has presented at international conferences and showcased her research at government departments including DfE and BIS. Her research is referenced in government documents such as Industrial Strategy and career education policy briefings. Her work was also endorsed in national publications such as Engineering UK annual report 2017 and public media including BBC Education and TES.

Dr Anthony Mann is former Director of Policy and Research at the Education and Employers. He is the author or co-author of more than thirty publications on employer engagement in education. Joining the Taskforce at its creation, he has led its research function, chairing the Taskforce's annual international research conference and publishing extensively on themes surrounding employer engagement in education, including (with Julian Stanley and Louise Archer), the first collection of research essays on the subject: *Understanding Employer Engagement in Education* (Routledge, 2014).

For more information about this report, contact: Jordan.Rehill@educationandemployers.org, Education and Employers Research, Quantum House, 22-24 Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, London, EC4A 3EB.

Key Findings

Do employer engagement activities have an impact on the academic achievement of pupils?

- 93.2% of teachers believed that employer engagement activities have an impact on the academic achievement of pupils
- Teachers from **disadvantaged schools** (in terms of level of Free School Meal eligibility) and **underperforming schools** (in terms of Ofsted ranking) were most likely to agree that these activities had impact.
- In terms of pupil type, teachers believe **girls, those uncertain about their future, higher and borderline achievers** are more likely to experience positive impacts on their academic achievement.
- On average, teachers believed **one in five students** in a typical year group can experience **positive impacts** on their academic achievement after taking part in employer engagement activities.

Which activities have the greatest impacts, and on which type of pupil?

- The majority of teachers believe that **work experience** has the greatest impact on improving academic achievement. This echoes recent survey data indicating that high proportions of both pupils and teaching staff believe that young people return from work experience more motivated to do well at school¹.
- Teachers believed that, in general, Career events (including **careers fairs** and **careers sessions aimed at challenging ideas about careers and professions**) were the next most

impactful encounters. Again, these findings have been echoed in recent UK survey data. (Rehill et al. 2017).

- The analysis indicates that teachers believe **work experience** is thought to be most effective for **borderline** and **lower achievers**.
- Teachers believe that **assembly talks** and **careers sessions** aimed at raising, broadening and challenging ideas about careers (e.g. gender stereotyping) have more of an impact on the academic achievement of **girls** rather than boys.

Why, according to teachers, do these activities have an impact?

- Over half of teachers felt academic achievement can be improved by helping students **understand the relevance of education to employment**, as well as **exposing students to new role models** through employer engagement.
- These findings echo surveys of both teachers and students suggesting that any positive impact on achievement largely stems from **attitudinal change**— an enhanced regard for the value of education and qualifications improving motivation.

¹ Full findings in (Mann, 2012)

Introduction

As governments around the world seek to tackle stubbornly high levels of youth unemployment, new attention has been focused on the relationship between education and employment. Both researchers and policy-makers have looked afresh at the capacity of employers to engage in education and training to improve young people's preparation for the adult working world. New studies have asked, can employer engagement enhance student educational performance and if so, how?

In recent years, organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have continued to advocate greater engagement of employers in education to support the progression of young people into an increasingly challenging labour market. The OECD has long argued that employer engagement has an important role to play within careers provision (OECD, 2010). Interviewed in 2014, the OECD's Director of Education and Skills, Andreas Schleicher, argued that not only might positive impacts from employer-enriched provision be expected in the economic outcomes of young people as they transition into the labour market, but may also be seen in the classroom: in increased student motivation following exposure to the realities of the working world. Employer engagement offers a new perspective on the value of education and qualifications being undertaken.

"As well as thinking anew about the curriculum and the preparations for modern working life that schooling provides, greater attention needs to be focused on improving signalling of the different pathways available to young people. This is why exposure to the workplace is so important within education. It not only provides excellent opportunities for experiential learning across the curriculum, but also underpins effective careers education and the decision-making of young people. Work experience and other forms of employer engagement demonstrate to young people the links between what they do in the classroom and how those skills ultimately will be used in the labour market. For young people, and for their teachers, that is a great motivator."(Andreas Schleicher cited in Mann and Huddleston 2015. 28)

It is this suggestion, and an investigation of its consequences in terms of student achievement, that drives the analysis presented in this report. Specifically, it considers whether teachers believe greater teenage engagement in school-mediated career development activities, which include elements of direct exposure to the working world can be associated with improved academic achievement.

What does the existing evidence tell us?

Academic achievement is perhaps one of the most challenging areas for research into the impact of employer engagement on young people's attitudes, pupil learning and, consequently, progression. The majority of studies assessing the impacts of employer engagement focus on the more tangible and more measurable economic and employment benefits that can be expected from engaging with the world of work (recent studies include: Mann et al., 2017; Kashefpakdel and Percy, 2016).

Yet, the number of research pieces assessing the impact of careers-focussed provision on educational outcomes continues to grow. In July 2016, the UK government-funded Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) published a systematic review of careers education activities undertaken across the OECD countries which had been evaluated using experimental or quasi-

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experimental methodologies (Hughes et al, 2016). The review considered literature published since 1996 to review the impacts of “careers-focussed-school-college-mediated provision designed to improve students’ education, employment and/or social outcomes”. The authors found that 60% of 67 studies which considered the impact of careers-focused interventions on the academic achievement of young people found evidence of largely positive outcomes. These studies find that while clear results were often identified by researchers, comparatively modest attention had been given to trying to understand what was driving results.

The literature does, however, broadly support the hypothesis that careers education helps young people to better understand the relationship between educational goals and occupational outcomes, increasing pupil motivation and application. First conceptualised by Raffo and Reeves (2000) and later expanded by Stanley and Mann (2014), social and cultural capital theory offers a way of illustrating how these changes occur and why young people change their conceptions of who they are and who they might become following exposure to the labour market. Encounters with the world of work are best conceived as a resource which will shape the thinking of students about who they might become and how what they do in classroom, even at the youngest ages, can relate to their adult lives.

Encounters with the world of work are best conceived as a resource which will shape the thinking of children about who they might become and how what they do in classroom, even at the youngest ages, can relate to their adult lives (Stanley and Mann, 2014).

The capital theory of change resonates with other more impressionistic data from other sources. Survey evidence suggests that any positive impact on achievement largely stems from such attitudinal change – an enhanced regard for the value of education and qualifications improving motivation – and consistently two-thirds of both 700 classroom teachers with experience at KS4 and/or KS5 surveyed by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in 2012, and 684 work experience coordinators agreed that pupils were more motivated after placements and only six to seven per cent less motivated (Mann, 2012).² Surveys of teaching staff have routinely recorded majorities agreeing that pupils taking part in career development activities return more mature and with greater confidence (Hillage et al., 2001; Eddy Adams Consultants, 2008), a view endorsed by pupil surveys (National Support Group for Work Experience, 2008: 20). In terms of impact on achievement, perceptions are also consistent with polls routinely supporting the view that positive links exist between placements and academic application and success.

Surveys of both teachers and students suggest that any positive impact on achievement largely stems from attitudinal change – an enhanced regard for the value of education and qualifications improving motivation (Mann, 2012; Hillage et al., 2001; Adams, 2008; National Support Group for Work Experience, 2008)

Education and Employers have also previously published papers on this topic. In 2016 researchers at Education and Employers published a study of PISA data which offers insight into whether employer engagement can have educational benefits, and how such relationships might work. It draws on data from the OECD’s 2012 study in which some countries opted to ask 15-year old participants whether they had taken part in a series of career development activities (CDA). In a regression analysis which took account of a common range of social, demographic and behavioural characteristics which routinely influence student success in education, participation in CDA was tested to see if it influenced attitudes towards schooling. In most cases, a positive and statistically significant relationship between participation in career development activities and more positive

² Mann, A. (2012) *Work Experience: Impact and delivery - Insights from the evidence* London: Education and Employers, UKCES, CIPD.

attitudes towards the utility of schooling was found. The most consistent positive effects are found in relationship to speaking with a careers advisor in school and attending a Job Fair. (Mann et al, 2016).

This report explores the findings from a new survey which asked teachers specifically what happens to children and young people in terms of their academic achievement after taking part in activities with local employers, for example work experience, careers sessions or enterprise activities. Many teachers are well placed to offer an informed professional opinion on whether employer engagement impacts on pupil achievement, why and how it might do so, when and where it is optimally designed for maximum impact and who (among pupils) is best placed to benefit. The report addresses three specific themes:

- 1. Do employer engagement activities have an impact on the academic achievement of pupils?**
- 2. Which activities have the greatest impacts, and on which type of pupil?**
- 3. Why, according to teachers, do these activities have an impact?**

In addressing these questions, a number of recurring themes and questions emerge. How does school type or geographic location shape experiences and perspectives? Does the level of free school meal eligibility or Ofsted rating make a difference to results? By using statistical analysis, this study is able to take account of those elements of social background which commonly drive inequalities. In so doing, it allows us to isolate specific interventions in the lives of young people provided by their schools and colleges to ask the question: did they make a difference to academic achievement?

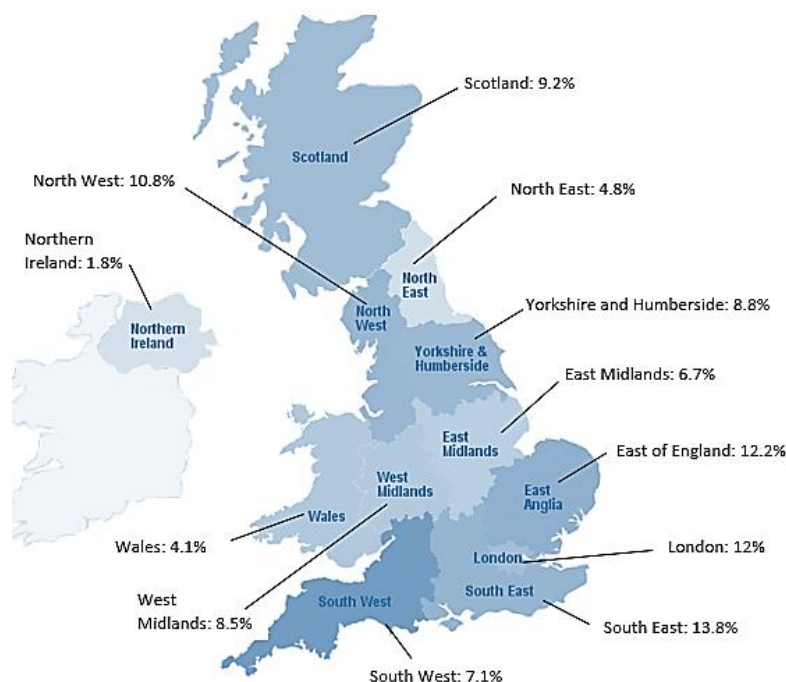
Method

This summary report considers the

responses of 824 teachers who completed a survey created by the Education and Employers research team working with Professor Prue Huddleston administered through the polling firm YouGov and online platform SurveyMonkey. Within the sample 59% of respondents were classroom or subject teachers and 27% were head of year or department. All the respondents in the sample felt well-placed to have a view about what contributes to the academic achievement of young people. The fieldwork was undertaken in April and May 2017. Respondents were drawn from the YouGov panel consisting of tens of thousands of teachers and other school staff. Respondents from schools were drawn equally from the three nations composing Great Britain and nine English regions, according to population figures. Similar numbers of respondents were sampled in the Key Stages across the ages from 11-19.

The school background variables deployed in the following analysis are used to determine whether any detected impacts related to career development activities as interventions are, in reality, a mask for some deeper variation in the experience of student participants. As well as the region and school type the survey also collected information on the percentage of students at the respondent's school that were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) as well as their school's most recent Ofsted inspection effectiveness grade. The sample largely matches with latest Ofsted secondary inspection outcomes data, with 'good' schools slightly underrepresented and 'inadequate' schools slightly overrepresented (Ofsted, 2016).

Fig 1: Regional distribution of respondents (N=434)*



*This does not include the new sample of 390 teachers as SurveyMonkey respondents were not asked for their region.

1. Do employer engagement activities have an impact on the academic achievement of pupils?

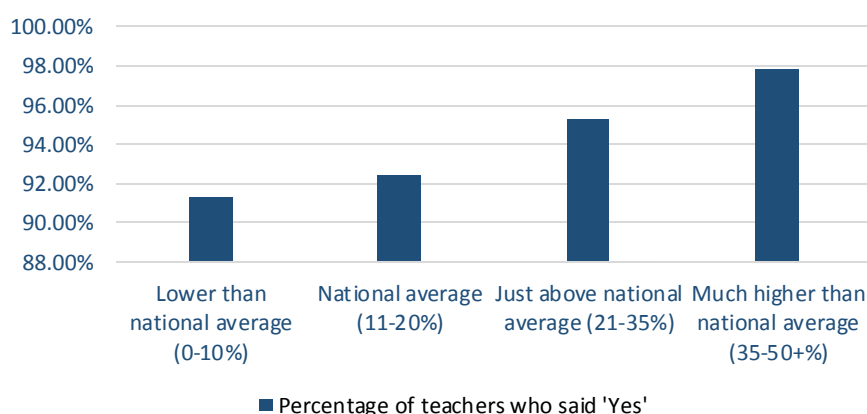
The survey began by asking respondents whether employer engagement activities can have an impact (whether positive or negative) on the academic achievement of pupils. To remove any doubt as what teachers implied when they talked about academic achievement in this survey, respondents were asked to write, in their own words, how they would define academic achievement. Of the 657 respondents of the majority of teachers highlighted that academic achievement in this sense was inextricably linked to higher grades and examination results, with a small percentage noting that it was linked to the skills and attitudes needed for future progression. Therefore, throughout this report any findings that relate to academic achievement, whether positive or negative, should be taken to refer to a wider concept of achievement related to progression which encompasses, but is not limited to, examination results.

A large majority of teachers, 93.2%, agreed that employer engagement activities can have an impact on the academic achievement of pupils.

Free School Meal eligibility

It appears that the percentage of students receiving FSM, a common signifier of disadvantage, in a school can affect whether teachers agree that employer engagement activities can have an impact on the academic achievement of pupils. As set out in Figure 2 below teachers from schools where the percentage of students receiving FSM is much higher than national average (35-50%+ of eligible pupils) are around 7% more likely to agree that an impact can be expected on academic achievement, compared to teachers from schools where the percentage is much lower than the national average (0-10% of eligible pupils).

Fig 2: Do employer engagement activities have any impact whether positive or negative on the academic achievement of pupils? By FSM eligibility among pupils



Latest Ofsted ranking

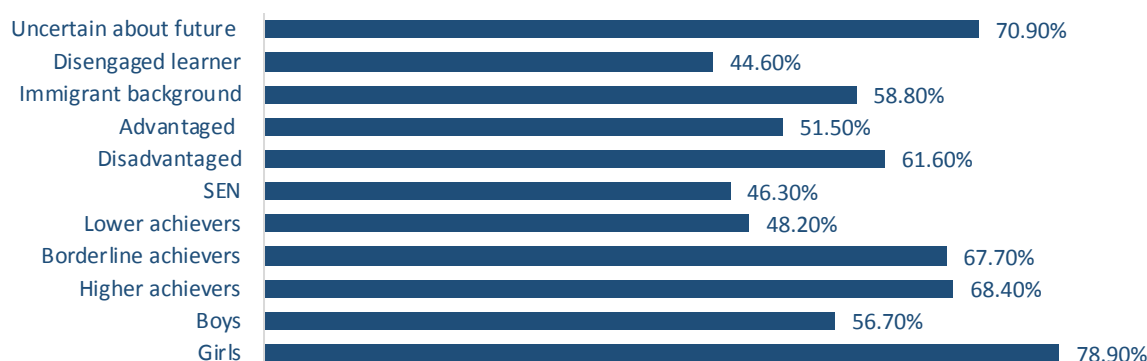
When we turn to the performance of a school there are consistent variations in whether teachers feel there is an impact according to the latest Ofsted ranking of their school. It is commonly teachers who are employed by underperforming schools (in terms of Ofsted criteria such as pupil development and wellbeing, how the school is led and managed etc.) who feel that these activities can have an impact. While the difference is small, teachers from schools that were either requiring improvement or deemed inadequate were around 5% more likely to say that employer engagement activities can have an impact on academic achievement compared to good and outstanding schools.

Who benefits from employer engagement activities?

Pupil type

Respondents were also asked to think about a typical year group and select which types of pupil were *more likely* to experience positive impacts on their academic achievement compared to every other group. We take that this should be interpreted as compared to everyone else in the year group.

Figure 3: Which type of pupils is *more likely* to experience positive impacts on their academic achievement?



79% of teachers believed that girls were more likely to experience positive impacts from employer engagement activities, this falls to just over 57% for boys. In terms of achievement level, teachers believe higher and borderline achievers are more likely to experience positive impacts of employer engagement compared to lower achievers (around 66/67% for higher/borderline achievers, compared to 45% for lower achievers).

How many pupils can expect this positive impact (in a typical year group)?

Teachers were also asked to highlight the size of the impact (whether positive or negative) that could be expected on the academic achievement of a typical year group after taking part in employer engagement activities. Although opinions on the exact number vary, the median response across a large number of teachers is that around a quarter of students in a typical year group experience modest positive effects from employer engagement and a further quarter can experience large positive effects. While teachers do recognise that some students can be negatively impacted academically by time spent on employer engagement activities, or the qualities of activities, the middle 50% of teachers believe this

According to teachers, around **one in five pupils** (in a typical year group) can expect a **positive** impact on their academic achievement after participating in employer engagement activities.

affects no more than ~5% of the typical year group. This new metric calculates that teachers believe around 20% of student receive a positive, whether large or modest, impact on their academic achievement following participation in employer engagement activities.

A negative impact?

Within this consideration of the link between employer engagement activities and achievement, it is important to consider whether any negative impact can be expected. In essence, does taking part in these activities negatively correlate with the exam success of pupils? Available evidence would suggest that this is occasionally, but rarely, the case. In the NFER surveys used by Mann and mentioned in the introduction, fewer than 5% of teachers thought that work experience placements would reduce the motivation of pupils, or their ability to reach achievement targets (Mann 2012).

Yet, within this analysis a number teachers voiced concerns about the potentially harmful effects these encounters could have on academic achievement. And while the negative responses made up a very small percentage of the overall picture, the concerns are still worth noting and, potentially, learning from. Often teachers note that the poor quality of activities means that the knowledge or inspiration gathered during the experience fails to outweigh the time spent away from lessons.

“Most work experience for students simply isn't, I feel, that useful to my students. The placements are often local, linked to families or friends, and the work experienced/set by the employer is often menial and boring.” (Year 11 classroom teacher, East Midlands)

“Too often badly pitched, and take students out of lessons which negatively impacts their achievement.” (Year 10 classroom teacher, East Midlands)

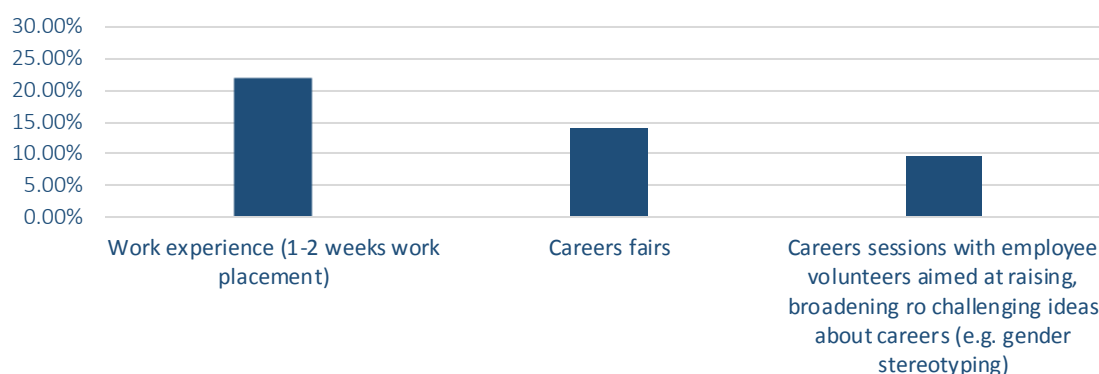
Moreover, a common refrain among teachers was that these activities come too late to alter the mind-sets or attitudes of the young people involved. It appears that these encounters may have the optimal impact on academic achievement if they take place earlier in a students' school career, potentially before they make key decisions about their futures (e.g. at age 14 and 16).

Pupils have to be self-motivated to learn and if they are not already in this mind set by this stage, most are unlikely to change this attitude unless they are significantly inspired to do so. (Year 12 classroom teacher, London)

2. Which activities have the greatest impact on academic achievement, and on which type of pupil?

The next section of the survey explored which activities teachers believed had the most impact on academic achievement. Teachers were asked to rank which activities they believed had the most impact on pupil achievement.

Figure 4: Percentage of teachers who ranked employer engagement activity first (in terms of its impact on academic achievement)



Work experience

As Table 4 shows, teachers most commonly highlighted that work experience had the greatest impact on academic achievement. These findings resonate with historical survey data collected from both young people and teachers. In 2008, some 15,000 young people aged 15 and 16 completed a questionnaire after returning from work experience placements. An overwhelming majority felt that the experience had led to a change in their attitudes towards schooling. In total, 90% agreed that following work experience they understood why it is better to do well at school with 89% agreeing that they had returned from work experience more prepared to work hard in lessons and in their coursework (NEBPN, 2008).

Focus group research with teachers highlights two primary means by which spells of work experience can influence improved achievement. Firstly, there is a sense that work experience can provide an environment which helps to contextualise classroom learning. Secondly, and more importantly, work experience is seen as a 'wake-up call' providing young people with powerful evidence that education and qualifications are of high value in the labour market. In this way, work experience can be seen as a means of motivating young people to apply themselves more assiduously to their studies (Mann, 2012).³

In a more recent survey by Education and Employers, the authors present survey data from 390 secondary school teachers which explicitly seeks professional views on the comparative value of different interventions to enhance academic achievement (Mann et al. 2016). The survey asked respondents to select from a list of 16 work-related activities (including many that involved employers) which took place in their own school. They were then presented with a new list of activities of which they had knowledge and asked to select which, if any, of the activities were effective, in their view, in improving student achievement. Again, work experience is perceived to have the most impact on a young person's academic achievement compared to other activities by a considerable margin. Out of the 353 teachers which had experience of work experience, 203 teachers (58%) believed it was effective in improving student achievement. From those teachers with experience of short-form enterprise competitions, the second most popular activity, only 38% believed it was effective.

Careers fairs and employer led careers sessions

The results are in keeping with recent survey data collected by Education and Employers. In 2017, funded by the Careers and Enterprise Company, Education and Employers undertook research into the impact of careers

³For a fuller discussion on Work Experience see Huddleston, P. (2012) Pupil work experience in Huddleston, P. and Stanley, J. (eds.) *Work-Related Teaching and Learning* Abingdon: Routledge.

events with employers held in UK schools and colleges. Two hundred and ninety one 12-18 year old students were asked to reflect on their experiences of careers events, having taken part in these events in different formats. When asked, the majority of young people agreed that they were motivated to study harder as a result of attending careers events (Rehill et al., 2017).

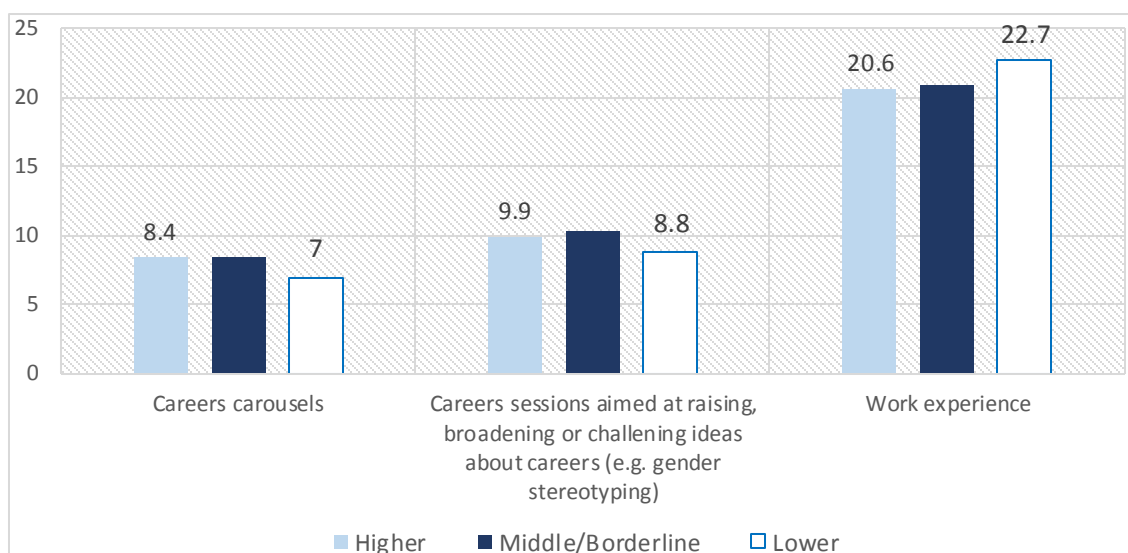
Which type of pupil benefits the most from employer engagement activities?

The preceding sections have presented the findings on who teachers believed to benefit most from participating in these events, as well as what they felt had the most impact. In following these lines of questioning, the research team explored whether relationships could be detected between the types of pupil most likely to benefit from employer engagement activities with the activity teachers ranked as having the greatest impact on academic achievement. As recent studies have demonstrated (Mann et al, 2016) different activities work, also other background characteristics must be considered when interpreting these results. More research is required to understand the reasons behind such variation and particularly the extent to which the perceived quality and relevance of employer engagement activities influences pupil perceptions. Another valuable line of enquiry would be: *'What benefits do employers gain from their engagement with schools?'*

Achievement level

As Figure 5 shows, the data collected for this report indicate that teachers believe work experience is thought to impact the most on all types of achiever, but seems to be most effective for borderline and lower achievers. These data echo results found by Mann and colleagues in their 2016 report of teacher perceptions (mentioned above). The findings reveal a practitioner instinct that different types of pupils can be expected to respond in different ways to different activities according to their achievement level. The study asked teaching staff which, if any, of the employer engagement activities (of which they had direct experience) was particularly effective in supporting the needs of young people of differing abilities. The results suggest that young people with lower levels of achievement will benefit more from sustained engagement with the working world (work experience, mentoring) and interventions which directly integrate employer engagement into teaching and learning (learning resources, classroom teaching). By contrast, higher achievers are expected to respond to less substantial interventions (careers fairs, mock interviews). It may be possible to read into these views that it is lower achievers whose confidence in education is weakest, who require the deepest exposures to the labour market to challenge embedded assumptions (Mann et al. 2016 pp. 16-17).

Figure 5: Teachers perceptions of which pupil type is more likely to benefit from specific employer engagement activities:
Achievement level



The findings are also echoed in Mann's 2012 study exploring the links between work experience, motivation and attainment. In this study teachers consistently report that highest achieving pupils rarely return from work experience more motivated than they were prior to the placement (Mann 2012). This is explained by the fact that these young people already have a clear sense of the connection between educational success and progression whether to further or higher education or ultimately into the workplace. In that survey teachers indicated that the broad cohort of middle-achieving pupils, and particularly those on the borderline of achieving key attainment targets (such as five good GCSEs) are likely to benefit the most. For such pupils, the increase in motivation is linked to a tangible educational objective. In the same study nearly half (51%) of teachers responding agreed that work experience placements increased to some extent the likelihood of borderline pupils from reaching key attainment targets (Mann 2012).

*The data collected for this report indicates that teachers believe **work experience** is thought to impact the most on all types of achiever, but seems to be most effective for **borderline and lower** achievers.*

Gender

A modest, but greater proportion (over 9% compared to 6%) of teachers believe that assembly talks and careers sessions aimed at raising, broadening and challenging ideas about careers (e.g. gender stereotyping) have more of an impact on the academic achievement of girls rather than boys. Work experience, careers fairs and careers sessions (with the aim of broadening or challenging ideas about careers) are ranked as similarly impactful for both boys and girls.

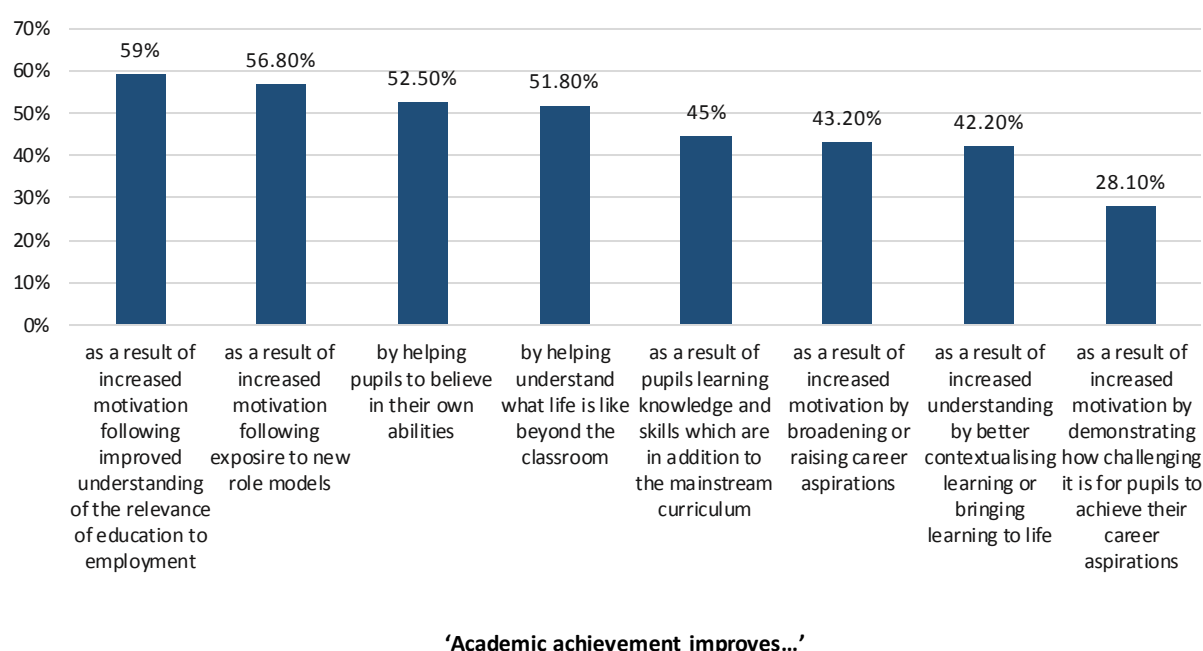
Again, recent findings appear to corroborate the results found in this survey. In the same 2017 study of careers events carried out by Education and Employers for The Careers and Enterprise Company *What Works* series (forthcoming) young people were asked if attending these events had an impact on their attitudes towards schooling and education. Girls found that these events had more impact on their motivation to study harder as well as changing their perceptions on the suitability of certain subjects compared to boys (Rehill et al., 2017).

*Teachers believe that **assembly talks and careers sessions aimed at raising, broadening and challenging ideas about careers (for example, gender stereotyping)** have more of an impact on the academic achievement of **girls** rather than boys.*

3. Why, according to teachers, do these activities have an impact?

The final section of the survey asked simply, ‘why do these activities have an impact on academic achievement?’ This question was designed to delve deeper into what teachers believed was driving the perceived change in students’ academic achievement. Teachers indicated broadly what they felt their students gained as a result of interactions with someone from the world of work which in turn motivated them to study harder.

Figure 6: Teachers perceptions of why employer engagement has an impact on academic achievement.



These findings align with previous survey data which suggest that any positive impact on achievement largely stems from attitudinal change—an enhanced regard for the value of education and qualifications improving motivation. As Figure 6 shows, over half of teachers felt that participating in employer engagement activities can improve academic achievement by improving students understanding of the relevance of education to employment. Teachers also believed that exposure to new role models was also a major driver in improving academic achievement. The results suggest that the relationship between employer engagement and academic achievement might rest most heavily in changing attitudes which emerge from engagements with a working world outside of, and fundamentally different from, the classroom. These findings align with perspectives highlighted by Mann and Dawkins (2014) in their exploration of teacher explanations for why employer engagement has an impact on attainment:

In discussions, participants returned to a number of key points:

- *Pupils often gained something new and distinct from their engagements with employers*

- They were highly attentive to the views expressed by employers on the value of education and qualifications
- Employer engagement impacts on achievement primarily through increasing pupil motivation (Mann and Dawkins 2014, p.4).

Voices of teachers: Employer engagement activities and changing attitudes to schooling

Understanding the relevance of education to employment

"Allows pupils to see relevance in their learning. Supports the development of employability skills."(Head of year, Key Stage 3, West Midlands).

"It allows students to put their learning into a context and can be particularly motivating for those students who cannot see themselves going down the university route."(Classroom teacher, Key Stage 5, Wales).

Exposure to new role models

"Firstly pupils listen to "real" people as opposed to teachers. No teacher can have a complete knowledge of all the different jobs out there. You can also bring in people that were not necessarily successful at school."(Head of year/department, Key Stage 4, London).

"They can help pupils direct their studies - which subjects to follow and also give them role models to focus on. They may also think about the wide range of jobs available to them, rather than the narrow options they often consider."(Classroom teacher, Key Stage 4, South East).

By helping pupils believe in their own abilities

"Raising confidence levels, ensuring greater engagement and more determination to succeed. Embeds research, communication skills"(Classroom teacher, Key Stage 5, Yorkshire and the Humber)

"It helps them to recognise areas for development and set themselves some long and short term targets in order to reach their goal."(Classroom teacher, Key Stage 4, London)

Demonstrating how challenging it is for pupils to achieve their career ambitions

"Students aspire to achieve better grades when they know requirements of employers. Reality of employment, further education etc is usually well received from employers."(Classroom teacher, Key Stage 5, London)

"The main element is that young people realise the reality of the work situation and if nothing else it gives them the incentive to achieve good exam results and lets them plan ahead for employment in the real world."(Head of Department/Year, Key Stage 3, West Midlands).

Conclusions

This report presents the initial findings from a 2017 survey of 824 teachers who felt well placed to have a view of what contributes to the academic achievement of young people. The survey explored whether teachers believe greater teenage engagement in school-mediated career development activities, which include elements of direct exposure to the working world, can be associated with improved academic achievement. Within these questions teachers were asked which activities they felt had the most impact, and for whom. Finally, teacher's perceptions on why these activities were impactful were also explored.

Overall, the findings suggest that enhanced academic achievement is a legitimate objective and outcome relevant to such school-mediated workplace exposure. It is clear from the findings that teachers believe that student participation in such activities can have a marked impact on their academic achievement, defined by respondents as encompassing, but not limited to, improved grades or examination results, of their students. On average, teachers believed **one in five** students in a typical year group can experience **positive impacts** on their academic achievement after taking part in employer engagement activities.

In terms of identifying specific interventions likely to enhance achievement, the findings here complement a number of opinion surveys and high quality analyses using experimental or quasi-experimental designs. The highest percentage of teachers believes that work experience has the greatest impact on improving academic achievement. Teachers also highlighted that careers fairs and careers sessions aimed at challenging ideas about careers and professions were the next most impactful. The data collected for this report indicate that teachers believe work experience is thought to impact the most on all types of achiever, but seems to be most effective for borderline and lower achievers. Teachers believe that assembly talks and careers sessions aimed at raising, broadening and challenging ideas about careers (for example gender stereotyping) have a greater impact on the academic achievement of girls rather than boys.

When asked *why* these activities had some impact over half the teachers felt that participating in employer engagement activities can improve academic achievement by improving students understanding of the relevance of education to employment. The responses suggest that employer engagement activities can be of value to young people on the presumed basis that they serve to enhance young people's ability to draw connections between education and later economic outcomes. Teachers also believed that exposure to new role models was also a major driver in improving academic achievement. Over half the teachers felt academic achievement can improve by helping students understand the relevance of education to employment, as well as exposing students to new role models. Interestingly, only around 28% of teachers found that a positive behavioural change was caused by demonstrating how challenging it is for pupils to achieve their career aspirations.

References

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