

The nature and implications of the part-time employment of secondary school pupils

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Determined to Succeed – the Scottish Executive's strategy for enterprise in education – aims to make a major contribution to the creation of an enterprise culture and to economic growth in Scotland. It was developed in response to the recommendations made by the Review Group in *Determined to Succeed: A Review of Enterprise* (Scottish Executive 2002). In direct response to one of the recommendations, the Scottish Executive subsequently commissioned a team from the Universities of Edinburgh, Paisley and Strathclyde to carry out research to establish the extent and nature of school pupils' part-time employment in Scotland and to investigate the potential for linking such part-time work to pupils' formal education. This Research Findings outlines the main findings of the wide-ranging study which was carried out between September 2003 and April 2006.

Main Findings

- Having a part-time job while at school was a majority experience among pupils. The proportion of pupils who had had part-time work varied by year group, ranging from 48% in S3 to 83% in S6
- Just under 1 in 10 of S4 to S6 pupils had had neither part-time work nor work experience
- School and some local authority staff tended to underestimate both the extent of part-time work and the level of demands made of pupils in their jobs
- The research identified a positive relationship between a high degree of enterprising attitudes and part-time employment, but it is not possible to assume a causal relationship between the two. Part-time work is one of a number of 'out of school' activities associated with a higher level of enterprising attitudes
- There was strong consensus among different stakeholders that part-time work helped pupils' personal and social development, especially confidence. Much part-time employment provided opportunities for pupils to learn and attain skills, especially core and employability skills
- The working hours of the majority of pupils, around two-thirds, were at the level that is unlikely to have a negative impact on their attainment but a substantial minority were working hours associated with a detrimental effect
- The main reason pupils gave for working part-time was to earn money and having an income of their own was seen as a way to gain independence
- There was little structured use of pupils' part-time employment in their schooling at the time of the research
- The principle of making more use of pupils' part-time work in their schooling was generally viewed positively by pupils and their parents, by teachers and other educationalists and by employers. There was no clear agreement on what approach should be taken to recognising part-time work in schooling
- The current legislative system governing the employment of young people aged under 16 is ineffective; most of the younger pupils were working without the required work permit

Background

Involvement in part-time employment by pupils is not a new phenomenon but it has largely either been ignored by educationalists or perceived negatively as an activity that distracts pupils from their school work. But in Scotland, as elsewhere in Britain, it is now well recognised that learning is not limited to the classroom and that education should make use of the variety of learning contexts in which young people develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. This is paralleled by the desire to enable young people to develop a wider set of knowledge and skills than have previously been fostered by the traditional school curriculum, for example, employability skills and enterprising attitudes and behaviours. It is also acknowledged that education needs to move beyond a simple focus on the acquisition of formal qualifications to a system which recognises pupils' broader achievement in a range of contexts and activities, including out-of school activities. Such thinking is central to both the Determined to Succeed agenda and A Curriculum for Excellence. This is the context in which this research into pupils' part-time employment is located.

About the research

The research had two broad aims:

- to investigate the extent, nature and implications of school pupils' part-time employment
- to examine and make recommendations on how pupils' part-time work might be linked to their formal schooling, including exploring the opportunities for its formal recognition

The research combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to enable the research team to collect comprehensive data on the extent of pupils' part-time work, to investigate the nature and quality of the work undertaken by pupils and to obtain the views of various stakeholders about the value of part-time work and its potential to contribute to pupils' formal education. The study involved a number of inter-related elements:

- **a survey of school pupils:** a nationally representative 10% sample of S3, S4, S5 and S6 pupils in local authority and independent secondary schools across Scotland was surveyed to establish the extent and nature of pupils' part-time work. The survey achieved an 89% response rate giving a total of 18,430 respondents..

- **a survey of local authorities and review of legislation:** all 32 Scottish local authorities were surveyed by telephone about the nature and effectiveness of their systems for monitoring child employment and views on the formal recognition of pupils' part-time employment. LAs' bye-laws and other child employment materials were collected and analysed.

- **focus studies:** two schools in each of four local authority areas were selected to participate and activities in each school comprised:

- interviews and group work with a range of teachers (46 participants)

- pupil focus groups (48 groups involving 376 pupils)

- survey of parents/carers (360 surveyed with a 76% response rate, n = 275)

- interviews with seven Careers Scotland staff

- **a survey of employers:** a telephone survey was undertaken of a sample of 42 employers reflecting the range and type of employment undertaken by school pupils. The interview covered the company's employment of school pupils, views on the value of part-time work and on the idea of recognising it within pupils' schooling.

- **interviews with members of the Scottish Councils Education Industry Network:** telephone interviews were carried out with members in all 32 local authorities in Scotland. The interviews focused on the potential link between pupils' part-time work and education.

- **case studies of pupils in their part-time employment** : in-depth case studies of 12 pupils were undertaken to gain an insight into what pupils actually did in their workplace. The case studies involved event recording by the pupils while at work and observation by members of the research team as well as interviews with the pupils and their employers.

- **desk studies:** literature and current practice relating to the use of part-time employment in an educational context were reviewed, and models to recognise part-time work were developed; a second review concerned literature and relevant initiatives relating to enterprise which informed the development of measures to assess pupils' enterprising attitudes and behaviours.

Research findings

Part-time work is a common experience

The national survey of pupils showed that part-time work is a common experience among school pupils (table 1). Part-time employment rose in line with pupils' age and stage of schooling: by the end of S4, 56% of pupils had had experience of part-time work and by the S6 stage, 83% of them had done so. By this stage, pupils who had never had a part-time job were the exception.

Table 1: School pupils' experience of part-time work

School year	Current job %	Former job %	Never worked %	(n)
All	38	21	41	(18207)
S3	29	19	52	(5936)
S4	34	23	44	(5847)
S5	43	21	35	(4099)
S6	63	20	18	(2325)

Involvement in part-time work varied according to a number of factors such as gender, ethnicity, social class, looked after status and locality. But these variations were not necessarily in line with commonly held assumptions, for example, pupils in rural areas were *more* likely to work than those in urban areas, a difference not explained by involvement in seasonal employment. While pupils from certain ethnic minority backgrounds had a lower level of *paid* part-time work, this is not explained by any greater involvement in *unpaid* work. The main finding in respect of part-time working and pupils' ethnic background is the very limited level of part-time employment among girls from a Pakistani background.

Part-time work, poverty and disengagement

It is sometimes thought that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to engage in part-time work, often to supplement the family income. The research, however, indicates that most pupils were not working to contribute to the household budget. The research also found only a limited link between pupils' socio-economic background and part-time employment; in this case, it was pupils for whom socio-economic information about their parents was missing or unclassifiable who were less likely to work part-time. Pupils whose parents were in professional and managerial occupations were just as likely to work part-time as those from intermediate and working class backgrounds. The research indicates that it is the less advantaged pupils who are slightly less likely to have part-time work.

Another commonly held assumption is that pupils who are less engaged with school will be more likely to have a part-time job but the study does not bear this out. There is little to suggest that pupils who are disenchanted by school turn to part-time work as an alternative. On the specific issue of any link between truancy and part-time work, we found no clear relationship between having a part-time job and being a frequent truant.

Pupils' decisions about part-time employment

It is unsurprising that the main reason given by pupils for working was in order to earn money. This in turn allowed them to buy a range of goods and to finance aspects of their social life. The second most popular reason for having a job was that it provided independence and other data from pupils indicates that, for some, having an income of their own was a means by which to establish their independence. Earning money and gaining independence are inter-related reasons for working and suggest that for pupils, part-time work may contribute to helping them establish an independent adult identity. Specific employment plans or career related reasons were less important motivating factors for most pupils having a part-time job.

The reasons for some pupils stopping their part-time jobs fell mainly into three categories: dissatisfaction with their job; time demands; and where their job had come to an end. Pupils in S5 and S6 were most likely to stop work to concentrate on their school work suggesting that some were exercising a degree of self management and attempting to balance the demands of school and work.

Pupils who had never had a part-time job were not a homogenous group. Some had not tried to get part-time employment but the reasons behind this varied. For some it was for negative reasons – a perceived lack of jobs – while for others it was a positive decision because they wanted to focus on school work or other interests instead. Others had, in fact, applied for job(s) but had not succeeded in finding employment.

Not just 'pocket money' jobs

Delivering newspapers or milk is the traditional stereotype of pupils' part-time work but the research shows that pupils work in a wider range of jobs. Retail and catering sectors were significant employers of school pupils; smaller proportions were employed in delivery work which was predominately carried out by S3 and S4 pupils. There was a move out of what might be termed 'less structured' employment in S3 and S4 to more formal types of employment in S5 and S6. Pupils generally worked in the same type of jobs irrespective of their academic attainment or social class but there were clear gender differences in the

type of work that pupils undertook. Pupils were extremely unlikely to have started their own businesses.

Many of the working pupils were relatively well paid. The average hourly pay rates of the majority of workers of all ages were above the National Minimum Wage of £3.00 for 16-17 year olds. These average figures, however, hide the fact that a significant proportion, just over a fifth, of workers of all ages had an hourly pay rate below this level. While the majority of pupils did not receive holiday or sick pay, S6 pupils were much more likely to do so suggesting that they were working under the same terms and conditions as other (non-pupil) employees.

Pupils' working hours

The impact of part-time work on pupils' attainment is a critical issue for many stakeholders, especially teachers. There is evidence from a range of previous studies that simply having a part-time job is not of itself associated with a negative impact on attainment. It is the number of hours worked that is critical: working long hours is related to poorer academic outcomes. (Some studies have also found that working for a small number of hours is associated with a positive effect compared with not having a job). The critical threshold varies according to pupils' age/ school stage: over 10 hours a week for under 16s and around 16 or more for older workers. In this research, we found that the majority of pupils, around two-thirds, were working within these parameters. But this leaves a substantial minority who were working hours that are associated with a detrimental effect on their school work.

Child employment legislation

Child employment legislation exists to provide some protection to young employees under the age of 16; among other requirements, under -16s in part-time employment should have a work permit issued by their local authority. The surveys of pupils and of local authorities demonstrated, however, that the current legislative system is ineffective; most of the younger pupils were working without the required work permit. In addition, our review of national and international legislation showed that Scotland is out of step with European legislation.

The value of part-time work

Traditionally, pupils' part-time work has been viewed as low skilled, providing little opportunity for learning. This question of the quality and value of pupils' part-time work was a key issue for the research since it is central to the potential of part-time work to contribute to pupils' formal education. The research approached the issue both by obtaining the

perceptions of pupils and adult stakeholders and also by investigating the activities which pupils carried out in the workplace by means of the pupil survey and the case studies of individual workers. It was clear that the perceptions of a significant proportion of adult stakeholders, especially school staff, were at odds with the reality of the scope of some pupils' work.

There was a clear perception that part-time work helped the personal and social development of pupils, particularly through increased self-confidence. The majority of pupils reported that they dealt with customers and had to co-operate with others to get their jobs done. Just under half worked with equipment and over a quarter of pupils worked with tools and machinery. Dealing with paperwork was a task for nearly a quarter of pupils and one in five had some supervisory or training role. Half had received some kind of training in their job. The majority of pupils in part-time jobs believed that their work allowed them to develop skills, had the potential to teach them new things and at some level allowed them to make some decisions. Overall, the research indicates that part-time employment provides opportunities for learning and attaining skills, especially certain core and employability skills. However, it is important to recognise that not all jobs offer the same scope. The level of demand varied not only across job sectors but also between jobs within the same sector. It cannot be assumed that because two jobs have the same title, eg shop work, that the scope of the work is the same.

The use of part-time work in schooling

The research indicated that, at the time of the fieldwork, there was little structured use of pupils' part-time work in schooling. A few local authorities were considering its use, most commonly to enhance or replace work experience. In relation to this, the pupil survey revealed that just over half of S4-S6 pupils had had both work experience and part-time work but that a small minority had only worked part-time and had not been on work experience while another group of pupils (9%) had had no exposure to the working world through either part-time employment or work experience. Stakeholders perceived work experience and part-time work as serving different purposes; it is also evident that the type of job sectors and employers were different. These findings are relevant to the issue of using part-time work to enhance or replace work experience.

The research found little evidence that pupils' part-time work was taken account of in any vocationally related opportunities being offered by schools (the fieldwork took place before the Skills for Work pilots).

The recognition of part-time work

An early task for the research was to conceptualise the link between part-time work and formal education in a way that would enable us to explore the issue with stakeholders. There were no examples elsewhere to draw upon so the research team developed five possible models (fig 1). It is important to note that these five models are not exhaustive nor are they mutually exclusive. The models differ in terms of: the level of school involvement; the extent to which the employer is involved; the nature of the link (if any) to the schools curriculum; the nature of the link (if any) to employability or other progression; and whether or not certification is involved.

Figure 1: Possible Models of Recognition

1. recognition of part-time work through full embedding in the curriculum
2. recognition that part-time work can develop generic transferable skills
3. formal recognition via discrete certification of the distinctive outcomes of part-time work
4. recognition of the role of part-time work in personal planning
5. recognition of the potential of part-time work to contribute to progression

We explored stakeholders' views of the principle of recognising pupils' part-time employment within their schooling and also their views on the different approaches or models of recognition. The principle of making more use of pupils' part-time work in their schooling was generally viewed positively by pupils and their parents, by teachers and other educationalists and by employers. But responses varied across and within the different stakeholder groups and their approval was qualified by a number of caveats. Moreover, there was no general agreement about which model or models of recognition should be used. School staff and also those in local authorities responsible for monitoring child employment had particular concerns about the resources that might be required and about legislative issues such as health and safety and child protection.

Part-time work and enterprise

In the current policy context there is a great deal of interest in the potential relationship between part-time employment and enterprising attitudes among pupils. Pupils involved in the research were asked to assess the extent to which they thought they were enterprising in their attitudes and we found a positive relationship between a high degree of enterprising attitudes and part-time employment. Since the research did not have a longitudinal element, the possibility of a causal link could not be tested. However, the research

suggests that having a part-time job is one among other indicators of a pupil's level of active engagement in their environment. Part-time work should be viewed as one of a number of out of school activities that are associated with a higher level of enterprising attitudes.

Conclusions/recommendations

Awareness raising

- Part-time employment is a majority experience among secondary school pupils but the research identified a number of commonly held misperceptions among many school and local authority staff about the extent and nature of school pupils' part-time employment. School staff also tended to perceive part-time work largely in terms of its possible negative effect on pupils' schooling. If schools are to acknowledge the place of part-time work in pupils' lives, action needs to be taken to provide them with accurate information that challenges misperceptions as a first step to changing attitudes to part-time work.
- Pupils also need information about part-time employment to ensure they are aware of their rights and obligations as employees and to enable them to make informed decisions on part-time work and how to balance part-time work, schooling and other aspects of their lives.
- Both the above recommendations need to be tackled at a number of levels, from school to Scottish Executive. They could be undertaken as part of the Determined to Succeed strategy.
- Strategies to encourage more structured consideration of pupils' part-time work in career guidance interventions and in career education need to be considered and developed by Careers Scotland in cooperation with education staff.

Employers

- Employers need to be encouraged to develop good practice in employing school pupils, including the use of contracts to limit the number of hours worked and a recognition of the role of study leave and exam preparation.
- Employers' views about the lack of preparedness of school pupils for work, especially in relation to certain generic skills, have been well documented. But the majority of school pupils are employed during their time at school and are therefore, already in the 'sphere of influence' of employers, and most carry out activities in their jobs that require such generic skills. The Scottish Executive should consult with employer organisations on how to encourage companies to help develop the employability skills of their part-time pupil workforce.

Legislation

- Any moves to formally recognise part-time work will bring the current system of monitoring child employment into prominence. The current system is ineffective in both monitoring and controlling the part-time employment of children aged under 16 and there is an urgent need for the appropriate Scottish Executive departments to address this.
- As a minimum, the current child employment legislation needs to be revised to ensure consistency of approach across local authorities. We suggest that a more radical re-evaluation and revision of legislation is required to establish a system that is effective and relevant for the 21st century.
- Good information on legislation targeted at different stakeholders needs to be developed and disseminated widely to ensure that pupils, parents, schools and employers are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- The guidance on National Minimum Wage does not apply to those under 16. Consideration should be given to extending this legislation to cover this younger group.

Recognition of part-time work

- The extent and nature of pupils' part-time work suggests that it **could** contribute to some of the wider goals set for Scottish education, for example, by Determined to Succeed and A Curriculum for Excellence. This contrasts with the traditional view of part-time work as having a detrimental effect on pupils' education and attainment.
- Whether it **should** be used in a recognised way in schooling is another issue. Policy makers need to be aware that any system of recognition will have an impact on the part-time work experience: this impact may be direct or indirect and may be positive or negative in nature. The nature of the impact is likely to vary depending on the approach(es) taken to recognition. Care should be taken to ensure that any recognition system does not erode currently perceived benefits of part-time employment such as enhancing a sense of independence and autonomy. The various consequences of any recognition system need to be fully considered.
- A number of key points about recognition emerged from the research and which should be taken into account by the policy makers when deciding whether and how the recognition of part-time work should be taken forward. These are that:

- the purpose of recognition needs to be defined
 - any system of recognition should be voluntary.
 - any system needs to respect the autonomy of the pupil as an independent worker in the workplace
 - any system would have to acknowledge the variability in the type and quality of jobs undertaken
 - there should be multiple models of recognition; no one approach can fit all situations
 - it should only happen if both pupils and employers value the result, especially given the resource implications
 - health and safety issues need to be addressed
 - legislation on the employment of children and young people needs to be clarified and made effective
- As noted above, an attitudinal change in schools about part-time work is required before any system of recognition could be successfully introduced.
 - While there was general support for the idea that pupils' part-time work should be more recognised in schooling, stakeholders did not give it a blanket endorsement. There was also no general agreement about how it might be done. Educationalists tended to favour those approaches that encouraged pupils to review the learning gained from their part-time employment.
 - The question of equity concerned some pupils and educationalists since not all pupils who wanted a part-time job could find one. Some groups of young people were less likely to have a part-time job. It could be argued, however, that this is the nature of the labour market. Moreover, pupils do not have unlimited access to the curriculum, including to vocational opportunities.
 - This question of equity needs to be taken into account in deciding whether or not to recognise pupils' part-time employment. If recognition is introduced, clear guidance is needed on whether education should play a compensatory role in respect of pupils who are disadvantaged in accessing part-time work and, if so, on the appropriate strategies that could be adopted, for example, for schools to negotiate part-time job vacancies as part of Partnership Agreements with local employers..
 - If a policy decision is taken to recognise pupils' part-time employment in their schooling, there needs to be a full feasibility study of the approaches developed as part of this research and also consideration of other approaches.

Part-time work and the vocational curriculum

- Considering the type of part-time work that pupils commonly engage in, it is difficult to envisage a direct vocational link with work-related and vocational opportunities in school. The research suggests that the most likely link from part-time work into these other experiences might be through generic transferable employability skills
- The extent of part-time employment raises questions for other forms of vocational experiences, in particular, work experience. Schools cannot assume that work experience is the first introduction to the world of work for all pupils and briefing and debriefing needs to take account of this.
- In the allocation of vocational experiences to pupils, their prior and current experience of part-time work needs to be taken into account to ensure the vocational experiences are complementary and can provide progression in learning.

- The timing of the introduction of Skills for Work courses meant that the research did not take account of this provision. If a policy decision is taken to link part-time work to schooling, then the potential for links with Skills for Work courses, and the employability units developed within them, needs to be examined as part of a feasibility study.
- A small minority of pupils had had neither work experience nor part-time employment. For these pupils, consideration needs to be given to targeting those vocational experiences within the school.

Part-time work and enterprise

- While this research has shown a relationship between part-time work and the extent to which pupils view themselves as enterprising, it was not designed to assess the impact of part-time employment on their development of enterprising attitudes, skills and knowledge. Further research designed on a longitudinal basis would be necessary for this.

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The report, "The nature and implications of the part-time employment of secondary school pupils", which is summarised in this research findings is a web only document and is available on the publications pages of the Scottish Executive website at

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