

Determined to Succeed: Investigating Young People's Perceptions of Success and Influencing Factors

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TNS System Three was commissioned by the Scottish Executive Office of Chief Researcher to carry out a programme of independent qualitative research designed to investigate perceptions of, and attitudes toward, Enterprise in Education and the Determined to Succeed strategy amongst school pupils, teachers involved with enterprise in education and businesses.

Main Findings

- Young people identify with the term 'success' more readily than with the term 'enterprise'. Enterprise is a term that is mainly introduced to the school pupils by the school itself.
- Success for pupils is related to personal goal achievements and having a good quality of life. Perceptions of what constitutes success are highly individualised and more closely related to 'softer' factors, such as good relationships with friends and family, as opposed to having lots of money and a high social status.
- In terms of working life, pupils wish to have a job that interests them as opposed to just attaining a high material status. Job satisfaction and enjoyment are seen as more important than the status level of the job.
- In terms of an outlook on the future, the pupils tended to focus on the next significant or perceived large scale event in their lives. For pupils in primary school (P7) this was the move to secondary school, and for those in secondary school (S4) this was their impending Standard Grade examinations. Secondary pupils tended to look further into the future than primary pupils, however, the concentration on the next 'big stage' remained.
- Both primary and secondary pupils had a positive view of what the future held for them. However, it is true to say that the future was full of unknowns and, in terms of aspirations, whilst some pupils had an idea of the broad occupational category they wanted to work within, they did not have a grasp of the specific steps they needed in order to achieve this.
- With regard to stimulus material, the pupils engaged with material which was in line with their thinking about what represented success for them. Therefore messages that revolved around job satisfaction, local success and achieving personal goals were well received by the pupils.

Background

The Determined to Succeed (DtS) strategy has been allocated £42m of funding over three years from the Scottish Executive, with a further £2m from the Hunter Foundation, to facilitate what is being referred to as a 'step change' in Enterprise in Education activity across the full spectrum of primary, secondary and special education.

The Determined to Succeed strategy has relevance for all pupils in full time education in Scotland. As well as being concerned with preparation for the world of work, Determined to Succeed intends to encourage ambition in young people in Scotland, whether that be through entrepreneurship or in more general terms, and to enable them to be prepared for life.

Aims and objectives

The specific research objectives were to:

- explore how enterprising young people are
- evaluate young people's enterprising values in relation to work and life
- investigate how young people define success and enterprise
- determine to what extent, if any, schools are influential in creating an enterprising spirit in young people
- ascertain young people's overall sense of optimism or pessimism towards the future
- test a range of stimulus (creative) materials which seek to engage school pupils with the concept of enterprise

Method

Qualitative methodologies were used in this study.

- Face to face, paired-friendship depth interviews were used with the primary pupils
- Focus groups with secondary pupils
- Face to face in-depth interviews with teachers responsible for enterprise in their school
- Telephone depth interviews with the local businesses

Results

Primary and secondary school pupils' view of the future

- Primary and secondary school pupils tended to focus on the next/most imminent step in their lives.
- Both primary and secondary pupils had a positive outlook toward the future. However, 'the future' as a concept consisted of too many unknowns and was not viewed in terms of specific events.
- In terms of goals for the future, pupils wanted to achieve happiness and contentment. This was more important than material gains from success.

Primary and secondary school pupils' conceptualisation of success

- Pupils associated success with achieving a happy or content state of mind, as opposed to attaining a high standard of living or wealth in terms of material status.
- One's employment was perceived as an important part of future happiness; however, this was not the sole criterion for judging whether or not one had achieved success. Within the context of employment, success was associated with achieving a high level of satisfaction with one's job.
- Achieving success was perceived by the pupils as the setting and achieving of individually-tailored goals.

Primary and secondary school pupils' associations around enterprise

- Enterprise was a familiar term to pupils across the sample, however, there was no simple or consistent definition given. Enterprise, in the context of Determined to Succeed, was a concept with which the pupils held a limited grasp.
- To some extent, the concept of enterprise had been placed on the pupils' radar by the schools.
- For pupils, enterprising skills may include: a 'can do' attitude, thinking creatively/generating ideas, working together as a team, communicating and demonstrating initiative.

Teachers and businesses

- Teachers held a very positive view of Enterprise in Education in terms of what it could offer pupils.

- There was enthusiasm held by teachers to move enterprise activity away from its traditional 'event-orientated' or 'one-off/annual' guise and further embed it into the curriculum.
- Teachers expressed enthusiasm for the involvement of outside bodies in enterprising activities. Partnerships with local business were seen as worthwhile.
- Both teachers and businesses firmly believed that pupils, through exposure to enterprise opportunities, were furnished with real life skills that would better prepare them for the demands of life after school/within the workplace.
- Businesses expressed a desire for greater involvement with schools at the stage when enterprise opportunity are being planned.

The creative materials

Pupils' responses to creative materials were consistent with the beliefs they held around the concept of success and the future.

Across both the secondary and primary pupils the response to the various creative materials tested was consistent.

The most motivating messages were held in those creatives that communicated messages around: job satisfaction, personal goal achievement, respect for oneself and from others, taking a positive view of the future and those which demonstrated clear outcomes.

The most successful creative routes were those that demonstrated:

- Everyday individuals, rather than 'superstars' or people who were out of reach for the pupils
- The importance of emotional well being rather than success in terms of material gain

In terms of the slogans for Determined to Succeed that were tested in the research, there was no clear favourite. However, those slogans perceived as being more personal and positive fared best. These included:

- 'It's your future' and 'Future possible'
- And also the line: 'You don't have to be big to be successful'

Conclusion

TNS System Three believes that pupils are enterprising to the extent that all have experienced 'enterprising' activities

through their schooling. However, pupils do not consider thoughts, ambitions and goals as 'enterprising'.

Enterprise as a concept is familiar to the pupils in this context only as a result of schools labelling certain activities 'enterprising'. There is no natural affinity with the notion of enterprise. What knowledge pupils have, is derived from learning at school.

Schools can be considered as influential in developing an enterprising spirit in young people, as all pupils had benefited from engaging in enterprising activities (at both enterprising and less enterprising schools).*

There was a large degree of consistency across the business and teacher audiences over the benefits enterprise has for pupils.

The teachers consulted were all responsible for enterprise in their schools, and as such were advocates of enterprise in education.

The businesses consulted were motivated to become involved with enterprise activities in schools through a desire to help make a difference to school children, and better prepare them for life.

Success is a more natural way of referring to an aspirational future for pupils. In terms of success, pupils favoured 'softer' definitions of success such as quality of life and personal well being, as opposed to material manifestations of wealth. For the pupils, there did not appear to be an absolute level of what represented success, rather success was perceived in very subjective terms. By setting and achieving personal goals success could be achieved.

The pupils desire for quality of life factors over material gain held true when the pupils considered what working life might hold for them.

It is the case that there were a range of pupils – from the would-be plumber to the aspirant solicitor – that participated in this research.

The pupils tended to view the future as a series of stages to be encountered and passed. They had a positive view of what the future held for them.

As one might expect, the secondary school pupils had more of an idea about the specific type of work they wanted to do than the primary school pupils, who tended to view working life in terms of wide occupational categories, such as 'doctors' or 'teachers'.

*Based on the numbers of teachers trained, and a schools engagement, in enterprise in education.

Of the creative stimulus researched with the pupils, those examples that were most in line with the pupils' own notion of success and what success meant had most impact.

The messages conveyed by the successful creative routes were appealing to all pupils. This universal appeal, and the

ability to ascribe one's own *personal* goals to the creative messages, sealed their successes.

Due to lack of affinity with the notion of enterprise TNS System Three recommend focussing on the notion of success in future communication.

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The report, "Determined to Succeed: investigating young people's perceptions of success and influencing factors", which is summarised in this research findings is available on the Social Research website at www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch.

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