

Skills for All research programme funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

# **How to motivate (demotivated) 14-16 year olds, with special reference to work-related education and training**

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Seminar papers, final summary paper and executive summary available for downloading on <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/events/seminars/motivation/default.asp>

# The problem

- A first estimate suggests that the disengaged are located within the broad group who achieve less than 5 GCSE passes A\* - C and comprise at least 20% of the cohort
- International comparisons (PISA) shows UK disengagement below the OECD average
- But the UK has the strongest link between socio-economic disadvantage and disengagement

# The analysis

- We identify a very small (1-2 %) 'out of touch' group who have practically lost touch with school
- A larger group – possibly to be identified with the 20% who *claim* to have no GCSEs (McIntosh) could be characterised as 'disaffected but in touch'
- Finally, we identify a further group, the '1-4 A\*-C grade' group located within the 20% of the cohort who gain between 1 and 4 GCSE passes at Grades A\*-C who have not reached full potential as a result of loss of interest in learning.

# Historical evidence – issues raised

- Historical evidence (technical secondary schools; TVEI, Advanced GNVQ) show vocational/technical subjects and programmes as being particularly vulnerable to pressures to academicise content, to problems of quality and to the absence of natural champions i.e. employers and trade unions.
- ***How can we ensure that the GCSE in vocational subjects will receive the sustained support necessary for survival?***

# Issues from International Comparisons

- The OECD PISA study showed even our poor-performers scoring better than their counterparts in some other countries.
- Yet perhaps half the English students scoring at Level 3 on the PISA tests may have failed to gain a Grade C GCSE pass in English (if we map directly across from PISA to GCSE). ***Are we setting the bar too high too early?***
- ***Or perhaps we can move more quickly towards de-coupling Key Stage 4 assessment from GCSE and encouraging a variation in length of preparation for GCSE?***

# Issues from pseudo-cohort analysis

- The (20%) claiming no GCSEs at 17 are unlikely to gain further qualifications.
- For the few who do, those with NVQ Level 3 have the same employment prospects as those with 5 GCSEs at A\*-C
- Young women in this group are highly marginalised
- This group should benefit most from Connexions guidance and support. ***There is concern that Connexions is not fully meeting the needs of this – or indeed any - group of young people effectively.***

# Issues from review of evaluation

- It was argued that ***nothing that we have heard in the seminars offers an obvious way forward for the 'disaffected but in touch' group***, targeted by work-place learning measures.
- For the '1-4 Grade C' group, there is something of a magic bullet; namely better vocational options. ***The danger is to try to apply the vocational options solution to the 'disaffected but in touch' for many of whom it is far from optimal.***

# And finally....

- Disengagement is not new, but changes in the demand for skills, and the importance of lifelong learning together with a more inclusive employment and social agenda have made it a high priority policy area.
- Estimating the size of the challenge presented by disengagement and distinguishing the variety of needs of those in this group is still under-researched.
- We believe that our work in this series of seminars has helped to clear some of the ground and achieve greater clarity.