

ESRC FUNDED SEMINAR SERIES

How to Motivate (Demotivated) 14-16 Year Olds, With Special Reference to Work Related Education and Training

Seminar 5:

Motivating 14-16 Year Olds to Invest in Learning and Aim for Progression: Scoping and Evaluation Part 2

Friday 31st October

The Marian Morris (NFER) 'Motivating 14-16-year-olds -- the role of work-related learning? Some early findings from the Increased Flexibilities Programme'

Going beyond its title, presentation offered a wider perspective, based on several years of experience of work-related alternatives to parts of the National Curriculum going back to TVEI . Went on to offer very preliminary findings from NFER's evaluation of the Increased Flexibilities Programme, where the report for DfES is currently being drafted and the detailed findings are not yet in the public domain.

Concerned with 'switching back on' young people who have been turned off by aspects of school. Important to distinguish between youngsters who are 'disaffected' (who may feel alienated yet often continue to perform satisfactorily, going on to make adequate transitions between school and subsequent activities), and those who have become 'disengaged' (so that their functioning as students is materially affected). Disengagement can lead to under-achievement, poorly-paid unsatisfying work, and sometimes to delinquency and crime.

Numerous recent examples of government initiatives to address educational disadvantage, including ones aimed at providing support systems or at fostering greater social/educational inclusion -- but MM concerned with those aimed at creating fresh learning and development opportunities. Impact of these curriculum development initiatives can be evaluated in terms of pupils' attitudes, behaviour, attainment, aspirations, and of their post-16 destinations and longer-term outcomes.

TVEI in the 1980s, and Urban Compacts in the 1990s included elements of work-related learning. There is evidence that they did increase some young people's motivation and develop increased understanding of the world of work and employers, but final outcomes were more mixed. No evidence that the young people made better post-16 transitions -- although this may have reflected shortcomings in data collection strategies of that period: current research may be able to go further in documenting these matters.

(NFER has also produced a retrospective micro-study under the Skills for All Programme, interviewing current FE students who took part while at school in work-related learning initiatives and attempting to understand their value in informing the decision to continue with education).

An additional research question is: what actually makes the difference in dealing with 'switched off' pupils? Is it the provision of the vocational, as opposed to academic, content? Or is it the teaching strategies involved (MM gave example of a similar effect in terms of young people valuing themselves differently which was achieved through an academic geography field trip where pupils were required to operate outside school and to collect their own data).

In addition to the growth of work-related learning in schools, TVEI had led to situation where over 90% of young people in years 10-11 had some kind of work experience placement, and part-time jobs for school students were now widespread (and must have some impact on school).

It has been argued that these initiatives result in greater self-esteem and self-confidence, clearer career goals, or greater motivation in the school students, and development of different pedagogical styles in the teachers. (Young people will be in situations where they are likely to learn from each other and develop teamwork skills). Similarly, claimed outcomes include reductions in truancy levels, improved behaviour in school, enhanced academic attainment, and higher rates for staying on after age 16. In fact, some at-risk young people can function satisfactorily in academic settings, and it is not proven that work-related learning can decrease their vulnerability. In previous research, young people have often mentioned the need for better help and guidance with these transitions.

Historically, disapplication of parts of the National Curriculum was first allowed to under Section 363 of the 1996 Education Act through regulations introduced in 1998. These allowed to up to two out of three specified subjects to be dropped in favour of an extended work-related learning programme. (See NFER report, "Disapplying National Curriculum Subjects to Facilitate Extended Work-Related Learning at Key Stage 4: and Evaluation", September 2001). The work-related learning tended to be some combination of employer-based work experience, college-or training provider-based vocational learning, and/or key skills enhancement, generally within school. The focus tended to be on job-related competences, general employability skills, work-related college courses, and life skills. Students were offered alternative accreditation through NVQ, GNVQ or Key Skills awards, or through locally awarded certificates.

Adoption of the scheme tended to be motivated by a desire to provide new learning opportunities for students who were disengaged from, or challenged by the, predominantly academic mainstream subjects, as well as to raise attainment, develop external partnerships, and/or legitimise existing practices. (Some instances where there was no employer involvement, with disapplication seen by school as an opportunity to drive up key skills; undoubtedly some instances where schools solved resourcing

problems by wholesale disapplication of, for example, modern languages). Students tended to be selected where they had a particular interest in work-related learning, or behaviour problems, under-achievement, learning difficulties, special educational needs, or some combination of these.

Schools frequently reported improved self-confidence, self-esteem and maturity in students, but these improvements were more evident within programme settings, and sometimes did not carry over into other school activities.

In terms of attainment, high numbers of students were reported as achieving nationally recognised vocational or key skills-related awards; schools were not expecting students' GCSE grades to increase, although many students who had been predicted to under-achieve through truancy or dropping out altogether were now sitting these public examinations, and had thus made as much progress from Key Stage 3 as their peers nationally, and therefore were nearer to achieving their academic potential.

The great majority of schools reported that at least some students were making better decisions now about post-16 progression: mention of more realistic ambitions, raised aspirations or clearer future plans as a result of involvement in extended work-related learning. 38% of programme students had modified their career plans, compared with only 13% of the comparison group.

These benefits were more noticeable with low-achieving students, or those with poor self-esteem, and the programme seemed less able to reach students with behavioural problems, poor motivation or significant attendance problems. Disapplication for extended work-related learning appears to be of more benefit for students who struggle with the academic demands of the National Curriculum than for those who have become disengaged from mainstream learning, although the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Two years later in 2000, schools gained a wider entitlement to pursue flexibility under the Increased Flexibilities for 14-16 Year Olds Programme (IFP), which NFER is currently evaluating.

Schools are required to operate in partnership with one of 269 Lead Partners (characteristically FE colleges) who are charged with delivering the programme for one of the 47 local LSCs and draw on £120 million DfES funding. (The requirement for partnership predates today's situation where college and school are encouraged to compete for the same pupils). The programme comprises some targets, including the aim that one third of all participating pupils obtain an extra GCSE at grades A-C: this target could be seen as potentially problematic, and as a 'bolt-on' additional demand).

(Since then, flexibility and work-related learning have been re-emphasised by the National Skills Task Force (2000). More recently in "14-19: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards", DfES Green Paper, 2002, which talks about 'individual pathways', a

concept which the present evaluation may help to examine).

IFP aims "to create enhanced vocational and work-related learning opportunities for 14-16-year-olds of all abilities who can benefit most".

So far NFER's evaluation has assembled the baseline data on schools taking part in IFP in Autumn Term 2002. 1663 mainstream secondary schools, 76 special schools and 18 pupil referral units in Cohort 1: on average 24 pupils for school were accessing Key Stage 4 vocational options through IFP, and an estimated total of 42,000 students were involved. Compared with the overall national profile of all schools, comprehensives, local authority-run schools, and schools with lower attainment is at Key Stage 3 and in GCSE and with higher proportions of students on free school meals were over-represented among IFP participant schools.

As to the profile of the students taking part, IFP students were more likely to be male, to be white English-speakers, to be receiving free school meals, and to have already invoked some part of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice compared with the general school population. A smaller proportion of IFP students had achieved level 5 or above in their Key Stage 3 and assessments compared with their peers. Preliminary findings suggest that IFP is not reaching more able students who might benefit, nor the most needy pupils of all.

58% of the IFP students (including a majority of girls and of higher-achieving students at Key Stage 3) were taking a vocational GCSE; the remainder were taking NVQs (generally at Level 1), GNVQ's or other vocational qualifications. The vocational subjects very often break down along traditional gender lines, perhaps pointing to the need for improved careers advice (not something which features strongly in the programme).

In most cases students pursued their vocational course off the school premises, generally at the Lead Partner's facility. Introducing pupils in compulsory education into FE settings has sometimes in the created disciplinary problems for FE tutors, and some participating schools have withdrawn from this aspect of IFP.

Questions and discussion

One question explored the nature of the split between the traditional 'disapplied' group of students and those who had done better at Key Stage three. In fact, the IFP cohort was less violently skewed towards educational disadvantage and underachievement than might have been expected.

Provision for the 'seriously disengaged', who appeared not to be reached by IFP, was raised. Was this a residual group which would always be with us, or could something be done? Consensus that this more disadvantaged group requires different provision: unlikely that they would cope with being sent out to employers or colleges under the IFP scheme. Other initiatives would be required.

Sally Kendall (NFER) 'Evaluation of Alternative Education Initiatives'

(Sally made the presentation in the absence of Kay Kinder, also of NFER).

In Spring 2000 NFER had been invited to evaluate a range of these initiatives as part of a wider joint Home Office-DfEE research exercise, Crime Reduction in Secondary Schools, examining the issues raised by young people who are excluded from school or are long-term non-attenders.

Thus, the overall framework for the research had been determined elsewhere. NFER were asked to examine a range of Alternative Education Initiatives (AEIs), reporting on their effectiveness in relation to returning pupils to full-time education, to increasing educational attainment, to improving attendance, to post-16 outcomes, to crime reduction (even though this was not one of the AEIs' aims), and to costs (where a cost-benefit analysis was required). Six AEIs were chosen for the research: they represented a range of different intervention methods, and were also the ones that worked in with pupils for the longest periods (12 months), in contrast to others which intervened over much shorter periods. Three were LEA-run, and three were in the voluntary sector.

Altogether the six AEIs worked with 162 students. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected over a number of visits to each one, including 'pre-' and 'post-' questionnaires. Interviews were also conducted with staff, parents and some representatives of other agencies.

Young people often came to the AEIs following very negative experiences of the school system. They had often been out of school for up to 2 years. The Initiatives tried to re-engage with them, working in highly flexible, responsive ways to achieve this. This involved establishing interpersonal relationships which were often highly appreciated by the young people as building trust and 'treating us like adults'.

All the AEIs tried to offer work experience, that this aim was not always deliverable and access to it was an important issue. Vocational training was offered through external providers; careers education was an input in every case; four of the six programmes offered college placements (involving intensive support, for example project staff might accompany the young person). One of the six projects, in the rural setting, was based around forestry activities. Leisure-based activities played an important part in re-engaging with the youngsters. Some of programmes provided the young person with a dedicated key worker, and some offered counselling (in one case through a counsellor from Mind), though in other cases guidance and supportive contact was more integrated into the daily life of the programme. Some of the young people had significant mental health difficulties. One project provided outreach to the parents through a support group.

The biggest difference between projects was in the degree to which they referred young people on to outside providers, with one of the six acting entirely as a referral agency.

In Spring 2000 full-time attendance at AEIs was not compulsory, and only one of the programmes required attendance for the full school week. The majority consisted of individual activities based around some common core provision.

One unit was staffed by social workers; another by youth workers; the remainder by teachers with additional support staff. Staff-student ratios were far more favourable than in mainstream school: between 1:1 and 1:10.

Between them the units offered support to young people between Years 7 and 11, but the evaluation focused on support to the 14-16 age group. Two-thirds of the young people were boys, 10% had had experience of the care system, 69% had recorded special educational needs. The most common scenario for referral was permanent exclusion from mainstream school; next most common was long-term non-attendance. Some of the young people were seriously disturbed, and labelled as Educationally and Behaviourally Disturbed; three-quarters were referred following previous attendance problems. In one case, the unit took victims of bullying (in an LEA where there was alternative provision for disturbed children who bullied others).

Although it was very often difficult to prepare the young people for mainstream educational awards, over half were awarded some form of accreditation. ASDAN (Awards Scheme Development Network, originally devised for special schools, involving the fulfilment of individual targets and offering bronze, silver and gold awards) was important here, as were vocationally-oriented certificates (for example, in first-aid or basic food hygiene), Duke of Edinburgh awards, key skills qualifications and in a few cases NVQ or GNVQ. Very often, such young people would never previously have received any award. One girl interviewed had received 40 such certificates, commenting that "if I hadn't been excluded, I'd never have got anything".

Comparison between the pre-and post-questionnaires suggested that students developed a more positive attitude to learning, and that the proportion considering post-compulsory education had increased from half to two-thirds (but the young people who dropped out of the programmes are missing from the post- survey).

89% of young people interviewed reported improved attendance within the AEIs, with median attendance ranging between 56% and 71% for each programme. As previously noted, attendance was generally required for less than a full school week; the programmes were able to relax many of the restrictions which made school oppressive for these young people (for example, some youngsters felt constricted if they were not able to get up and walk around the room at will, which would not have been tolerated in school); the atmosphere and social content of the projects helps to break down the isolation of young people who had previously been at odds with their peers.

Three-quarters of students reported improved personal behaviour. This perhaps went

with their feeling more in control of their own lives and situations through attendance at the projects. Similarly, half reported improved family relationships, possibly because they were no longer in the home all day long. Three-quarters reported that their relationships with staff and other students had improved; this was corroborated by the staff.

The special quality of the students' relationship with staff was widely acknowledged to be the biggest success factor ('respect', 'treated like adults', staff are 'like friends' and confidants), with distinctive interventions to prevent or address problematic behaviour. The units offered the troubled young people acceptance ("you are not having to assert long yourself because you are accepted, you are part of the special group, and they don't have to be rowdy and loud and showing off"), bringing with it improved relations with the new peer group, and a general gain in self-confidence.

Retention rates varied between the projects, and were highly dependent on the levels of attendance and commitment different units used to assess continued involvement with their programme. One third of young people left the AEIs over the course of the evaluation. Although this proportion included some positive outcomes, the main reason for leaving was non-attendance. Other causes of drop-out included drug use, parental pressure, children in care having their placements moved, and teenage pregnancy.

The young people's offending behaviour was evaluated both through self-report questionnaires and by reference to the National Police Computer (which tended to under-report offences). The police records suggested that the volume of offending increased, but that now the offences were being committed by fewer of the young people. Three-quarters of the young people claimed in the post- questionnaires to be offending less. It is likely that the AEIs at least had some diversionary effect away from previous offending patterns.

Only 10 of the young people followed by the researchers were reintegrated back to school, but a further 42 went on to college or vocational training (about one-quarter of the cohort): this tended to require intensive preparation and support, perhaps through taster FE sessions within the AEI premises. These progression routes became possible through the improved attitudes to learning engendered by the programmes. A further 23 went into full-time employment, but this tended to be very low paid.

These young people ideally needed intensive support, such as summer schemes to sustain them through the long school holiday, and continued monitoring after they left.

**Deirdre Hughes (Centre for Guidance Studies (CeGS), University of Derby)
'Reaching out to young people: Making the linkages between new initiatives?'**

CeGS created five years ago to address the gulf between policymakers and practitioners in the world of guidance services for young people. DH's own background in careers

guidance (trained in mid 1980s).

CeGS currently undertaking research and evaluation work into the development and impact of the Connexions Service. The Centre will conduct mainly qualitative research, aiming to track young people through the Connexions process and to interview both advisers and young people, while relying on the Centre for Performance Management, University of York, for support with the econometrics of the evaluation. CeGS can draw on well-established and ongoing relationships with a number of local Connexions Partnerships, principally in the Midlands and South London. Aim of understanding the organisational mechanisms that lead to the outcomes, in line with the approach of Ray Pawson and Nick Tilly, Realistic Evaluation (1997), seeking to build theories about how to create a holistic service, and how to do this without alienating any of the young people.

Connexions was piloted in 2001 and since April 2003 has gone national, with 47 Connexions Partnerships all operational. It represents a series of new structures and institutional relationships, aiming to provide a new holistic universal guidance and support service for young people with a new emphasis on outreach and forging community partnerships to target young people who are at risk in the post-16 progressions.. This organisational upheaval ('The Connexions Context') thus involves changes in the client group, the personnel, the organisation, and (increasingly for the future) in the technology involved in delivering services -- compared with the old Careers Service.

This year's Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters, envisages that by 2006 Connexions locally would come under the management of a local Director of Children's Services, with a local Children's Trust acting as its management committee.

While it aspires to be a universal service, Connexions is driven by national targets, notably to reduce the number of 16-18-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training. There is a national system of priorities, aimed at identifying the young people who are most at risk, although these criteria are used inconsistently across the organisation. The system identifies three levels of priorities: 'P1s' have substantial and multiple problems, with previous difficulties in engaging in learning. 'P2s' are at some risk of not continuing to participate in education or training, and their aspirations may not match with their abilities. 'P3s' require less intervention -- but may be in need of help at strategic moments in their development. An important question for the evaluation is whether the balance between these groups is providing the best resource allocation.

The merging of different disciplines into new multi-agency teams represents a strength for Connexions. Young people themselves are involved in the planning and policy-making. The targets set for the whole organisation translate into clear management objectives. Connexions' approach has fired the enthusiasm of some staff, leading to a commitment to make the organisation succeed. Some of the outreach work is highly successful.

On the debit side, understanding by other organisations of Connexions is still generally

poor . There is a need for greater clarity about the role of the Personal Advisers, who are central to the delivery of services to the young people. Similarly, the place of careers guidance and careers guidance specialists within the organisation remains to be clarified. (DH noted that there was little space for the careers guidance role envisaged within 'Every Child Matters'). The system for categorising priority need (which determines which young people are allocated Personal Advisers) is poorly understood by the advisers themselves and appears to be operated without consistency. Resourcing problems, including high staff turnover, also lead to frustration that the organisation's inability to meet need.

The Personal Adviser role, which for many staff such as careers advisers trained at post graduate level represents the imposition of a new occupational identity, is often contested, with the ethics and politics of the counselling relationship providing a focus for professional resistance. Guidance workers who conducted outreach work in the past are often very comfortable in the new Connexions context, whereas specialist advisers are often ill at ease in the new generalist service.

In the contradictions involved in a 'targeted' service which is also 'universal', it could be that careers advice might become the 'glue' needed to bind the service together.

Discussion (covering all three presentations):

Importance of distinguishing between educational, economic and social drivers for new policies. Important to understand that meeting the needs of the high priority group would be responding to a social driver. This distinction recalls the earlier struggle between the old Ministry of Labour and the LEAs over control of the Youth Employment Service. There was currently uncertainty about the future role of schools in careers guidance, with many guidance professionals feeling that this was not well handled when it was the sole responsibility of schools in the past.

It was noted that the Careers Service was privatised as recently as 1995.

One questioner wanted much more information about what Connexions was delivering in exchange for its funding (which represented a huge increase over that given to the Careers Service). What level of contact with how many young people? This information is not readily available: suggestion that some of the might be found in service level agreements between Connexions and schools.

Prioritisation and the problem of reaching the 'third quartile' of young people, who at present were probably muddling through to the jobs or training that suited them.

What was Connexions' links with the Alternative Education Initiatives? It was suggested that Connexions should have scrutiny of every referral made to an AEI.

The function of careers guidance was clarified: "professional support... to help young

people reflect on future plans", so that advisers needed to possess both counselling skills and specific careers knowledge. At one point in their history, careers advisers had been required to turn out 'action plans' for every single young person. Now, they were required to work in a more systemic way, operating with an awareness of the individual young person's network of contacts and personal resources.

Attempting to draw broader conclusions from the day, we noted that an enormous input of time could be required to achieve (possibly non-sustainable) progress in one damaged young person. Could anything be done in terms of earlier identification of vulnerable children? What lessons from the Alternative Education Initiatives would be replicable and affordable in mainstream education? What about early support for parents?

One participant had written a book about parenting, and unpacked the concepts of motivation and failure into their many components. Elizabeth _____ - _____
Parenting Your Child.