

APPG for Education Inquiry Call for Evidence: Do schools prepare young people for their future careers?

Deadline for submissions: **13th June 2016**

In its 2015 Education and Skills Survey, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) found that over half of employers were concerned that in the future there would not be enough people available to fill skilled job roles. The report stated that, “The [education] system must change, with more focus on developing the aptitudes and attributes that set young people up for success in both work and life – which matter much more to employers when recruiting than academic results alone”.

Others, however, take a different approach, suggesting that the balance has swung too far towards skills in recent years, to the detriment of the transmission of knowledge in the classroom. Schools Minister Nick Gibb identified at the Education World Forum earlier this year that the government has “reformed the national curriculum in England to put in much of the subject knowledge that previous governments – under the influence of the 21st century skills movement – had taken out”. He cited Daniel Willingham, professor of cognitive science at the University of Virginia, who “explains how the ‘thinking skills’ most prized by schools and employers are dependent upon background knowledge”.

What value should we place on the need to promote other skills that prepare our children for the future, besides strictly academic ones? Is there a role for teaching skills in the classroom, or should teachers focus on imparting subject knowledge? If this is the case, how can young people acquire the attributes that the CBI and others believe are necessary for the workplace?

This APPG for Education inquiry will examine how well our schools are preparing young people for their future, with a particular focus on their readiness for the workforce.

If we are to develop a more productive workforce that will contribute to our growing economy what does this mean for our schools? Are young people experiencing the right balance between acquiring the requisite subject knowledge and developing the skills and understanding that will make them employees who creatively enhance the productivity of companies? Should schools be helping young people to develop soft skills, IT skills and a flair for entrepreneurship? What are the skills, knowledge and understanding that world-class employers look for in the expanding area of apprenticeships? Are we providing our schools with the correct framework and sufficient resources to prepare our young people for the world of work?

We intend to develop a clear set of practical recommendations, so that the inquiry is useful to educationalists and policymakers, parents and young people.

The APPG is keen to engage with a wide range of organisations and individuals including schools, colleges and universities; teachers, lecturers and education professionals; young people and representative bodies; employers and representative bodies; parents and carers; educational publishers and suppliers; and other stakeholder organisations.

Terms of Reference

The Inquiry seeks written evidence in response to the following questions:

What should our schools be focusing on in order to prepare young people for the future?

Ensure attainment in the core subject areas of Maths, English and ICT grade A-C – all of these are essential to be able to secure a job/apprenticeship and undertake vocational training successfully. Inform young people that these are just as important for vocational study .

Ensure that the ethos of the school includes vocational training as an option and not as a second best; try to include in the curriculum opportunities to undertake Level 1's as taster's for possible career choices. This would hopefully narrow the academic vocational divide.

Interview skills and CV writing – give advice and guidance on knowing how to 'sell' themselves face to face and on paper, effective communication skills – eye contact, body language

Business etiquette – accepting job offers, letting employers know if you can't attend interview

Resilience and transferable skills through clear embedding of careers education into a relevant curriculum.

Quality careers education within designated statutory lessons to improve real world of work understanding

A focus on strengths and interests so that they can help prepare them for a suitable progression / career path once they leave Secondary School. Skills for life should be a focus alongside developing the person as well as preparing them to gain qualifications is vital for them to succeed and provide them with the confidence to move into their new destination.

Should schools play a role in developing skills, or should subject knowledge be prioritised?

Subject knowledge is required as achievement in core subjects is just as essential for vocational training as they are in obtaining further academic study

Knowledge needs to be married with knowledge about the world of work – expectation of employers, responsibilities and consequences of actions regarding securing and keeping employment

Schools are vital in developing skills alongside subject knowledge; demonstrating relevance of subjects to future working life is essential.

Yes they have a responsibility in developing skills and it should be on a par with teaching subject knowledge as its pointless knowing and be able to retain lots of information if they don't have the skills to be able to use this knowledge in FE or employment. I'm not sure of the Ofsted criteria in Schools but when I completed my training we were judged on our ability to embed skills such as team work, communication but also to demonstrate how the lesson related to employment in the sector. Possibly easier to do in FE where subjects are more specific to employment sectors but I think topics in lessons can be linked to how they are used in jobs so yp can see how the relevance.

Who should be responsible for ensuring that young people develop soft, financial and entrepreneurial skills?

These can be bought in, there are a number of organisations that have developed programmes for schools that can be accessed by schools to ensure that young people are given information in these areas.

Schools – through the embedding of careers skills in the curriculum

The ideal answer is everyone (Parents, Schools, Youth Organisations) but young people spend the majority of their time at Schools so they have a responsibility to develop soft skills. I think large money making businesses and banks should also play their part in helping young people develop financial and entrepreneurial skills. In a previous role Nationwide were very supportive in running sessions around finance and their HR team delivered good interview skills workshops followed up with mock interviews.

Do education providers have the resources to prepare young people for the workforce?

They need to find some way of delivering these to young people. Perhaps get local employers to come into the school to talk about their recruitment process, ask a local employment agency to give a talk to young people about what they expect when people seek work and their experience of dealing with employers. Not everything costs money, some of these examples will do it for free.

There are many resources available free of charge – u-explore, Ulas to name just 2. Alongside this there are local EPB and CEC links to utilise – the careers co-ordinator role in schools needs to be brought back and its importance recognised and rewarded.

Up to a point. Teachers are obviously already stretched but teaching employability skills in periods such as tutor time would help. Even simple, quick things like showing each pupil the apprenticeship website and getting them to create an account I don't think are being done in all Schools.

But with budget cuts I'm sure many Schools don't have the money available to bring in resources additional resources, such as charities, youth organisations to help deliver programmes / activities to prepare young people for work. You will know better than me but obviously with Connexions going and along with that a guarantee of impartial Careers guidance, I'm sure Schools probably don't put this in place off their own back due to needing to fund it.

To help the APPG create a practical set of approaches and recommendations:

What example are there of schools and colleges preparing young people well for the workforce?

College transition days – Southampton colleges

University schemes which prepare without bias towards HE – Solent and Soton

Careers programmes which include parents and are visible on the school website.

Schools using the local access-southampton.co.uk site and keeping up-to-date with CPD through the local partnership.

Not a School or college but I'm a big fan of what the Princes Trust in terms of preparing YP for their next step, particularly the Get Into programmes that links well with local employers. I've only ever seen good things when I've been out to see programmes being delivered and heard positive things from young people who have attended.

What examples are there of employer-led initiatives that have had an impact?

Barclays have come up with a very good scheme and they have been able to advertise on national TV which I am sure has had an impact. People in schools etc need to seek out the assistance of employers, contact Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses to engage with business

Business in the community has a great way of linking business on a personal basis with schools.

I've experienced Nationwide being supportive and I know Barclays have delivered financial programmes in Schools before. Locally the NHS, Construction companies, TK MAXX and M&S have all been part of the Princes Trust Get Into programmes.

I think the key to all of this is for skills, employment, careers etc to be embedded in all aspects of School from as early as possible. It's all good having themed weeks e.g. apprenticeship, employment etc but if Joe or Jill are ill, they miss out and by the time the following week starts everyone who was there has forgotten what an apprenticeship is or which college offers Carpentry. If it's being drip fed in on a regular basis then it's likely to have more of an effect.

In addition, the APPG for Education would welcome details of any relevant research carried out by your organisation which it would be willing to share with the Inquiry.

We do not have any research, but from our experience with young people we have found many do not turn up for interview, do not respond to text messages, have mental health or social issues that impact on them being fit for work, do not understand the expectations of employers with regard to calling in if they are off sick, letting employers know they are not going to attend an interview, having a lot of time off when they have just started work etc.

Southampton entitlement to careers education and guidance – recent audit of provision has led to a partnership approach to ensure equality of access to a CEIAG program across the city to roll out from September.

Input from:

Youth Options – Apprenticeship team

Southampton city council Youth participation

Southampton city council City Deal Youth manager