

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

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

Youth unemployment has been an issue in the UK since before 2011, with young people aged 16-24 consistently being the group with the highest unemployment rates. As identified by the APPG, bodies such as the CBI have often cited that young people need to be better prepared for the world of work. The challenge for many young people unlike their peers of previous generations is that there are fewer opportunities to develop skills for work outside of the education system. There are less part-time roles that support work based learning skills. Whilst recent education reforms have seen many schools reduce the offer of work experience and work related learning education for all pupils, removing another experience point that young people have previously benefitted from.

Young people need to be able to develop both their academic and subject knowledge to enable them to be well-rounded and grounded, but the need for work based learning must also be addressed during the crucial time spent in full-time education.

Finding a balance of academic and practical learning should be a priority. It is not just those school leavers of 16 or 18 that experience youth unemployment but many graduates experience some level of youth unemployment or under employment.

One of our Young Ambassadors wrote this response to the question;

Schools including all educational institutions should have a platform in place that allows for informal education to have a real impact on young people when transitioning through education. It is vital that careers advice is incorporated as mandatory throughout the curriculum and is more centred around the individual's own professional and personal development through a more mixed approach of more formal and informal education.

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

Gene Carter, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of ASCD, stated that the "purpose of schools must be preparing children to compete in the global environment."

In 2015 Nick Gibb MP said himself "Education is the engine of our economy, it is the foundation of our culture, and it's an essential preparation for adult life."

It makes the most sense that schools take a leading role in developing the skills of its students for life as well as supporting them to develop academic knowledge. Creating a new infrastructure to support skill development would be costly and most likely not be able to offer services to all pupils.

The way people can access information and learning has changed with the development of technology. Employers now are also more invested in the education and skill development of young people. This is a

great time with the opportunity for life-long learning, to evaluate the subjects, skills and personal development that we offer young learners at various stages of their time in education.

One of our Young Ambassadors wrote this response to the question;

Schools should absolutely play a role in developing work ready skills from the early onset, tailoring this around each individual's own interests and aspirations. It isn't a question of which should be prioritised, but rather that of considering each individual's own aspirations and considering any difficulty that they have experience along the way, be it personally or professionally. Regardless of this however, even if academic attainment is the aspiration, it is still vital at least some degree of teaching work ready skills are prioritised into the educational system.

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

Government must ultimately be responsible for ensuring all children are equipped with the skills they need for life. A long-term plan is needed that looks at the future skill requirements of the economy and society, then working with educators, employers and young people design a 21st century education system that will be given the time to be perfected and stabilized. Constantly changing the education system to allow for different political parties to apply their ideologies is damaging. A long-term vision that is supported cross-party and does not allow radical change would be the best thing for young people.

The education system must be responsible for developing the life skills of all pupils. Both primary and secondary schools could be supported to embed wider curriculums that offer the opportunities to develop and experience all of the skills needed for life beyond the classroom.

A fully balanced education system should include these components but will require from government, clear strategic direction, a new model of evaluation to support the prioritization of life skills and appropriate funding. Funding will crucially allow schools to employ specialized members of staff who can deliver work-related skills, financial, civic and entrepreneurial education utilizing the employment community and the range of third party organisations specializing in these areas.

One of our Young Ambassadors wrote this response to the question;

I believe that employers could be doing a lot more to work directly with educational institutions to give young people real work experience to range of different career paths, or to at least provide an opportunity to develop skills that can be 'universally' transferred to a wide spectrum of careers. It is vital that young people are given exposure to work from an early onset, as this allows them to make a far more balanced decision as to where they truly see their future selves and this in turn will allow for individuals to make better decisions that's right for them.

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

Whilst there are so many pressures on teachers to deliver the curriculum and see pupils make the required levels of progress it is too much to be expect them to deliver work-related skills, financial, civic and entrepreneurial programmes for students.

Funding should be given to schools to allow them to recruit the specialized staff that they need to in order to deliver a school-wide programme.

One of our Young Ambassadors wrote this response to the question;

Currently I feel that the teaching profession is under unprecedented pressure from targets, bureaucracy and regulation. A lot of this is completely unnecessary more power needs to be given back to teachers that allows them to do their job. Whilst resources are a problem, financial or otherwise, the current system is badly bogged down with red tape that takes much of the resources away from the very people it is meant to serve. I also believe that young people are under immense pressure to get high academic attainment and are confused by the vast array of qualifications some of which aren't even recognised by employers. I believe the government does need to not only give more power back to the teaching profession but to also strongly consider the impact of incorporating informal education into the curriculum.

5. To help the APPG create a practical set of approaches and recommendations?

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

One of our Young Ambassadors wrote this response to the question;

I have seen some examples where schools and colleges have employed a 'badge' style system, something of which has been achieved through working with Third Sector organisations. The purpose of the 'badge' system is to recognise individual's on what is a true achievement for them personally, rather than defining what is 'achievement' through a generic grading system. This method of informal education is continuing to be developed and has the potential of proving to make young people more well rounded and balanced with academia and life skills.

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

One of our Young Ambassadors wrote this response to the question;

Some employers are starting to consider other eligible means of entry into their recruitment and/or graduate programmes, other than pure academic attainment. This is a trend that is on course to continue, including the opportunity to provide work experience placements that have a far more meaningful impact for individuals who are struggling with working out what they want for a career. More and more employers are starting to work with Third Sector and other training organisations, the opportunity to provide work placements/internships that are a vital stepping stone for young people transitioning from either school or university into a form of employment.

About Youth Employment UK CIC

Youth Employment UK was set up to support all of those working in the youth employment space, including young people who we feel should be at the heart of the work taking place in this sector.

Our key objectives are:

- To provide a platform for young people to have a voice on youth employment issues that affect them.

- To empower young people to use the information and inspiration available to them and to develop their skills and networks to help them progress.
- To support organisations working in the youth employment space by providing an impartial platform for them to communicate, share best practice and network.
- To campaign and influence policy on the issues and barriers that affect our members.

SINCE 2012

YOUNG PEOPLE

Youth Employment UK now has a growing reach of 16-24 year olds who access our online platform and social community. We also have created a UK wide network of volunteer Youth Ambassadors who support the work we do in a number of ways. Our Ambassadors represent our young members at policy meetings, conferences and in community events.

In 2016 Youth Employment UK launched a Corporate Ambassador Programme giving employers an incredible opportunity to support and inspire a generation of young people.

ORGANISATIONS

Youth Employment UK has developed a unique Community Membership where organisations can network together, access support and share their own best practice and opportunities. Organisations who join Youth Employment UK must be committed to working to the principles of being a “Youth Friendly Employer”.

EXPERTISE AND POLITICAL WORK

Youth Employment UK is the Secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment, this is a very active group which meets monthly to discuss the issues of youth employment. Our Community and Young Members are all invited to attend these meetings.

Youth Employment UK also works closely with Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education and Department for Business. With working links to the Cabinet Office and the Skills Funding Agency. Our CEO also sits on a number of expert panels which include national sub-committees for the European Social Fund.

Youth Employment UK CIC is a not for profit organisation that relies on its members, sponsors and donors to ensure its sustainability, impartiality and independence.