

**THE NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE PART-
TIME EMPLOYMENT OF SCHOOL PUPILS**

**GIVING RECOGNITION TO THE OUTCOMES OF
PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT UNDERTAKEN BY
SCHOOL PUPILS – A REVIEW OF PRACTICE IN THE
UK AND INTERNATIONALLY**

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ABSTRACT

The previous *Discussion paper on Curriculum, Progression and Recognition* (December 2003), offered five models by which the outcomes of part-time work could be given formal recognition. These are set out in Annex 1. This paper reports on a search and review of literature undertaken to establish whether recognition has been given to the outcomes of part-time work in other countries and, if so, what kind of recognition is given. It has been written by John Hart, one of the members of the research team. The review did not come across any cases of formal recognition, but it did examine some initiatives designed to recognise ‘wider achievements’ and non-formal, learning¹ by school pupils. Although the approaches taken were already covered in the five models, some work undertaken by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in England did offer some new approaches to structuring the issues. The review also found one case (a state in Australia) where the authorities were tackling part-time employment directly and this initiative is considered as an addition to the five models. This paper explores both the possible advantages and the dangers of giving formal recognition to the outcomes of part-time work.

CHAPTER ONE FINDINGS OF THE SEARCH AND REVIEW - THE OUTCOMES OF PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

A search for literature dealing with part-time employment was undertaken between January and June 2004. The search was focused on links between part-time work undertaken by full-time school pupils, but also took account of systems which involved the pupils work placements of different kinds. It did not discover any initiatives designed to give formal recognition to the outcomes of part-time work undertaken by school pupils. On the other hand, the search did reveal a number of studies about the level of participation in part-time employment and some studies which looked at the effects of part-time employment on pupils’ academic performance and/or on the pupils themselves. The review found a growing appreciation of the potential value of work-based learning and showed that a number of thinkers in the field see real work experience as the ideal way to incorporate vocational objectives into school learning. These findings were not, however, related specifically to part-time work.

All of these general observations must be offset by a reminder that the relationship between formal classroom learning and non-formal workplace learning within education systems varies considerably from country to country.² It is also worth recording at this point that the Scottish system is unusual in a global context in two important ways: firstly because it

¹ The EU *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (2000, EU: Brussels) defines this as learning which takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to formalised certificates. Non-formal learning may be provided in the workplace and through the activities of civil society organisations and groups (such as in youth organisations, trades unions and political parties). It can also be provided through organisations or services that have been set up to complement formal systems (such as arts, music and sports classes or private tutoring to prepare for examinations).

² Examples of systems links in other countries include dual systems (eg in Germany); production schools (eg in Turkey); Charter High Schools (in the USA); and a ‘transition year’ (in the Irish Republic). Many countries offer different learning tracks, including apprenticeships, technical and vocational schools or vocational routes in schools which also offer academic or general educational courses. Although Scotland does not include a systems link between education and employment, many schools offer some opportunity for pupils to undertake work experience or enterprise activities with a link to employment or the business sector.

currently offers a single educational track for those still in compulsory secondary education³; and secondly because it offers very diverse opportunities for gaining formal recognition of achievement within a single unified system – the Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC) issued by the SQA. All of these factors affect the findings of this review.

A number of the studies examined in the review associate part-time work with positive and negative outcomes. In considering these studies, it is important to realise that: (i) research evidence substantiating such links is scarce; (ii) researchers in this area hypothesise a complex relationship between part-time work and any outcome, positive or negative; (iii) and the issue of causality has still to be fully addressed.

An OECD issues paper ‘Combining learning at school and at work’ (2000) gives a list of the positive aspects of workplace experience as experienced around the world. These are:

- making learning more applied and interesting for young people;
- contributing to improved educational attainment;
- helping to develop the specific occupational skills that employers actually want;
- developing important general work habits and attitudes such as punctuality and team skills;
- signalling these skills to employers when young people are seeking work;
- helping employers and young people to get to know one another and facilitate the recruitment process.

The studies reviewed suggest that, by and large, young people see part-time work in a positive light, offering them increased independence, new challenges, a more adult role, and a range of opportunities for different kinds of learning which increase effectiveness and improve employability. From the point of view of recognition and accreditation, the outcomes which are identified in the studies in the review may be grouped in three clusters:

- A. *Learning outcomes which are part of formal school or college programmes:* part-time work can support the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy where these are lacking; it can lead to the development of occupationally specific skills; and it can help with the development of more sophisticated generic skills such as communication and IT skills.
- B. *Outcomes linked to attitudes which result from socialisation in the work environment:* part-time work can lead to the development of attitudes to work and the workplace, which are associated with generic skills such as time-management, team working, problem solving and leadership. These may also be included in school and college programmes, eg as core skills.
- C. *Outcomes contributing to personal growth:* part-time work can create a positive attitude to life and work; it can support the development of attributes which define basic employability – promptness, dependability, etc; it can give young people the opportunity to develop social skills through involvement in out-of-work activities with adult workmates; and it can generate feelings of independence and enhance self-confidence and self-esteem.

³ However, pilots of new vocational curricula are being undertaken in a number of local authorities. See the final paragraph in section 4 below.

In terms of the potential for formal recognition of these clusters of outcomes, the following observations can be made:

- The occupationally-specific skills included in cluster A are likely to be included somewhere in the SQA portfolio of awards, which has units accrediting skills in most sectors of the economy.
- The other outcomes in clusters A and B are basic and generic/transferrable skills and these are already recognised to some extent in the Scottish education system (eg through core skills). On the one hand such outcomes are well represented in SQA's catalogues of units, and on the other topics such as personal organisation and interpersonal skills are already incorporated in the curriculum in a range of schools, with or without certification.
- The outcomes in cluster C might initially appear too personal or individual to lend themselves to straightforward accreditation or inclusion in the curriculum. However, there may be links to some of the generic outcomes in clusters A and B and this could merit further exploration. In terms of accreditation, it will be worth exploring the kinds of unit which have been used with learners who require provision to help them build confidence before going on to tackle more standard skills-related provision. In looking at other forms of recognition, it may also be worth considering guidance programmes designed to tackle related issues, in particular the basics of employability. These may be found in schools, colleges or community education.

CHAPTER TWO THE VALUE OF FORMAL RECOGNITION

The review found a considerable variation in reported rates of part-time work among school pupils around the world. The range was from 75-80% in high-participation countries to 15-17% in low-participation countries. The UK appears to be at or near the top rate, although there are no definitive figures.⁴

This finding puts the recommendation in *Determined to Succeed* – that ‘opportunities for certification of appropriate part-time work as part of the National Qualifications Framework must be investigated so that it is clearly recognised by employers’⁵ - in a new light. The question which arises is, ‘If three quarters or more of the older school pupils in Scotland are involved in part-time work and if such work can be beneficial in the ways identified by the OECD, would some form of formal recognition of this experience capture, reinforce or even increase these suggested benefits?’

Scotland has seen a remarkable growth in the formal recognition of skills and knowledge in all sectors over the past half century. As a result of a series of Government policies based on qualifications, both the rates of participation in certificated learning in all sectors and the range of accredited provision available to these learners have grown significantly. The Action Plan of the mid-1980s and the work of Scotvec in implementing and developing the unitisation of vocational qualifications in the 1990s were particularly important in demonstrating the ways in which accreditation could be valuable. In the current climate, formal recognition of the outcomes of part-time work, particularly through accreditation of some kind, would be likely to give part-time work a status which it may not currently enjoy and could result in one or more of the following advantages.

Formal recognition of the outcomes of part-time work could:

- record the actual skills and/or knowledge gained from/during the part-time work, adding value to the experience
- assist teachers and learners to capitalise on the experience in formal learning
- assist school leavers, recruiters and selectors to capitalise on the outcomes of part-time work in interviews for jobs and places in colleges and universities
- highlight to employers, pupils and parents the potential value of part-time work and the importance of making it a positive experience

However, there are cautions to be entered here. This list of advantages is dependent on the part-time work in which the pupil is engaged leading to positive and appropriate outcomes. In the best of circumstances, for example where the part-time worker is given full access to training and development, the advantages may be significant, but employers of part-time labour have been shown⁶ to vary greatly in their attitudes to training in general and to the training of young part-timers in particular. If the work is boring, restrictive, repetitive and not supported by mentoring or training, then it is likely to create negative, rather than positive outcomes.⁷ These issues are expanded on in the next section.

⁴ This research will be establishing the first ever baseline figures for Scotland.

⁵ *Determined to Succeed* – Section 12, p.40.

⁶ Keep (1999)

⁷ One study (Stern & Briggs 2001) did suggest – partly seriously - that if the work was very unpleasant it might serve as an object lesson in the value of formal schooling.

CHAPTER THREE CAPTURING THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION IN PART-TIME WORK

In the previous *Discussion paper on Curriculum, Progression and Recognition*, the term ‘recognition’ was used to include a range of possibilities including:

- A. inserts or references in appropriate SQA documents which give guidance to teachers on the content and assessment of courses and units (Course Arrangements, unit specifications and National Assessment Bank items)
- B. inclusion in general guidelines on assessment issued by SQA
- C. the development of new National Units
- D. paper or IT support for Progress File or Personal Learning Plans
- E. mechanisms or pro forma which a young person could draw on in preparing CVs or being interviewed for a place in further or higher education for a job

This was linked to five models of recognition (see Annex 1) differentiated by factors such as: the extent to which the school is involved, the extent to which the employer is involved; the nature of the link (if any) to the school curriculum; the nature of the link (if any) to employability or other progression; and whether or not the recognition will lead to certification.

It was also noted in the paper that, in considering the viability of each model, three constraining factors would need to be taken into account:

- not all young people will be involved in part-time work
- not all part-time work will yield the kind of outcomes needed for the accreditation process
- not all young people will wish to use their experience of part-time work in this way

To these we can now add a fourth consideration: not all part-time work will yield appropriate outcomes.

If at least two thirds of senior school pupils in Scotland are engaged in part-time work, this must represent a wide spectrum of ability and this raises an issue about the outcomes of part-time work which might be recognised. For the recognition to be credible and worthwhile, the outcomes which are recognised must be at an appropriate level of intellectual demand for the pupils involved.⁸ This is especially true if the recognition is to take the form of accreditation (as in models 2 and 3 – Annex 1). Fortunately there is no indication in the findings outlined in sections 1.3 and 1.4 that the outcomes of work-based learning need be low level.

However, while we can envisage some part-time work requiring the young employees to use sophisticated skills – for example relatively high-level problem solving or communication skills in the field of customer care - there is no guarantee that all young people capable of developing or deploying such skills will be involved in part-time work which requires them to do so. In other words, even if recognition can be given to certain outcomes of part-time work, there is no guarantee that individual pupils will be required to exercise these at a level which would make recognition attractive or useful. The consequence of inappropriate

⁸ The most likely way to define these levels will be by using the levels of the SCQF and the descriptors which define them.

certification was demonstrated in 2000, when SQA included core skills on the SQC for the first time. Feedback showed that pupils and their parents were strongly opposed to the certification of additional skills at levels below the level of the courses they were taking and saw these as undermining and devaluing the other achievements on their certificates.

In summary, because part-time work is entirely voluntary, the circumstances of the part-time work will be beyond the control of those giving formal recognition. For this reason there will be considerable dangers in giving a blanket endorsement to part-time work and ways of minimising these will have to be built into any approach to recognition.

CHAPTER FOUR PART-TIME WORK AND QUALIFICATIONS

Where countries have distinct vocational tracks in their education system, this is usually reflected in the qualifications available to pupils. However, the question of how to give recognition to wider achievements and non-formal learning, such as might be associated with part-time employment, often remains unaddressed. As indicated above, the review did throw up some attempts to deal with what might be called ‘wider achievements’ and/or non-formal learning. None of these offered techniques not already known and used in Scotland, but work in England did put the issues in a slightly different, and helpful, structure.

Around the world, there are a number of baccalaureate-type qualifications which make some effort to give recognition to wider learning, but none which focus on giving recognition to part-time employment.

Perhaps the best known of these qualifications is the International Baccalaureate (IB), which does include wider learning, but does not include it in the formal assessment and scoring for the award. In England, the interim proposals of the Tomlinson committee for a baccalaureate-type qualification at different levels appears to be taking a similar approach, recognising the value of non-formal learning and including it in the overall award, but (reports suggest) not planning to give credit value to it.

There is also a model where credit value is given for experience without a detailed examination of the outcomes. This appears to work in some parts of the American High School system and is understood to be under consideration in some parts of Australia. (This is a new reference and is still being investigated at the time of writing).

At first sight, neither of these appears attractive in the Scottish context. On the one hand, the tendency within the Scottish system has been to give formal credit – and the status that goes with it – to wider achievements, where this can be done. And on the other hand, the SCQF (and SQA’s own procedures) require that credit should only be given to assessed and quality assured learning. It appears therefore that these models do not offer fresh insight into the question of how to give qualifications-related recognition to this kind of learning, although they may offer a model of recognition which should be considered in relation to the less direct approaches of models 4 and 5 (Annex 1).

In Scotland there is a history of developments centred on short courses which would add options to broaden out the curriculum. In the school sector these started with the Munn report and were fully realised following Action Plan. From the first National Certificate Catalogue there was a suite of PSD (Personal and Social Development) modules which required evidence of planning and evaluating a broad range of experiences at different levels of sophistication. Arguably these assessed the providers more than the learners, but they were very popular and opened up the curriculum for many schools. At one time, the Work Experience modules had the highest annual uptake of any National Certificate modules. The kind of model of reflective practice and the building up of portfolios of evidence which was pioneered with these units, still exists in some areas of the SQA Portfolio, notably in some recent Higher National Units in areas such as personal development planning which may be of use in fleshing out models 2 and 5 (Annex 1).

Partly because of the range of developments cited above, the incorporation of ‘wider activities’ in Group Awards in Scotland has not been a major issue in Scotland and it has

been left to centres to use the extensive flexibility of the Scottish system to take steps to give recognition to these activities through existing units if they wished and were able to resource it. In the late 1990s, however, it was an issue in England and Wales, with Government proposals for a Graduation Award. QCA produced a *Report on the Implementation of a Graduation Certificate* (December 2001) which sets out in some detail the issues which are connected with the giving of recognition to 'wider activities' and this is a useful source. It includes sections on: providing a workable model of quality standards that can be used for the wider activities; developing a model for a transcript recording a young person's achievements; developing a mechanism for collecting, storing and collating information for the certificate; and a framework for the wider activities contributing to a Graduation Certificate. Whilst all of these issues are dealt with somewhere in the Scottish system and in current or archive Scotvec/SQA publications, they do not appear to have been brought together in quite this way.

However, the kind of outcomes outlined above will only be achieved if the objectives of learning at work are clearly defined and the advantages can be understood and recognised by those involved: young people, teachers, trainers and employers. If 'innovative combined school-work initiatives' (Morgan, 2000) could be developed to create options for combining part-time work with school learning the advantages would be enhanced. This would mean looking at 'flexibility in the way courses are structured and studied, and the way examinations are taken and credits can be accumulated'. In Scotland, pilots are underway to offer specially designed qualifications for pupils undertaking new vocational courses which may include learning in the workplace or in workplace conditions. These qualifications might offer a means of linking part-time work and the school curriculum for some pupils, either by using the experience of part-time work to reinforce vocational learning (as in models 1 and 4 – Annex 1) or by creating mechanisms which would allow properly authenticated and quality assured evidence of competence (ie outcomes in the new qualifications) to be generated through the part-time work (as in models 2 and 3 – Annex 1).

CHAPTER FIVE LESS FORMAL RECORDS AND RECOGNITION WITHOUT ACCREDITATION

The National Record of Achievement (NRA), which has evolved into Progress File also gives scope to record non-formal learning and is capable of giving recognition of a kind to part-time employment. However the record here would be a personal account which might be supported by a teacher, but would not involve either assessment or validation.

In Scotland the idea of giving recognition to non-formal learning has been a matter of discussion and research from time to time over the past 30 years or more. The earliest work identified in the survey (although not yet sourced) was a profiling project (*Profiles in Practice*) undertaken by SCORE in the late 1970s/early 1980s, but efforts were also made within some areas of Standard Grade development (notably in English) to capture relevant non-formal learning and bring it within the scope of formal assessment.

More recently, SQA has been considering the development of profiles of the kind cited in Model 3 (Annex 1) and progress in this field will be important in further developing that model.

The review did find one case where the authorities were tackling the issues of part-time employment directly, however, and the approaches adopted there will be further explored in this component of the research. The answer may be at least partly in a very simple approach. In New South Wales the issue of part-time employment has been tackled head on and a web-site has been developed by the Department of Education and Training which encourages young people to undertake part-time employment and gives advice on how to get the maximum benefit from doing so. It encourages planning and negotiating among other things. This will be further investigated as a new model or part of the existing Model 5 (Annex 1).

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ANNEX 1

Possible models of recognition

In principle, there appear to be five models of recognition. These are differentiated by a number of factors including the following: the extent to which the school is involved, the extent to which the employer is involved; the nature of the link (if any) to the school curriculum; the nature of the link (if any) to employability or other progression; and whether or not they will lead to certification.

Model 1: recognition of part-time work through full embedding in the curriculum

In this model part-time work would be recognised as a context for school learning and assessment. This could be achieved through syllabus inserts and/or by ensuring that there were opportunities for learners to draw on their experience of part-time work in assessments. There would be no discrete certification.

Model 2: recognition that part-time work can develop generic transferable skills

In this model part-time work would be recognised as a context for the development and assessment of skills which complement the subject-based curriculum. These could either be skills which can already be assessed and certificated through national units (eg core skills) or skills which would require the development of new national units (eg other employability skills).

Model 3: formal recognition of the distinctive outcomes of part-time work

In this model part-time work would become a focus for discrete certification in which either the school or the employer or both could be involved. This would result in the generation of formal record of the outcomes of part-time employment within the Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC), possibly involving the SQA's new profiling facility.

Model 4: recognition of the role of part-time work in personal planning

In this model, part-time work would be formally recognised as having in part to play in the learner's personal development planning. This would be captured in paper or IT-based support materials related to Progress File and/or Personal Learning Plans.

Model 5: recognition of the potential of part-time work to contribute to progression

This model focuses on the contribution which the experience of part-time work may make to the learner in future – ie to the next stages of education or to employment - rather than on possible links to concurrent school activities. Examples of the outputs envisaged here would include web-based self-assessment programmes for the learners, structured references for use by employers, or a combination of these.

In further developing the models, close attention will have to be paid to the quality of the experience of young people undertaking part-time work. At present there is a lack of data on matters such as the types of work, types of employer, frequency or duration of employment and so on. However, it would be reasonable to anticipate that not only will the work itself

vary considerably in nature – eg the extent of the skills and degree of responsibility involved – but the opportunity for personal and/or vocational development or progression within the employment and the support available for those involved is also likely to be very different in both degree and kind. These factors will influence the learning which takes place and the recognition which can be given to it.

In table 1 below the models are shown as relating along two axes. One of these shows the nature of the links with the formal school curriculum and the other shows the extent to which the model is concerned with the formal assessment of outcomes. Whether they would be intended to lead to some form of certification is shown by an asterisk.

* associated with some form of certification