

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

THE EMPLOYERS PERSPECTIVE ON SCHOOL PUPILS' PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following a survey of school pupils concerning their part-time jobs, 110 businesses named by school pupils as their employers were contacted and asked to participate in a survey of employers' views and practices. Forty two interviews eventually took place. Large companies and hairdressers are not represented because of their unwillingness to cooperate. Businesses taking part have been categorised according to the work undertaken by the school pupils, namely Delivery (4), Retail (13) Hotel and Catering (12) and Miscellaneous (13).

Recruitment: Few employers advertise for school pupils. Informal 'word-of-mouth' channels are used and some pupils pro-actively contact employers to seek employment.

Why employ school pupils? Some employers stress the flexibility and availability of young people, especially their willingness to work at times which are unpopular with adults. Employers in Hotel and Catering often have difficulty finding adult employees. In Delivery and Retail, the relative cheapness of employing young people is a factor.

Links with school: Many employers in the Miscellaneous category had been involved in Work Experience programmes, but this was much less common in the other sectors.

Value of part-time employment: Most employers saw part-time jobs as being beneficial to the school pupils. Employers tended not to value Work Experience programmes as highly as paid employment.

Formal recognition of part-time employment: Most employers were favourably disposed towards the possibility of school pupils' jobs being formally recognised. They also anticipated that they would take account of part-time employment if it were formally recorded as part of an applicant's educational attainments.

Contracts: Just over half of the employers had contracts with school pupil employees but this was more common with 16-18 year old pupils.

Training: Most employers claimed to give young workers initial training and a large minority gave further on-going training. However the extent of training varied considerably, from merely showing a delivery route to a new delivery person to attendance at certificate courses in health hygiene.

Regulation of the employment of under-16s: Most employers showed little awareness of national laws and local byelaws concerning work permits. Most favoured the idea that employers rather than children should be registered. However, some were concerned that the system might be bureaucratic and expensive.

CHAPTER ONE BACKGROUND

In Britain, the 1990s witnessed a growth in academic interest in the part-time employment of young people who are still attending school (see for example Lavalette, 1994; Hobbs & McKechnie, 1997; Pettitt, 1998; Lavalette, 1999; Mizen, Pole & Bolton, 2001). The emergence of this research interest is in part attributable to international debates about 'child labour'. However, the research focus in Britain has centred around specific themes including: establishing the nature and extent of part-time employment, the relationship between part-time work and academic attainment, the effectiveness of legislation and policy, young people's perspectives on their work and health and safety issues.

It could be argued that what characterises all of this research is that it approaches the topic from the supply side perspective. By that we mean focusing on the experiences of the employees, the type of work they are involved in and their reasons for working. In other words researchers have been preoccupied with understanding the issue from the young worker's side. However, the fact that children and school pupils are willing to work or that their parents want them to get a job does not guarantee that they will become employed. There has to be a demand for their labour as well and that demand must come from employers.

Within this research area the employers' perspective or the demand side of the equation has been ignored. This lack of attention is not unique to the research base in Britain, it is common amongst all research in this area, and even at the international level the reasons why employers employ 'child labour' is largely unexplored.

In Britain a review of gaps in the research base on child employment drew attention to the need to understand why employers employ young school-based part-time workers (McKechnie & Hobbs, 2000). At the international level Anker (2001) has suggested that employers have been neglected because of the emphasis on poverty as the main factor driving the supply of young child workers. In Britain we would suggest that employers have been missing from the research agenda for different reasons.

First, research into children and school pupils' employment is in its infancy and has focused on the employee side of the employer-employee equation. Second, much of the early research was about the effectiveness of legislation protecting those under 16 years of age. It was apparent that this legislation was ineffective and as a result employers were in a legally grey area. It is possible that researchers assumed that in these circumstances employers would not engage with research. Third, 'common sense' assumptions existed about the employer's perspective. The main assumption is that employers employ school pupils to keep costs down and increase profits.

However, if we are to fully understand school pupils' employment we need to begin to explore the demand side. For example it could be argued that the demand for young employees will impact on the sectors that they are likely to work in, on their working conditions and on the rates of reward they receive for their labour.

At a practical level we need to develop some understanding of why employers recruit this particular group of employees. Do they set out to target this group and what employment practices do they adopt? What are their views on part-time employment and work experience? Do they have specific links with the school system? What do they think about the idea of recognising or accrediting school pupils' employment?

Accordingly, the present study focussed on four key areas:

1. The reasons for employing school pupils
2. Links with schools
3. The value of part-time work
4. Employment practices

CHAPTER TWO METHODOLOGY

The design of the Part-Time Employment and Secondary Education research included the identification of four local authorities to participate in the Focused Studies element. This element of the research allowed for a more in-depth investigation of schools pupils, parents and schoolteachers views on a range of issues related to pupils' part-time employment. The sample of employers was also drawn from these four local authority areas.

In the main survey pupils had been requested to provide information on their work status and to provide the name of the business that they worked for. Within the four local authorities, which formed the sample for the Focused Studies, a number of employers were identified as representative of the range and type of employment undertaken by school pupils. (See below for full sampling details.)

Pupils had been requested to provide the names of their employers but no contact details were asked for. Using the names provided, web-based business and telephone directories were used to identify the location and contact details for employers. In a number of cases pupils provided insufficient or limited information as a result of which some employers could not be identified.

Once identified, initial contact was made with employers to request their participation in the study. If they agreed to participate a telephone interview was carried out based upon a standardised interview schedule. The schedule consisted of open and closed questions covering the extent of their employment of school pupils; recruitment methods; induction and training; use of contracts; their involvement with local schools in work experience and other enterprise activities; their views on the value of part-time work; and their opinion on the idea of formally recognising part-time employment.

Responses to open-ended questions were written down at the time of the interview. In the section reporting the interview findings the quotations used should not be treated as verbatim transcriptions, rather they should be viewed as presenting the flavour of the employer comments.

A draft interview schedule was piloted through a face-to-face interview with an employer. The key problems identified were the length and level of detailed information requested. A major review of the interview schedule was undertaken resulting in a shortened and more focused schedule. It was evident that a trade-off would need to be made between securing employer participation and the length and depth of material covered in the interview.

The activities detailed above were carried out from January to May 2005. The majority of the interviews took place in March and April.

The Sample

The target sample was to interview 40 employers reflecting the range and type of employment undertaken by school pupils. In total 42 interviews were completed, the additional two interviews were employers who had recently employed school pupils (one in Retail and one in Miscellaneous). We have included their interview responses in this report. Table 2.1 provides a summary of the number of employers interviewed within four main employment categories. Employment such as babysitting was excluded from this element of the research given the rather unique nature of the employer-employee relationship.

Table 2.1 Employer Participation and Job Sector

Job Sector	Number of Employer Interviews
Delivery	4
Retail	13
Hotel/Catering	12
Miscellaneous	13

Throughout the study of employers we have grouped responses by job sector to investigate the extent to which there are similarities or variations based on sector. The job sectors are detailed in the above table. The sectors are self explanatory with the exception of Miscellaneous. Research has shown that young people work in a wide range of jobs and some of these share common features allowing them to be grouped together, eg Retail. However, some pupils are employed in relatively unique jobs and we have grouped these under the Miscellaneous heading. In the present study this category includes nursing homes, leisure facilities such as swimming pools, a cycle maintenance business and a golf range.

To achieve the required sample a total of 110 employers were contacted with an average of three telephone contacts per employer. From this group 21 employers refused to participate in the study (see Table 2.2). A number of reasons were given for non-participation including not having the time and that they did not employ school pupils. In some cases the latter statement was clarified by indicating that they had employed school pupils in the past but were not currently doing so and were unwilling to participate in the research. In the case of the larger chain stores some managers indicated that they could not consider participation without clearance from their Head Office. The researchers contacted the relevant Head Offices but found it difficult to gain approval while others simply refused permission. As a result these larger stores are not represented in the sample.

One other group of employers is not represented in the sample. While a number of hairdressers were identified by pupils as employers all attempts to recruit them failed. This may be in part due to the nature of the business. The employers were typically busy with customers when contacted and could not stop to take part in the research.

Table 2.2 Non-Participants by Job Sector

Job Sector	Refused to Participate	Stated reason: No school pupils Employed
Delivery	0	0
Retail	5	1
Hotel/Catering	7	3
Miscellaneous	9	8

From the remaining employers a total of 42 completed the interview. Tables 2.3 to 2.6 provide a summary of the size of the business, indicated by the total number of employees, and the number of school pupils employed. In the latter case we discriminated between school pupils under 16 year of age and those in the 16-18 year old age group.

Table 2.3 Profile of Delivery Businesses

Employment Sector	Code	Size of Business: Total number of employees			Number of school employees	
		up to 10	11 to 50	51 to 100	<16	16-18
Delivery	1	x			5	3
	2	x			9	

	3	x			6	4
	4		x		14	

Table 2.4 Profile of Retail Businesses

Employment Sector	Code	Size of Business: Total number of employees			Number of school employees	
		up to 10	11 to 50	51 to 100	<16	16-18
Retail	1	x			1	
	2	x				1
	3		x		4	8
	4	x				1
	5	x				1
	6	x			1	1
	7	x			1	2
	8	x			1	
	9		x			1
	10		x			1
	11		x			2
	12	x			1	
	13	x			0	0

Table 2.5 Profile of Hotel/Catering Businesses

Employment Sector	Code	Size of Business: Total number of employees			Number of school employees	
		up to 10	11 to 50	51 to 100	<16	16-18
Hotel/catering	1	x			1	
	2	x				1
	3		x			5
	4	x				1
	5		x		10	
	6		x		14	10
	7		x			5
	8		x			2
	9		x			12
	10		x			1
	11	x				1
	12	x				1

Table 2.6 Profile of Miscellaneous Businesses

Employment Sector	Code	Size of Business: Total number of employees			Number of school employees	
		up to 10	11 to 50	51 to 100	<16	16-18
Miscellaneous	1		x		2	
	2		x			7
	3	x			1	
	4	x				2
	5	x				1
	6	x				1
	7		x			1
	8	x			2	1
	9	x			1	1
	10		x			6
	11	x				3
	12			x		1
	13	x			0	0

Of the 42 employers interviewed, 25 had businesses where ten or fewer employees worked. Of the remainder only one had more than 50 employees, the remaining 16 had between 11 and 50 employees. In the present sample the majority of pupils are employed in small enterprises, but as explained earlier this picture may be biased by the difficulty in obtaining the cooperation of large stores.

Of the 40 businesses who were currently employing school pupils, the majority (23) have only 16-18 year olds. In contrast 9 of the businesses have only school pupils under 16 years of age in their employment. The remaining 8 employed a combination of under 16s alongside 16-18 year olds. There is no obvious pattern linking the age of school pupils employed to the particular sector.

CHAPTER THREE THE MAIN FINDINGS

This chapter is structured around the four key areas of enquiry:

1. The reasons for employing school pupils
2. Links with schools
3. The value of part-time work
4. Employment practices

We shall consider each area in turn, outlining the main issues covered and considering the responses from the employers within each employment sector.

The reasons for employing school pupils

All employers were asked to explain the main reasons for their employment of school pupils. In addition we were interested to know if they specifically set out to recruit school pupils and asked about recruitment practices. Responses are considered by job sector.

Delivery

Recruitment

Of the 4 employers in this sector, only one specifically advertised for young paper deliverers. The others recruited through word of mouth or were directly approached by young people looking for paper rounds. One employer also indicated that he would approach young people that he knew in the area and ask them if they were looking for a part-time job.

Reasons

For 2 of the employers in this sector, the reason for employing school pupils was that the type of job was essentially 'children's work' and as such it suited this age group. The other 2 employers made reference to cost in their reasons for employing school pupils. In one case the employer indicated that these workers were cheaper than adults and as such it allowed him to 'carry on his business'. The other stated that no other workers would accept the pay levels offered for this type of job.

Retail

Recruitment

Of the 13 employers in this sector, 6 used advertisements as part of their recruitment strategy. In a number of cases the adverts were targeted at potential part-time workers rather than school pupils. It just so happens that it is school pupils who apply for the jobs. However it is noticeable that informal recruitment practices are important with 6 employers indicating that they are approached by pupils seeking jobs or that they use word of mouth as a means of recruiting workers.

Reasons

In the Retail sector employers provided a wider range of reasons for employing young people, and in a number of cases gave multiple reasons. In total 6 employers made some reference to the flexibility of young workers and their willingness to work at the times that the employers needed them, for example week-end or evening work. By implication it would appear that adult workers would not be interested in these types of vacancies.

It was also apparent that employers used younger workers as cover or relief for adult employees. Four employers made specific reference to this in explaining their reasons for employment.

Of the 13 employers interviewed in this sector, 4 referred to cost when explaining their employment decisions. For two of the employers it was the low cost that attracted them to this workforce. However, the remaining two employers indicated that cost was not a factor in their employment practices. They were at pains to point out that there was no pay discrimination based on age.

Only 3 of the employers in this sector stated that their reason for employing this group of workers was related to skills that they have. In one case the employer simply indicated that the young person was the best person who had applied for the job and had the necessary skills. One of the other employers generalised beyond the individual indicating that in their view this group of workers were typically '*good workers, pick things up quickly and are keen to learn*'.

One final explanation given for employing young workers was that the employers felt that the employment benefited the young person. Three of the employers indicated that their reasons for employing the young person was that it was good for them in terms of experience.

Hotel/Catering

Recruitment

In this sector only one out of the 12 employers had used an advertisement to recruit their young employee. Eight of the employers had recruited because the young person had approached them, while 5 employers referred to word of mouth within their recruitment practices. In one case an employer indicated that they had recruited their young employee through the school.

Reasons

The dominant reason given by 5 employers in this sector related to the flexibility of this workforce and the fact that they were available at the times that they needed them, weekends and evenings. This was also linked to the relatively short working hours, which adults would not be interested in.

For 2 of the employers their main reason for employing young workers was the lack of adult alternatives. One employer indicated that they did not set out to employ young people but '*finding good full-time waiting staff is difficult, they are few and far between, we take on young workers because we need to fill positions*'.

The majority of employers did not give cost as a major reason for employing young workers. One employer indicated that they were cheaper to employ than older workers, while one

other indicated that they paid all employees the same rate. Of course, some respondents might have been embarrassed to acknowledge cheapness as a reason to employ school pupils.

In explaining why they employed young people some positive and negative comments were made about this group. For one employer young workers' attitudes could cause some problems, while another indicated that there were constraints on what young workers could do, for example, the amount of time they could work and constraints on serving alcohol.

In contrast some employers mentioned the benefits of employing young workers. In one case the employer indicated that they enjoyed their attitude and that they brought a '*breath of fresh air*' into the workplace.

Miscellaneous

Recruitment

Given the wide variety of jobs in the Miscellaneous category we may be less likely to find similarities of approach within this group of employers. However, when it comes to recruitment the majority of employers (7) indicated that they recruited school pupil employees through word of mouth and 4 employers indicated that potential employees approached them asking about work opportunities.

In the case of 2 employers school links were important. In one case the employee was recruited through a work experience placement and in the other case the business, a swimming pool, shared the resource with the school so that the school pupils were already on site as potential employees.

Reasons

As anticipated given the nature of this sector a more varied set of reasons were provided by employers for employing school pupils. In two cases the employers cited family links as the reason. For one they were employing the young person because they were related and in the other the father worked in the business and got his child recruited.

Some employers, 6 in total, indicated that the flexibility and availability of this group of employees were important reasons for their employment. They were also used to cover for adult staff to allow them time off and to cover certain work times.

However, we also see other reasons being given, in one case an employer said that it was not their usual practice to employ young employees but that the individual had '*hounded*' them for the experience since it was related to their future ambitions. Another employer who ran a cycle maintenance business argued that he employed the individual because of their '*passion for bikes*'.

We can also identify some evidence of different employers' attitudes to young workers. For example in one case the employer indicated that they did not differentiate on the basis of age, young workers deserved the same chance as others. In contrast another employer justified their employment practice by saying it gave the young person something to do and kept them off the streets. It is unlikely that such a reason would be given for employing adults.

Finally, a minority of employers emphasised the skills that young people brought to the workplace (*bright, clever, show potential, energetic and punctual*) or the skill match between

the individual and the job. In one case the employer emphasised the benefits of this group of employees in that they are good workers, have a rapport with customers and are fun to be with. In this latter case the employer appears to be emphasising what the young workers brought into the work environment.

Links with School

A number of questions were asked to establish the extent to which employers had established connections with schools in their area. We focused on three aspects of this:

1. had they been involved in work experience and in providing feedback on the pupils placed with them? And as a supplementary question whether they had ever employed school pupils as part-time workers after they had been on such a placement;
2. did they have any other links with schools? For example, being involved in school visits to their business premises or visited schools to talk about business;
3. had they ever been approached to develop links with local schools or to take work experience pupils?

Table 3.1 provides a summary of the responses to these questions. Less than half of all the employers had any involvement in work experience. It is evident that there are between sector variations, particularly with respect to the work experience questions. In the case of Delivery work 2 employers had been involved with work experience pupils. It should be noted that in these cases the work experience was based in the shop premises rather than the delivery aspect of their business.

Table 3.1 Employer links with schools (number of employers responding)

Job Sector	Work Experience involvement	Involved in Work Experience feedback	Employed Work Experience pupils	Other links with schools	Involvement requested	N
Delivery	2	2	1	1	2	4
Retail	2	1	0	3	3	13
Hotel/Catering	2	1	2	3	0	12
Miscellaneous	11	10	6	6	1	13

Only 2 employers in the Retail and 2 in the Hotel/Catering categories had taken work experience pupils at some time, and few had been approached with requests to participate. The category that has the highest number of employers involved in work experience was the Miscellaneous category. It is possible that schools perceived the type of work that fell into this category as more suitable for work experience placements. For example this category included work in nursing homes, leisure facilities and mechanical work.

The Miscellaneous category also has the highest number of employers who indicated that they had taken work experience pupils on as part-time workers after they completed their placement. However, such behaviour is present in other job sectors such as Hotel/Catering.

A total of 13 employers had other links with schools. In the Delivery and Miscellaneous categories employers involved in work experience also had other links with the schools in their area. In contrast, in the Retail and Hotel/Catering sectors it was employers who were not involved in work experience that had links with schools. This involvement typically took the form of school visits to their premises and in many cases involved primary school pupils.

Only a minority of employers who were not involved with work experience had, in fact, been approached to participate in the system (6 out of 25). Those who had been contacted, nevertheless, had refused these requests indicating that they were either too busy, did not have enough staff to supervise or that they felt it was inappropriate because of the nature of the work.

Value of part-time work

In this section we focus upon employer responses to a series of questions about their views on the value of part-time work. This included questions on:

1. the value of part-time work and work experience in the context of future career development;
2. the idea of recognising part-time work;
3. their perception of the usefulness of some form of certification in the context of their employment practices.

Part-time work and work experience compared

Table 3.2 provides a summary of employers' responses to a question which asked them to indicate whether part-time work or work experience was better for the young person's development or future job prospects. It shows that the majority of employers indicated that they felt that part-time employment was of more value in the context of future employment.

When asked to justify their choice similar explanations were provided across all job sectors. It was apparent from the explanations provided that for many, part-time work was of greater value since the young person had found the job for themselves and it involved longer periods of employment experience. These views were reinforced by comments such as '*part-time work gives you the full picture*' and '*part-time work is more real*'. Amongst those favouring part-time employment, work experience was felt to involve too limited a limited range of experiences. This appeared to be related to the limited time involved in work experience.

Table 3.2 Value of part-time work and work experience (frequency of positive responses)

Job Sector	Part-Time employment	Work experience	Both	Don't know	N
Delivery	4	0	0	0	4
Retail	9	1	1	2	13
Hotel/Catering	8	1	1	2	12
Miscellaneous	6	5	2	0	13

Table 3.2 also shows that in some cases employers indicated that work experience was of more value than part-time work to future employment prospects. This was most evident in the Miscellaneous category. Employers justified this choice by suggesting that work experience allowed access to a wider range of industries and to job sectors which did not employ young people. For others the value of work experience lay in the fact that it was a concentrated period of full-time employment which allowed a more detailed insight into the workplace.

For a minority of employers, 4 in total, both part-time work and work experience were of importance to future job prospects. For this group there was some indication that they perceived the two experiences as serving different functions, and that ideally having both would be of value to the young person.

The idea of recognising part-time work

Employers were asked to indicate their views on the idea and desirability of recognising young peoples' part-time employment. Table 3.3 summarises the responses to this question and shows that in all job sectors the majority of employers responded positively to this suggestion.

Table 3.3 Desirability of recognising part-time employment (number of responses)

Job Sector	Yes	No	Not Sure	N
Delivery	3	0	1	4
Retail	11	0	2	13
Hotel/Catering	10	0	2	12
Miscellaneous	11	1	1	13

When asked to explain why they were in favour of this idea a number of different reasons were proposed, including:

- bonus for working
- praise for effort
- good for CV
- motivates young people
- helps get jobs in the future
- shows skills acquired

In addition some employers were of the opinion that some recognition was justified because not all young people work and some recognition of this fact was merited. Implicit in this argument was the view that those who did gain work were reflecting a higher level of motivation. For one employer the justification for recognising part-time work was that *'it's enhancing and doesn't have to be academic'*.

One interviewee indicated that they were not in favour of recognising part-time employment and a further 6 felt that they could not decide. The one employer who specifically stated that they were not in favour suggested that in their view having had the experience was enough and that certification did not add anything to the experience. Amongst those who could not decide it was apparent that some of them felt that recognition would be dependent on the type of job that was being done. In one case an interviewee indicated that in their view references were more important than certification.

Would employers take notice of part-time work certificates in their employment practices?

To ascertain their views on this we asked about whether they would take account of such certificates in their recruitment processes. To help clarify this section we asked employers to distinguish between potential employees who were still attending school and those who had completed their secondary education.

The responses suggest that the majority of employers across all sectors would take notice of individuals' part-time employment certification when recruiting (see Table 3.4). This applied to the recruitment of potential employees while they might still be at school and also later after they had left school.

Table 3.4 Employer willingness to take account of part-time work recognition (numbers)

	Would take notice of certificate				
	Still at School		Post-School		
Job Sector	Yes	No	Yes	No	N
Delivery	4	0	4	0	4
Retail	10	1	10	1	13
Hotel/Catering	11	0	11	0	12
Miscellaneous	11	2	10	2	13

When asked to explain why they would take notice of such recognition/accreditation employers indicated that it would be of value since it demonstrates that the '*work ethic was already there*' while others felt that it would show the extent of previous experience and allow them to establish existing levels of training and identify skills.

A number of employers, while positive in their response, added some caveats in their replies. These typically revolved around the issue of what it was that would be recognised or certificated. To what extent would it identify skills? Any potential employee would have to be able to demonstrate these skills as well as having a certificate. Some employers suggested that the usefulness of such a system would lie in identifying potential interviewees for any post. In this case recognition/accreditation would be useful at the initial stage of sifting through applicants.

Three employers indicated that they would not take account of any recognition/accreditation system in their recruitment. In these cases the employers argued that the reference that a person brought from their previous job was more important than any certificate. In addition how the candidate reacted in interview was crucial to their chances of employment.

Not all employers place a similar value in the importance of references. One employer in favour of recognition suggested that references are not always reliable. In this context they felt that recognition/accreditation could act as a reliability check, indicating what a person had done.

When employers were asked if they would participate in any recognition scheme then the responses were positive. Of the 42 employers interviewed 37 responded that they would be willing to participate. Interestingly employers who had said that they would not take account of recognition/accreditation in their recruitment practices did indicate that they would participate in such a system if it were introduced.

However, some caution is needed in interpreting this positive response since many of the responses were qualified. The main concern of employers was the amount of time which would be spent if they were to get involved in such a system. For the small number of employers (5) who were not in favour of participation in any recognition/accreditation system, time issues were also a concern.

Others expressed different concerns including the issue of training for staff who might be involved and the relevance of such a system to their business. One employer was of the view that any recognition/accreditation should be carried out by an independent body without involving employers.

Employment practices

The final theme within the employer's interview focused on their employment practices with respect to employees still attending school in relation to: contracts of employment; the impact of the National Minimum Wage (NMW); the extent and nature of training given; and employers' knowledge of legislation governing the employment of under 16s.

Contracts and the NMW

Interviewees were asked about whether they issued contracts to their employees and also whether the introduction of the NMW for 16-17 year olds had made any difference to them.

In the latter case 2004 saw the introduction of a £3.00 per hour NMW for 16-17 year olds and it is possible that this impacted on employment practices. For example, it has been suggested that employers would reduce the number of 16-17 year olds in favour of younger employees.

Table 3.5 summarises the responses to these two areas for each of the employment sectors. In total 24 out of the 42 employers interviewed indicated that they used contracts with the school pupils they employed. This is most common in the Retail sector and least common in Delivery. However, a complication arises when we look at the nature of these contracts. We asked employers to indicate whether the contracts were written or verbal.

In the Delivery sector the only employer to indicate that a contract existed stated that this was a verbal contract, in the Retail sector 5 of the contracts were verbal. The number of verbal contracts in the Hotel/Catering and the Miscellaneous sectors were 2 and 3, respectively.

Table 3.5: Contracts and the national minimum wage (numbers)

Job Sector	Contracts	NMW impact	N
Delivery	1	1	4
Retail	11	2	13
Hotel/Catering	5	0	12
Miscellaneous	7	0	13

One possible explanation for the variation in the use of contracts varies according to the age of the employees. As we noted earlier across all sectors there were examples of businesses employing under 16s, those between 16-18 years and those businesses that employed young people from both age groups (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6 Age of employees and use of contracts (numbers)

Employee	Contracts	
	Yes	No
<16 only	4	5
16-18 only	15	7
Both	4	4

Sample size issues meant that it was not possible to test the strength of the relationship between age group and the use of contracts. The data suggests employers are slightly more likely to make use of contracts if they employ 16-18 year olds school pupils.

The introduction of the NMW appears to have had little impact for the majority of employers. The main reason given by employers was that they were already paying their employees above this rate. In the three cases where the introduction of the NMW had impacted on employment practices the employers had had to raise their pay rates to ensure that they were conforming to the NMW. One of these employers did indicate that they would consider employing younger employees in order that they could reduce costs.

Training

With respect to training we were interested in establishing the extent of training or induction that employers carried out at the start of employment and whether there was any ongoing training element.

Table 3.7 Training provided by employers (numbers)

Job Sector	initial	ongoing	accredited training	N
Delivery	4	0	0	4
Retail	10	4	1	13
Hotel/Catering	10	7	1	12
Miscellaneous	11	6	1	13

The majority of the interviewees (35) stated that there was initial training or induction for their employees, while 17 highlighted that there was some form of ongoing training. What these figures fail to reveal is the extent of the variation in the training experienced by young employees. To provide some insight into this variation we will consider each sector in turn.

Delivery sector

All of the employers stated that there was some initial training or induction. Typically this involved showing the new employee around their route, a task done by the employer driving them around the route or accompanying them on the first day or two. In one case this role was delegated to another ‘paperboy’. One employer stated this training also involved them in providing ‘*tips on how to be a good paperboy*’. None of the employers mentioned the issue of health and safety training.

One employer in this sector said that ongoing training was provided, but, it emerged that this only applied to those ‘paperboys’ who progressed to working in the shop behind the counter.

Retail sector

We found a range of responses in this sector to the questions on training. At one end of the spectrum we found employers whose responses seemed to suggest that the training was minimal eg *'just tell them what needs doing'* and *'just till training, showing them the shop floor'*. In these cases there was no ongoing training.

At the other end of the spectrum we found examples of employers who had more intensive training programmes. For example one response to the training question was:

'Yes, they get a full induction, involves an introduction to the company and its history, health and safety, employment law etc.'

This lasted approximately 4-6 hours and there is the opportunity for further training through SVQ's in retailing, the latter being dependent on the candidate.

This was not an isolated case. In another example the response to the training question was:

'The young people get full training just like the adults apart from some management training about banking etc. which they don't need. The training goes on for 12 weeks and runs alongside their work, if it takes them longer than 12 weeks that's fine. Once training is finished they have a workbook which is signed off and sent to head office.'

This employer also indicated that there was ongoing training to cover new products or as the interviewee expressed it, *'there's always training'*.

In another case the response to the training query produced the following response:

'Yes, quite a bit of in-store training, have to go over guidelines and manuals with them about health and safety, train them on the till. Have to inform them about the medicines we sell, they have to be able to explain it all to customers.'

A number of the employers in this sector stated that they covered a range of topics in training including practical issues concerning the workplace, health and safety as well as job specific skills.

Hotel/Catering sector

This sector also provided a variety of responses to the questions on training with some employers emphasising that their training involved showing employees how the till worked, customer service, how to work tea/coffee equipment and hygiene issues. However, the level of formality of the training did vary.

Some examples of their responses to the questions on this topic may provide a flavour of the training process. Responses to the question about initial training/induction included the following:

'Yes, they get full induction, fire, health and safety, basic equipment training. They get a certificate of attendance and training is recorded in the staff file'

Asked about ongoing training the same interviewee responded:

'If appropriate, they can go on for elementary food hygiene training. There is a lot of repeat training for young workers, they often have a poorer appreciation of work.'

In another case the response to the question on initial training was:

'Yes, they are given a buddy. The induction covers health and safety, quality standards, the company, fire, wages It takes about half a day.'

The interviewee continued in respect of ongoing training:

'There's a lot of on-floor training for waiting staff, lasts 10-14 days but they always have a buddy if they need one.'

In the hotel/catering sector it is common to find that the initial training induction covers hygiene issues and in some case this is linked to some form of certification.

Miscellaneous

The diversity of jobs within this sector means that it is difficult to draw out similarities in training. For example, in the retail sector till training is common while in the hotel/catering sector hygiene training is a common theme. The one similarity with the other sectors is the diversity of response to the questions on initial and ongoing training.

At the lower end of the spectrum we find responses to the training question such as:

'It depends, we tell them all the jobs to be done and get other staff to speak to them. There is a general showing of what there is to do. We tell them to keep an eye out for certain things like shoplifting and stealing. It just takes half an hour to an hour and I'll keep telling them after that.'

In this case on-going training

'depends if something comes up, we might show them how to use the engraving machine or how to change batteries, then they can show each other how to do it.'

In two businesses where there was no ongoing training the response to the initial training/induction queries were:

'Yes, handling cash, handling money, there is ongoing training everyday, we show by example here.'

'Yes, health and safety takes about 20 minutes, recorded on staff record.'

At the other end of the range of responses we find examples of what one might term more intensive training. For example in one interview the response to the initial training and ongoing training questions was:

'Yes, health and safety, they can't work until they have their National Pool Lifesaving Certificate. We show them the general facilities, the procedures for emergency action. It takes one full day. The Pool Lifesaving Certificate takes one full weeks training.'

And for on-going training:

'In their first year they can have NSPCC child protection training (about working with young children). They can do courses in exercise to music and health and safety courses etc.'

Another example at this end of the spectrum:

'Yes, they have to work through an induction pack which has information on health and safety, workers rights, what the care job involves, they have to read through policies and procedures. There are videos to watch and questionnaires, which they get certificates for. This takes about two days but then they are supervised and have a mentor for 12 weeks, then they are checked and updated yearly.'

In this case the response to the question about ongoing training produced the following response:

'Can get training and certificates in client care, communication skills, behaviour management, infection control, pressure care, nutrition and many more.'

In this employment sector we found a number of other training practices including shadowing systems, the integration of training and personal development practice. It is apparent that in this sector the form of training is linked to the type of job activity that the employee is involved in. Unfortunately the scope of this present study did not allow for a fuller more detailed exploration of these links.

Employers and the under 16 employee

As we have noted not all employers have employees that are under 16. Therefore the findings from this set of questions are derived from a sub-sample of the employers who were currently employing younger employees at the time of the interview.

Employees who have not yet reached the minimum school leaving age are covered by national legislation and local bylaws (See Appendix 8). In the interviews we covered such issues as whether their younger employees had work permits, if someone had ever visited their business from the local authority, whether they had seen copies of the local bylaws relating to child employment and if they thought that the bylaws were effective. Finally, we explained a recent proposal from the Better Regulation Task Force (2004) which proposed an employer registration system to replace the existing work permit system and asked for their views on this idea.

Interviewees responses to the questions on permits, local authority visits, awareness and effectiveness of bylaws are summarised in Table 3.8. Few of the 16 employers who had under 16s working for them were able to tell us if their employees had work permits. None of the employers in the Retail sector were able to provide this information and one employer had no knowledge of the permit system. The Delivery sector has generally been associated with higher permit levels and three quarters of the employers said that their employees had permits. Two of the three employers stated that all of their employees had permits, while the other employer was sure that some of his employees had permits, but others did not. The fourth Delivery sector employer said that his employees did not have permits but explained that he had parental permission for his employees and that was good enough for him.

In the past researchers had speculated that one of the reasons for the low uptake of permits is the lack of awareness and knowledge amongst employers. We consider two possible routes by which employer information could be generated, visits by local authority personnel to the employer's premises and the bylaws. Only one employer has ever received a visit at his premises to check on his young employees. A higher number of employers had viewed the bylaws (6), however, this did not ensure that their employees had the necessary permits.

Table 3.8 Legislation issues (numbers)

Job Sector	Permits	Local Authority Visit	Viewed Byelaws	Effectiveness	N
Delivery	3	1	2	0	4
Retail	0	0	1	1	6
Hotel/Catering	1	0	2	0	3
Miscellaneous	1	0	1	0	3

One employer was of the view that the present bylaws were effective. It is difficult to interpret this assertion since the employer involved had employees without work permits, a basic cornerstone of the bylaw system.

Employer response to the BRTF proposal was largely positive across all sectors. Of the 16 employers with employees under 16 years of age, 14 were in broad favour of the idea of employer registration. Some thought it might be a better system, others that it would be an easier system. The remaining 2 employers views are interesting. One expressed the view that they could not see the point of any such scheme; the other was concerned about the cost.

On the surface employers are positive about the BRTF proposal. However it is important to note that a number added caveats to their supportive statements. These caveats expressed concern about the administration of any system, the imposition it would make on them and the potential cost implications.

CHAPTER FOUR OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION

As the first systematic study of employers the findings make interesting reading, providing some insight into the employers' perspective. There were four primary aims identified at the start of this research. First, what were the main reasons employers gave for employing school pupils; second, did these employers have any links with the school system; third, what were their views on the value of part-time employment, fourth, what employment practices were used with this group of employees.

How and why do employers recruit school pupils?

In reviewing the recruitment practices adopted by the employers in this study it is evident that many young people are pro-active in seeking out employment. A number of employers said that this was how they recruited workers. A few used advertisements, though it was rare for these adverts to specifically state that they were looking for young school aged applicants.

There is some evidence that informal networks and 'word of mouth' plays a role in recruitment. In effect, existing employees probably inform friends of available jobs and by employing school pupils the employer is sending a message to the local community that this is part of their employment practices.

A common assumption is that employers turn to young workers in order to save on costs. Such a view has its roots in the international literature of child labour and the historical practices in developed economies such as Britain. When we asked employers to explain their reasons for employing school aged workers a wider set of explanations were provided. In some cases it was clear that cost was an important reason. For example in the Delivery and Retail sectors we found examples of cost based reasons for employment of young people.

We found some evidence to suggest that cost is not the main reason for the majority of employers. This position is supported when we consider their response to the impact of the NMW on their business. The majority of employers said this had little or no impact because they were already paying employees above this rate. A number of employers explicitly stated that they did not discriminate between their school aged and adult employees.

It was more common for employers to emphasise other reasons for employing school pupils. In the case of the Retail, Hotel/Catering and Miscellaneous sectors the importance of flexibility and availability was often cited. The terms flexibility and availability appear to be associated with a number of issues. School pupils are willing to work at less popular times (eg cover the 4.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. shift, or work on Saturdays) and to work fewer hours per week than adults. In some cases the employers suggest that adults would not view the jobs as viable or in some cases appropriate for them.

In Hotel/Catering it was clear that employers had difficulty employing adult staff. This could have been due to a shortage of adults seeking jobs in the locality or that adults did not find the jobs attractive. As such school aged employees were recruited because they were the only employees available. In at least one case an employer indicated that they preferred adult employees but they were not available to them. In contrast to this rather negative reason some employers were clearly employing school pupils because of what they brought to their business, sometimes in respect of specific skills or interests, or linked to their motivation and attitude.

School links and views on part-time work and work experience

Given the extent to which school pupils are employed we investigated the degree to which employers were engaged with schools in their locality. Our specific interest was the link between employers and the school through the work experience programme. Less than half of all the employers interviewed were, or had been, involved in the work experience system. It was also evident that there was a major variation in involvement across the employment sectors.

Nearly all of the employers on the Miscellaneous sector (11 out of 13) indicated that they had participated in work experience programmes, and more than half of these employers (6) had gone on to employ the young person in a part-time capacity. In contrast only 2 employers in each of the remaining categories, Delivery, Retail and Hotel/Catering, had been involved in this programme. Two thirds of this group had then employed the work experience pupils as part-time employees. In the majority of cases employers who participated in work experience had also been involved in providing feedback on the pupils placed with them.

One explanation for this variation between sectors is to be found in the types of jobs that pupils worked in within the Miscellaneous category. As we noted earlier this category includes pupils working in care homes, leisure facilities and jobs involving mechanical skills such as bike maintenance. Schools may perceive these types of jobs as more suitable for work experience than, for example, the Delivery sector. An alternative explanation is that employers in some of the other sectors are less willing to get involved in such programmes. Support for this argument comes from the Delivery and Retail sector employers who had been approached to participate in work experience placements but had refused.

Just under a third of employers had other links with schools. In the Delivery and Miscellaneous sectors the employers who had other school links were also engaged with the work experience programme. In the case of the Retail and Hotel/Catering sector the employers who had other types of links with were not the same employers who were linked to the school through work experience.

Due to the time constraints on the interviews we were not able to explore the range and types of links with schools. From the information provided it was apparent that such links were not solely focused on the secondary school sector. In some cases employers had links with primary schools. In the latter case this involved school visits to their premises, in the former case it might involve the employer visiting the school to talk about their business.

When we considered the level of involvement in the work experience programme we suggested some possible explanations for the low level of involvement in the Delivery, Retail and Hotel/Catering sectors. It is also possible that the level of involvement is related to the attitudes of employers towards work experience and part-time employment. That is some employers may place a limited value on work experience.

There is some evidence to support this position. We asked employers to indicate their evaluation of part-time work and work experience, and their estimation of the relative importance of each in the context of school pupils' development for entry into the job market. The majority of employers (23) highlighted the importance of part-time employment. The justifications offered in support of this view emphasised that these employers thought that it was important that young people showed some initiative in gaining employment. In addition it was argued that part-time employment in contrast to work experience involved longer time periods and allowed school pupils to engage with the workplace as a 'real' employee.

However, some employers were of the view that work experience or the combination of both part-time work and work experience was of more importance in the context of future employment. For this group, work experience was valued because it allowed pupils access to job sectors and forms of employment that they would not normally be able to experience. The fact that work experience involved a full-time commitment over a concentrated period was perceived as an advantage which is not provided by part-time employment.

It is worth noting that this latter group was dominated by employers who were in the Miscellaneous sector. As we noted earlier most of the employers in this sector were or had been involved in work experience programmes and in that sense had experience of both processes, part-time employment and work experience.

A majority of employers in all sectors favoured the idea of recognising part-time employment. While employers offered a range of justifications for this position one specific idea is of interest. For some employers recognition was important in that it would differentiate between pupils who had or had not gained employment. Implicit in this view is the idea that those who gained employment are demonstrating a level of motivation which non-workers do not have. We would suggest that some caution is needed here. Many pupils do not work and they have a number of varied reasons for not having, or, in some cases, not seeking part-time employment. To assume that all non-workers can be grouped together in this way is not justified by the existing evidence.

A small minority of employers did not respond positively to the idea of recognising part-time employment. Only one directly stated their opposition to it but a further six could not decide. Amongst this group it was clear that some questioned the usefulness of certification while others felt that recognition would have to be dependent on the type of job that the young person was doing.

Given that the majority of employers were in favour of the idea of recognising part-time employment it came as no surprise to find that they would take account of such information when recruiting staff. This applied to potential employees who were still within the school system and to those who had left school. There were some concerns about what form the recognition/accreditation would take and what information would be provided. These caveats suggest if such a system were to be introduced consultation exercises would be needed to ensure that employers were being provided with relevant information.

A small minority of employers (3) indicated that for them references and interviews were of more importance than any recognition/accreditation. Clearly if any system of recognition/accreditation was put in place it would not replace job interviews and references. Rather it would provide additional information to the employer. As one of the employers in favour of recognition indicated it might help in the stage when selecting applicants for interview, or might provide an 'objective' assessment to place beside the more 'subjective' reference process.

Employment practices

The final area we focused on was the employment practices adopted by employers when dealing with school aged employees. We have already noted that a common assumption is that employers turn to this age group as a means of limiting costs. The responses to the questions on the impact of the NMW for 16-17 year olds suggest that this may not be the dominant concern of employers. For most of the employers the introduction of the NMW had little or no impact because they already paid their employees above this rate.

However, we should be cautious about assuming that employment costs are not important to some employers involved in this specific labour market. Three employers did indicate that the NMW had impacted on their costs and they had had to increase the wages they paid. In addition, while the majority had indicated that the NMW had no impact on them it does not mean that they did not discriminate between adult part-time employees and young employees in terms of hourly pay rates. If this was the case then employing school pupils rather than adults would result in a cost saving. The time constraints on the interview meant that such issues could not be explored in detail. It also means that we cannot dismiss the cost explanation when we look at reasons for employing school pupils.

There was some evidence of variations in employment practices across the job sectors when we consider the use of employment contracts. Just over half of the employers (24) indicated that they used contracts. It is clear that some school pupils have their jobs contractually recognised adding a sense of formality to their employment. In some cases these are verbal contracts and, as such, might be difficult to enforce, but the majority relied upon written contracts. The use of contracts was most likely to emerge in the Retail sector. This might simply reflect different practices between sectors when dealing with part-time staff. There was a slight trend for contracts to be more common where 16-18 year old pupils were employed. We have no information on whether part-time adult employees would have been given contracts in all of these sectors.

The majority (35) indicated that their employees receive initial training and a large minority (17) were able to point to ongoing training. Not surprisingly there was some variation in the training experienced by employees. This was in part sector related. For example, in the Delivery sector training appeared to focus on familiarising the employee with the delivery route. It is worth noting that none of the employers in this sector made any reference to health and safety training given the potential for accidental injury in this job.

In each of the remaining sectors we found a wide variety of training and ongoing training. This variation did not appear to be sector dependent suggesting that in all of the sectors there are examples of what we might refer to as low and high intensity training. There are also opportunities for employees to gain some certification related to their training experiences. The examples included here ranged from certification of attendance at training days through to specific certificates relating to food hygiene and lifesaving.

The existence and extent of such training could be important in the context of debates about the idea of recognising/accrediting school pupils' part-time employment. The fact that employees are trained may provide an initial basis for evaluating the skills or experiences that any recognition system might wish to focus upon.

Finally, the issue of dealing with employees less than 16 years of age was explored. Previous British research has considered the effectiveness of existing child employment legislation from two perspectives. First, requesting information from young workers about their work and, second, the practices of local authorities. The latter are responsible for implementing the legislation in this area. The existing research findings show that the majority of child employees work illegally (Hobbs & McKechnie, 1997; McKechnie et al, 2005) and it is clear that local authority practice in this area is problematic (Hamilton, 2002; Murray 2004). Some byelaws may be out of date or difficult to understand.

This is the first time that the issue of child employment legislation has been approached from the perspective of the employers. However, the findings are consistent with existing research findings. The majority of employers who have employees under 16 years of age are not aware if their employees have work permits. Only one has received a visit from the local authority

regarding the employment of young people and less than half have had sight of the relevant bylaws. It is not surprising that against this background only one employer felt that the bylaws are effective. However even this positive view could be questioned since his employees were in breach of the legislation in that they did not have the necessary work permit.

At present the issue of child employment legislation is on the policy agenda based on a set of recommendations from the Better Regulation Task Force (2004). This body reviews legislation in a range of areas and suggests ways in which it could be made more effective. In the child employment context the BRTF has proposed a new system of employer registration to replace the work permit system. This would mean that employers would be registered allowing them to employ young workers.

We asked employers their views on this proposed change and found that the majority indicated that they had no objections or thought that this might be a better system. However, most employers added caveats to their supportive statement. These related to queries about how such a system would work, would it be bureaucratic, would it cost them money to register? Their support for any proposed change would be dependent on the answer to such questions. At the time of writing there is no information on the details of the BRTF proposal so it is impossible to address the concerns raised by employers.

Conclusion

This is the first study of its kind in Scotland and as such provides some insight into the employment of school aged pupils from the employer's perspective. Previous research has been dominated by an emphasis on the supply side of this particular employee-employer relationship.

From a methodological perspective, we should keep in mind the exploratory nature of this study and that it has involved a relatively small number of employers interviewed for a short period of time. Similarly, since interviews were not taped, some detail may have been lost in the real time recording of responses. However, these issues need to be kept in perspective and the main body of findings has added significantly to our understanding of employer's views.

Future studies are needed to verify the findings from this research and to extend our knowledge in this area. Consideration should be given on how to recruit employers from large chain stores and how to include small one-person businesses such as hairdressers. The study has also demonstrated the importance of the insight that can be gained about this employment sector by attending to the demand side of the employer-employee relationship.

CHAPTER FIVE

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