

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

CASE STUDIES OF SCHOOL PUPILS' PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Reviewing the literature on children in the workplace shows that researchers have used a range of approaches when collecting data. Different contexts have tended to be associated with different techniques. For example, in the so-called under-developed countries research into child labour has drawn upon anthropological and qualitative approaches. In contrast researchers in the developed economies have tended not to use such approaches. Instead they have relied upon self report survey techniques.

British research follows this trend with survey approaches dominating the literature. This is not to imply that other techniques have not been used. For example some studies have relied upon more qualitative approaches. However, such studies are at present in the minority. The dominance of survey studies is in part a reflection of the populations being investigated and the context in which the research is carried out. Research has typically looked at school-aged pupils and 'captured' their views by accessing them through the school system.

Survey approaches have been crucial in opening up this area of research and they will continue to be important. However, as researchers expand the range of questions that they wish to investigate the pressure to expand methodologies also increases. When attempting to answer such questions as whether or not an individual has or had a job, what the job is or was and what hours they work, then questionnaires are an appropriate means to capture information from large samples.

When researchers start to ask questions about what goes on in the workplace or what activities are young workers involved in, we start to see the need for other methodologies. To address these issues we need to ask young workers what they actually do in the workplace. Such questions may not lend themselves to survey approaches, or the information gained from this type of source may not be very detailed.

One alternative would be to use interviews as a means of gaining such information. A recent study by McKechnie, Anderson and Hobbs (2005) has shown the potential value of interviews. In this study interviews were carried out with a sub-sample of pupils from a larger survey. In one section of the survey pupils had been asked about accidents at work. The interviews pursued this theme in more depth. The results showed that some pupils who had indicated that they had not been involved in an accident at work told the interviewers that they had in fact had an accident. It appears that the pupils interpretation of the concept of 'accident' had influenced the way they responded to the survey question. The interview setting allowed for more detailed, and ultimately more accurate, information to be gathered.

This suggests that interviews may be a useful tool for researchers. However, there are methodological issues associated with interviews. For example, the skill of the interviewer in probing specific issues can impact on the information that is gathered. Similarly, the ability of the interviewee to respond to the questions being asked can create problems in accessing specific information. For example, Hobbs, Stack, McKechnie and Smillie (forthcoming) have argued that one problem with interviewing young workers is that they may not be well practiced in talking about their jobs. Posing certain questions in an interview may be the first time that the young worker has given any thought to the issue. In such circumstances it is possible that the answer provided may not be comprehensive. Such concerns should lead us to consider the use of other approaches when investigating what young people do in the workplace.

Two alternative approaches are worth noting. First Bolton, Pole and Mizen (2001) provided the participants in their study with cameras so that they could take pictures of their work

environment using disposable cameras. The young workers were instructed to take pictures that represented their place of work and what they did. The employees then chose a sample of pictures to illustrate their work.

This approach is clearly innovative and informative. However, it might be of limited use if such an approach were applied to trying to understand what young people actually do in their workplace. Pictures by their very nature are static and as such lose the dynamic element involved in work activity. As Bolton et al note many of the images did not contain the young worker since they were taking the pictures.

An alternative approach was used by Steinberg, Grennberger and Ruggerio (1982). They decided to investigate the characteristics of young employee's jobs by observing them in the workplace. The use of observation has rarely been used in the context of young employees. Steinberg et al's study appears to be unique in this particular research area, yet their findings are of interest. The results from their study found a lack of agreement between what employees said they did and what their job involved and what independent observer's noted about the jobs and the worker's activities. As such Steinberg et al's study appears to offer some support for the concerns expressed by Hobbs et al.

The advantage of Steinberg et al's approach is that it provides us with the capacity to access the dynamic element that we need to capture the activities carried out by employees. This paper, while not replicating the specific methodology of Steinberg et al, does follow the same principle by applying observation techniques to the study of school pupils' part-time work.

In this section of the research the primary aim is to gain a greater insight into the experiences of young workers. A case study approach was adopted to allow for an in-depth consideration of this issue. In addition to gaining insight into what young people did in the workplace we investigated who they worked with and the potential skills that they may gain from their employment. To address these questions a number of data gathering approaches, including observation, were used. These are explained more fully in the next section.

CHAPTER TWO METHODS

The sample

The first step in recruiting participants for the case study project was to establish the work status of pupils. We approached one school that had participated in the main survey to request access. Once this was agreed we carried out a small survey involving S4, S5 and S6 pupils. The aim of the survey was to establish the current work status of the pupils, to explain the research and invite them to provide contact details to allow us to discuss the study with them. A total of 222 returned completed survey forms and 97 indicated they were currently working.

Based on the survey information pupils were approached and invited to participate in the case study. There were a number of specific criteria that participants had to meet. In addition to consenting to participate in case study pupils had to be presently employed and working in specific sectors.

The sectors that the study focused on were the dominant employment sectors which emerged from the main survey, namely, delivery, retail, catering (including waiting) and miscellaneous. In all studies of pupil employment small numbers of pupils are found working in jobs that few other pupils do. These workers were grouped under the miscellaneous heading.

The recruitment phase had a dynamic element to it in that some pupils who agreed to participate subsequently left their jobs while others changed their mind and decided not to participate. Other potential participants were dropped from the study because their employers refused consent for the observation element to be carried out or were unwilling to be interviewed.

In total 12 pupils, five males and seven females completed all of the elements in the case study research. Table 1 provides a summary of the case study participants and the sectors they worked in.

Table 1: Case study participants

Job Type	Case Number*	Gender	Year group
Delivery	12	F	S4
Retail	4	M	S4
	9	F	S5
	5	F	S4
	6	M	S6
Catering	8	M	S5
	3	M	S6
	11	F	S5
	2	F	S5
Miscellaneous	1	M	S5
	10	F	S5
	13	F	S6

*Case 7 dropped out of the research towards the latter stages and is not included in this report.

The procedure

Each case study consists of a number of discreet stages. Once the pupil and the employer had given their consent, a standard sequence of events took place. The sequence was as follows:

Interview 1: This involved a semi-structured interview with a number of themes explored. After confirmation of work status, pupils were asked to provide information about the tasks they did at work, their views about the job and their workplace contacts and relationships.

Event Recording: Pupils were supplied with a mobile phone with the alarm function programmed to ring five times within a one hour period. At each of these time periods they completed a short form indicating what they were doing, who they were with and to indicate their level of satisfaction on a scale ranging from 1 (extremely unsatisfied) through to 10 (extremely satisfied).

Interview 2: This semi-structured interview was carried out to clarify the content of the event recording stage and to ask participants to indicate whether it had been a typical or atypical day at work. During this interview pupils were also asked about the skills they thought they may have gained from their work.

Observation: In this stage of the study an observer accompanied the pupil to their workplace. This had been pre-arranged with the pupil and the employer. The observation lasted one hour. During this time the observer, using a digital recorder, described in detail the tasks that the pupil employee carried out. The observer contextualised the activities by recording the extent to which other people were working with the individual and the type of interactions involved eg serving a customer. The observer's narrative was then transcribed.

Employer interview: A structured employer's interview was carried out. This followed the template that had been used in the Employer's Survey regarding part-time employment. Topics covered included the size of the business, number of school aged employees, key tasks they carried out, views on part-time employment, training and the issue of recognising school pupils' part-time employment. The aim was to interview employers in person, however, in some circumstances the interview was carried out on the phone.

While this sequence of events was standardised the timeframe for carrying out each step had to be flexible. This was due to the practicalities inherent in organising such a complex sequence with a number of participants. Some delays were the result of the pupil's holidays and other unforeseen problems.

In recognition of the time that pupils committed to this study each participant was sent a £20 voucher for use in a store of their choice.

Coding

The initial focus is on the information that this approach provides regarding the activities that the school pupils carried out in their work. This information is drawn from three sources: Interview 1, Event Recording and the Observation. Two independent raters considered the three sources for each of the case studies. Their initial instruction was to list the activities that had been identified within each of these sources. The second task was to consider the extent to which tasks and activities identified in Interview 1 were present in the Event Recording and Observation stage.

The raters then met to compare the lists of identified tasks and activities. A high degree of consistency was found across all 12 cases. Where inconsistencies emerged it tended to be around the terminology, or specific word, that raters used to categorise an activity. Clarification of these inconsistencies resulted in the production of an agreed set of activities for each of the twelve case studies.

CHAPTER THREE THE MAIN FINDINGS

In reviewing the material from the case studies a number of discrete objectives were identified. These were:

- (i) to consider the activities young people undertake in their workplace
- (ii) to gain some understanding of the context they work in with respect to the people they work with
- (iii) to consider what skills young people think they gain from work
- (iv) to consider the value of this methodology

(i) The activities

Each case study provided three sources of information about the activities that the person performed in their workplace. In the interview employees were asked to provide details of a typical day, what they would do from entering to leaving their job at the end of their shift. The event recording exercise provides information about the activities being carried out while working and the observation stage involved an observer recording what the employee was doing. In the case of the event recording and the observation the data was collected for a set time period (one hour) during the employees working period.

Table 2 provides a summary of the total number of activities recorded at each stage. The table shows the degree of variation between the case studies in terms of the number of activities carried out by each employee.

Table 2: Total activities for each data source

Activity List				
Total number of activities at each stage				
Job Type	Case	Interview	Event Recording	Observation
Delivery	12	7	3	5
Retail	4	12	2	8
	9	18	3	15
	5	11	3	6
	6	15	2	6
Catering	8	21	4	5
	3	20	4	9
	11	13	4	18
	2	21	5	18
Miscellaneous	1	6	4	8
	10	12	7	12
	13	11	4	15

The above table provides an indication of the number of activities identified within each data source. The table also shows some variation across the three stages for each case study. In all case studies the number of activities noted in the event recording stage is lower than that identified by the interview stage. One possible explanation for this pattern is that the interview stage asked employees about their typical working day while the event recording focused on a limited time period within that working day. For example in Case 12, delivery, the employee's papers were delivered to their doorstep and they had to count out the papers

for the different parts of their paper round. This process was carried out in a time period not covered by the event recording.

The table also shows that for all case studies the observation stage recorded a higher number of activities than the event recording. This variation cannot be explained by differences in the time frames. Instead it reflects the different procedure within each stage. In the event recording a timed signal triggered the recording of the activity being carried out. This happened five times limiting the total number of activities that could be recorded, even if employees noted multiple activities at the time. The observation consisted of a one hour narrative recorded by the observer noting what the employee was doing. Clearly this had a greater potential to identify more activities than the event recording.

In the majority of cases (8 out of 12) the interview resulted in the identification of the greatest number of activities. This may reflect the fact that many pupils have jobs where they may carry out a number of different roles. In describing their job they describe the possible range of activities. What is recorded or observed in a limited time period will only capture the activities they are doing on that day and this may be dependent on which part of the shop or store they have been assigned to. This could lead us to conclude that the interview process provides us with the most detailed account of the range of activities undertaken by employees. However, this is not always the case. In a number of the case studies the observation identified a greater number of activities, Cases 1, 11 and 13. In addition, both the event recording and the observation identified new activities which had not been mentioned in the interview stage.

Table 3 provides a summary of the unique activities identified from the interview, the event recording and the observation. By ‘unique’ we mean that the activity was only identified within the stated data source and not repeated in any of the other sources. Based on this information it is possible to identify the total number of unique activities identified for each participant across all three sources.

Table 3: The number of unique activities identified at each stage

Activity List					
Unique activities at each stage					
Job Type	Case	Interview	Event Recording	Observation	Total
Delivery	12	7	1	0	8
Retail	4	12	0	2	14
	9	18	1	3	22
	5	11	1	2	14
	6	15	0	3	18
	8	21	0	4	25
Catering	3	20	0	5	25
	11	13	0	13	26
	2	21	0	5	26
Miscellaneous	1	6	1	3	10
	10	12	3	3	18
	13	11	1	15	20

It is evident that in some cases (Case 11 and 13) the observations identified a number of new activities which the employee had not highlighted in their interview. However, in a number of cases it was apparent that the interviewee’s and the observer’s level of specification of tasks varied. For example, in the case of some of the participants they would state that they ‘served

customers'. During the observation stage it was apparent that 'serving customers' involved a range of other activities such as food preparation and working machinery such as tills or coffee machines.

Table 3 also highlights the variation between case studies in the total number of activities identified for each of the case studies. While some caution is needed in interpreting this, it could be argued that this may reflect some aspect of the 'complexity' of the specific job, or the demands placed upon the employee. If we pursue such an argument it is apparent that the variation in 'complexity', or demands, exists at two levels, between the individual case studies and between job types.

The greatest number of activities are recorded for catering (Cases 2, 3, 8 and 11) followed by retail (Cases 4, 5, 6 and 9) and the miscellaneous category (Cases 1, 10, and 13). The lowest number of activities is recorded for delivery (Case 12).

What are these activities?

In order that we may gain some insight into the activities carried out by this group of employees we will consider one case study within each of the job type categories. Drawing on the interviews, the event recording and the observation what follows is a brief sketch of the main activities that were identified.

Case 12: Job type- delivery: age – 15 years: length of employment: over one year

In this case the participant delivers a free weekly newspaper. The young person normally delivers these on a Friday after school and devotes approximately two and a half hours to this task. However, she has some flexibility in delivery times as long as the papers are delivered by Saturday lunchtime.

The bundle of papers is delivered to her door along with any additional leaflets that have to be delivered with the papers. The individual delivery person is responsible for organising the order of the route, preparing the papers for delivery (counting papers out and pre-folding them) and inserting leaflets in advance of delivery.

When starting her job she was supplied with a delivery bag and they clearly carry loads, but they can decide for themselves how large the load is. She has sub-divided the route into four segments of approximately 70 houses per section and returns to her house to re-load her bag at the end of each section. During the year she may vary the number of houses in any one segment. For example, when there are a lot of additional leaflets to deliver this increase in weight can be compensated by breaking the round into smaller sections.

She has limited contact with customers since the paper is free and no money has to be collected. However, she does meet a number of customers while delivering the papers. The route was supplied by the employer who checks that the papers are delivered by calling houses on the route and checking whether they have received their free paper.

Other activities that were carried out by this individual involved the posting of papers, developing strategies to deliver to houses with dogs and responding to householder's requests not to have papers delivered. There was no contact with the employer or any colleagues who do the same job.

Case 2: Job type – catering: age – 16 years: length of employment: between 6 months and one year

This individual works in a fast food outlet and typically works on a Saturday for approximately seven to eight hours. A significant part of her job revolves around serving customers. This includes taking orders, preparing the order, placing requests through to the kitchen for items, preparing drinks (hot and cold), taking payment, working the till, giving change and in some cases delivering the food to customers waiting at tables or in the car park at the take away section. In some cases they are dealing with multiple customers at any one time.

In addition to this she carried out a number of other duties. She stocked shelves with consumables (cups, napkins etc.), prepared trays for customers and stocked a number of food displays (eg drinks in the cool cabinet and sweet dispensers). To carry out these activities the individual had to visit the stock cupboards and lift boxes. These activities were carried out either at the request of the employee's supervisors or on their own initiative.

While her employment contract did not include food preparation in the kitchen area she did prepare some food such as hash browns and fries.

Cleaning responsibilities ranged from sweeping and mopping the front seating area through to cleaning tables and tidying up after customers, for example, spillages. She also cleaned the machines such as the drink dispensers.

During her shift she has to use a number of machines. These include cold and hot drink dispensers, ice cream machines and the till. In the latter case the employee was responsible for collecting the float for the till and ensuring that there was sufficient change available throughout the day.

In this environment working with colleagues was common and she would help make up orders for other workers and share responsibility for specific sections (eg drive through) depending on the level of customers at any given time. This element of co-working also extended to showing new employees around and guiding them through the range of tasks.

Case 9: Job type – retail: age – 16 years: length of employment: between 6 months and one year

This participant works in a shoe shop for approximately nine hours per week. The main activity revolves around serving customers but once again increasing the level of specificity highlights the component elements within this task. In this case the individual shows customers a range of stock helps with the choice and if the customer buys the goods this is processed through the till. Payment methods include dealing with cash, cheques, credit and debit cards and vouchers.

In the store this individual was responsible for shoe sizing using both manual and electronic systems. Her main area was in the children's department and therefore assessing the fit of shoes was an important element of their job.

It was evident that the employee was clearly working in a sales environment where she was expected to approach customers who are browsing in the shop and sell goods such as shoe care products when completing shoe sales.

While shoe sales accounted for a number of the activities recorded other duties were also noted. For example, she was responsible for maintaining the appearance of the shop. This involved tidying away stock that had been shown to customers, checking the displays and the stock on the shelves, collecting and replacing items from the stock room and some general cleaning. During the observation it was noted that she also had to deal with customer queries regarding stock and availability of specific items.

An additional activity identified in the event recording stage was the role that the employee played in monitoring other staff. Since they had been trained to assess children's shoe sizes they were called upon to check the measurements of fellow employees who were not fully trained.

Case 13: Job type – other: age – 17 years: length of employment: between 6 months and one year

The individual was employed as a cleaner. The company that she works for is sub-contracted by a large supermarket chain to carry out cleaning within their store. This cleaning takes place normal opening hours. In this case the individual works for approximately fifteen hours per week.

The individual is involved in cleaning a range of different areas within the store including the café, food aisles, staff areas, toilets, and shelves. She also respond to call outs to clean up spillages in the aisles or checkouts. These requests are made through the store tannoy system.

The cleaning involves sweeping and washing floors. The latter requires preparing the cleaning solution. She is also responsible for ensuring that washed areas are clearly marked with safety notices warning customers of wet floors.

While some cleaning duties are in response to call outs for spillages other activities are carried out according to a rota or specific instructions. She is allocated sections to clean and has to check toilet areas according to a time schedule, recording their visit on a time sheet. She is responsible for ensuring the toilets are clean and stocked with soap and toilet paper.

In this case the employee works largely by herself meeting colleagues in passing or when they come together to clean larger areas of the store.

While mopping and sweeping are central activities she also empties bins, removes rubbish to the compactor and has to lift tables and chairs when cleaning certain areas. One of her duties involves sweeping the food aisles and as a result is in contact with the stores' customers. In many cases customers ask her questions about produce and where goods are located. While she is not directly employed by the supermarket she has been instructed to respond to such requests for information or to identify a store employee who can help the customer. While cleaning may be the central task carried out by this employee they also have to deal with a range of requests from the store's customers.

(ii) The people

During the first interview the case study participants were asked to provide some information about the people that they worked with. Specifically they were asked whether they had contact with adult and peer co-workers or supervisors and customers within their typical work environment.

The table below shows that across all of the case studies the majority of young employees have contact with adults, peers and customers.

Table 4: Employee's contacts

Contacts				
Job Type	Case	Adults	Peers	Customers
Delivery	12			x
Retail	4	x	x	x
	9	x	x	x
	5	x	x	x
	6	x	x	x
Catering	8	x	x	x
	3	x	x	x
	11	x	x	x
	2	x	x	x
Miscellaneous	1	x	x	
	10	x	x	
	13	x	x	x

However, there are a number of comments to be made regarding this table. In the case of adult contact the individual working in delivery (Case 12) is the exception to the general pattern of having contact with adults during a typical working period. In this case the individual typically had had no contact with adult co-workers or supervisors while working. The papers that they deliver are dropped off at their house and are typically left at the front door. Occasionally they see the adult who drops the papers off. It is worth noting that while this form of delivery job, ie delivering a free newspaper, is common it is only one variant within the delivery sector.

Those individuals employed by a local newsagent will be more likely to come into contact with adults since they would collect papers from the shop in the morning or evening before delivering them. Similarly other forms of delivery work (eg milk delivery) would also involve more direct contact with adults due to the nature of the activity.

As for the other eleven case studies the fact that they all have some contact with adults during their daily job activities masks the variation in this contact. In some cases the adult contact is in effect continuous throughout the employment period. For others the adults may be in the vicinity but not continually working alongside the employee. For example in Case 1 and 10 the participants indicated that adults were in the vicinity and could be called on if they were needed. Typically they would see them at some time during their work period. This contrasts with some of those participants who worked in retail or catering where adults were continuously present throughout the work period.

The role of the adults also varied across the case studies. In some cases the adults were co-workers carrying out similar tasks to the participants in this research. However it was also clear that in a number of cases the adults were in supervisory or management roles and issued instructions to the employees and monitored performance. Unfortunately the methodology adopted here does not allow us to identify the specific role of the adults.

Contact with peers was common in all cases with the exception of the delivery sector (Case 12). Once again this may be a reflection of this specific form of delivery work and not typical of the sector as a whole. While the majority of employees worked alongside peers these were

not always other part-time school pupils. In some cases the peers were co-workers or supervisors who had left school or were full-time employees.

Customer contact played an important part in a number of the participant's jobs, which given the sectors of employment is not surprising. Once again there are variations in the form of contact. In the case of the delivery worker contact was intermittent and limited in its range. It might be a simple 'hello' or 'thank you' being exchanged through to a conversation about not delivering the paper to their house.

In contrast for Case 2, the individual working in a fast food outlet, customer contact was central to the employment experience. Dealing with varying customer orders, specific requests and complaints meant that there was a greater degree of variation in the form of customer contact. Similarly, in Case 9 the type of customer contact has a specific quality to it. This individual works in a shoe shop and as such serves customers and deals with a range of product questions. In addition the 'sales element' within the job has a specific impact on the employee-customer interaction.

It is noticeable that neither Case 1 nor 10 have customer contact. This is in part a reflection of the jobs that they do. In both cases the participants were involved in sports coaching. As such they do not have 'customers' in the sense of the word that was applied to this research. Rather we may think of them coming into contact with a range of 'clients' who benefit from their services as coaches. Clearly the initial conception of customer needs to be re-considered to allow for the variety of jobs that school pupils are involved in.

Since the majority of the pupil employees are working in a range of 'service sectors' it is not surprising that they all have contact either with customers or clients. However, we should not lose sight of the variability in the form and type of contact that is involved.

(iii) Skills and work

When participants had completed the event recording stage they met with the researchers to return the equipment. At that point a short interview was carried out to clarify any issues arising from the event recording. The interviewer took this opportunity to ask the participants about the skills that they thought they had gained from their job.

A number of common themes emerged across all of the case studies when we consider the responses. Six of the participants identified communication skills as a key factor. Amongst those who did not directly refer to communication skills a number inferred this skill by referring to behaviours such as 'better at talking to customers' or 'talk to strangers a lot better', while one referred to an improvement in their 'people skills' as a result of their employment.

A second theme that emerged was the relationship with co-workers. A number of the participants referred to 'working with others' or 'being able to work with different people'. In some cases the participants referred to having gained some skill in team working or 'working together with people'.

The third theme related to the area of confidence. Many of the employees indicated that their employment had contributed to a greater sense of confidence. For example some commented that their employment had resulted in the ability to 'overcome shyness' or 'more confident dealing with customers'.

Finally, a number of individuals referred to skills such as 'maths skills' or numeracy which tended to be associated with working with tills and handling cash.

While it is possible to identify some general themes across the case studies some of the skills associated with their employment were specific to the individuals. For example in Case 1, the sports coach, they identified that coaching had improved their own specific sports skill but that through coaching different people they had an 'understanding that they learn differently'. This idea was also mentioned by Case 10 the other sports coach. Case 10 also suggested that they had gained the ability to adapt to different situations. This referred to the fact that while they may plan their coaching session in advance what actually happens is dependent on who turns up and their particular ability levels. Not all jobs have this degree of variability.

In Case 5, the individual indicated that they had learned a lot about, and had become more aware of, retail sales. Reference to this type of skill is clearly dependent on the extent to which the job exposes the person to this type of environment.

This job specific aspect of skills emerged in other cases as well. Case 9 referred to specific job related skills gained as a result of training. In this case they had been instructed in shoe fitting, how to use specific machinery for this and shoe care products. Case 2, who worked in catering, had gained health and safety knowledge as a result of training, while Case 8 referred to specific skills associated with clearing tables and setting up function suites.

It is apparent that across the case studies the employees make reference to the attainment of general or possibly transferable skills which are gained from employment. In addition the employees may also gain some job specific skills.

NOTE: the skills identified by the participants have been checked against the interview, event recording and observation. This allowed us to consider whether there was a basis for the skill. If an employee indicated that they had learned how to deal with problem customers the data sources were reviewed to confirm that customer contact was a part of their employment experience.

(iv) The methodology

Some researchers have been arguing that there is a need to expand the methods adopted when investigating school pupil employment. One of the aims of this research was to consider the potential of alternative methods for gathering information about the activities carried out in the workplace.

In this area it is common to ask pupils what they do at work. In that sense the interview is a standard approach, however, there have been few, if any, checks on the reliability of the material provided during such interviews. In this study two reliability checks were used, the event recording and the observation.

Table 2 (repeated below) shows the total number of activities recorded at each phase. It is apparent that the interviews produced the highest number of identified activities, when compared to the event recording and the observation. There are some important exceptions to this pattern.

Table 2: Total activities for each data source

Activity List				
Total number of activities at each stage				
Job Type	Case	Interview	Event Recording	Observation
Delivery	12	7	3	5
	4	12	2	8
Retail	9	18	3	15
	5	11	3	6
	6	15	2	6
	8	21	4	5
Catering	3	20	4	9
	11	13	4	18
	2	21	5	18
Miscellaneous	1	6	4	8
	10	12	7	12
	13	11	4	15

In Cases 1, 11 and 13 the observation highlighted a greater number of activities than the interview, and in Case 10 the same number of activities were identified. The event recording produces a consistently lower number of activities than the interview or observation.

There are a number of issues linked to these patterns. First, both the event recording and the observation were limited to a one hour period. In contrast the interview stage asked employees to give an outline of their typical day. Clearly the latter has greater scope to produce a larger number of activities. Second, in at least three cases the number of activities identified at the observation was greater than the interviews. This suggests that not all employees are as adept at detailing their typical day or the activities that they perform.

This latter point is reinforced when we consider that the event recording and the observation identified new activities that were not provided at the interview stage. Table 5 provides details of the number of unique activities identified at each stage. If the interview had provided a detailed insight into the activities involved in the job then a zero should be recorded in the event recording and observation columns.

Table 5: The number of unique activities identified at each stage

Activity List				
Unique activities at each stage				
Job Type	Case	Interview	ER	Obs
Delivery	12	7	1	0
	4	12	0	2
Retail	9	18	1	3
	5	11	1	2
	6	15	0	3
	8	21	0	4
Catering	3	20	0	5
	11	13	0	13
	2	21	0	5
Miscellaneous	1	6	1	3
	10	12	3	3
	13	11	1	15

Typically the event recording identified a lower number of new activities. In other words the activities identified by the participant in the interview were typically captured in the event recording. Observation tended to add new activities to those identified at the interview stage. In two cases, Case 11 and 13, there was a substantial addition to the range of activities that were identified.

One reason for the identification of new activities is the level of specificity used by the interviewee to explain activities. For example in some cases participants would describe an activity at a global level, not identifying the range of activities that are involved in the activity. This approach may reflect the participant's belief that we all know what is involved in a given task, but it may also be related to the interviewee failing to identify or think about the range of activities they carry out.

There is some support for the latter idea. In the observation stage many of the activities added to the pupil's activity profile were new behaviours and not simply the differentiation of sub-tasks within a global task. This may reflect the difficulty of asking people to tell you about their typical day. How easy is it to recall accurately all the activities that you perform? Even though the participants knew they would be asked about their jobs in advance of the interview it is still challenging to accurately recall the range of activities carried out.

A final concern relates to the issue of being observed. It is possible that the very process of observing someone results in a change of their behaviour. In the present study it is difficult to evaluate the impact of observation. However, the fact that the event recording and the observation stages identified activities which the interviewee had stated suggests that there was some consistency and that behaviour was not changed dramatically by introducing an observer.

CHAPTER FOUR CONCLUSION

This part of the research set out to consider four aims, we will review each in turn. The first aim was to consider the activities carried out by young employees. The data indicates that in many cases this group of workers are involved in jobs where they are required to master a number of activities. However, it is apparent that the ‘demandingness’ of the employment varies by job category.

Second, the case studies set out to develop an understanding of the context that school pupils work in. Our primary focus was on who they worked with and it is apparent that the majority work alongside adults and peers. Further research is needed to clarify the role of these adults and peers, although it is evident from the present study that a number of these co-workers have some supervisory role. The majority of our case study participants deal with the public in one form or another. For some this means serving customers for others it means working with clients. Future research needs to be aware of the potential variation in this type of contact.

Third, we set out to consider the extent to which pupils’ jobs may result in the attainment of skills. We relied upon the young employee’s perceptions of skill development, but in the context of this research we were able to consider whether the job provided the opportunity to attain any identified skill. It was apparent that the young workers did believe that they had gained a number of skills from working. These range from what we might consider to be soft skills such as communication skills through to job related skills which were gained from training.

Finally, we adopted a case study methodology which encompassed some alternative data gathering approaches. Based on the experience of running the research and the data gathered it is apparent that the use of observation and event recording can offer valuable insights into the experience of school pupil employees. Interviews provide an insight into the young person’s perception of their work. However, the additional data sources in this study provide valuable information and result in a more realistic view of school pupils ‘employment.

CHAPTER FIVE REFERENCES

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