

EDGE Annual Programme of Stakeholder Surveys: Report



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1 Summary

Different types of learning in schools

- 1.1.1 Generally schools are seen to favour academic qualifications over vocational ones. Both parents and teachers were most likely to think that their school favoured academic qualifications, although significant proportions also thought it had a balanced view between the two. By contrast with schools, sixth form/ FE colleges were seen as fairly balanced, with a majority (58 per cent) of lecturers saying their college had a balanced view. Private schools were thought to be much more biased in favour of academic qualifications than state schools.
- 1.1.2 There is a view that the current balance between specialising and a generalist approach is not correct. Teachers believe that the education system forces children to continue with subjects which do not benefit them (net agreement scores of 47 per cent). This view is particularly prevalent among state school teachers. Many parents also believe that the system forces children to narrow their options too early (net agreement score of 38 per cent).
- 1.1.3 The overall opinion among stakeholders was that teachers understand the character of their students. The majority of teachers agreed with this (net agreement score of 83 per cent); parents were less positive than teachers but still inclined to agree (net agreement score of 33 per cent). Children at Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9) were likely to think that their teachers understood what they are good at (78 per cent) and to a lesser extent, what they like and don't like (49 per cent).
- 1.1.4 The majority (60 per cent) of children are involved in practical learning fairly or very often at Key Stage 3, however this drops to 52 per cent by Key Stage 4. (Years 10 to 11) While many children thought that the amount was about right, there was also significant demand for more practical learning, particularly at Key Stage 4, where 55 per cent thought there were too few opportunities. Parents were also likely to think there was too little practical learning (48 per cent). Teachers were the group most likely to think that the level of practical learning was right, but 43 per cent still thought that there was too little.
- 1.1.5 Many teachers feel inadequately trained to properly support practical learning (net agreement score of 14 per cent), although this would of course vary depending on the

subject(s) taught. Sixth form/ FE lecturers feel better equipped than school teachers, and teachers in independent schools feel better equipped than those in state schools.

- 1.1.6 When asked about their priorities for a school, parents were most focussed on softer attributes and less on specific achievement. The top priorities were their child being happy there (95 per cent), that the school is well managed (78 per cent) and that it treats children as individuals (77 per cent). By contrast, teachers were more concerned with specific achievement/ development: their top priorities were helping children achieve their potential (86 per cent), performance in qualifications (82 per cent) and increasing confidence (78 per cent).

Attitudes to different types of learning

- 1.1.7 At both Key Stages, a mixture of learning types tends to be preferred, and there is significant support for practical learning options. However there is evidence of a slight shift in preference towards academic learning as children get older. Parents of Key Stage 3 children were most likely to say their child prefers a mixture of academic and practical learning (53 per cent), while for Key Stage 4 this drops to 43 per cent with a corresponding increase for academic learning. At both Key Stage 3 and 4, children are most likely to say they favour a mixture of learning types, but answers relating to practical learning are more popular than those relating to academic learning. However the popularity of these answer options decreases by Key Stage 4, with a corresponding increase in support for academic options.
- 1.1.8 All stakeholder groups had a good opinion of vocational learning overall. The view on balance was that vocational learning provides a good education, can lead to a good career, is not only for those who don't do well at school, and that university is not the only good route. However employers and teachers tended to be more positive than parents and children and young people. In particular, 22 per cent of parents agreed that young people would only fulfil their potential by going to university. There was also a concern that taking a vocational route might rule out university later: young people were more likely to agree with this than disagree (32 per cent compared with 26 per cent), while among parents opinion was evenly split. This indicates a need for better information about vocational routes.
- 1.1.9 At both Key Stage 3 and 4, children are likely either to think academic and vocational qualifications equally important or to think academic qualifications most important. There

was limited support for vocational qualifications at either key stage. However support for both types of qualification increases by Key Stage 4, as children by this stage are better informed and the proportion not expressing an opinion decreases. There is also a gap between children's own views and what they think their parents would believe. At both key stages, children are more likely to think their parents see academic qualifications as more important than they are to hold that view themselves.

- 1.1.10 Employers have a balanced view of different types of qualification, with similar proportions choosing academic and vocational as most important, and the largest group (44 per cent) thinking both equally important. There was a wide variation by business size, with smaller organisations more in favour of vocational qualifications, and larger ones more in favour of academic.
- 1.1.11 Employers believe some soft skills are better developed by vocational qualifications and others by academic qualifications. Team working, business and customer awareness, and attitude and enthusiasm are thought to benefit more from vocational qualifications, however academic qualifications are believed to be better for developing numeracy, communication and literacy, and basic IT skills.
- 1.1.12 There is a perception among some teachers that some vocational qualifications are mainly suited to less able individuals. A third (36 per cent) believed this of NVQs / SVQs, while 32 per cent had this view of qualifications such as BTECs and City and Guilds. This perception could affect the advice teachers give. Teachers' opinion of Diplomas was better: many did not express an opinion since knowledge of this new qualification is still low, but the majority of those who did have an opinion thought the Diploma suited to individuals of all abilities. Knowledge of the Welsh Baccalaureate was also low, however those who did express an opinion nearly all thought it suited either to more able individuals or to individuals of all abilities; clearly it is not seen as a 'soft' option.

Making your mind up

- 1.1.13 Most children at Key Stage 3 are aware that GCSEs/ Standards are available at their school, however awareness of vocational qualifications is lower. Around 1 in 10 believe vocational qualifications to be available, and 7 per cent do not know what options are available. 89 per cent are planning to take GCSEs/ Standards; the remainder are either planning to take vocational qualifications or do not know what they will do.

- 1.1.14 At the end of Key Stage 4, the majority (71 per cent) of children are planning to take A Levels/Highers, while 18 per cent are planning to take a vocational qualification. Girls are more likely than boys to choose a vocational qualification.
- 1.1.15 Those who are planning to take a vocational qualification at Key Stage 4 or 5 are likely to be doing so because the style of learning is suitable for them, or to get into a specific job or career path. Only around a quarter said they were planning this route because they struggle with academic qualifications.
- 1.1.16 Children are most likely to discuss their decisions with parents. Half (51 per cent) of Key Stage 3 children had consulted their parents, while 38 per cent discussed their options with friends and 14 per cent with teachers. However 37 per cent had not discussed their options with anyone. Less than half (48 per cent) at Key Stage 3 believed there was a link between their choices and what they would do after Key Stage 4.
- 1.1.17 Many children at Key Stage 3 are making decisions about their Key Stage 4 options without being well informed. Only a third said they felt extremely or fairly well informed; boys were more likely to feel well informed than girls. Similarly, only a third of Key Stage 3 children said there was sufficient information available to make decisions, and this view was shared by 27 per cent of parents. By Key Stage 4, however, 70 per cent feel well informed.
- 1.1.18 At Key Stage 3, only 17 per cent had used the internet to get information on their options, with social networking sites most commonly used among this group. However at Key Stage 4, 44 per cent had used the internet for information, with Connexions being the most popular site.
- 1.1.19 Parents believe they have a good overall knowledge of the qualification options available, however this does not translate into good knowledge of all the individual options. Aside from GCSE/ Standards, under half of parents had a good knowledge of any qualification. Knowledge is lowest for the new 14 to 19 Diploma and Welsh Baccalaureates.
- 1.1.20 Parents consider a variety of information sources useful, with the popular being their child's school as a whole, teachers and the internet. Those who use the internet are most likely to have used Direct Gov.

Business in schools

- 1.1.21 Opinion was evenly balanced among parents on whether children have enough opportunities to experience the workplace while in school. Teachers were much more likely to think there were not enough opportunities; 51 per cent had this view while only 29 per cent thought there were enough opportunities.
- 1.1.22 Teachers were likely to think there was not enough employer engagement in their school. Nearly two thirds thought there was too little and 29 per cent that there was the right amount; very few thought there was too much. Those with nominated member of staff for employer engagement in their school were more likely to think the balance was correct.
- 1.1.23 Employers did not feel well informed about opportunities to engage with school. Two thirds felt that their organisation was on balance not well informed, and small organisations were less well informed than large ones. The most widely recognised form of engagement was work experience (79 per cent).
- 1.1.24 Children and young people were most likely to have experienced careers days and visits to or by universities. Other activities such as enterprise projects or mentoring had very low participation. Young people were likely on balance to say they want or would have wanted more engagement activities; work placements were the most popular but around half the sample felt that more of most types of activity would be beneficial.
- 1.1.25 Employers were generally positive about engaging with the education sector. Two thirds were on balance more willing than not and only 4 per cent were not at all willing. Of those employers that currently do not engage, 40 per cent were on balance in favour of doing so in the future, while eleven per cent indicated that they would definitely not be willing to do so.
- 1.1.26 63 per cent of employers said they currently engage with the education sector. This was lower in the private sector (54 per cent) than the public (92 per cent) or the third sector (76 per cent). Larger organisations were much more likely to engage (80 per cent) than were small and medium sized organisations (50 per cent).
- 1.1.27 The top benefits for employers were seen to be recruitment opportunities and a better community image. 82 per cent of employers believed engagement can be mutually beneficial for themselves and schools. Only 69 per cent felt that there had to be clear benefits for the employer in order to justify engagement.

- 1.1.28 Over half of teachers (58 per cent) believed that engagement benefits both the employer and the school, but a third (35 per cent) thought that the school had the main or only benefits. This suggests a lack of recognition or understanding on the part of teachers about what employers can take from engagement.
- 1.1.29 Many employers felt that schools do not make it easy for them to engage: 39 per cent agreed with this statement compared with 20 per cent who disagreed. Employers were also likely to feel that business and schools do not understand each other. 40 per cent agreed that they did not *'have much common ground or talk a different language.'* While 30 per cent disagreed.
- 1.1.30 Young people in Key Stage 4 and above had positive views on balance about the benefits they had got from activities with employers. In terms of gaining skills, 60 per cent of young people ranked team working as a benefit; other benefits included personal presentation and problem-solving. Only 16 per cent felt that they had not learned anything from taking part.
- 1.1.31 The main barriers for employers were a perceived lack of time and resources, concerns about bureaucracy and whether there were suitable or appropriate opportunities. Some employers had concerns about having students in their workplace; this demonstrates that the concept of engagement for many employers is narrow and focused largely on their ability to provide work experience opportunities.
- 1.1.32 Nearly 40 per cent of employers reported that they do not receive any information about the engaging with the education sector. The most common sources of information are local colleges and schools, while 17 per cent had used a Education Business Partnership.
- 1.1.33 A third of teachers were unsure whether their school had a particular member of staff with the responsibility to liaise with local employers. Among those who did know 69 per cent said their school did have that arrangement in place and 21 per cent that it did not.

Education and the workplace

- 1.1.34 For all ages, soft skills such as teamwork and enthusiasm are of high importance to employers. For school leavers aged 16 to 17, soft skills are the most valued factor, but GCSE or equivalents are also a key qualification for most employers. For 18 to 20 year olds, previous work experience, soft skills, and references from previous employers are

seen as most important. For recent graduates, previous work experience, soft skills and degree class were most important.

- 1.1.35 Over half of young people thought that employers value academic qualifications more highly than vocational ones. Only just over a third felt that both academic and vocational were of equal importance. ABC1s were more likely to think that employers favour academic qualifications than C2DEs.
- 1.1.36 Employers think graduates are better prepared for the world of work than school leavers. 80 per cent thought that school leavers were on balance not well prepared, compared with 61 per cent for graduates. Those that engage with the education sector are likely to have a more positive perception of both school leavers and graduates.
- 1.1.37 School is seen as better at providing qualifications than skills. Two thirds of working young people felt that the education system did not do enough to develop the skills they have needed in the workplace. In contrast, two thirds of working young people in work believed that they had left school with the right qualifications to help in their chosen career.
- 1.1.38 71 per cent of employers believed that there was a mismatch between the skills of young people and their requirements as an organisation; only 10 per cent disagreed.
- 1.1.39 Employers were close to evenly balanced on whether academic, vocational or both types of qualification were most relevant for their organisation. A quarter felt that vocational qualifications were more relevant while 30 per cent believed academic qualifications to be more relevant.
- 1.1.40 Practical work experience was seen to be more important than specific qualifications (37 per cent compared to 21 per cent) when employing a school or college leaver.
- 1.1.41 New employees with vocational qualifications were judged to be stronger at team working, and to have a better attitude and business awareness. However academic qualifications are thought better at developing problem solving, IT skills and – markedly - both literacy and numeracy.
- 1.1.42 The research suggests an unmet demand for people with vocational qualifications and a relative over-supply of people with academic qualifications. 81 per cent of employers felt that there were too few people in the job market with vocational qualifications, while 47 per cent thought that there were too many with academic qualifications.

Training and development of employees

- 1.1.43 The majority of employers (68 per cent) said that they fund training and development for current staff. With the exception of micro businesses (just 39 per cent) this trend was strong across small, medium and large employers. The most common sources of training are private providers, in-house staff and industry bodies / professional associations.
- 1.1.44 Training is predominantly aimed at improving specific skills required for a job (85 per cent). Generic business skills such as communications and team working were seen as less importance but were still mentioned by nearly half of employers.

Apprenticeships

- 1.1.45 Overall, the stakeholders were most likely to think the Government target for Apprenticeships about right. Teachers were the group most likely to think the target too high, while employers and parents were most likely to think it too low. Teachers report a very poor knowledge of Apprenticeships (net score of -39 per cent) while parents claim a much better knowledge (net score of +10 per cent). However it is possible that parents are overestimating their knowledge.
- 1.1.46 Teachers do not have a good opinion of Apprenticeships. Almost half (46 per cent) disagree that they are a good alternative to A Levels. There is also a gap between how teachers expect Apprenticeships to be viewed by other groups, and how those groups actually see them. For example, the proportion of parents who actually see Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A Levels is 26 percentage points higher than the proportion of teachers who expect parents to favour this opinion.
- 1.1.47 Young people are also more positive about Apprenticeships than teachers expect them to be, and over half (52 per cent) think they are a good alternative to A Levels. However again there is a perception gap when thinking about how other stakeholders would view them. Parents are more positive than young people expect them to be, while teachers are less positive.
- 1.1.48 Parents have a positive view of Apprenticeships with 43 per cent agreeing that they are a good alternative to A Levels. Parents also report a good knowledge of Apprenticeships, however this may be overstated. They may also see Apprenticeships as a good alternative for other people's children, but not for their own.

1.1.49 Employers were the most positive towards Apprenticeships, and this was correctly identified by other stakeholders. Over half (55 per cent) believe Apprenticeships are a good alternative. However they tend to think that parents, teachers and young people do not view Apprenticeships as good alternatives.

14-19 Diplomas

1.1.50 Awareness of the new 14-19 Diplomas is generally low. 7 out of 10 employers rated their knowledge as poor. 39 per cent of parents had heard of the qualification before taking the survey. A third of teachers said their school was offering the Diploma.

1.1.51 Parents have a more positive view of Diplomas than teachers. They are twice as likely to think the Diploma will be a high quality alternative to traditional qualifications, and also more likely to think it will be different to other qualifications past and present. Both parents and teachers strongly believe that the new Diplomas will increase the level of practical learning in schools. The majority (65 per cent) of employers believe the Diplomas will be seen as having a lower status than GCSEs/ A Levels.

2 Methodology

2.1.1 In November 2008 YouGov conducted surveys of four key stakeholder groups. The research was carried out online and sample was sourced from YouGov's panel of 250,000 adults and young people in the UK.

Figure 1: Headline details about the four stakeholder surveys

Stakeholder group	Dates	Sample	Invites	Response rate
Children and young people	13 th to 24 th November	2,538	7,312	35%
Parents	3 rd to 10 th November	1,030	2,000	52%
Employers	3 rd to 10 th November	1,001	2,020	50%
Teachers	3 rd to 10 th November	1,199	2,305	52%
Total	-	5,768	13,637	42%

2.1.2 Further detail about the sample composition of each stakeholder group is provided in turn below beginning with the survey of children and young people.

Children & young people

2.1.3 For the survey of children and young people the sample frame was fixed as those aged between 11 and 24 with an even spread of ages across that range. Sample was drawn to be representative of region and socio-economic classification based on pre-known data about their household and the data was weighted for age and gender of respondents. In future years this survey will return back to the same respondents in a longitudinal exercise that will track decision making and changes in their attitudes as they get older. The key variables are presented in the table below.

Figure 2: Breakdown of the children and young people's survey sample

Variable	Value	Weighted	Unweighted
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Variable	Value	Weighted	Unweighted
	Base	2538	2538
Gender	Male	1269	1098
	Female	1269	1440
Age bands	11 to 12	363	358
	13 to 14	363	371
	15 to 16	363	397
	17 to 18	363	353
	19 to 20	363	367
	21 to 22	363	327
	23 to 24	363	365
Which of these best describes what you are doing at the moment?	At school or college in full time education	1257	1283
	At University/ other higher education institute	550	544
	Working full time	487	475
	On a training course	24	22
	A combination of working and studying	93	89
	Doing an Apprenticeship	14	14
	Not working studying or on a training course	113	111
Current Key stage	Key Stage 3	568	565
	Key Stage 4	354	376
	Key Stage 5	315	322
School/ college type	State/ Comprehensive School	859	880
	Grammar/ State Selective School	128	125
	Special School	9	10
	Academy	34	35
	Independent/ Public/ Private School	84	84
	Sixth Form College	91	90
	Further Education College	107	112
	Tertiary College	0	0
Social Grade	ABC1	1035	1046
	C2DE	1501	1490
Government Office of the Region	North East	117	119
	North West	284	282
	Yorkshire and The Humber	232	232
	East Midlands	172	176

Variable	Value	Weighted	Unweighted
	West Midlands	242	242
	East of England	256	260
	London	314	313
	South East	349	344
	South West	238	237
	Wales	128	127
	Scotland	205	206

Parents

2.1.4 The sample frame for parents was defined as parents or carers of at least one child currently aged between 11 and 18. The sample was controlled and weighted using the national population as a proxy for representativeness amongst parents. The data was weighted for region and socio-economic classification, sampling ensured a broad 50/50 split between gender and age was not considered a key variable. The key variables are presented in the table below.

Figure 3: Breakdown of the parents survey sample

Variable	Value	Weighted	Unweighted
	Base	1030	1030
Gender	Male	501	502
	Female	529	528
New age	18 to 34	90	87
	35 to 44	408	402
	45 to 54	421	428
	55+	111	113
Social Grade	ABC1	556	602
	C2DE	474	428
Government Office of the Region	North East	46	42
	North West	121	100
	Yorkshire and The Humber	89	98
	East Midlands	75	81
	West Midlands	94	105
	East of England	97	105
	London	130	105

Variable	Value	Weighted	Unweighted
	South East	144	169
	South West	91	103
	Wales	52	52
	Scotland	93	70
Working status	Working	804	808
	Full time student	25	25
	Retired	23	23
	Looking after family full time	105	104
	Unemployed	11	11
	Not working for health reasons	48	45
	Not working for other reasons	14	14
Number of children between 11 and 18	1	590	588
	2	377	380
	3	53	52
	4	10	10

Employers

2.1.5 The target sample profile for employers was to survey 1,000 managers / decision makers with responsibility for recruitment as a component part of their job. Respondents were not human resources personnel, but rather middle and senior management. The sample was drawn to be representative in terms of business size (as measured by the number of employees) and industry sector. The data was weighted on business size and industry sector using National Statistics data. The key variables are presented in the table below.

Figure 4: Breakdown of the employers survey sample

Variable	Value	Weighted	Unweighted
	Base	1001	1001
Government Office of the Region	North East	24	25
	North West	74	73
	Yorkshire and The Humber	89	86
	East Midlands	81	80
	West Midlands	76	75
	East of England	109	110
	London	176	171

Variable	Value	Weighted	Unweighted
	South East	178	182
	South West	72	77
	Wales	44	46
	Scotland	78	76
Organisation size	Micro (2 to 9)	131	166
	Small (10 to 49)	137	181
	Medium (50 to 249)	120	155
	Large (250 or more)	613	499
Sector	Private sector	721	724
	Nationalised industry or public corporation	3	2
	Public sector	207	194
	Charity/ voluntary sector	70	62
Industry	Advertising/Marketing/PR	28	31
	Aerospace	9	7
	Agriculture/Chemicals/Forest Products	11	12
	Automotive	14	14
	Computers/Electronics	50	54
	Construction	84	85
	Consumer Goods	23	24
	Education	76	77
	Energy/Mining	16	16
	Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	107	98
	Government/Military/Public Service	98	89
	Hospitality/Recreation	36	40
	Media/Publishing/Entertainment	24	25
	Medical/Health Services	85	81
	Pharmaceuticals	11	10
	Retail	53	55
	Service	58	59
	Telecommunications/Networking	24	23
	Travel/Transportation	36	36
Other	157	165	

Teachers

2.1.6 The target sample for teachers was to achieve 800 responses from working secondary school teachers and 200 from those in specific sixth form or other Further Education

colleges (FE). The final survey sample consisted of 1,024 secondary teachers and 175 from FE colleges. Sampling was controlled for balance across age, regions and ages of pupils taught. The data was not weighted and the key variables are presented in the table below.

Figure 5: Breakdown of the teachers survey sample

Variable	Value	Number
Base	Base	1,199
Gender	Male	515
	Female	684
Age	18-34	429
	35-44	216
	45-54	224
	55+	330
Government Office of the Region	North East	51
	North West	146
	Yorkshire and The Humber	111
	East Midlands	70
	West Midlands	135
	East of England	104
	London	134
	South East	169
	South West	95
	Wales	63
	Scotland	121
Role	Secondary teacher	1024
	Sixth form / FE lecturer	175
For how long have you been a teacher or lecturer?	Up to 2 years	167
	Between two and five years	204
	Between five and ten years	241

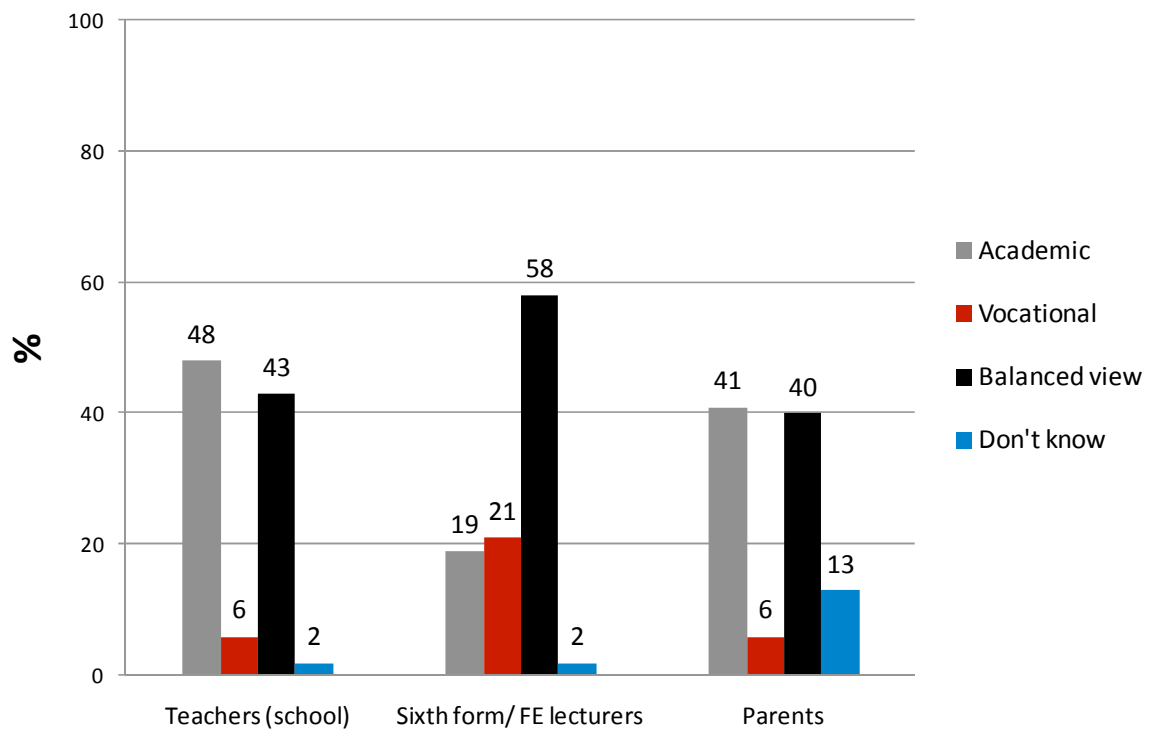
Variable	Value	Number
	Ten years or more	587
Institution Type	State School	813
	Independent/ Public/ Private School	116
	Sixth Form/FE/ Tertiary	213
Age Group(s) Taught	11 to 13	830
	14 to 16	887
	16 to 19	723
	19 plus	204
Type of subjects taught	Academic	832
	Vocational	88
	Mix of both	241

3 Different types of learning in schools

3.1 How balanced are schools between academic and practical learning?

3.1.1 In general, schools are not seen to be particularly balanced between academic and vocational learning. Significant proportions of both teachers and parents thought that their (child's) school was more likely to favour academic qualifications (48 per cent and 41 per cent respectively), while very few thought the school favoured vocational qualifications. However a large proportion also believed that the school has a balanced view between the two. In contrast, further education colleges are seen as much more balanced by college lecturers, with similar proportions saying that the college favours academic and vocational qualifications, and the majority (58 per cent) believing that it is balanced.

Figure 6: Do you feel that your school/ your child's school favours academic qualifications, vocational qualifications or has a balanced view?



Base: 1,024 teachers, 174 sixth form/FE lecturers, 1,030 parents.

- 3.1.2 Significant differences are apparent between different types of school. In the state sector, 47 per cent of teachers thought that their school had a balanced view and 46 per cent that it favoured academic qualifications, however in the independent/ private sector, none of the teachers surveyed thought that their school had a balanced view, with the vast majority (91 per cent) saying it favoured academic qualifications. This suggests that opportunities to take vocational qualifications may be very limited in private schools.
- 3.1.3 The research also showed regional variations on this issue. Teachers in Wales were indicatively more likely to think their school had a balanced view (54 per cent, compared with 45 per cent in England and 42 per cent in Scotland). Those in Scotland were most likely to say their school favoured academic qualifications. Gender seems to have an effect on perceptions of this issue: among both teachers and parents, women were more likely to say their (child's) school had a balanced view than were men, who were more likely to say the school favoured academic qualifications.

3.2 Widening or narrowing choices

- 3.2.1 There has been debate over the extent to which children should specialise, and at what age. Questions were asked to determine whether the current situation is right, or whether the system either forces children to narrow their options too early, or to continue with subjects that do not benefit them. Teachers were inclined to believe that the system does force students to continue with subjects that are not beneficial: 65 per cent agreed with this statement compared to only 18 per cent disagreeing, giving a net agreement score of 47 per cent. The length of teachers' experience had an impact on this; those who have been teaching for two years or less were least likely to hold this view, with a net agreement score of 31 per cent, and this rises to 54 per cent for those who have been teaching for 10 years or more. Those in the state sector were also more likely to agree with this than those in private/ independent schools (55 per cent compared with 31 per cent).

Figure 7: The education system makes students continue with subjects that do not benefit them (net agreement score)

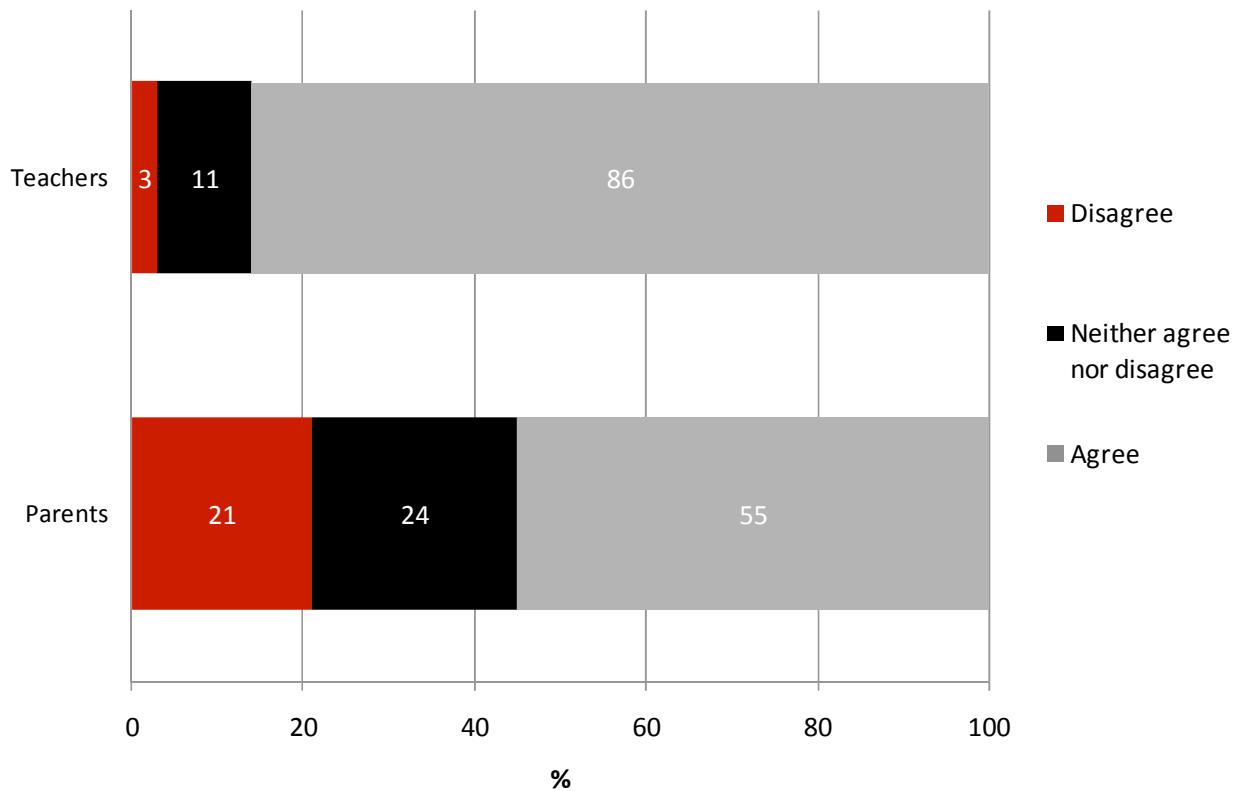
Total	Length of experience				Institution type		
	Up to 2 years	2 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	More than 10 years	State	Private/Independent	Sixth form/FE/ Tertiary
47%	31%	43%	48%	54%	55%	31%	28%

3.2.2 Parents were also asked whether the education system forces children to narrow their options too early, and their overall opinion was that it does, with 53 per cent agreeing and only 15 per cent disagreeing, giving a net agreement score of 38 per cent. This view was considerably more prevalent among mothers than fathers (48 per cent compared to 28 per cent).

3.3 Do teachers understand the character and strengths of their students?

3.3.1 Most teachers felt that they understand the character of their students, with 86 per cent agreeing and only 3 per cent disagreeing, giving a net agreement score of 83 per cent. Parents were less positive about this than teachers, but were still broadly of the opinion that their children’s teachers did understand them, with 53 per cent agreeing and 20 per cent disagreeing, giving a net agreement score of 33 per cent.

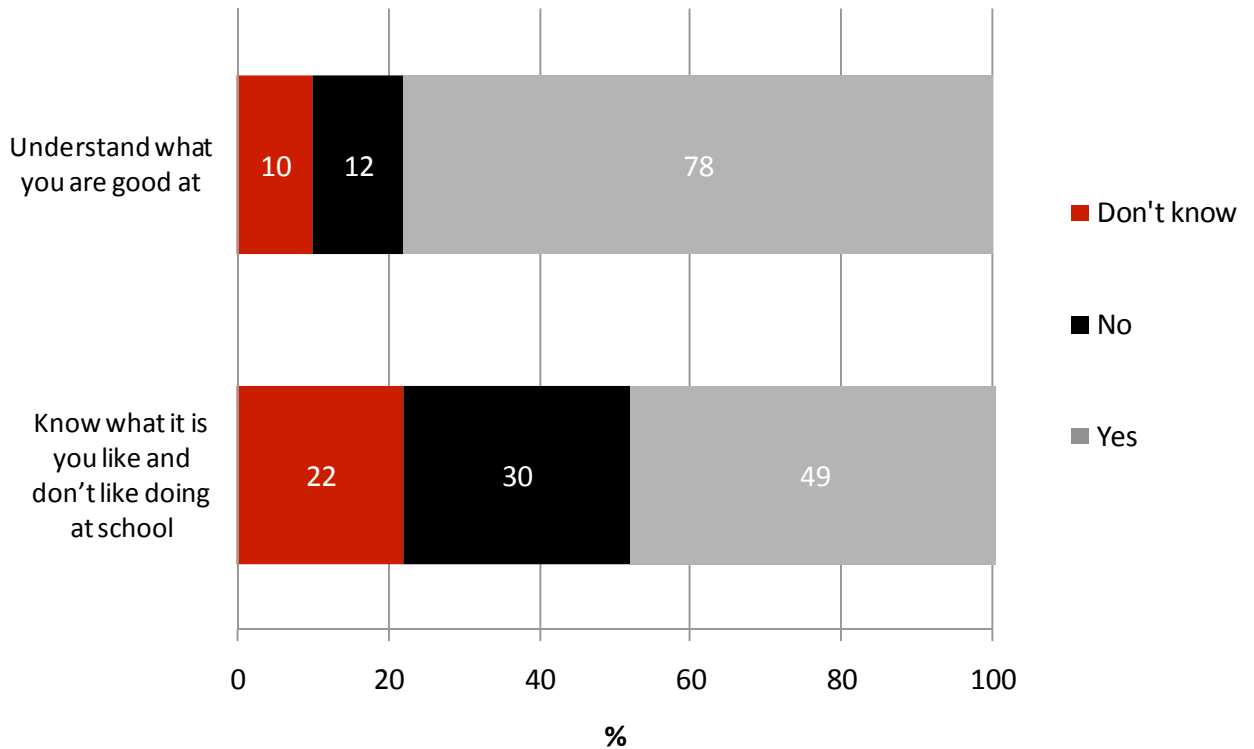
Figure 8: “You understand the character and ambitions of your students” / “Your children’s teachers understand the character of your children”.



Base: 1,199 teachers/lecturers, 1,030 parents

- 3.3.2 Parents were also asked whether their children’s teachers understand their strengths and weaknesses, and this showed a similar pattern to the question about understanding character, with a net agreement score of 36 per cent. It seems that overall parents feel that teachers’ understanding is adequate in this area.
- 3.3.3 Children at Key Stage 3 were also likely to feel that their teachers understood them, with 78 per cent agreeing that their teachers understand what they are good at, compared to only 12 per cent disagreeing. When asked whether their teachers know what they like and don’t like at school, the view was closer to balanced but still overall children felt that their teachers did understand this, with 49 per cent agreeing and 30 per cent disagreeing.

Figure 9: Do you think that your teachers....



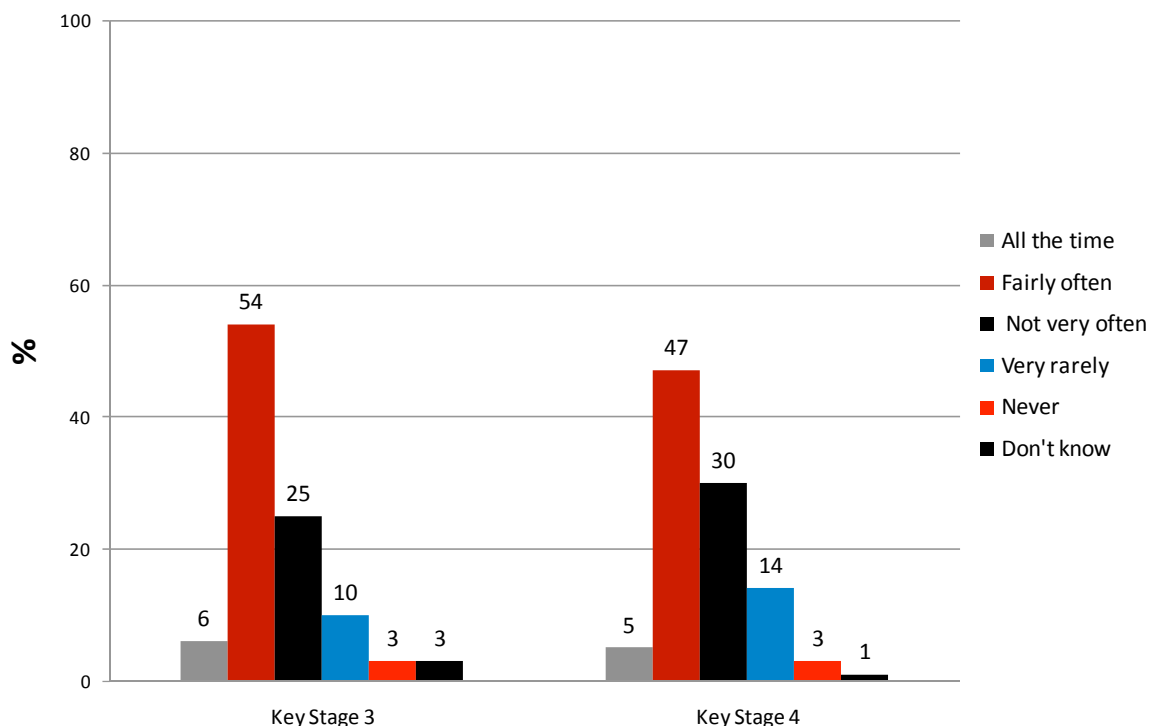
Base: 565 children (KS3)

3.4 Involvement in practical projects

3.4.1 At Key Stage 3, the majority of children are regularly involved in practical learning. 54 per cent said their lessons fairly often included practical projects, and 6 per cent said they were involved in practical projects 'all the time'. By contrast, 35 per cent said they were involved in practical projects rarely or not very often, and 3 per cent said they never did projects of this kind.

3.4.2 By Key Stage 4 this involvement in practical learning drops slightly: only 47 per cent of children at this stage said their lessons fairly often included practical projects, and 5 per cent answered 'all the time'. 44 per cent of Key Stage 4 pupils said they were involved in practical projects rarely or not very often. This decrease is likely to be the result of specialisation at Key Stage 4; children at this stage will have dropped some subjects whereas those at Key Stage 3 follow a broader curriculum.

Figure 10: During your lessons at school are you ever involved in practical projects? Practical projects include things like enterprise competitions, organising events and making things.

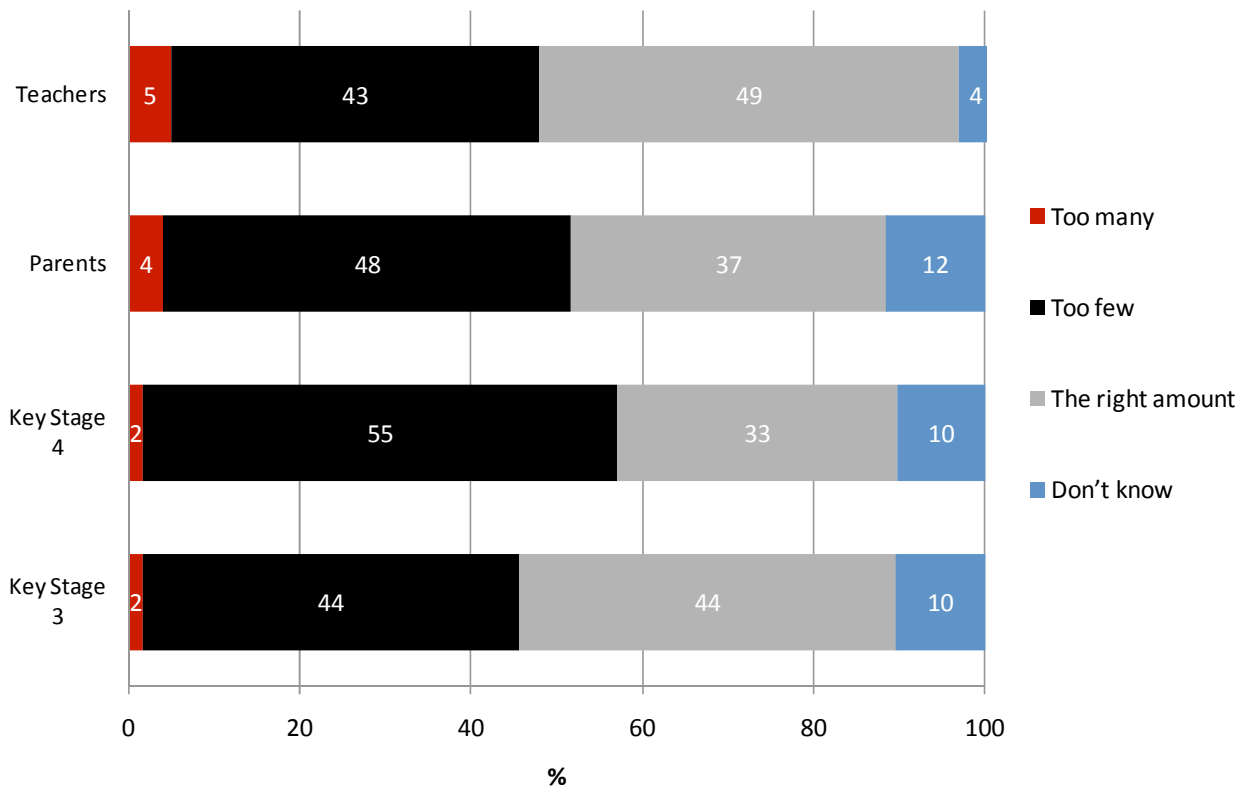


Base: 565 children (KS3), 376 children (KS4)

3.4.3 While many children felt that the amount of practical learning was about right, a large proportion also felt that there were too few opportunities for practical learning, while very few thought there was too much practical learning. This view is held by both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 children, but is particularly prevalent at Key Stage 4, where as we have seen children take part in less practical learning. At this key stage, over half (55 per cent) thought that there were too few opportunities, while a third thought that the amount was right. This suggests a significant demand for an increase in practical learning at Key Stage 4 in particular.

3.4.4 Parents were also likely to think that there is insufficient practical learning in schools, with almost half (48 per cent) of those surveyed saying that there were too few opportunities, and 37 per cent saying that the level was right. Teachers were the stakeholder group most likely to think that the current amount of practical learning was right (49 per cent), however even among this group a sizable 43 per cent thought that there were too few opportunities.

Figure 11: Do you think schools have too many not enough or about the right amount of practical projects?



Base: 565 children (KS3), 376 children (KS4), 1,030 parents, 1,199 teachers/lecturers

3.4.5 There were significant differences between teachers in different types of school. Those in independent schools were much more likely to think that the level of practical learning was right than were those in state schools (52 per cent compared with 43 per cent), and correspondingly less likely to think there was not enough practical learning. As discussed earlier, there seems to be less focus on vocational qualifications in independent schools, nevertheless many teachers in these schools think that the level of practical learning is right. This may suggest that lessons in general contain more practical projects in independent schools, without necessarily being connected to vocational qualifications as such. A much greater proportion of those in sixth form/ FE institutions thought that the level of practical learning was right (65 per cent); this is not surprising since sixth form/ FE colleges are likely to offer a wider range of vocational courses than are schools. However

even among this group, a quarter (26 per cent) still thought that there was an insufficient amount of practical learning.

3.5 Teachers supporting practical learning

3.5.1 The research shows that many teachers may be inadequately trained to support practical learning. 44 per cent of teachers agreed that their training did NOT sufficiently equip them to support practical learning, while only 30 per cent disagreed, giving a net agreement score of 14 per cent. However, it is important to remember that practical learning may not be relevant to all teachers, depending on the subject they teach, so not all teachers can necessarily be expected to have received training of this kind.

3.5.2 As might be expected, lecturers in sixth form/ FE colleges were much less likely to feel poorly equipped to support practical learning than were school teachers, and those in independent schools felt better equipped than those in state schools.

3.5.3 Perhaps as a result of having more opportunity to receive training and gain experience, older teachers were the least likely to feel poorly equipped in this respect, and young teachers were the most likely. Those in Yorkshire and the Humber were indicatively the most likely to feel poorly equipped, with those in the South West the least likely to (with net agreement scores of 30 per cent and 1 per cent respectively).

Figure 12: How far do you agree or disagree that the training you have received does NOT sufficiently equip you with the skills needed to help students get the most out of practical learning? (net agreement score)

Total	Institution type			Age			
	State	Private/ Independent	Sixth form/ FE	18 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55+
14%	28%	2%	-22%	20%	17%	14%	5%

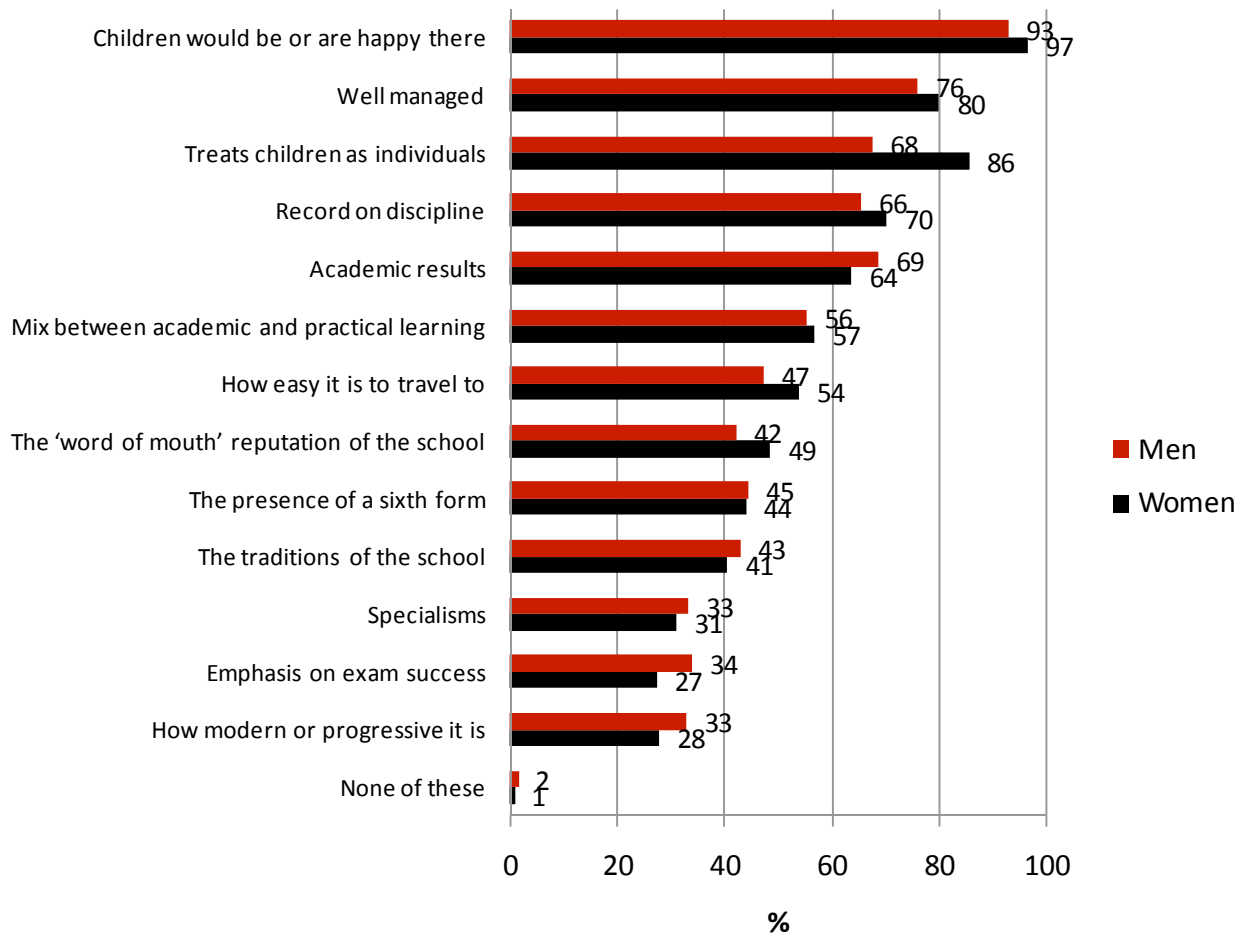
3.6 Parents' priorities

3.6.1 Parents were asked what they consider important in a school. They considered a number of factors to be important: each respondent ticked seven options on average. By a large margin, the single most important factor was the happiness of their child at the school, with 95 per cent of parents selecting this. Other key factors were that the school is well managed (78 per cent) and that it treats children as individuals (77 per cent). The priorities

of mothers varied somewhat from those of fathers: women were more likely to value treating children as individuals (86 per cent compared to 68 per cent), and how easy the school is to travel to (54 per cent compared with 47 per cent).

- 3.6.2 Men, on the other hand, were more likely than women to prioritise the school's emphasis on exam success (34 per cent compared with 27 per cent). Social grade also had an impact on priorities: ABC1 parents were more likely than C2DEs to value academic results (72 per cent compared with 60 per cent) and the presence of a sixth form (49 per cent compared with 39 per cent). While gender did not make a difference to whether parents considered the balance between academic and vocational learning important, C2DE parents were marginally more likely to consider this important than were ABC1s (58 per cent compared with 55 per cent).

Figure 13: Thinking about your children’s school, which of the following are important for you as a parent?



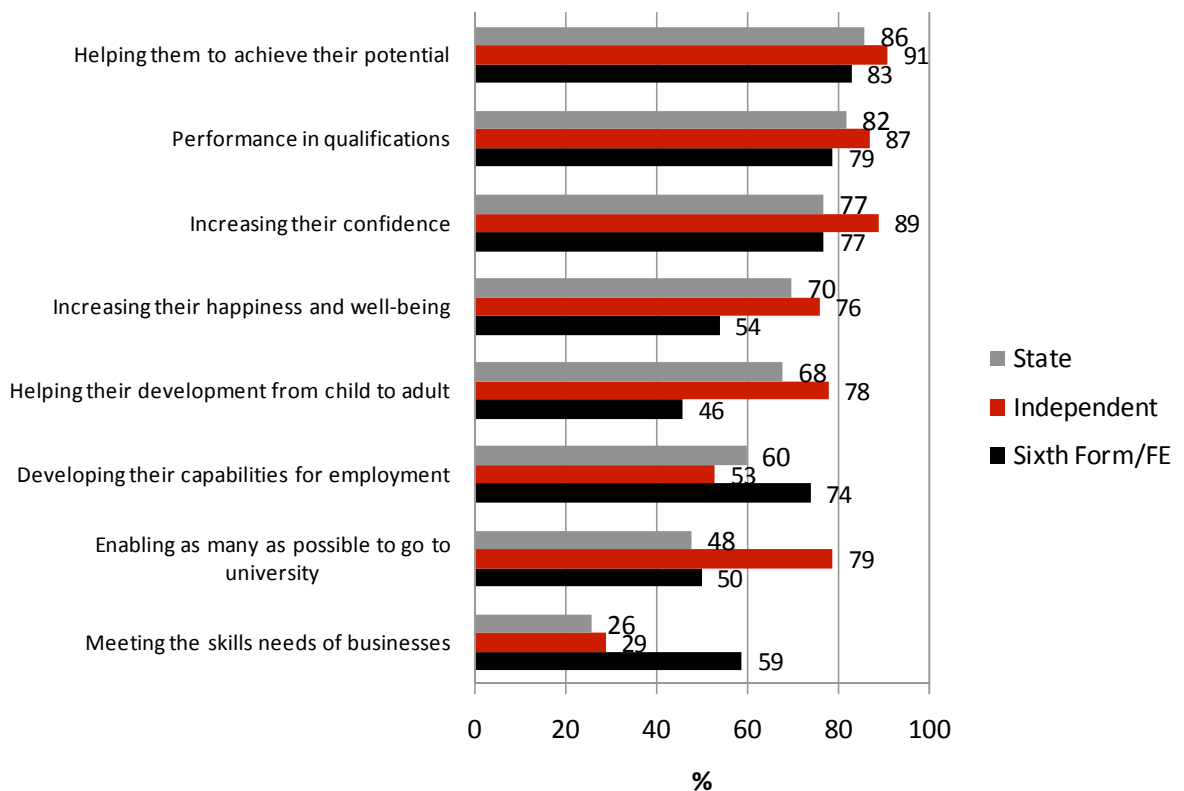
Base: 502 men, 528 women (parents)

3.7 Schools’ priorities

3.7.1 In contrast to parents, teachers/ lecturers were more concerned with qualifications and less so with happiness (although the majority did still list happiness as a priority). Among teachers, the top priority was helping children achieve their potential (86 per cent), followed by performance in qualifications (82 per cent) and increasing confidence (78 per cent). There were significant differences between different institution types: teachers in independent schools were much more concerned with ‘softer’ priorities such as increasing confidence, increasing happiness and well-being, and assisting development from child to adult than were state schools or sixth form/ FE colleges, and additionally were massively

more concerned with enabling as many as possible to go to university (79 per cent compared with 48 per cent for state schools). FE/ sixth form colleges were more likely than either state or private schools to consider developing employment capabilities, and meeting the skills needs of businesses, as priorities.

Figure 14: Thinking about your school/ college, which of the following are considered important for students at your school/ college?



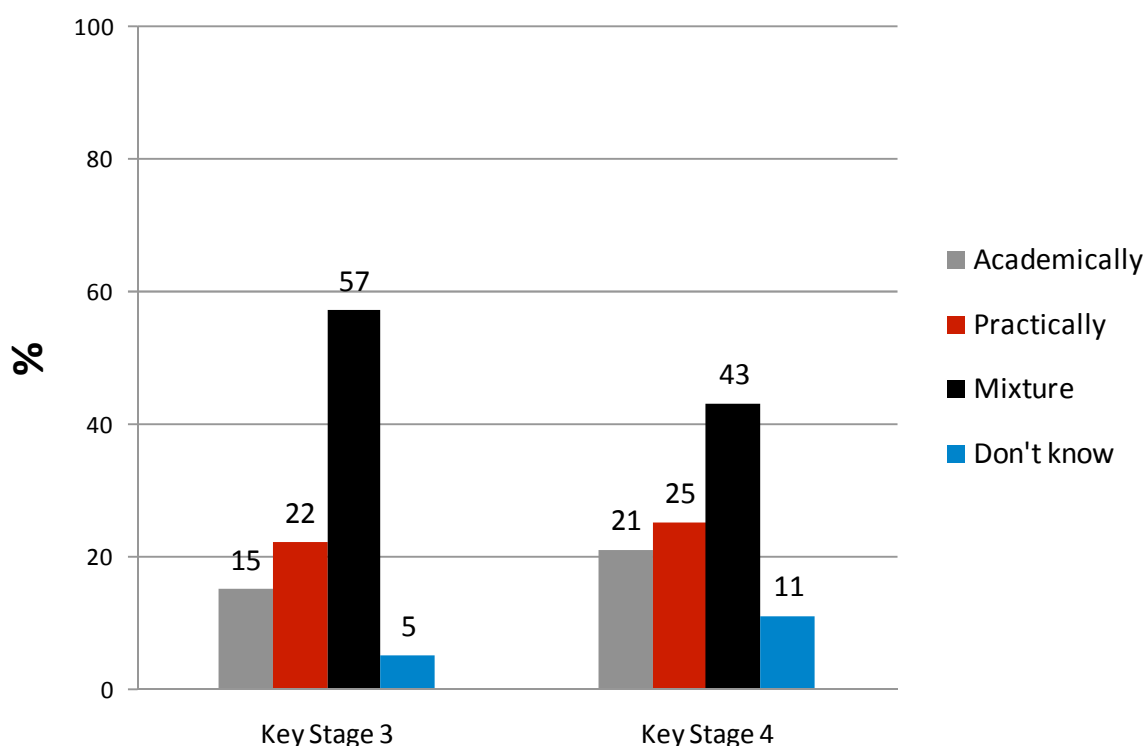
Base: 813 state school teachers, 116 independent school teachers, 213 sixth form/ FE lecturers

4 Attitudes to different types of learning

4.1 How people prefer to learn

4.1.1 At Key Stage 3, parents were most likely to say that their child prefers a mixture of academic and practical learning: 53 per cent gave this response. At Key Stage 4, 'a mixture' remains the most popular answer, but the percentage falls to 43 per cent. One in ten parents of Key Stage 4 pupils (11 per cent) did not know how their child prefers to learn.

Figure 15: How do you think this child prefers to learn?

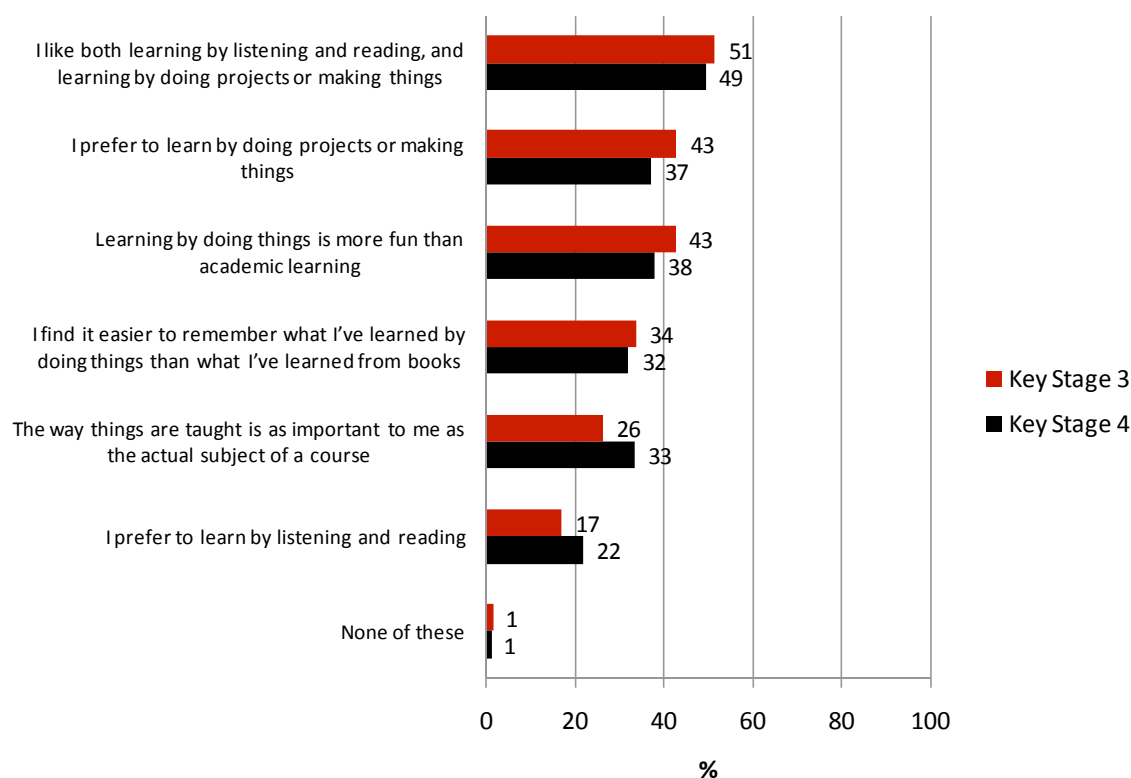


Base: 1,030 parents

4.1.2 A similar view was also reflected by children. At both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, children were most likely to say that they preferred a mixture of learning types. However options relating to practical learning were significantly more popular than those relating to academic learning. Children at Key Stage 3 were more likely to say they preferred practical learning than those at Key Stage 4 (43 per cent compared to 37 per cent), while those at Key Stage 4 were correspondingly more likely than those at Key Stage 4 to say they

preferred academic learning (22 per cent compared with 17 per cent). This, together with the findings from the parents survey, suggests a slight shift in interest towards academic learning between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Nevertheless, at both Key Stages, many children view practical learning as more fun than academic learning (43 per cent at Key Stage 3 and 38 per cent at Key Stage 4). Girls were particularly likely to view practical learning as more fun at both key stages, and were also much more likely than boys to say it is easier to remember things learned practically than those learned academically.

Figure 16: Thinking about how you prefer to learn, which of these statements do you agree with?



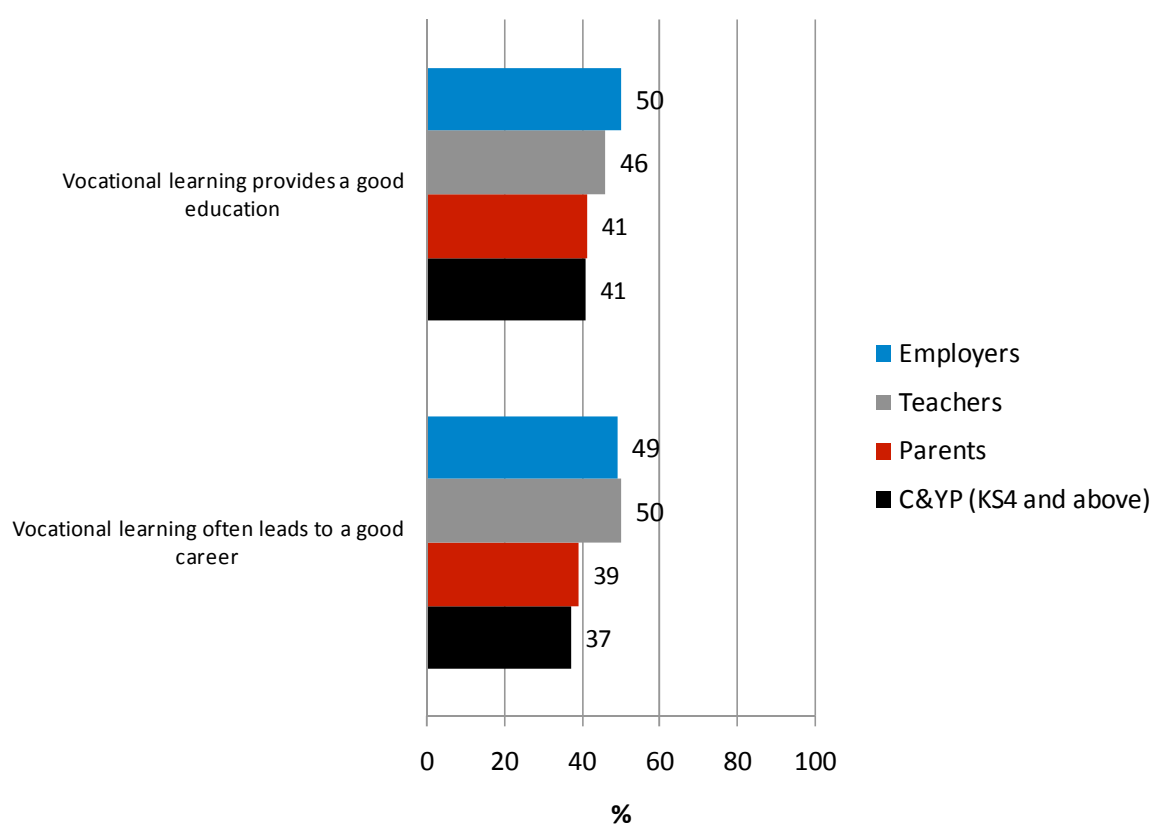
Base: 565 children (KS3), 376 children (KS4)

4.2 Perceptions of vocational qualifications

4.2.1 All four stakeholder groups were asked questions on their attitudes to vocational qualifications. The general opinion was that vocational learning does provide a good education and often leads to a good career; among all four groups, when those disagreeing

were subtracted from those agreeing, the net agreement score was highly positive. Employers and teachers were the most positive groups, while parents and children/ young people were somewhat less positive. In particular, these groups were significantly less positive than teachers and employers on the question of vocational learning leading to a good career.

Figure 17: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (net agreement score)

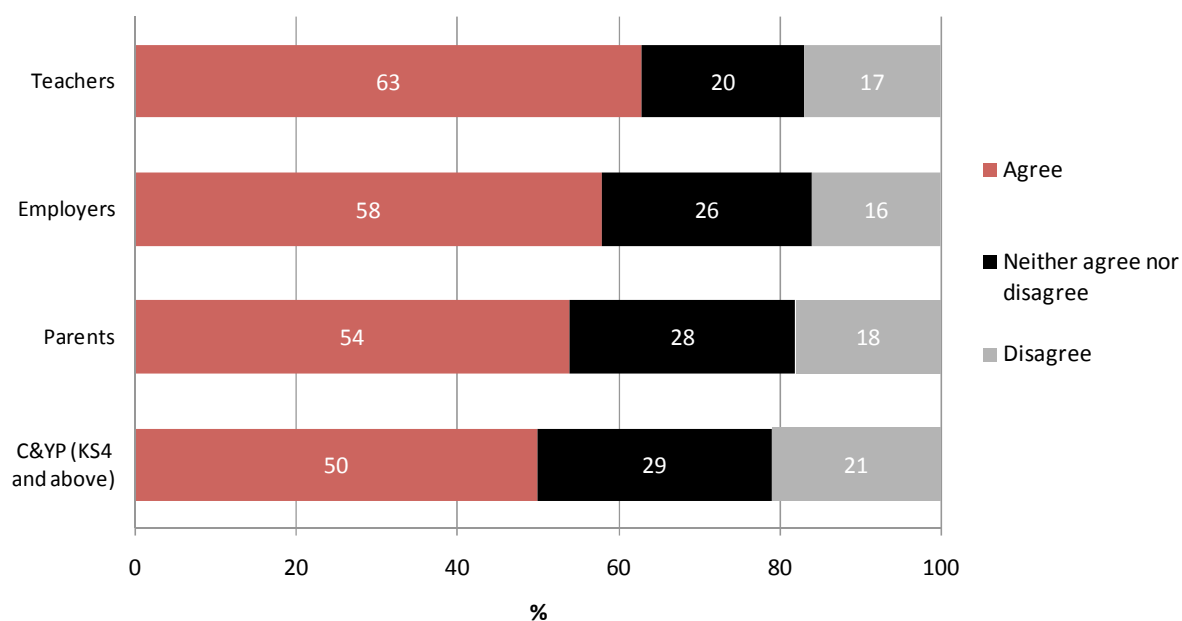


Base: 1,967 young people (KS4 and above), 1,030 parents, 1,199 teachers/lecturers, 1,001 employers

4.2.2 The stakeholder groups surveyed were also not generally of the opinion that vocational learning is only for those who do not do well at school. While there was a certain proportion of each group that did agree with this statement, in each case a much greater proportion disagreed. Employers and teachers were the most positive about vocational learning in this respect, and parents and children and young people the least. Among children and young people, half (50 per cent) disagreed that vocational learning is only for those who do not do

well at school, however 21 per cent agreed with the statement, and 29 per cent had no opinion or did not know. This may suggest a need to provide young people with more information about vocational learning opportunities.

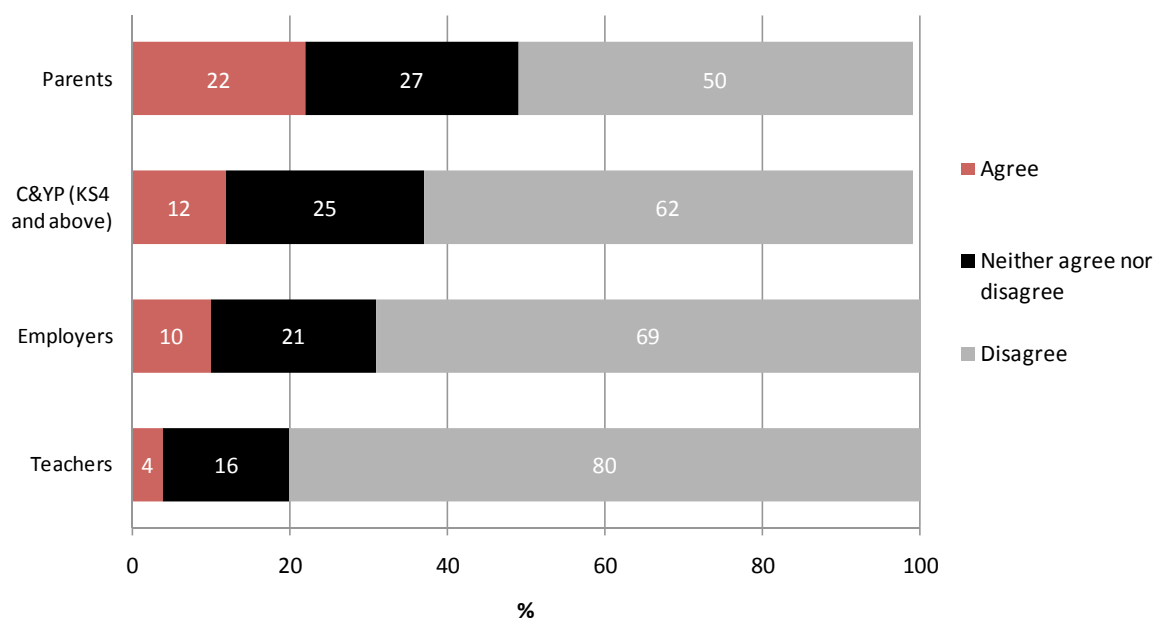
Figure 18: “Vocational learning is only for those who do not do well at school”



Base: 1,967 young people (KS4 and above), 1,030 parents, 1,199 teachers/lecturers, 1,001 employers

- 4.2.3 Stakeholders emphatically disagreed overall that young people will only fulfil their potential by going to university. However there were important differences between the various stakeholder groups. Teachers were the least likely to believe that university was essential for young people to fulfil their potential; 80 per cent disagreed with the statement and hardly any (4 per cent) agreed. This suggests that teachers have quite a balanced and impartial view of educational routes.
- 4.2.4 Although less extreme than the figures for teachers, employers were also strongly of the opinion that university is not the only route, with 69 per cent disagreeing and only 10 per cent agreeing. This may reflect their own experience; many employers may not themselves have been to university, so they will be aware that alternative routes can lead to senior positions, and they may also have experience of employing young people from various educational backgrounds.
- 4.2.5 Children and young people showed fairly similar figures to employers. Although they were slightly less positive about non-university routes, they were still broadly of the opinion that university was not essential, with 62 per cent disagreeing with the statement and 12 per cent agreeing. However parents were significantly less positive about non-university routes than the other stakeholder groups. While 50 per cent of parents agreed that university was not essential, over a fifth (22 per cent) believed that young people would only fulfil their potential via the university route. This is significant, since parents are likely to have an influence on young people's decisions.

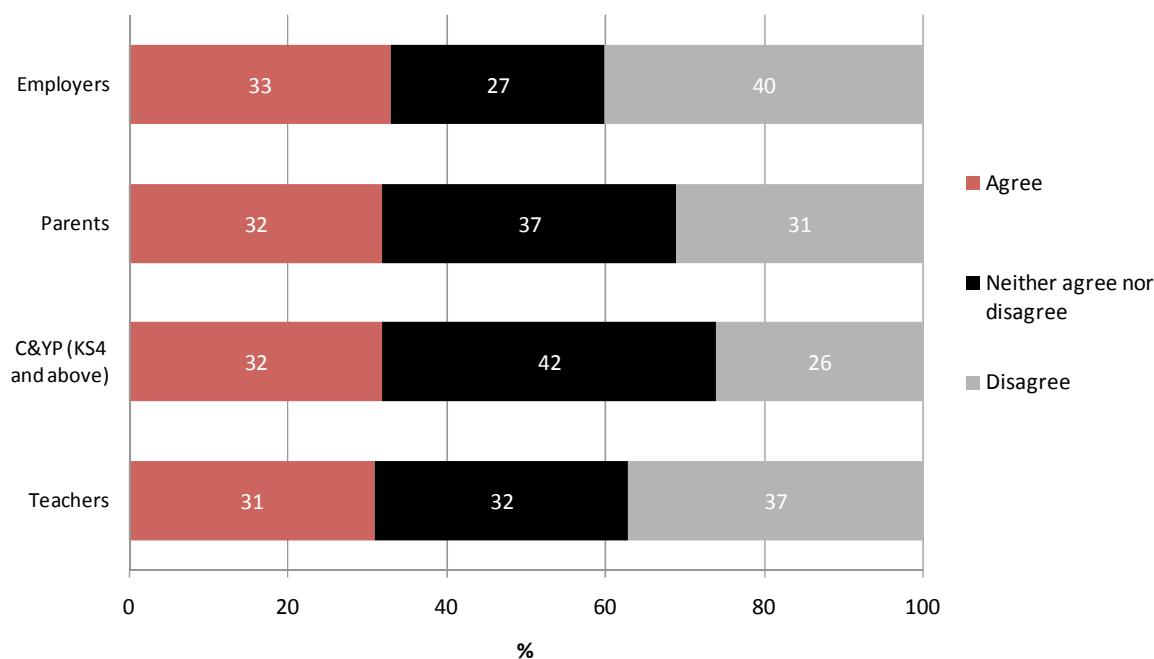
Figure 19: “Young people will only fulfil their potential by going to university”



Base: 1,967 young people (KS4 and above), 1,030 parents, 1,199 teachers/lecturers, 1,001 employers

4.2.6 Although, as discussed earlier, all stakeholder groups had a reasonably high opinion of vocational qualifications in terms of the education they provide and their potential to lead to a good career, the research did show a concern for some stakeholders that taking vocational qualifications may rule out university as a later option. Among each stakeholder group, around a third agreed that vocational qualifications might rule out university. Employers and teachers were more likely on balance to disagree with this view, while among parents, opinion was evenly split. However children and young people were more likely to agree with the statement than disagree: 32 per cent of those surveyed believed that vocational qualifications might rule out university, compared with 26 per cent disagreeing. The remainder either did not know or expressed no strong opinion either way. This may indicate a need for better information about vocational routes.

Figure 20: “Taking a vocational qualification route might rule out university as an option”



Base: 1,967 young people (KS4 and above), 1,030 parents, 1,199 teachers/lecturers, 1,001 employers

4.3 Parent’s attitudes to vocational qualifications: segmentation

4.3.1 We conducted a segmentation exercise among the parents sample. This exercise aims to group the respondents into different categories according to their attitudes to vocational learning and different types of learning. Of 1,030 parents, 765 respondents (or around 74 per cent) were used in the segmentation analysis.

4.3.2 Four segments were identified:

1. Pro Apprenticeships
2. Pro University Education
3. Pro Vocational Learning
4. Broad Minded

4.3.3 Each segment differs in terms of their attitudes to vocational learning and different types of learning, their demographics and their behaviour.

1. *Pro Apprenticeships*

4.3.4 28 per cent of the parents included in the segmentation exercise fell into this group. The typical respondent in this group is female and educated to GCSE level or perhaps holding vocational qualifications (7 per cent of this group had no formal qualifications). They are likely to read tabloids or midmarket papers. This group has fairly neutral attitudes across many of the factors measured. This suggests they may have limited knowledge of these issues. However they have a positive view of Apprenticeships and of how they will be viewed. Respondents in this group think that they have little influence on their children's learning choices, as do friends and role models. They think only teachers have a lot of influence.

4.3.5 Parents in this group had the following attitudes:

- They have a neutral view on whether vocational learning is only for those who don't do well at school;
- They tend to agree that vocational learning provides a good education;
- They have a neutral view on whether vocational learning leads to a good career;
- They have a neutral view on whether their child's school places too much emphasis on academic achievement;
- They tend to agree that all stakeholders see Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A-levels or equivalent qualifications (the only group to do so);
- They tend to disagree that their children will only fulfil their potential by going to university; and
- They tend to agree that every young person should study at least one vocational subject at school.

2. *Pro University Education*

4.3.6 15 per cent of the parents included in the segmentation exercise fell into this group. The typical respondent in this group is male and university educated. They are likely to read broadsheets. This group generally has a poor opinion of vocational qualifications, and

places a high value on university. They believe that they have a great deal of influence over their children's learning choices, and that teachers also have a lot of influence. They think that friends have little influence over their children's choice, and role models have none.

4.3.7 Parents in this group had the following attitudes:

- They tend to agree that vocational learning is only for those that don't do well at school;
- They have a neutral view on whether vocational learning provides a good education;
- They tend to disagree that their child's school places too much emphasis on academic achievement;
- They have a neutral view on whether vocational learning often leads to a good career;
- They tend to disagree that all stakeholders (young people, parents, teachers and employers) see apprenticeships as a good alternative to A-levels or equivalent qualifications;
- They tend to agree that their children will only fulfil their potential by going to university;
- They tend to agree that taking a vocational qualification route might rule out university as an option;
- They tend to agree that every young person should study at least one vocational subject at school;
- They tend to agree that their children have had or will have enough opportunities to experience the workplace whilst at school; and
- They tend to disagree that their children have gained practical skills needed for the workplace whilst at school.

3. *Pro Vocational Learning*

4.3.8 19 per cent of the parents included in the segmentation exercise fell into this group. The typical respondent in this group is male with vocational or technical qualifications. This

group contains a mix of midmarket and broadsheet readers. They were a little less positive about Apprenticeships than the 'Pro Apprenticeship' group, but more positive about vocational learning in general. They think that the current system does not give children enough practical skills, nor enough opportunities to experience the workplace. They believe that they have a great deal of influence on their children's learning choices, but that teachers, friends and role models also have a lot of influence.

4.3.9 Parents in this group had the following attitudes:

- They strongly disagree that vocational learning is only for those that don't do well at school;
- They tend to agree that vocational learning provides a good education;
- They tend to agree that their child's school places too much emphasis on academic achievement;
- They tend to agree that vocational learning often leads to a good career;
- They strongly agree that there is too much pressure on young people to go to university;
- They strongly agree that young people, parents and employers see apprenticeships as a good alternative to A-levels or equivalent qualifications, but have a neutral view about how teachers see them;
- They strongly disagree that their children will only fulfill their potential by going to university;
- They tend to disagree that taking a vocational qualification route might rule out university as an option;
- They tend to agree that every young person should study at least one vocational subject at school;
- They tend to disagree that their children have had or will have enough opportunities to experience the workplace whilst at school; and
- They tend to disagree that their children have gained practical skills needed for the workplace whilst at school.

4. *Broad Minded*

4.3.10 38 per cent of the parents included in the segmentation exercise fell into this group. The typical respondent in this group is female and likely to be educated to GCSE or A Level. This group contains a mixture of midmarket and broadsheet readers. This group had neutral views on many factors and did not express very strong preferences. They believe that they have a great deal of influence on their children's learning choices, and teachers also have a lot of influence. Friends and role models have little influence in their view.

4.3.11 Parents in this group had the following attitudes:

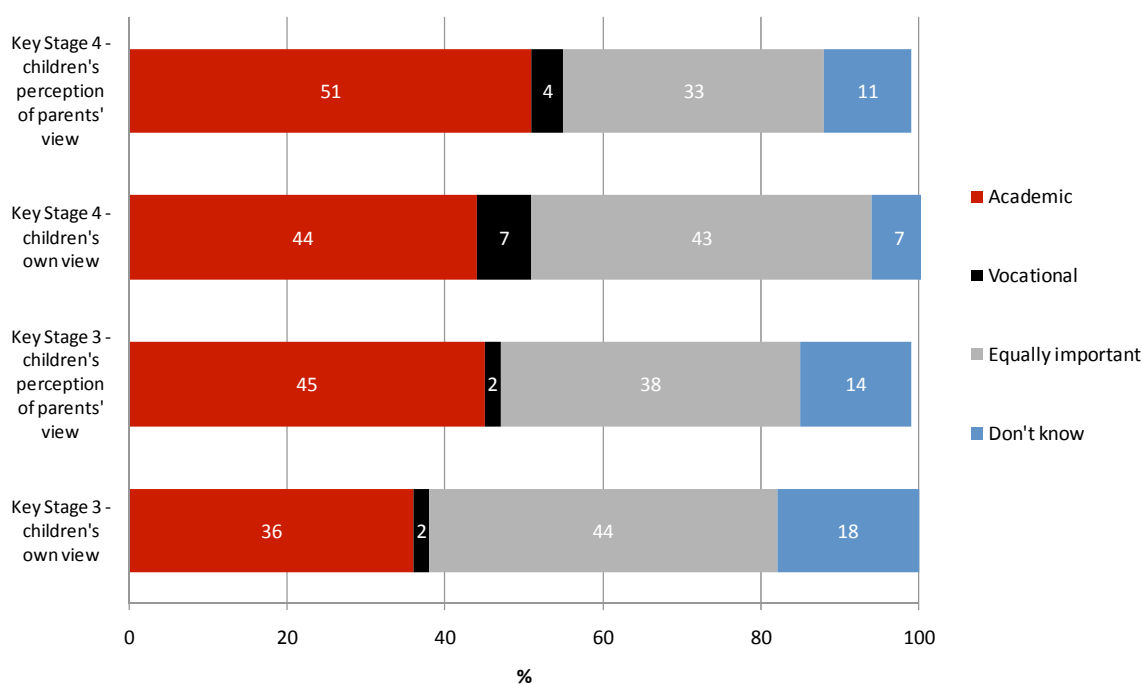
- They tend to disagree that vocational learning is only for those that don't do well at school;
- They have a neutral view on whether vocational learning provides a good education or leads to a good career;
- They have a neutral view on whether their child's school places too much emphasis on academic achievement;
- They tend to agree that there is too much pressure on young people to go to university;
- They have a neutral view on Apprenticeships and how they will be viewed;
- They tend to disagree that children will only fulfil their potential by going to university;
- They tend to agree that every young person should study at least one vocational subject at school;
- They have a neutral view on whether their children have had or will have enough opportunities to experience the workplace whilst at school; and
- They have a neutral view on whether their children have gained practical skills needed for the workplace whilst at school.

4.3.12 All four groups agreed that skills like team work and problem solving are as important as academic knowledge. They were also all in agreement that every young person should study at least one vocational subject at school

4.4 Relative importance of academic and vocational qualifications

- 4.4.1 There is a general perception among children and young people that academic qualifications are more important than vocational ones, although large proportions also believe that the two types of qualification are equally important. There is also a gap between what children believe themselves, and what they think their parents believe regarding qualification types.
- 4.4.2 At Key Stage 3, children are most likely to think the two types equally important (44 per cent) however more than a third (36 per cent) believe academic qualifications to be more important. Hardly any (2 per cent) thought that vocational qualifications were more important. Almost a fifth (18) did not express an opinion, perhaps reflecting limited understanding of difference qualifications in this age group.
- 4.4.3 When asked what their parents would think most important, however, the view is more strongly in favour of academic qualifications. 45 per cent believe that their parents would consider academic qualifications more important, compared with only 36 per cent when talking about their own view.
- 4.4.4 At Key Stage 4, children were more likely than those at Key Stage 3 to think academic qualifications more important (44 per cent compared with 36 per cent), but also more likely to think vocational qualifications more important (7 per cent compared with 2 per cent). This is likely to be the result of children being better informed by this stage and the choices they have made for themselves; the proportion who did not express an opinion was also much lower.
- 4.4.5 Comparing the views of children at Key Stage 4 with what they think their parents would believe shows a similar pattern to at Key Stage 3. Children are more likely to say their parents think academic qualifications are more important than they are to believe that themselves (51 per cent compared with 44 per cent), and less likely to think their parents would either favour vocational qualifications, or have an equal opinion of both types, compared with their own views.

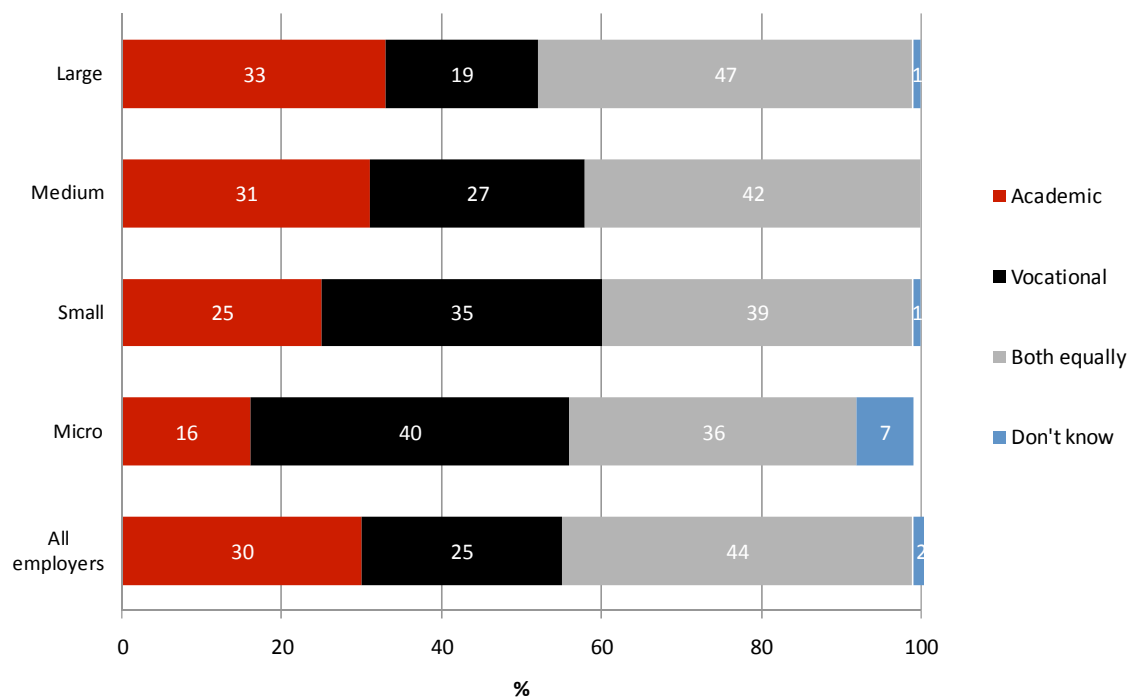
Figure 21: What do YOU think/ what do you think your PARENTS believe is more important, academic qualifications such as GCSEs and A levels (Standards and Highers in Scotland) or vocational qualifications?



Base: 565 children (KS3), 376 children (KS4)

4.4.6 Among employers, however, the view is much more balanced. Employers are only slightly more likely to think academic qualifications are more useful/ relevant to their organisation than vocational ones (30 per cent compared with 25 per cent), and the largest group (44 per cent) believe both to be equally useful/ relevant. There is also a large variation by organisation size: those in micro and small businesses are strongly in favour of vocational qualifications, while those in medium sized organisations are slightly in favour of academic, and those in large organisations strongly prefer academic qualifications.

Figure 22: Overall would you say that vocational qualifications or academic qualifications such as degrees are more useful and relevant to your organisation?

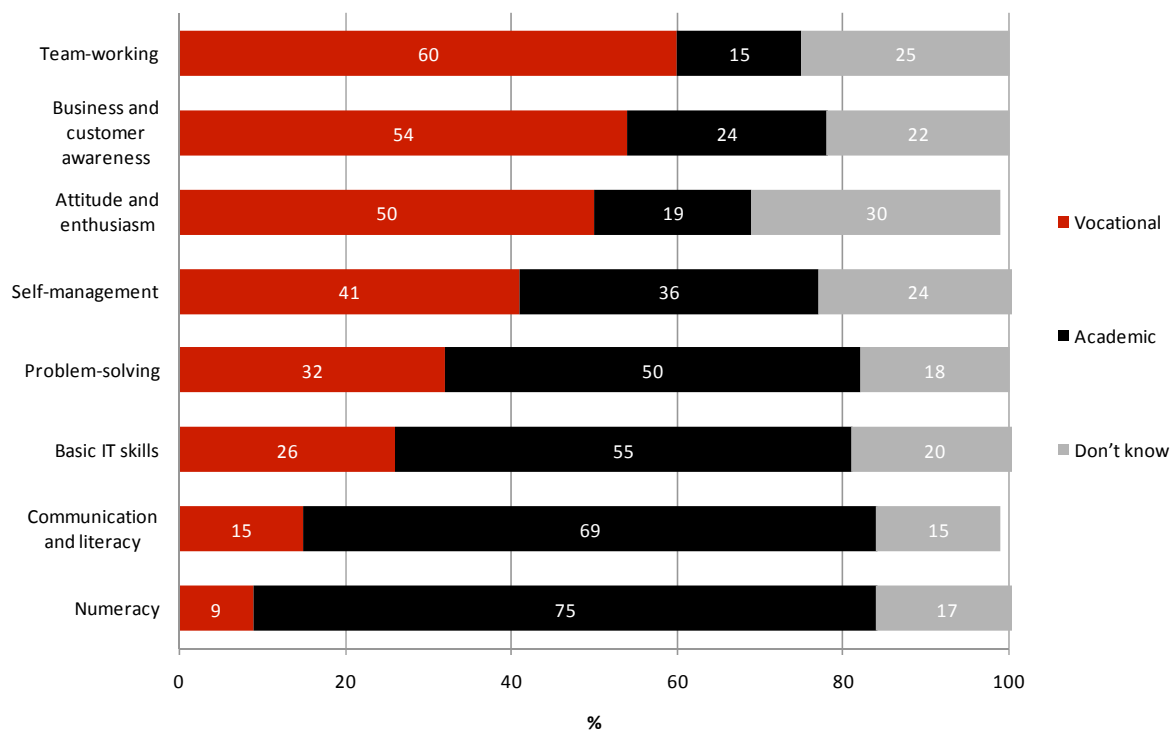


Base: 1,001 employers

4.5 Which type of qualification leads to better soft skills

4.5.1 When employers were asked whether vocational or academic qualifications lead to better soft skills, opinions varied widely across the different skills listed. Vocational qualifications were seen to be much better than academic in terms of team working (60 per cent compared to 15 per cent), business and customer awareness (54 per cent compared to 24 per cent), and attitude and enthusiasm (50 per cent compared to 19 per cent). Clearly, employers recognise the benefits of these qualifications. However academic qualifications were also much preferred to vocational with regards to a number of other skills, particularly numeracy (75 per cent compared to 9 per cent), communication and literacy (69 per cent compared to 15 per cent), and basic IT (55 per cent compared to 26 per cent).

Figure 23: Based on your experience of new employees, are those with academic qualifications or those with vocational qualifications better developed in terms of the following skills and attributes?



Base: 1,001 employers

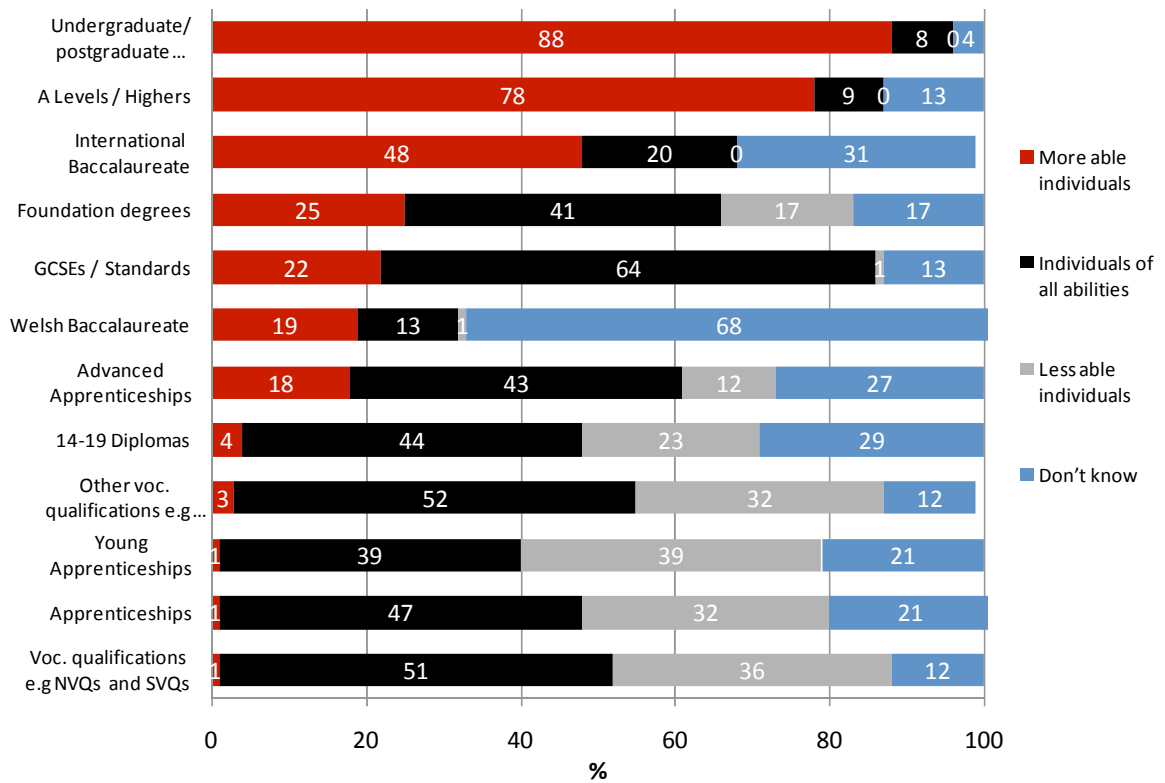
4.6 What type of people suit different qualifications

4.6.1 There is evidence of a perception among teachers that some vocational qualifications are mainly suited to less able individuals. While half (51 per cent) the teachers surveyed thought that vocational qualifications such as NVQs and SVQs were suited to individuals of all abilities, more than a third (36 per cent) also thought that these qualifications were mainly suited to less able individuals. Similarly, a slightly smaller proportion (32 per cent) thought vocational qualifications such as BTECS and City and Guilds mainly suited to less able individuals. For Apprenticeships the balance between those who thought the qualification suitable for everyone and those who thought it suitable for less able individuals was similar to that for the other vocational qualifications, except that the proportion who did not express an opinion was much higher. By contrast, the majority of teachers (64 per cent)

thought GCSEs/ Scottish Standards suited to individuals of all abilities. This perception could affect the advice or information which teachers provide to young people.

- 4.6.2 29 per cent of teachers also did not express an opinion on Diplomas, suggesting that awareness and knowledge of this qualification is still low. Those who did express an opinion, however, were most likely to think Diplomas were suited to individuals of all abilities. This suggests that the new qualification may be better viewed by teachers than explicitly vocational routes. On the other hand, only 4 per cent of teachers think Diplomas are most suited to more able individuals: this compares with 78 per cent who think A Levels are most suited to more able individuals.
- 4.6.3 Not surprisingly, relatively few teachers knew about the Welsh Baccalaureate. However, it is worth noting that those who expressed an opinion, almost all thought it was suitable for young people of all abilities or more able individuals. Clearly, the Welsh Baccalaureate is not seen as a 'soft' option. This could inform policy in England and Scotland.

Figure 24: Thinking about the suitability of qualifications for individuals of different abilities, how would you describe each of the following...?



Base: 1,199 teachers/lecturers

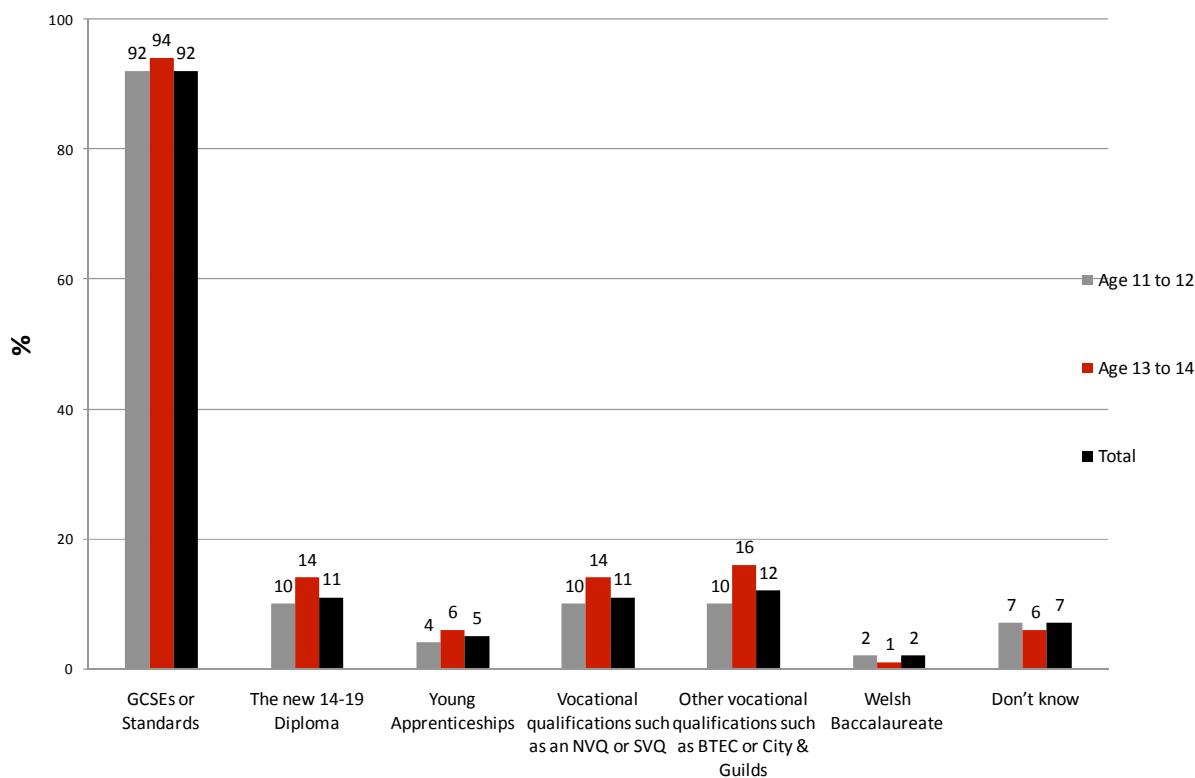
5 Making your mind up

5.1.1 In this section the report analyses the options that pupils have at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. At the end of Key Stage 3 (S2 in Scotland) decisions are made concerning what subjects to study in years 10 and 11. Clearly choices made here will influence the choices available at the end of Key Stage 4 (the end of compulsory schooling). This section looks at the choices available to pupils, the information they have upon which to make choices and the influence of parents and teachers on them when making choices.

5.2 What options are available

5.2.1 All those in Key Stage 3 or S2 in Scotland were asked what options they thought were available at their school or college for study at Key Stage 4. The chart presents the findings below. It shows that most pupils are aware that GCSEs or Standards are available to study. Awareness of the availability of vocational qualifications is, however, much lower. Overall about one in 10 pupils believe that vocational qualifications are available at their school. Interestingly, girls are more likely than boys to believe that other options are available to them. For example, 14 per cent of girls believe that the new 14-19 Diploma is available at their school but for boys the figure is eight per cent. Awareness of the option of studying for the 14-19 Diploma increases by age with pupils in Year 9 more likely to say that this option is available for them.

Figure 25: As far as you know are the following options available at your school?



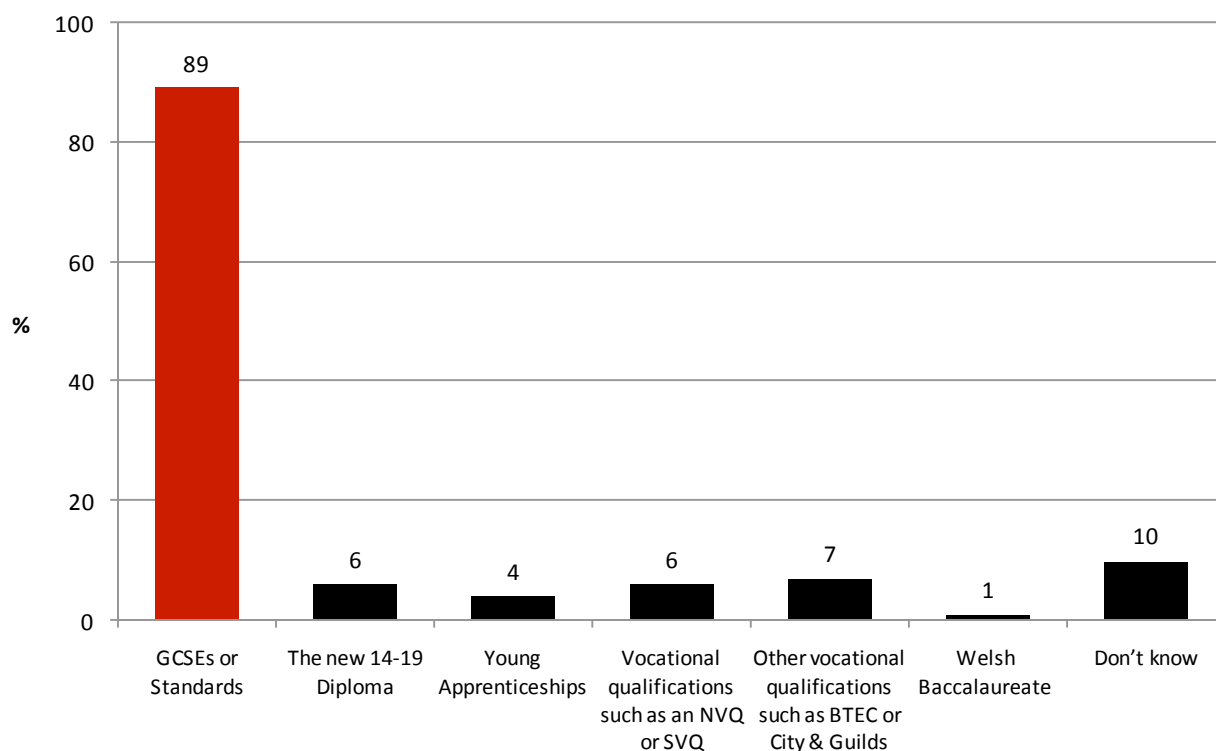
Base: 565 children (KS3)

5.2.2 What is also interesting is the reasonably large proportion of pupils who say that they do not know what options are available to them. The overall figure of seven per cent masks significant gender differences with girls more likely to say they do not know (10 per cent) compared with boys (three per cent). The figure for do not know is important because it occurs in other questions, particularly in relation to how well informed pupils are at the point at which they have to make choices. This is discussed later.

5.3 What are pupils thinking of doing at Key Stage 4 and at 16+

5.3.1 Comparing options available to what pupils intend to study shows that academic qualifications are the most likely to be pursued, with 89 per cent thinking of doing GCSEs/Standards.

Figure 26: Which of the following are you thinking about doing at Key Stage 4?



Base: 565 children (KS3)

- 5.3.2 The chart shows that about one in 10 pupils are thinking about doing either a qualification other than GCSEs or Standards or simply do not know what they will do. For vocational qualifications the proportion who are thinking of doing them is about half the proportion who believe that their school offers them as an option. The exception to this is Young Apprenticeships where the figures are nearly the same. This might suggest that only those pupils who want to do a Young Apprenticeship are aware that it is an option at school.
- 5.3.3 Those already at Key Stage 4 were asked what they intended to do at age 16 (the end of statutory schooling). The table shows the options that those in Key Stage 4 are thinking about.

Figure 27: What do you plan to do after Year 11 (S4 in Scotland)

Option	Total %	Male %	Female %
A Levels or Highers	71	78	64
Get a job	4	5	3
14-19 Diploma	1	1	2
NVQ/SVQ	3	1	4
Apprenticeship	7	5	9
BTECS/City and Guilds	7	5	9
International Baccalaureate	1	1	0
Other	2	1	0

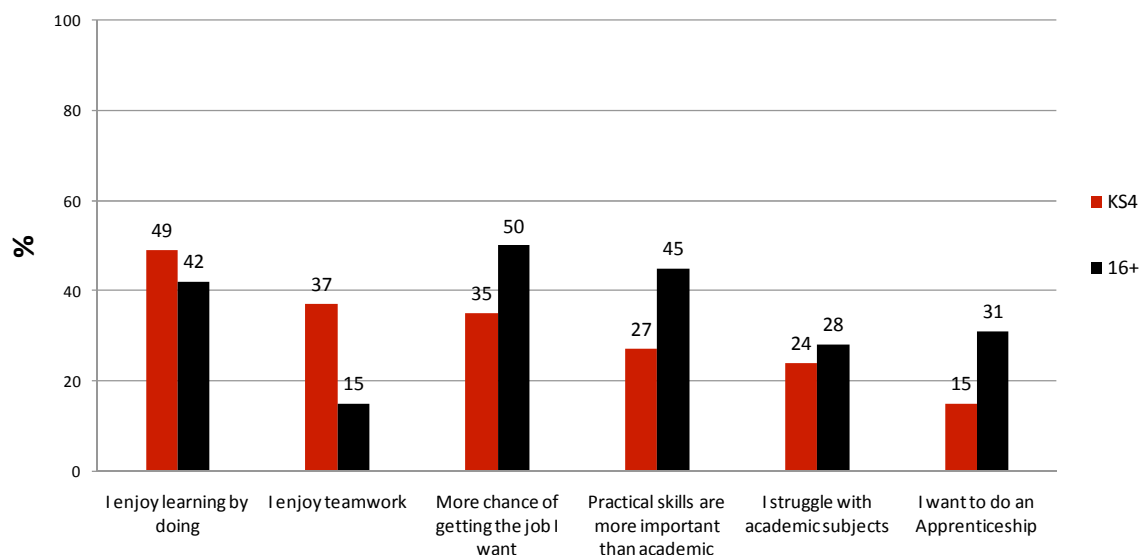
5.3.4 The table shows that the majority of pupils in Year 11 (S4 in Scotland) intend to carry on either in education or undertake some form of training. Boys are more likely than girls to stay on to do A levels (Highers in Scotland). The proportion who stated that they will leave school to enter the job market is very small (four per cent).

5.3.5 Girls are more likely than boys to want to do an Apprenticeship although the figures are small and the difference is not significant.

5.4 Reasons for Key Stage 4 and 16+ choices

5.4.1 The survey would suggest that the majority of pupils who are thinking of taking vocational qualifications at Key Stage 4 see them as something that complement their style of learning and is an appropriate pathway into the work they would like to do in the future.

Figure 28 : Main reasons for thinking about doing vocational qualifications at Key Stage 4 and 16+

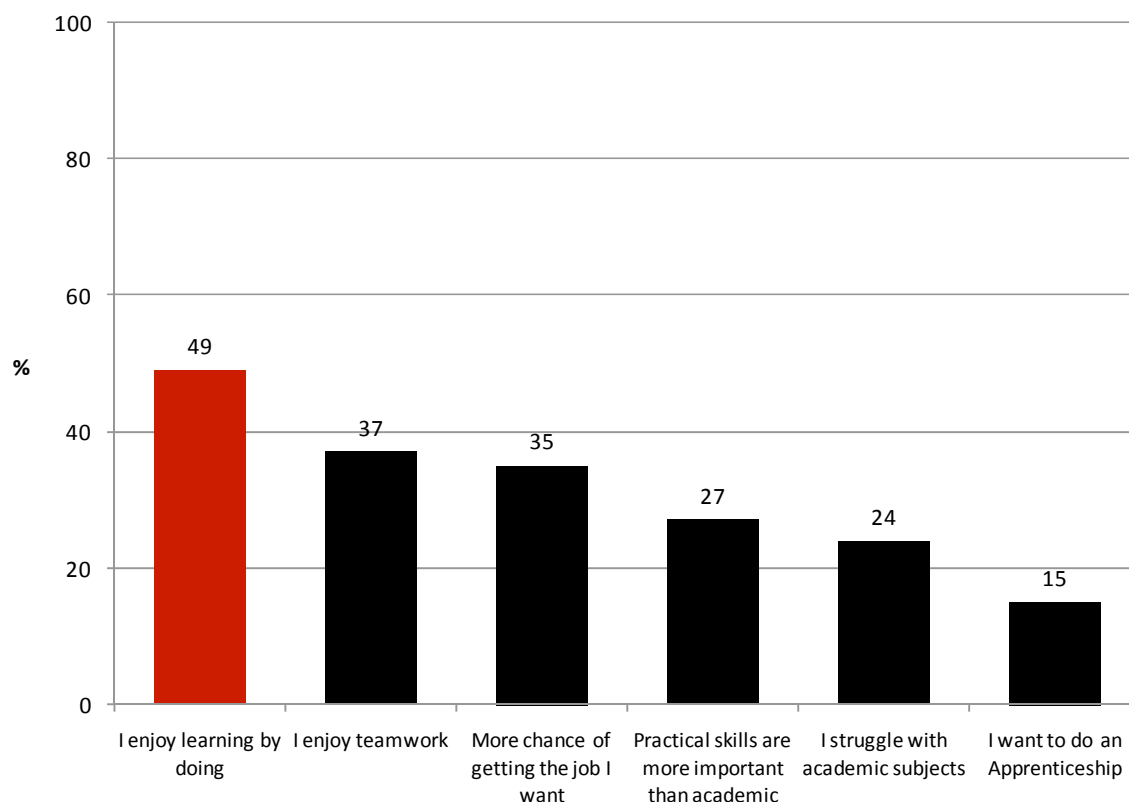


Base: 111 who would consider something other than GCSEs/ Standards (KS3), 72 who are thinking about vocational qualifications (KS4)

- 5.4.2 Fewer than a quarter of pupils are thinking of doing vocational qualifications at Key Stage 4 because they struggle with academic subjects. The figure for those thinking about doing vocational qualifications at 16+ is only slightly higher. This is an important finding because it runs counter to a received wisdom that vocational qualifications are only done by those who struggle with academic qualifications. Many pupils see the vocational path as a positive choice with half believing it will get them the sort of job that they want at 16+.
- 5.4.3 It seems that as pupils progress through the key stages they become more focussed upon the skills they need for the type of career they see themselves going into when they leave school. By Year 11 the reasons for taking vocational qualifications are less about their style of learning (teamwork, learning by doing) and more about what is needed when they join the workplace (practical skills more important than academic, doing an Apprenticeship).
- 5.4.4 On the other hand, for those that would only consider GCSEs or Standards after Key Stage 3 nearly half have not thought about why they would prefer this option over a vocational path. It seems that many pupils go on to take GCSEs without ever thinking through whether or not it is the right choice for them. At post-16, the proportion who have never thought

about why they would only consider academic qualifications is lower than at Key Stage 4, but still a significant 30 per cent.

Figure 29 : Main reasons for taking GCSEs or Standards after Year 9 (S2 in Scotland)



Base: 397 who would only consider GCSEs/ Standards (KS3)

- 5.4.5 The chart shows that the influence of parents and teachers is not particularly strong although the proportion increases slightly with the age of the pupil. In a similar way the proportion of respondents stating that teachers advised against doing anything other than GCSEs increases to 12 per cent for pupils in year 9 (S2 in Scotland).
- 5.4.6 Although the influence of parents and teachers is not prominent in the chart above, evidence elsewhere in the survey suggests that young people do consult their parents before reaching decisions at the end of Key Stage 3. Over half (51 per cent) of Key Stage 3 pupils surveyed consulted their parents. For those in Year 9 the figure rose to 69 per cent. There is a strong overlap between what pupils think they will do at the end of Key Stage 3 and what they think their parents want them to do. Nearly nine in 10 pupils think that their

parents want them to do GCSEs or Standards. Pupils believe their teachers are slightly less likely to steer them into doing GCSEs but the figure is still very high (76 per cent).

- 5.4.7 Nearly four in 10 (38 per cent) discussed the issue with friends (again the figure was much higher for those in Year 9) and 14 per cent discussed it with teachers. However, 37 per cent of pupils in the survey said they had no discussions with anybody before making their decision. This figure falls significantly to 15 per cent for pupils in year 9 but it still means that for the first two years of secondary school many pupils do not consult anybody about an important decision that they will need to make within the next year or two. Furthermore, fewer than half of pupils in the survey (48 per cent) believe that the choices that they make now are linked to what they plan to do at the end of Year 11 (S4 in Scotland).

5.5 How well informed are pupils and from what sources do they get their information?

- 5.5.1 The survey suggests that not only do pupils make decisions about Key Stage 4 options without much thought, they also make it from a position of being poorly informed. Only one third of pupils (33 per cent) stated that they felt extremely or fairly well informed. Four in 10 pupils in the survey stated that they were poorly informed or they simply did not know. There is a striking gender imbalance in the extent to which pupils feel informed. Boys are more likely to believe that they are well informed about their options when compared to girls (38 per cent of boys gave this option compared with 28 per cent of girls).
- 5.5.2 There is also evidence that both pupils and their parents would benefit from more information being available to them to help inform decisions at the end of Year 9. Only 33 per cent of pupils and 27 per cent of parents in the survey stated that there was sufficient information upon which to make choices.
- 5.5.3 The influence of parents, teachers and friends in the decision making process for Key Stage 4 options has already been discussed. In addition to these the internet is used as a source of information by some pupils to help inform them of what they might do after Year 9. The use of the internet is not great with only 17 per cent using it. Social networking sites such as Facebook (nine per cent), Bebo (nine per cent) and Myspace (six per cent) seem

to be used the most with sites such as Connexions Direct (three per cent) and Directgov (two per cent) being the only other websites mentioned.

- 5.5.4 Pupils already in Key Stage 4 make more use of the internet to help inform their 16+ options. Just under half (44 per cent) have used an internet site for information with Connexions Direct being the most frequently used as the table shows.

Figure 30: Websites used by pupils in Key Stage 4 to inform decisions at 16+

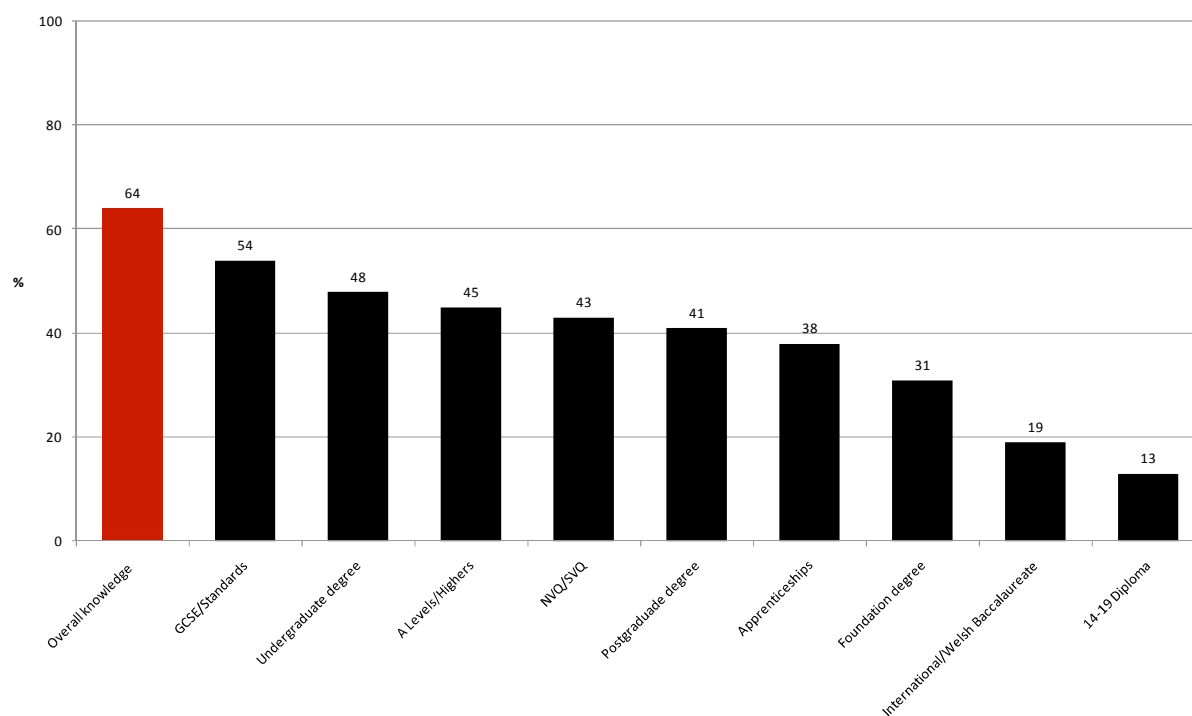
Website	Total %
Connexions Direct	23
Bebo	9
Facebook	8
UCAS	8
Direct Gov	7
Myspace	7
Careers Scotland	5
Learndirect	3
Apprenticeships	3

- 5.5.5 By the time pupils get to Key Stage 4 and have to make decisions about what happens at 16+ the proportion who feel that they are well informed about their options rises to 70 per cent with only 10 per cent feeling poorly informed.

5.6 How knowledgeable are parents on the different qualifications available?

- 5.6.1 Given the influence that parents have it is worth at this stage analysing their knowledge of different qualifications. The chart below shows the proportion of parents in the survey who said that their knowledge was either very good or good.

Figure 31 : Proportion of parents whose knowledge of qualifications is good or very good



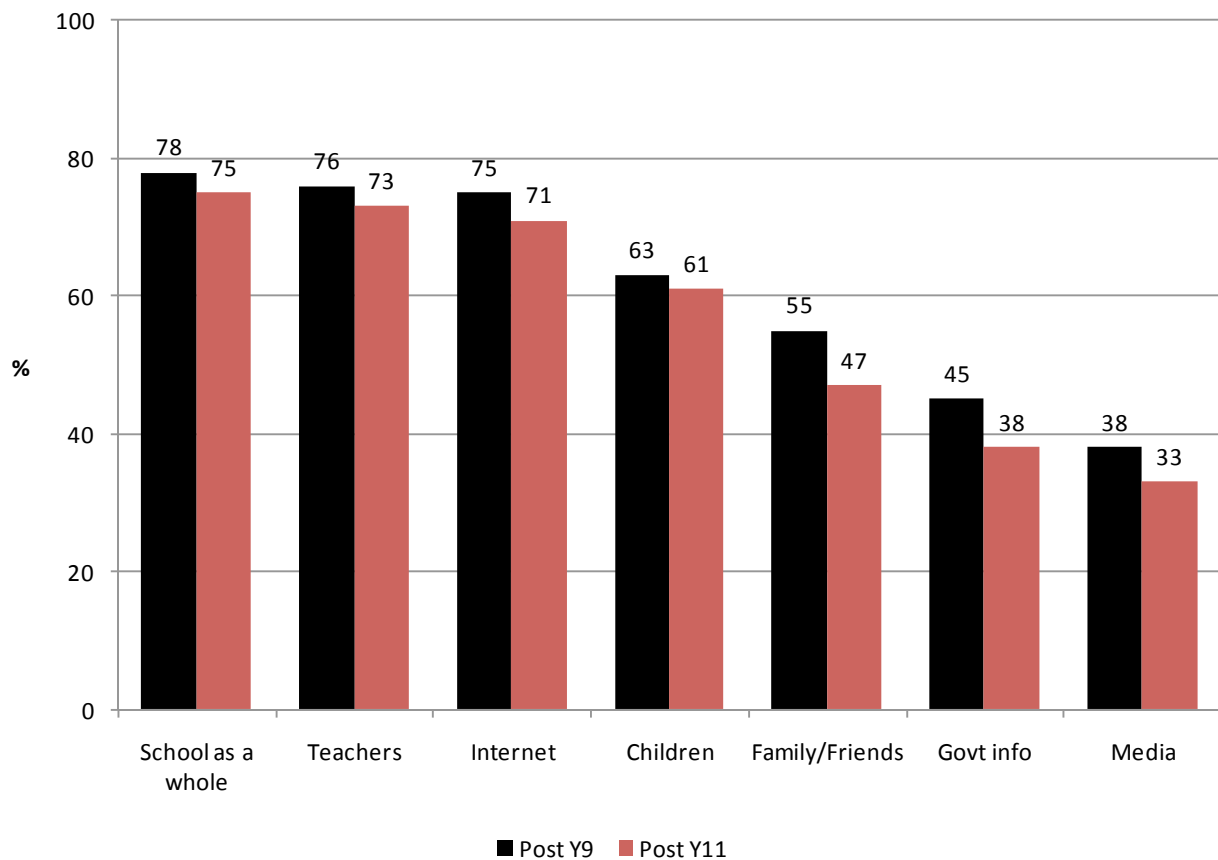
Base: 1,030 parents

5.6.2 The chart suggests that parents believe that they have a reasonably good knowledge overall of the qualification options available for young people but that this does not necessarily translate into a good knowledge about individual qualifications. With the exception of GCSE or Standards fewer than half of parents in the survey have a very good or good knowledge of qualifications.

5.6.3 Parents have the lowest level of knowledge about the new 14-19 Diploma which is less well known than the International/Welsh Baccalaureate. Knowledge of NVQs/SVQs and Apprenticeships is much better which is possibly a reflection of them being more long standing. It is clear from the figures that there is still much that needs to be done to raise awareness of the 14-19 Diploma and inform parents about its objectives.

5.6.4 Earlier it was seen that 17 per cent of pupils use the internet to obtain information about their future choices. For parents, however, the figure is over 70 per cent as the chart shows.

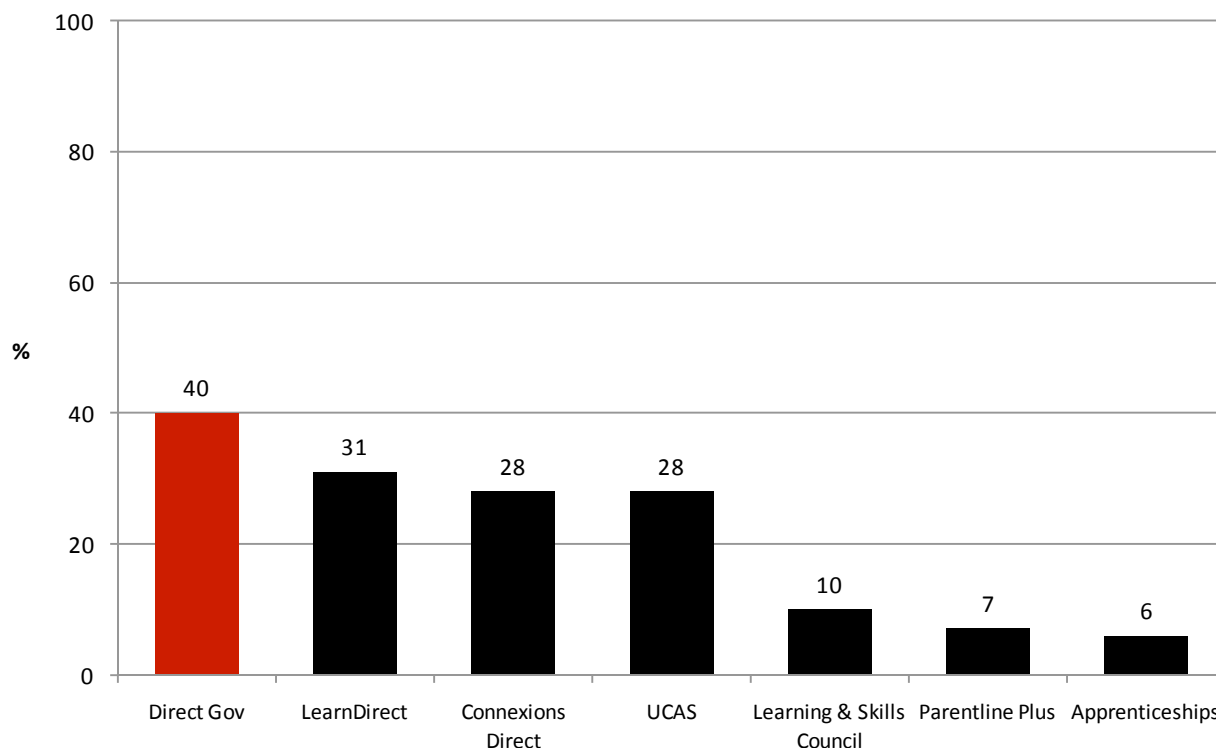
Figure 32 : Parents saying that the source of information was very useful or useful concerning choices after Year 9 (S3) and Year 11 (S4)



Base: 392 parents with a child at KS3, 359 parents with a child at KS4

5.6.5 At both decision points parents find information from the school itself to be the most useful. This is closely followed by teachers and information from the internet. The use of the internet does not differ significantly by age of the parent with younger parents and older ones using the internet in similar numbers.

Figure 33 : Which websites have been used by parents?



Base: 1,030 parents

5.6.6 The chart shows that Direct Gov is the most used site with Apprenticeships the least used. It is clear from the analysis that parents use a combination of sources to obtain information. However, the information they get seems to give them only partial knowledge of the options and choices available to their children after Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils have identified their parents as the single most influential source of advice but this advice is not necessarily based upon the full facts. Perhaps as a result, pupils, particularly at the end of Year 9, do not feel very well informed when it comes to making decisions.

5.7 How good is the careers information provided by schools

5.7.1 The extent to which schools offer good quality advice on careers options was measured by asking those aged 16 and over about their experiences. The table shows net good advice scores. To calculate these scores the proportion stating that careers advice was poor or

very poor has been subtracted from the proportion stating that it was good or very good. The net score is a better indicator of strength of feeling.

Figure 34: Net good advice scores by age

Age	Net good advice score
16	26
17	23
18	34
19	18
20	17
21	7
22	4
23	-5
24	-4

5.7.2 The worrying aspect of the table is the extent to which the net good advice score drops with age. For 16-18 years olds (the majority of whom are still in education) the net good advice scores have a high positive value. This means that significantly more people think that the advice they got on careers options was good compared with the proportion who thought it poor.

5.7.3 However, after age 20 the gap narrows significantly and for 23 and 24 year olds the proportion who think advice was bad outstrips the proportion who thought it good. Those who stated that advice was poor or very poor were asked what aspect they wanted to have better advice on. The table shows that there are a number of issues over which respondents would have wanted better advice.

Figure 35: What aspects would you have wanted better advice on?

Aspect for which better advice needed	Age 16-20	Age 21- 24	Total
Academic qualifications	34	43	39

Vocational qualifications	40	51	45
Going to college/university	55	55	55
How to get a job	67	73	70
Training courses	49	55	52
Other	3	4	3
Number of cases	443	419	862

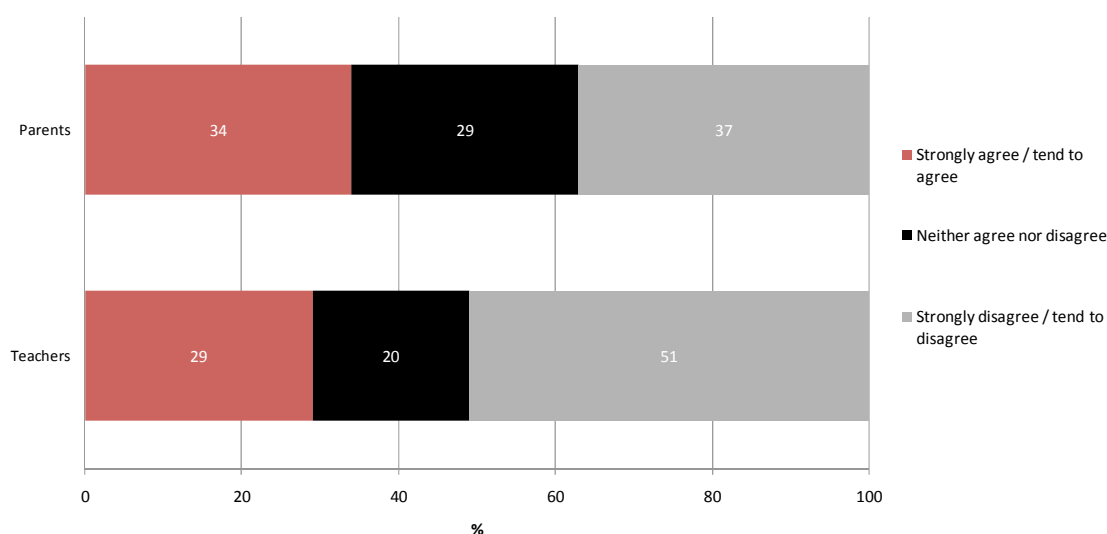
- 5.7.4 By grouping together different ages it can be seen that the older age group (who were more likely to state that they thought careers advice was poor) identified the need for better advice on academic qualifications, getting a job and vocational qualifications. The desire for better advice on vocational qualifications is 11 percentage points higher for the 21 to 24 age group compared with the 16-20 age group.
- 5.7.5 This would seem to support some of the findings earlier which find that there is a need for better information to help inform choices at Year 9 and Year 11.

6 Business in schools

6.1 Experiencing the workplace whilst in school

6.1.1 Opinion amongst parents about whether their children have or will have enough opportunities to experience the workplace was evenly balanced. Older parents were indicatively more likely to feel that they did, as were those from ABC1 households. In comparison, 51 per cent of teachers felt that there were not enough opportunities for young people to experience the workplace, while only 29 per cent felt that there were enough opportunities. Older teachers and those in sixth form / FE colleges were more convinced than others that there were not enough opportunities.

Figure 36: Students have enough opportunities to experience the workplace whilst at school (teachers and parents)



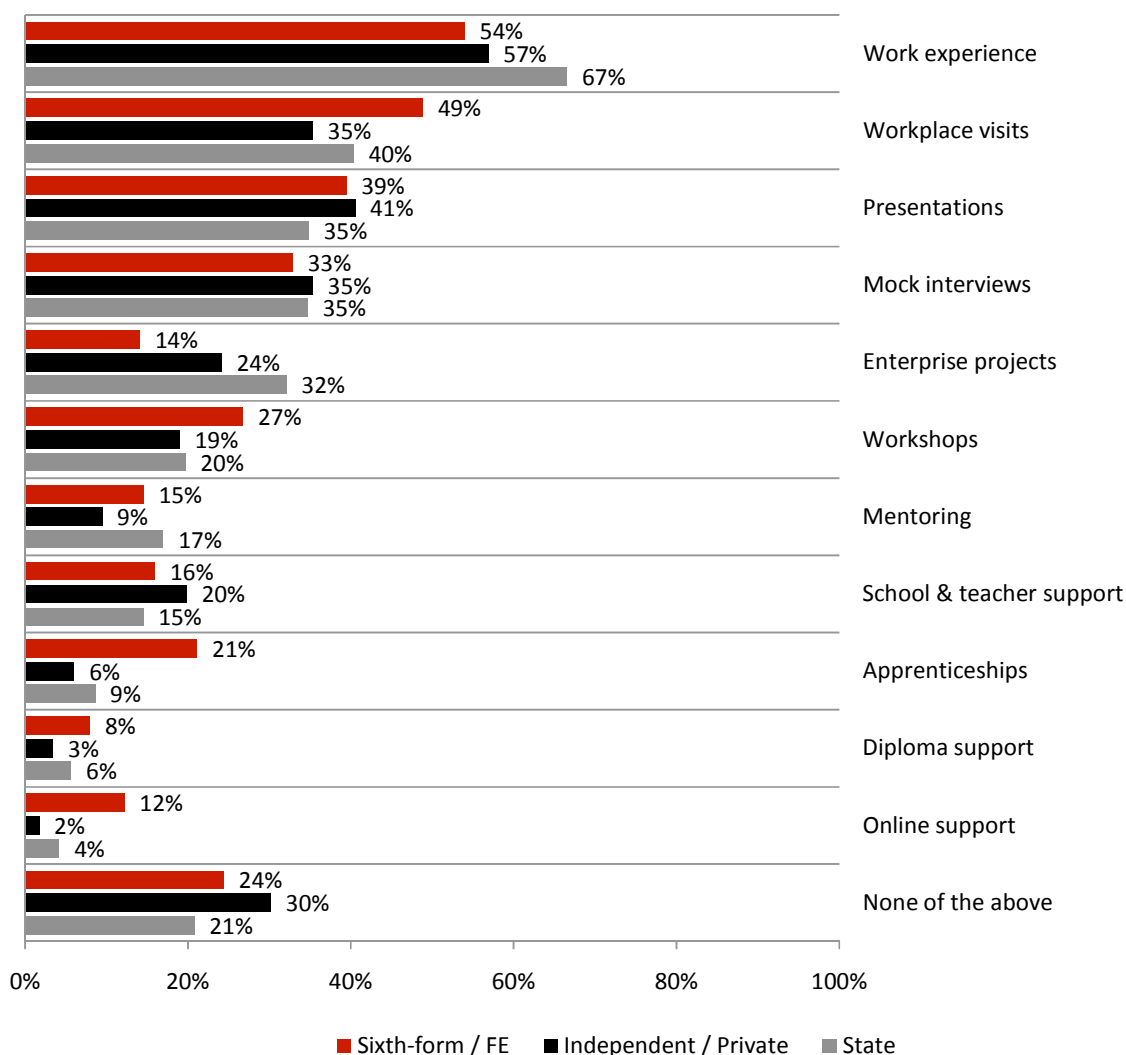
Base: 950 parents, 1,169 teachers. Figures exclude don't knows.

6.2 Supply of opportunities and types of employer engagement

From the teachers viewpoint

- 6.2.1 Very few teachers (less than 5 per cent) felt that there was currently too much employer engagement at their school. Nearly two-thirds felt that there was too little and 29 per cent that the balance was correct. Amongst the largest pool of teachers (comprehensives) over 70 per cent felt that there was too little engagement. As might be expected, those teachers in schools with a nominated staff member to liaise with local businesses were significantly more likely to report that there was the correct balance of employer engagement, though even then over half still felt that there was not enough. Those teaching in sixth forms or FE colleges were more likely than others teachers to feel that the current balance was correct, as were those in the independent / private sector although perhaps for different reasons.
- 6.2.2 When excluding teachers with less than two years experience, one-fifth of those remaining stated that they had not been involved in any employer engagement activities. Of those that had, work experience, workplace visits, mock interviews and presentations were the most frequently reported activities.
- 6.2.3 With the exception of presentations and mock interviews, independent / private sector teachers reported less involvement than others in all form of business engagement. Workplace visits, Apprenticeships and workshops were more common in sixth form / FE colleges and there was a clear distinction between state and private sector in that whereas 30 per cent of private sector teachers had not experienced any form of engagement compared to 21 per cent of those in the state sector.

Figure 37: During your career have you been involved in any of the following activities with businesses?



Base: 1,119 teachers and FE lecturers.

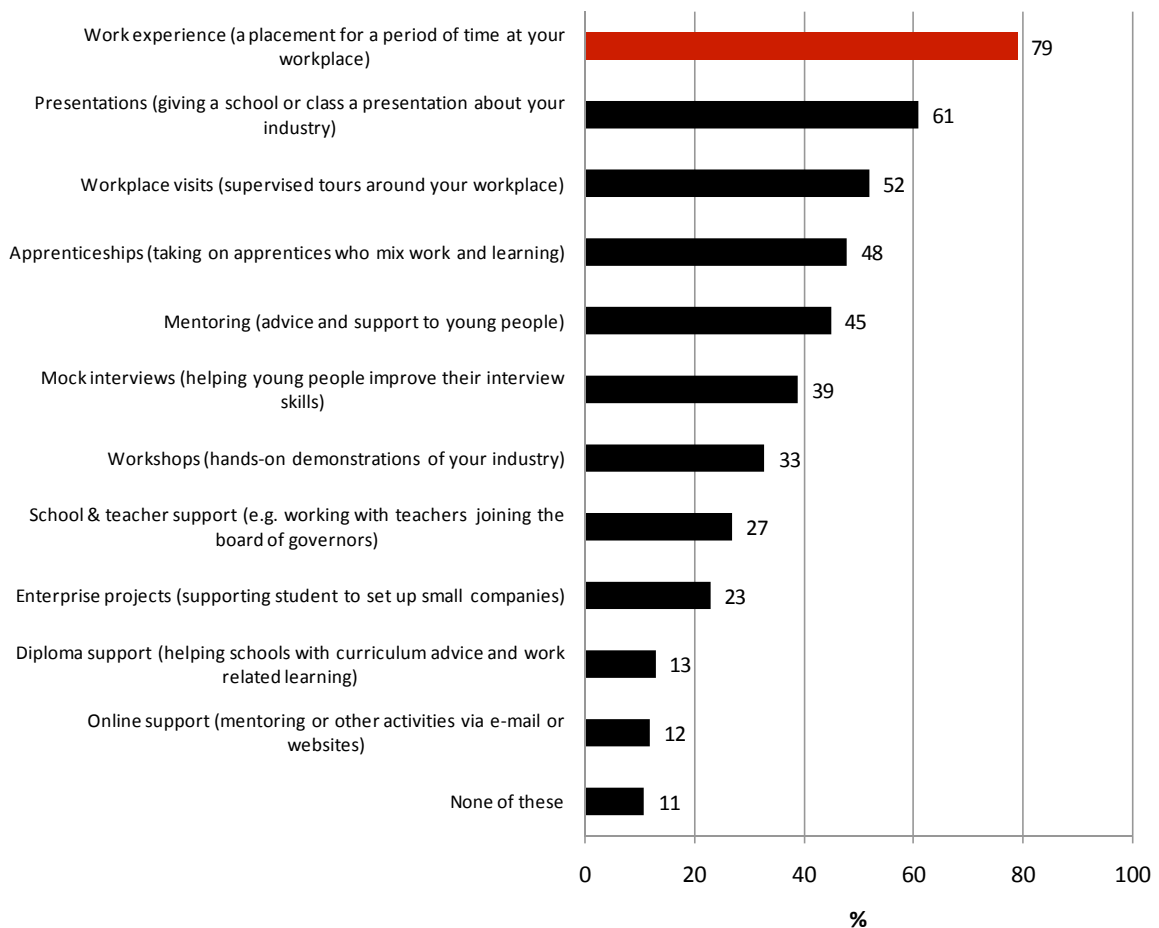
From the employer's perspective

6.2.4 Two-thirds of employers felt that their organisation was on balance not well informed about opportunities to engage with schools. Only 5 per cent felt fully informed with a third in total ranking their level as 6 or above on a 10 point scale. Employers based in London were the least informed, whilst those in the Midlands / Wales were more likely to feel in touch. There was also a clear distinction between micro-businesses and larger organisations. On the 10 point scale, micro-businesses reported an average of just 3.2 compared to 5.0 for large

employers. Public sector employers were better informed than those in the private sector (5.6 compared to 4.2).

- 6.2.5 The most widely recognised form of engagement with schools was work experience which 79 per cent of employers were aware of. Even two-thirds of those with no current engagement activities recognised work experience as an option.

Figure 38: Which of the following types of engagement activity were you aware of?



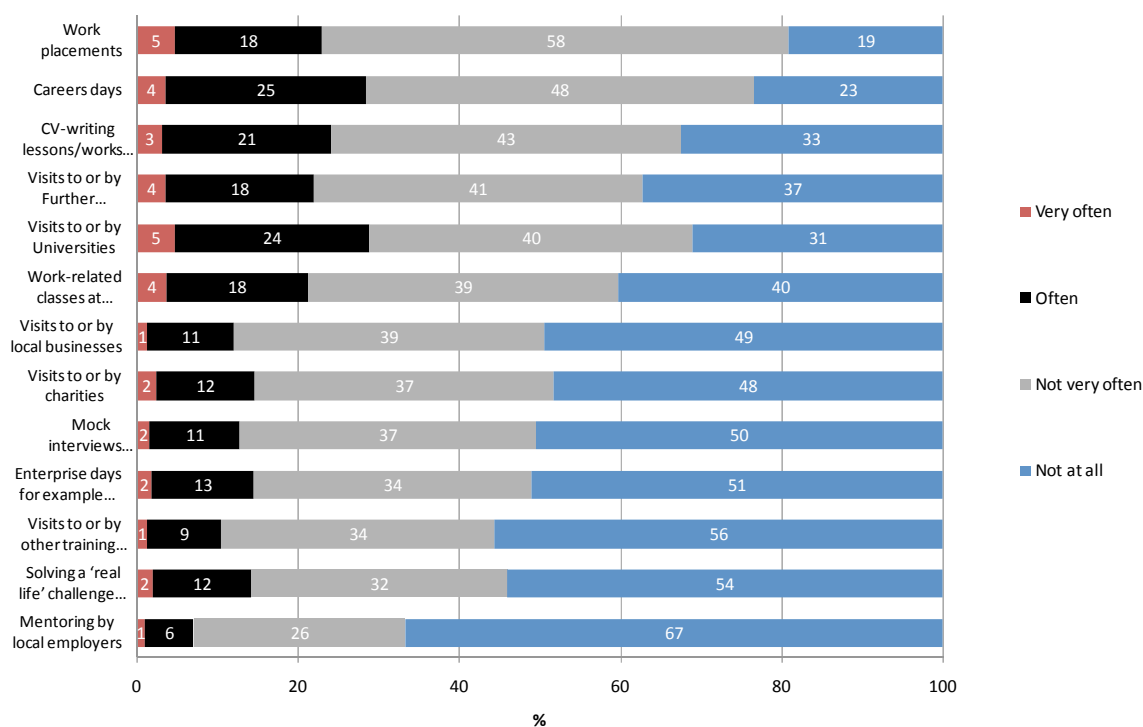
Base: 1,001 employers.

- 6.2.6 Awareness of all forms of engagement activity was higher amongst public sector than private sector employers and amongst micro and small businesses; however recognition of Apprenticeships stood out as relatively balanced between micro and large employers.

6.3 Demand for engagement activities from young people

6.3.1 With the exception of those in Key Stage 3 all children and young people were asked to recall whether and how often they had participated in engagement activities with businesses, employers and education providers (both further and higher). There was relatively high recognition of visits to universities and careers days but many engagement activities such as enterprise projects or mentoring were rarely experienced if at all. As would be expected participation levels increased amongst those still in education at Key Stage 5.

Figure 39: Thinking about these activities, how often do you or did you take part in them?

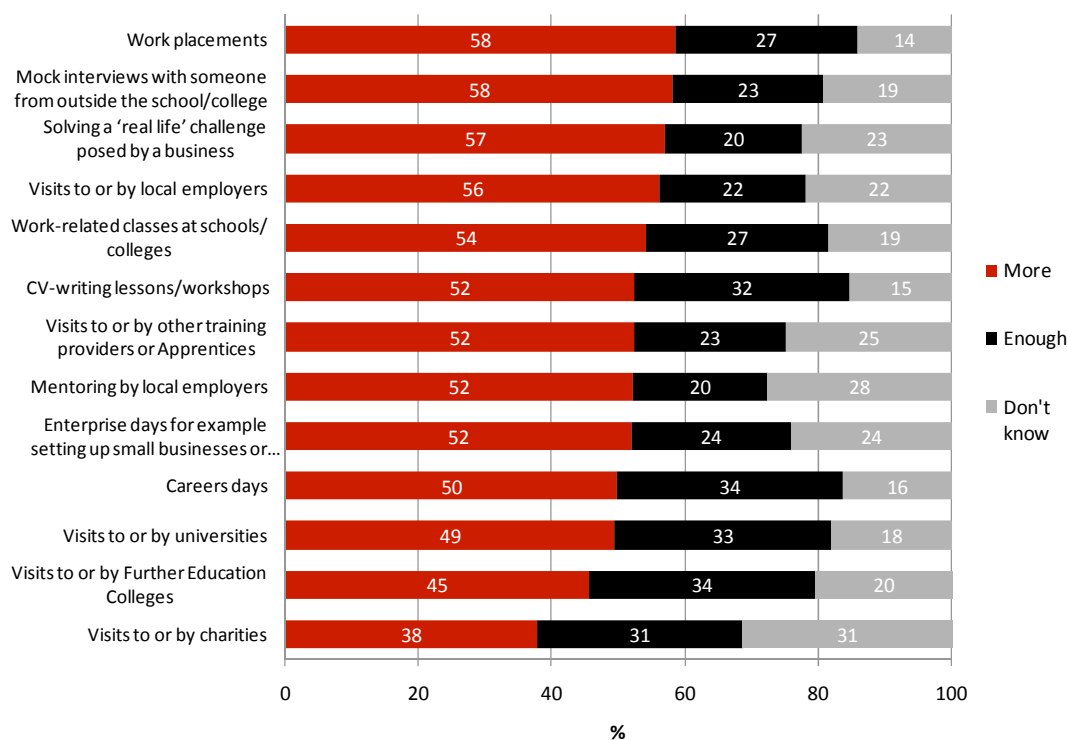


Base: All at Key Stage 4 and above (1,964)

6.3.2 On balance more young people stated that they would like more of these opportunities than they currently receive or did receive when they were at school. Work placements were viewed highly with nearly 60 per cent wanting more of them, but around half of those interviewed felt that more of most types of activity would be beneficial. Looking at the profile of those wanting more opportunities, they were more likely to be:

- Female rather than male;
- Currently in Key Stage 4 and so had less exposure to date;
- In state schools rather than the private / independent sector; and
- Currently in employment, looking back at the opportunities they had when at school and recognising that they would have liked more.

Figure 40: For each of these activities would you say that you have or had enough opportunities to take part or would you have wanted more?



Base: All at Key Stage 4 and above (1,964)

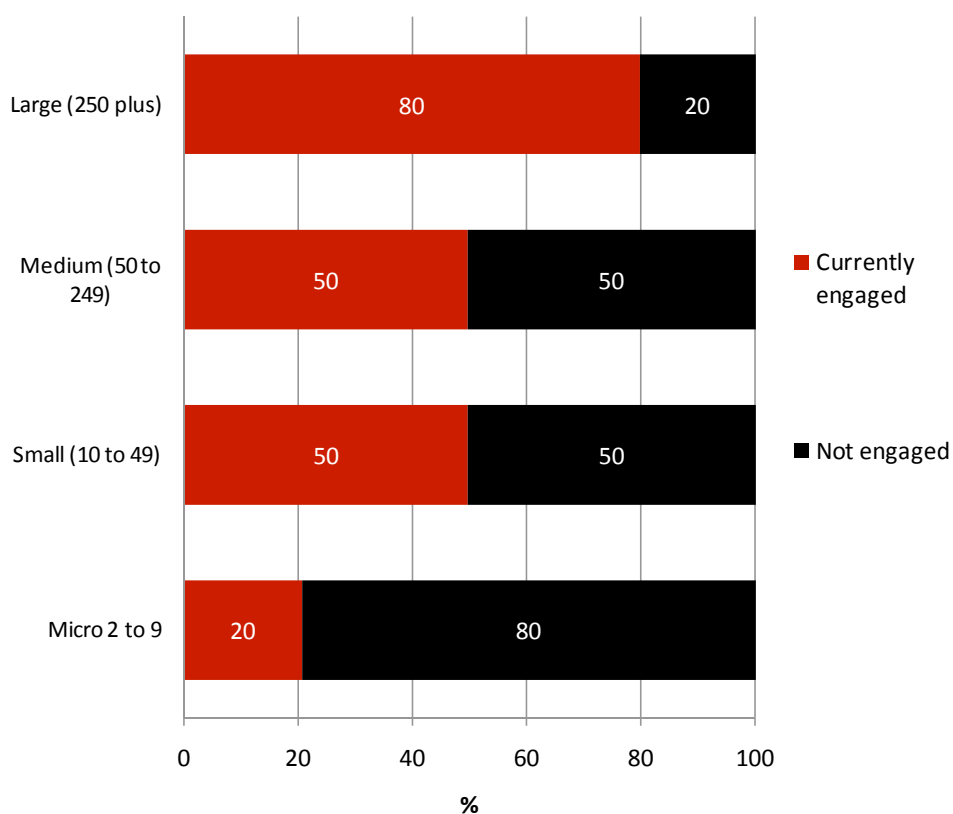
6.4 The willingness of employers to engage

6.4.1 Employers were generally positive about engaging with the education sector. Only 4 per cent were not at all willing and on a 10 point scale, two-thirds of employers marked 6 or above to indicate their willingness. Those in the public sector were more strongly in favour (7.8) than the private sector (6.2). Of those employers that currently do not engage, 40 per

cent were on balance in favour of doing so in the future, while eleven per cent indicated that they would definitely not be willing to do so.

- 6.4.2 Employers in London recorded the lowest levels of willingness to engage (6.2) compared to Yorkshire & Humber, West Midlands, East Midlands and Wales (all 7) and Scotland (7.1). Professional services such as media, finance, marketing and advertising recorded a lower willingness to engage whereas higher levels were demonstrable in construction, aerospace, automotive and computing, however the figures are small and so these findings are only indicative.
- 6.4.3 Sixty-three per cent of employers stated that they currently engaged with the education sector. This was lower in the private sector (54 per cent) than the public (92 per cent) or the third sector (76 per cent). Patterns of engagement across industry sectors mirrored those described above, but there was a clear difference between smaller and larger organisations with as many as 80 per cent of large employers engaging, compared with just half of small and medium sized organisations.

Figure 41: Does your organisation currently engage with the education sector in any way? (by employer size)



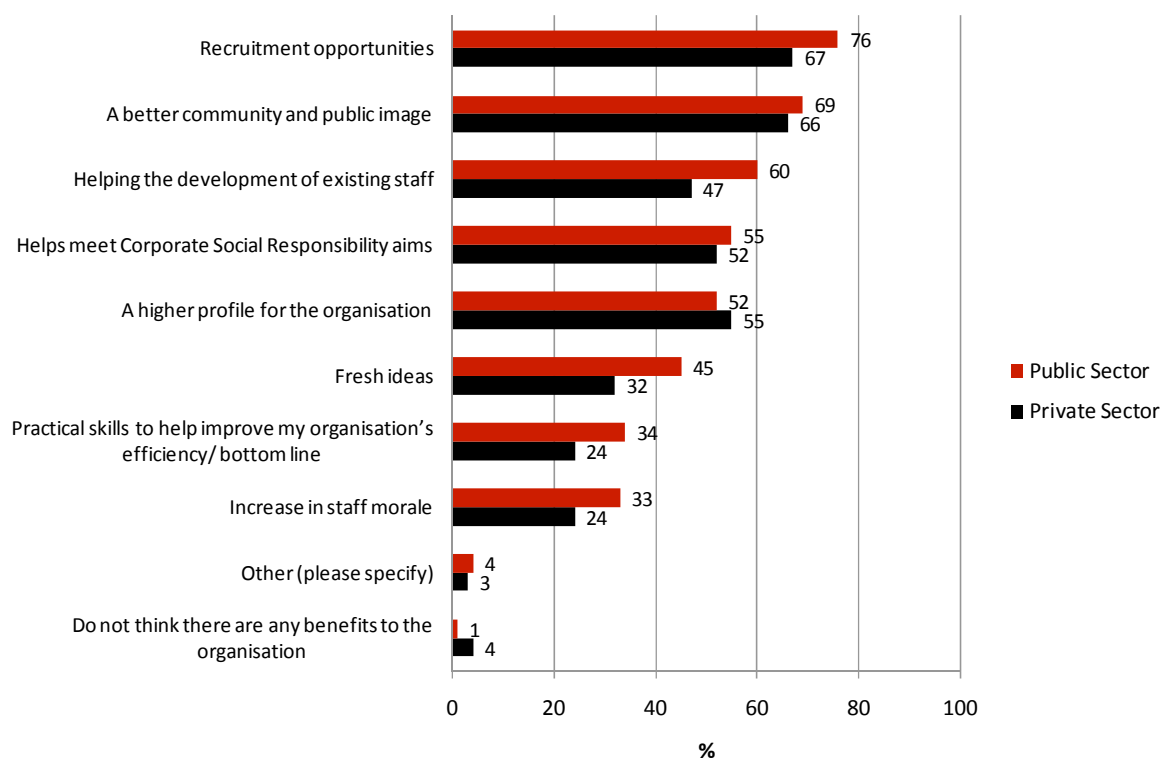
Base: 912 employers. Figures exclude don't knows.

6.5 The benefits of engagement

For an employer

- 6.5.1 Recruitment opportunities and a better community image were the key benefits reported by those employers that currently engage. There is also a strong resonance with an organisation's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) agenda and in raising their profile.

Figure 42: What do you see as the main benefits which engagement with the education sector brings to your organisation? (by private / public sector)



Base: 357 private sector and 171 private sector employers.

6.5.2 Employers in professional services were most likely to focus on CSR whilst public service organisations and manufacturers highlighted recruitment opportunities in particular. Asked to elaborate on the benefits, one employer felt that it allowed them to get involved early to help shape their business requirements:

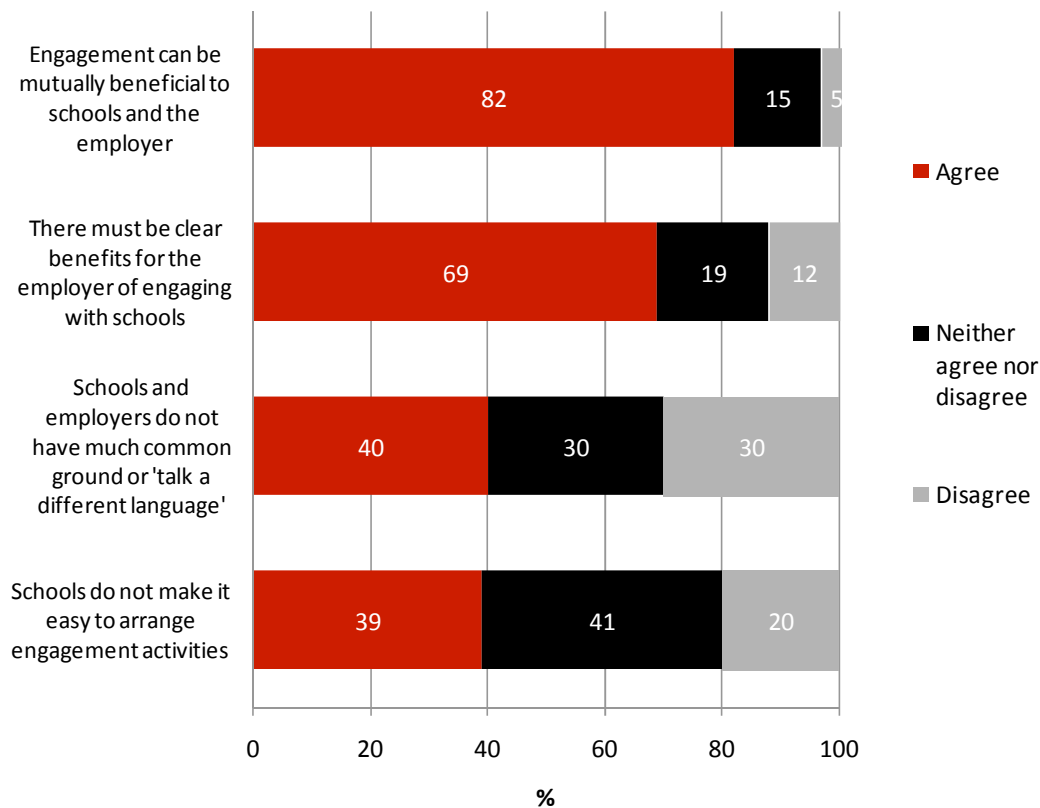
- *“Business needs to help the education sector understand what candidates need to demonstrate, so potential candidates are prepared and if this starts early enough in education we will not need to take remedial action in terms of lack of basic skills or turn people down.”*

A mutual benefit for schools and employers?

6.5.3 Amongst employers there was clear recognition that engagement can be mutually beneficial for themselves and schools. More than four out of five (82 per cent) supported this statement. Interestingly, a lower proportion (69 per cent) felt that there had to be clear

benefits for the employer in order to justify engagement, indicating that some employers may engage for essentially altruistic reasons alone.

Figure 43: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about engaging with schools? (Employers)



Base: All employers excluding those answering don't know (range: 832 to 979).

6.5.4 Over half of teachers (58 per cent) believed that engagement offers benefits for both employer and school, but a significant number (35 per cent) felt that the school had the main or only benefits. This suggests a lack of recognition or understanding on the part of teachers about what employers can take from engagement. Only a handful felt that the employer gains the greater share of the benefits. There was little variation between teachers in terms of their age, although younger teachers had less experience of contact with employers. Although there was an indication that sixth form / college lecturers were

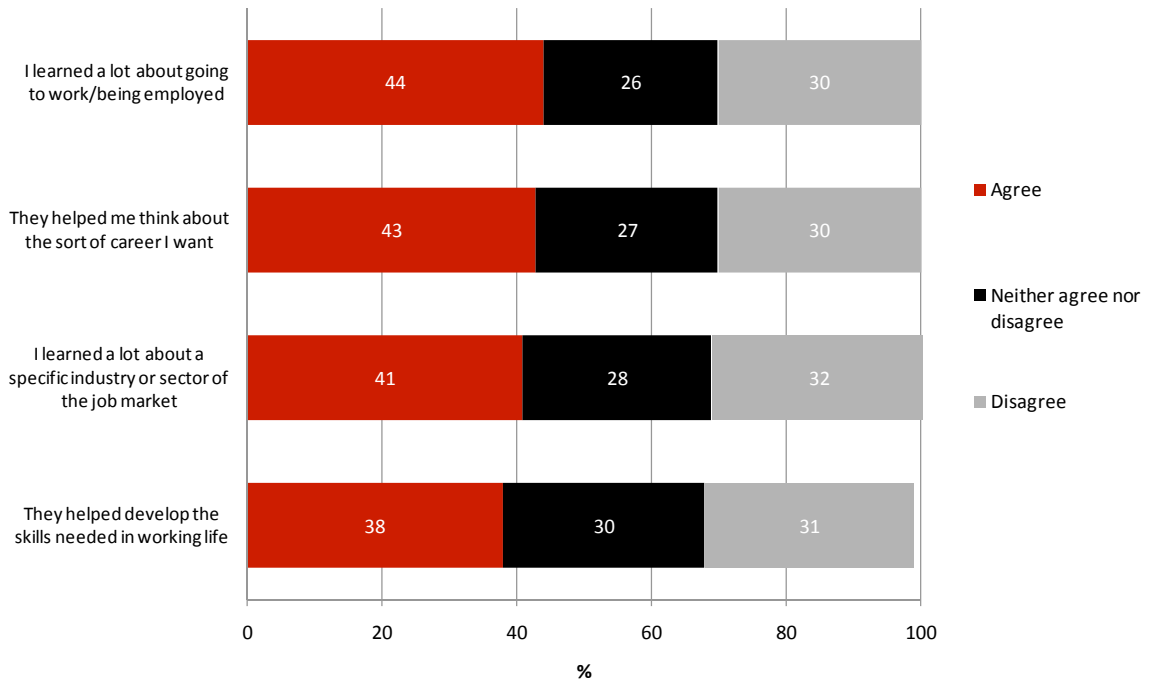
more likely to recognise the benefits for employers, this was only a slight variation when compared to secondary school teachers. Similarly there was some small and indicative evidence that teachers from schools with a nominated member of staff to liaise with local businesses were more likely to recognise the shared benefits.

- 6.5.5 Many employers felt that schools do not make it easy for them to engage: 39 per cent agreed with this statement compared with 20 per cent who disagreed. Patterns of response here followed previously established lines in that micro and small businesses were less likely than large organisations to believe that schools make it easy for employers. Likewise those in the public services sector were more likely to be engaged and to disagree that schools do not make it easy for employers.
- 6.5.6 Views on whether employers and schools share a common understanding were tilted slightly towards the feeling that they do not. Forty per cent felt that they did not *'have much common ground or talk a different language.'* Thirty per cent were unsure and the same proportion disagreed. Larger employers felt that there was more common ground between them than did micro and small organisations and, as would be expected, public sector employers were significantly more likely than the private sector to feel connected in this way.

For children & young people

- 6.5.7 Those in Key Stage 4 or above were asked about the benefits they felt they gained from activities with employers. Overall less than half expressed a positive response and around a third were ambivalent. However, responses were generally more positive among young people in Key Stage 5, probably reflecting the greater number of opportunities they have had to engage with employers by that stage.

Figure 44: Thinking about [engagement] activities, how far do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

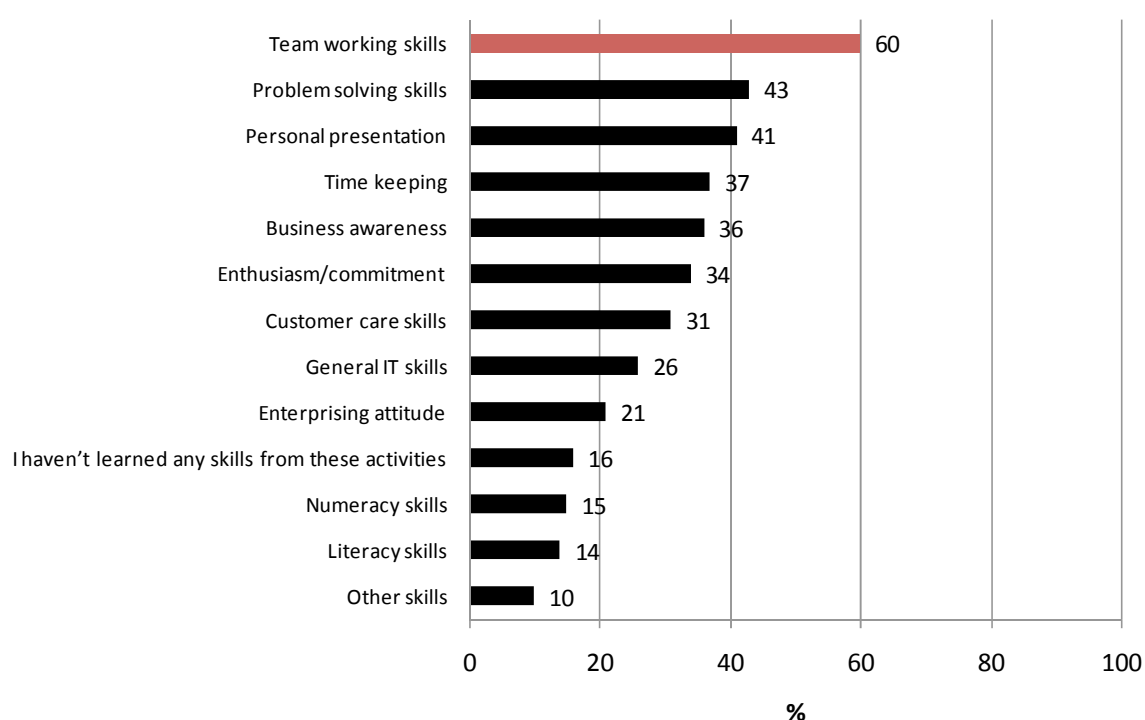


Base: Those in KS4 and above (range: 1,255 to 1,278). Excludes not applicable and don't knows.

6.5.8 When asked to think about the skills they gained from employer engagement activities, 60 per cent of young people ranked team working as a benefit; other benefits included personal presentation and problem-solving. Only 16 per cent felt that they had not learned anything from taking part.

6.5.9 Academic skills such as numeracy and literacy were not widely reported benefits and there were no significant differences between boys and girls. Those from ABC1 households were indicatively more likely to report picking up more skills than C2DEs and, as noted above, it is likely that the greater exposure to work by Key Stage 5 is reflected in more of the older age group recognising the skills benefits.

Figure 45: What sort of skills, if any, do you think you have gained from work related activities?



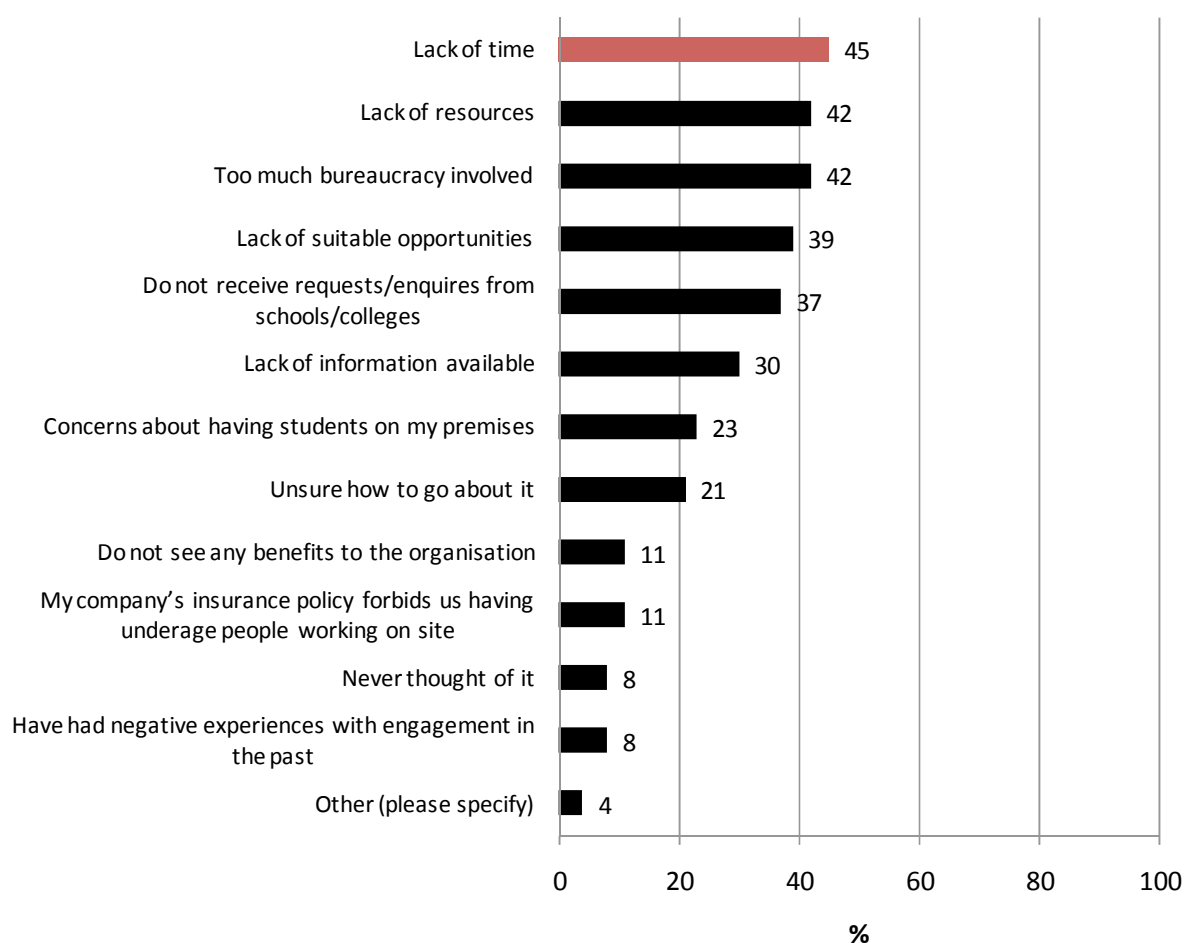
Base: Those in KS4 and above (1,304, excludes not applicable).

6.6 Barriers to engagement

6.6.1 All employers were asked about the barriers to start engaging or to engage more. The most commonly mentioned reasons were a perceived lack of time and resources, concerns about bureaucracy and whether there were suitable or appropriate opportunities. Relatively few felt that a lack of benefits prevented them engaging and only a small number had had poor experiences in the past. Just under a third had not received requests from schools or colleges to get involved and 17 per cent were unsure how to proceed. A similar proportion had concerns about having students in their workplace and in other responses, a small

number of employers felt that confidentiality and security concerns prevented their organisation from working with young people. This again indicates how narrow the concept of engagement is for many employers – focused largely on their ability to provide work experience opportunities.

Figure 46: What are the main factors which prevent your organisation from engaging more with the education sector?



Base: Those not currently fully engaged (792).

6.6.2 Employers outside London and the South East were more likely to report a lack of contact from schools and colleges. Large organisations that were not currently engaged were more likely than smaller firms to highlight a lack of resources and slightly more so to be concerned about bureaucracy. However they were also less likely to report a lack of information or a lack of requests from local schools or colleges. More of the smaller

organisations could not see the benefits and reported that local schools or colleges had not been in touch with them. Micro, small and medium sized organisations were also more likely to have '*never thought of it*' and to be unsure of how to go about it.

6.7 Sources of information for employers

- 6.7.1 Nearly two-fifths of employers reported that they do not receive any information about the education sector. Amongst those who do receive information, the most commonly mentioned sources are local colleges and schools. Seventeen per cent mentioned the Local Education Business Partnership. Other sources such as websites, Chambers of Commerce and Business in the Community (BITC) were mentioned less frequently.
- 6.7.2 The key differences between employers were in terms of their size. Local Education Business Partnerships were cited by 21 per cent of large employers which were also the most likely to have received any information from any source. Employers in the public sector were the most likely to have established contacts and be receiving information.

Figure 47: Where do you go for information about engaging with the education sector? (by business size)

Information source	Business Size				Total
	Micro	Small	Medium	Large	
Local college	18%	29%	28%	40%	34%
Local school	20%	24%	21%	34%	29%
Local Education Business Partnership	6%	13%	13%	21%	17%
Specialist organisations such as Young Enterprise	7%	12%	5%	15%	12%
Business in the Community	4%	7%	9%	12%	10%
Other	5%	3%	2%	11%	8%
Websites	8%	12%	14%	10%	11%
Chamber of Commerce	8%	9%	12%	9%	9%
Friends/family	4%	6%	10%	7%	7%
CBI	-	2%	3%	6%	4%

Newspapers	3%	2%	5%	2%	3%
Radio or TV	1%	1%	5%	2%	2%
Do not get any information	58%	43%	51%	29%	38%

6.8 Trends in employer engagement

6.8.1 Of those employers currently engaging with education, a third are doing so more than they did three years ago. Sixteen per cent report less activity and over half no change over that time period. Of those not currently engaged, only 11 per cent said that they had been engaged three years ago. Just under a third of those currently engaged felt that future economic conditions might result in less activity. Only 12 per cent felt that their level of involvement would increase.

Figure 48: Does your organisation engage with schools more or less than it did three years ago or has there been no change?

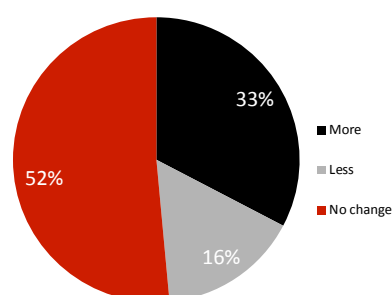
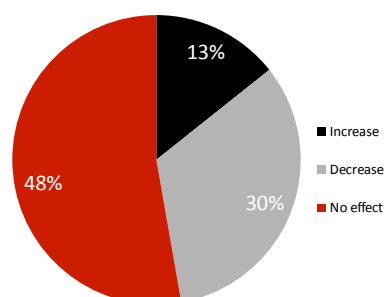


Figure 49: do you think that the future economic situation might increase, decrease or have no effect on your engagement?



Base: Those currently engaged, excluding don't knows 524 and 527.

6.9 Do schools have a nominated member of staff to liaise with local employers?

6.9.1 A third of teachers were unsure whether their school had a particular member of staff with the responsibility to liaise with local employers. This lack of awareness is a finding in itself but when this group is excluded, 69 per cent reported that their school did have that arrangement in place and 21 per cent that it did not. Those teaching in the state sector

were significantly more likely to report that a member of staff had responsibility for liaising with local employers than those in the independent / private sector. Those teaching at sixth form or college level were even more likely to report that arrangement was in place: this is unsurprising since employer links are a core activity for most FE colleges.

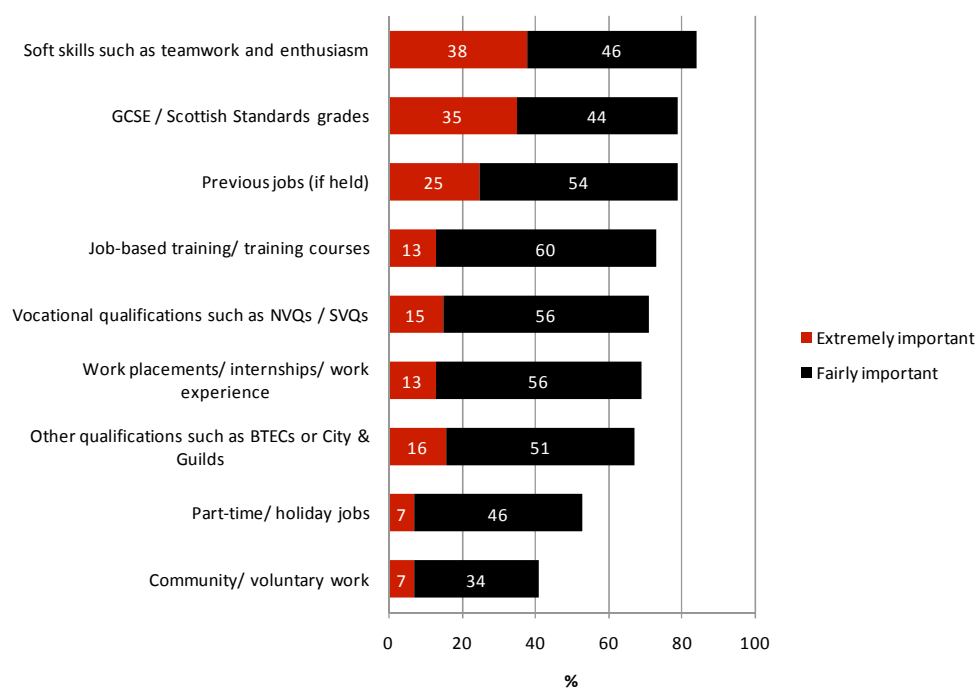
7 Education and the workplace

7.1 Importance of different types of qualification when recruiting young people

School / college leavers aged 16 or 17

7.1.1 Thirty-six per cent of employers confirmed that their organisation does recruit school leavers aged 16 or 17. They were asked about the importance of various qualifications or skills that they might have gained by that stage in their education. The most valued attributes are the young person's soft skills (such as teamwork and enthusiasm), but GCSE and equivalents are also a key qualification for most employers. Other qualifications (such as BTECs and City & Guilds) are not viewed as strongly relative to GCSEs, but are still considered important.

Figure 50: How important are each of the following when deciding on the suitability of a typical candidate who is a school leaver aged 16 or 17?

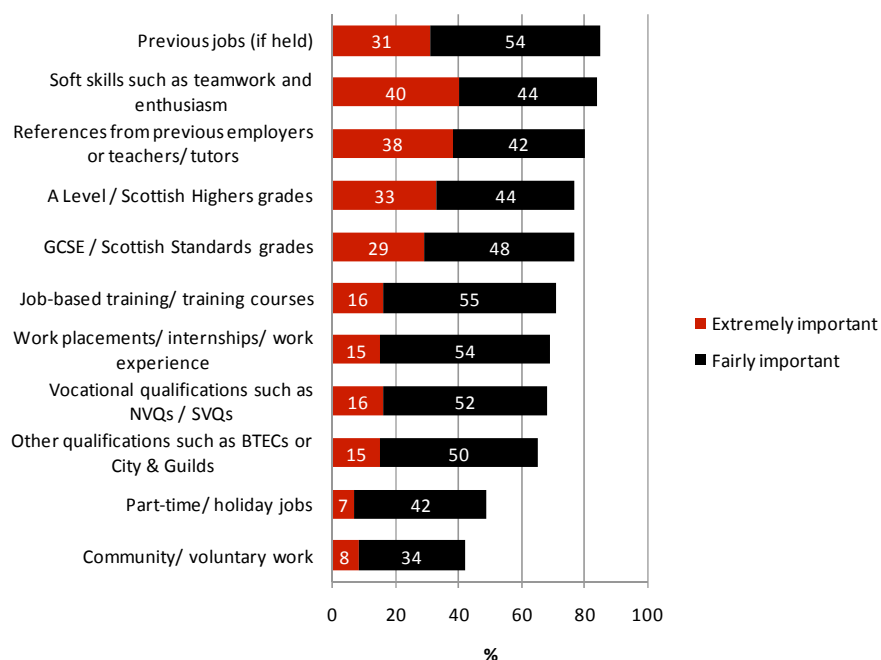


Base: employers who typically recruit school leavers aged 16 or 17 (363).

School / college leavers aged 18 to 20

- 7.1.2 Fifty-nine per cent of the employers questioned would regularly take on those aged 18 to 20 who had left school or college and would have had access to qualifications, experiences and skills appropriate for that age group including A-Levels and work placements and references from previous employers.
- 7.1.3 For this age group, employers see previous work experience and references from previous employers as relatively more important than for younger age groups, and again soft skills are highly valued. A-Levels rank only fourth in the order of importance, and GCSEs are considered as important as for the younger age group but come lower down the list. Vocational qualifications are valued more highly by larger employers and those in the public sector. In the private sector and amongst smaller employers there is a particularly strong focus on previous jobs and soft skills; these employers also rank academic qualifications more highly than vocational qualifications.

Figure 51: How important are each of the following when deciding on the suitability of a typical candidate who is a school / college leaver aged 18 to 20?

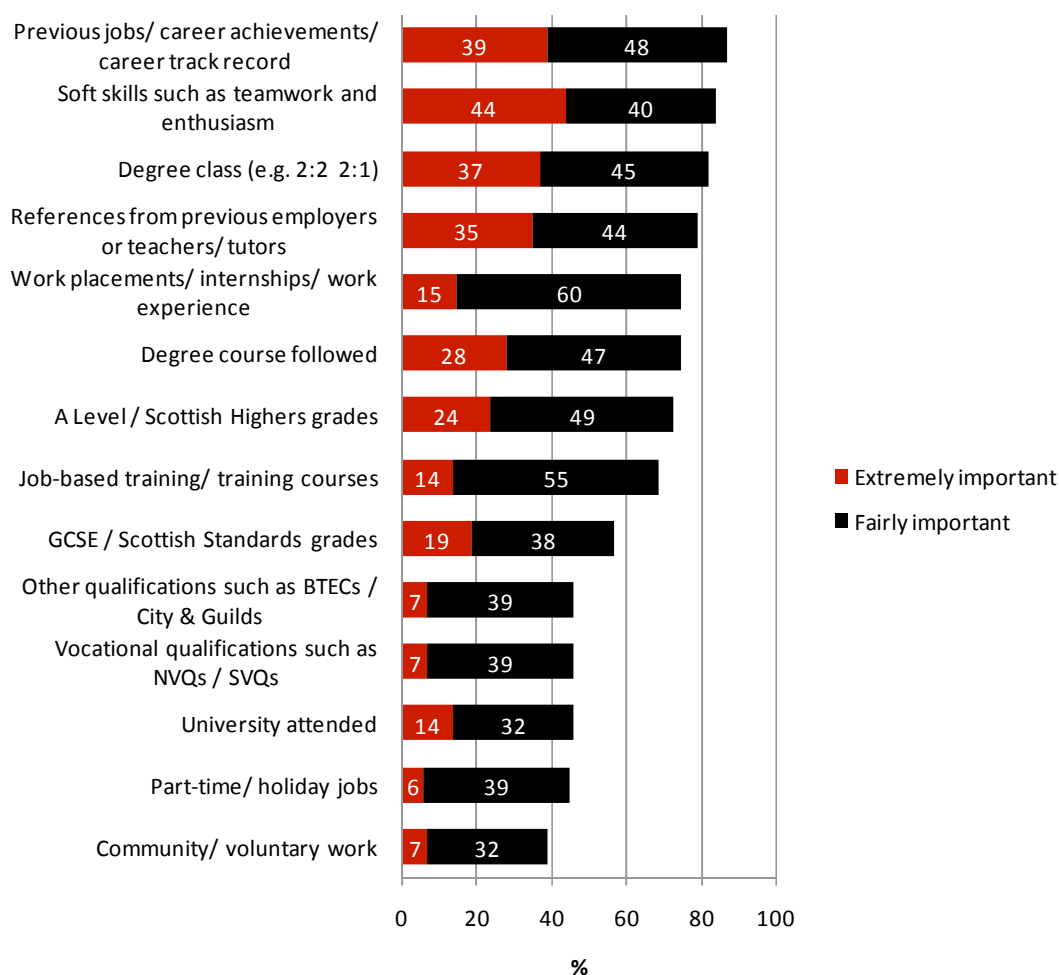


Base: employers who recruit school leavers aged 18 to 20 (591).

New and recent graduates

7.1.4 Eighty per cent of employers interviewed recruit new and recent graduates. When asked about their priorities for qualifications, experience and skills, once again, soft skills, references and experience are important. A-Levels and GCSE fall further down the priorities list and the class of degree obtained is valued more highly than the subject of the degree course followed or the university attended.

Figure 52: How important are each of the following when deciding on the suitability of a typical candidate who is a new or recent graduate?

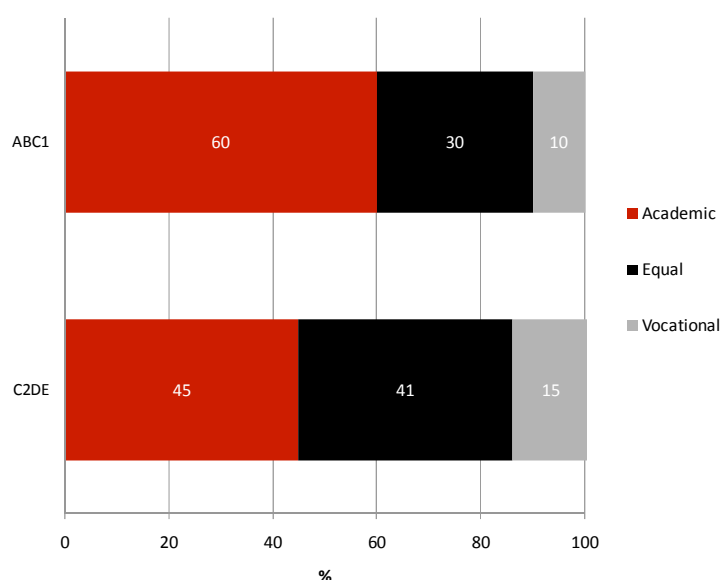


Base: employers who recruit new and recent graduates (798).

The views of young people currently in work

7.1.5 The higher prominence given by employers to academic qualifications was reflected in the views of young people, over half of whom felt that employers value academic qualifications more highly than vocational. Only just over a third felt that both academic and vocational were of equal importance. There was however a clear difference between socio-economic groups with 60 per cent of ABC1s feeling that employers favour academic qualifications, compared to 45 per cent of C2DEs.

Figure 53: What do you think employers believe is more important, academic qualifications or vocational qualifications? (by socio-economic classification)



Base: young people currently in work, excluding don't knows (432).

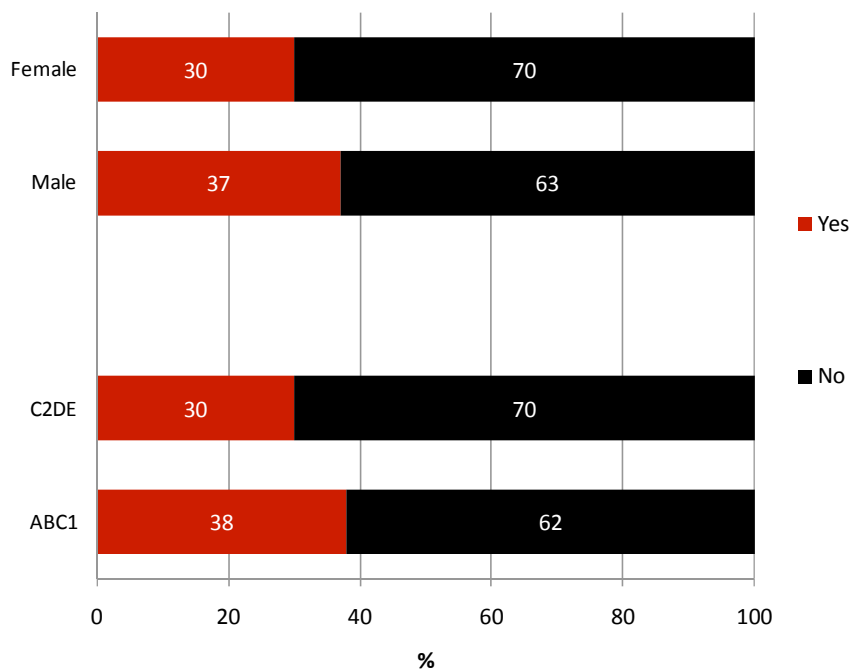
7.2 How well does the education system equip young people for the workplace?

7.2.1 On balance, employers felt that graduates were relatively better prepared for the world of work than school leavers. On a ten point scale, 80 per cent of employers felt that school leavers were closer to being 'poorly prepared' than 'well prepared'. A lower but still significant proportion (61 per cent) felt likewise about graduates. Echoing earlier findings, employers from micro, small and medium sized organisations were less positive than large employers, as were those from the private and third sectors compared to public sector

organisations. Those that engage with the education sector are likely to have a more positive perception of both school leavers and graduates.

7.2.2 Those young people who were in work were asked whether they felt that the education system did enough to develop the skills they have needed in the workplace. Overall, two-thirds felt that it did not and women and those from the C2DE social group were more likely to feel this way.

Figure 54: Do you think that the education system did enough to support you to develop the practical skills you need for the workplace?



Base: those currently in full or part-time work, excluding don't knows (439).

7.2.3 In contrast, two-thirds of young people in work believed that they had left school with the right qualifications to help in their chosen career. This time women were more likely to believe that they had, but again those from the C2DE social group were less likely to respond positively.

7.3 Skills, qualifications and alignment with your business

Mismatch

- 7.3.1 Seventy-one per cent of employers believed that there was a mismatch between the skills of young people and their requirements as an organisation; only 10 per cent disagreed. Large employers and those operating in the public sector were least likely to support the statement. The sense of mismatch was particularly strong in IT / computing and hospitality.

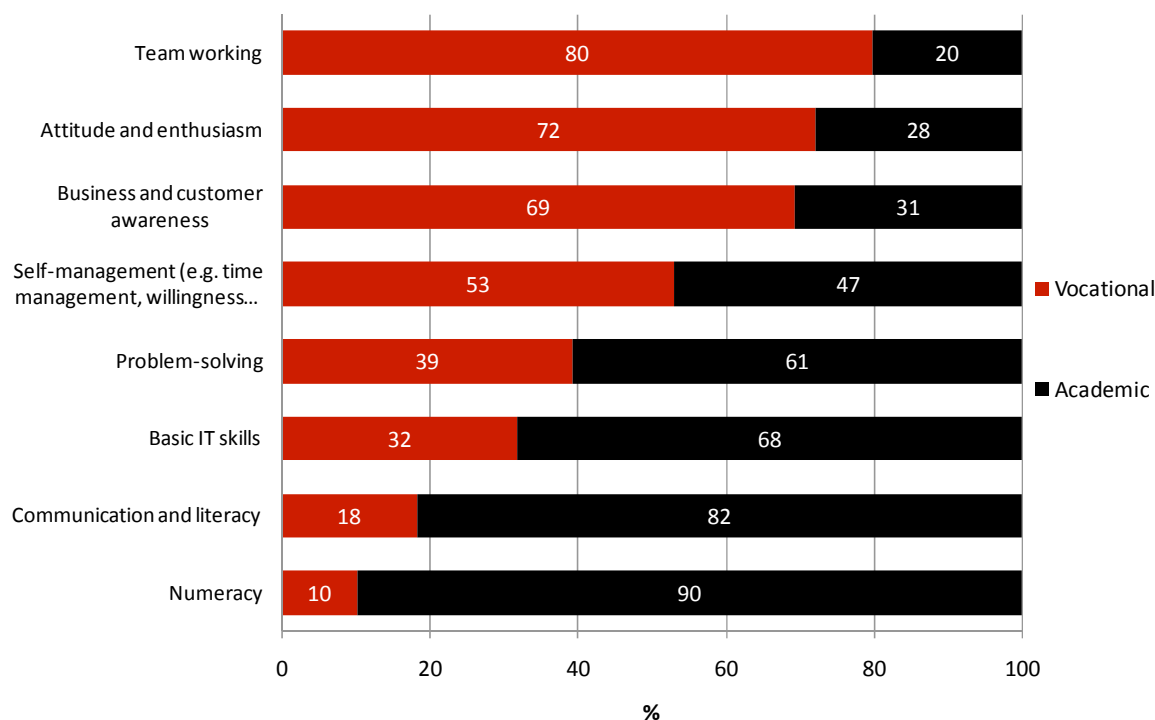
Relevant for your business

- 7.3.2 There was an even balance of response when employers considered whether academic, vocational or both types of qualification were most relevant for their organisation. A quarter felt that vocational qualifications were more relevant; this opinion was felt most strongly in the private and third sectors and in retail, hospitality and construction. Over 30 per cent believed academic qualifications to be more relevant, a viewpoint most strongly held amongst finance, IT and public services employers. Of interest was a clear difference between those employers currently engaging with the education system, in that those most interested in the supply of people with vocational qualifications were less likely to be engaged with schools and colleges.
- 7.3.3 When thinking about a school or college leaver only, there was a greater preference for practical work experience than for specific qualifications. Nearly two-fifths of employers preferred the former, compared to 21 per cent favouring qualifications earned at school or college.

'Employability' skills

- 7.3.4 When asked to think about the differences between new employees with academic and vocational qualifications there were some clear differences in experiences. Those with vocational qualifications were judged as stronger at team working, and to have a better attitude and business awareness. However vocational qualifications fall behind academic qualifications in developing problem solving, IT skills and – markedly - both literacy and numeracy.

Figure 55: Based on your experience of new employees, are those with academic or vocational qualifications better developed in terms of the following skills and attributes?



Base: all employers excluding don't knows (between 698 and 847).

7.4 Does the job market contain the right balance of people for employers?

7.4.1 The research suggests there is an unmet demand for people with vocational qualifications and a relative over-supply of people with academic qualifications. Eighty-one per cent of employers felt that there were too few people in the job market with vocational qualifications, while 47 per cent stated that there were too many with academic qualifications.

Figure 56: Does the job market contain too many, too few or the right amount of people with vocational qualifications?

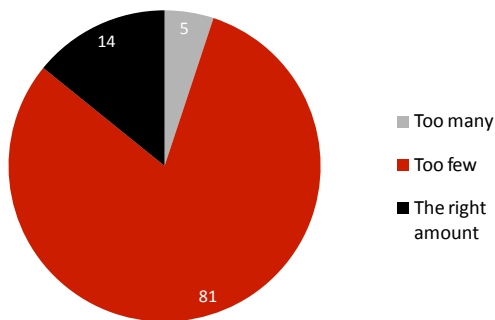
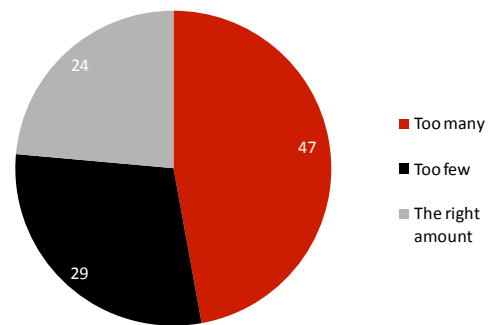


Figure 57: Does the job market contain too many, too few or the right amount of people with academic qualifications?



Base: all employers excluding don't knows (841 and 889).

7.4.2 There were only small differences of opinion between private and public sector employers on vocational qualifications, but those from the private sector were more likely to feel that there are too many people with academic qualifications. As might be expected, those from industry sectors that are more vocational such as construction and automotive were more likely to say that there are too few with vocational qualifications, but demand was high across the other sectors including services. The only exceptions were higher end professional services, but still over half (in sectors such as media and publishing) would welcome more people with vocational qualifications in the jobs market.

8 Training and development of employees

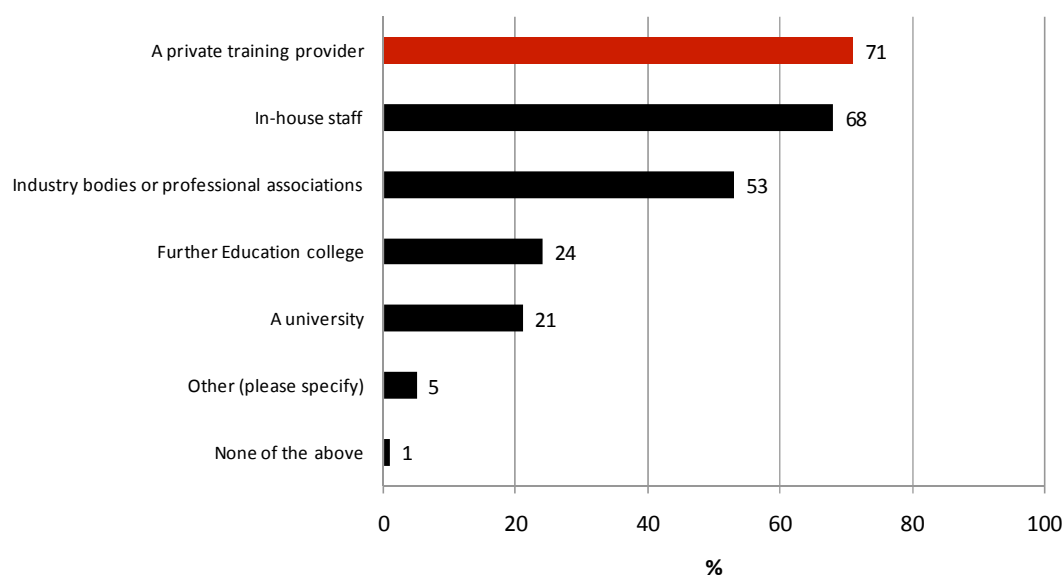
8.1 Training provided

8.1.1 The majority of employers (68 per cent) interviewed stated that they fund training and development for current staff. With the exception of micro businesses (just 39 per cent) this trend was strong across small, medium and large employers. It was strongest in the public (81 per cent) and third sectors (85 per cent) in comparison with the private sector (63 per cent).

8.2 Sources of training

8.2.1 Those that provide training take it from a variety of sources, amongst which external private providers, in-house staff and industry bodies / professional associations are most prominent. Around a quarter draw upon further education colleges, a finding that is consistent across public and private sectors, however private companies are less likely to use in-house staff than those in the public sector which in turn is more likely to utilise opportunities from universities.

Figure 58: Which of the following have you used for training?

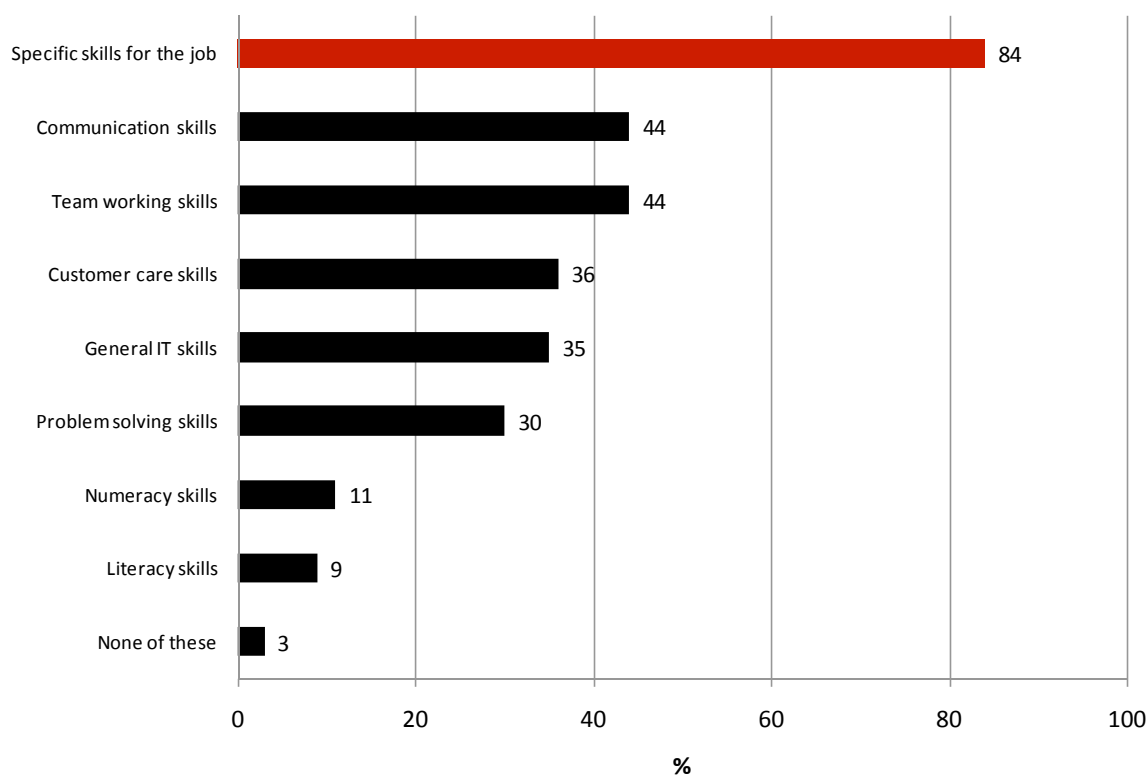


Base: employers that provide training (684).

8.3 Purposes of training

8.3.1 For 85 per cent of employers providing training, the addition of specific skills required for a job is of importance. Generic business skills have a lower profile, although communications and team working were marked by nearly half of employers. Literacy and numeracy is not provided by many employers, despite their concerns about the skills of young people in those areas. There were no large differences between public and private sector employers, however the private sector was more likely to focus on the specific skills required for a job and also be concerned with communication and customer care.

Figure 59: Is your training providing any of the following?



Base: employers that provide training (684)

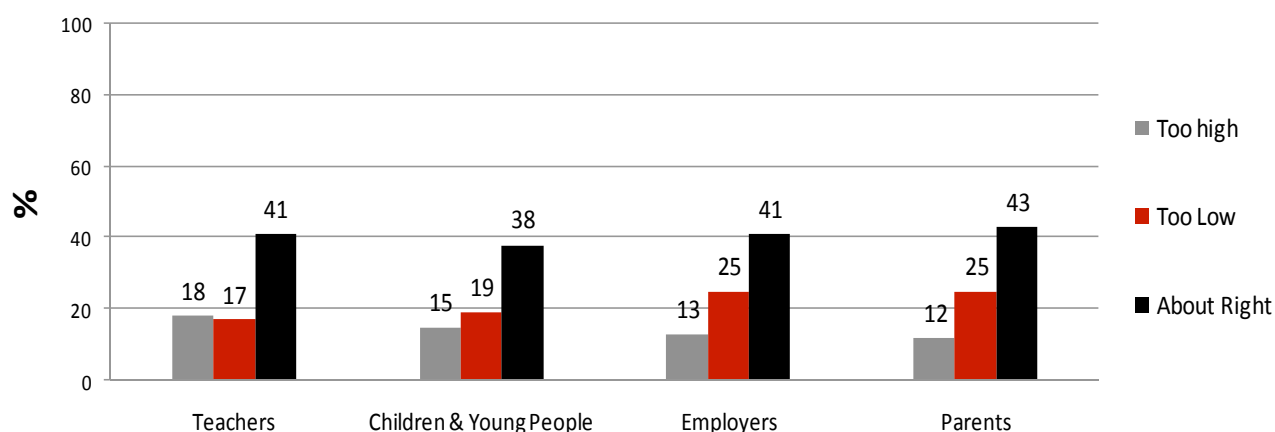
9 Apprenticeships

9.1 Apprenticeships – the government target

9.1.1 In its strategy *'World Class Apprenticeships: Unlocking Talent, Building Skills for All'*, the government announced its intention to expand Apprenticeship programmes very significantly over the next 5 years. At present 130,000 employers offer Apprenticeships and 1 in 15 16-18 year olds are on an Apprenticeship scheme. The government wants all suitably qualified young people to have the choice of an Apprenticeship place and new targets have been set to increase this number to one in five over the next 10 years.

9.1.2 Stakeholder groups were asked whether they thought the Apprenticeship target set by the Government was too high, too low or about right. As the figure below shows the majority felt that it was about right. Among parents, mothers were likely to support the target than fathers (47 per cent compared to 38 per cent). One in five parents aged 18 to 35 felt the target was too high compared to one in 10 parents aged 55 plus. A quarter of parents and employers believed the target to be too low. Employers who are not currently engaged with the education sector were more likely to think the target was too low than those who are.

Figure 60: Attitudes towards Apprenticeships Targets

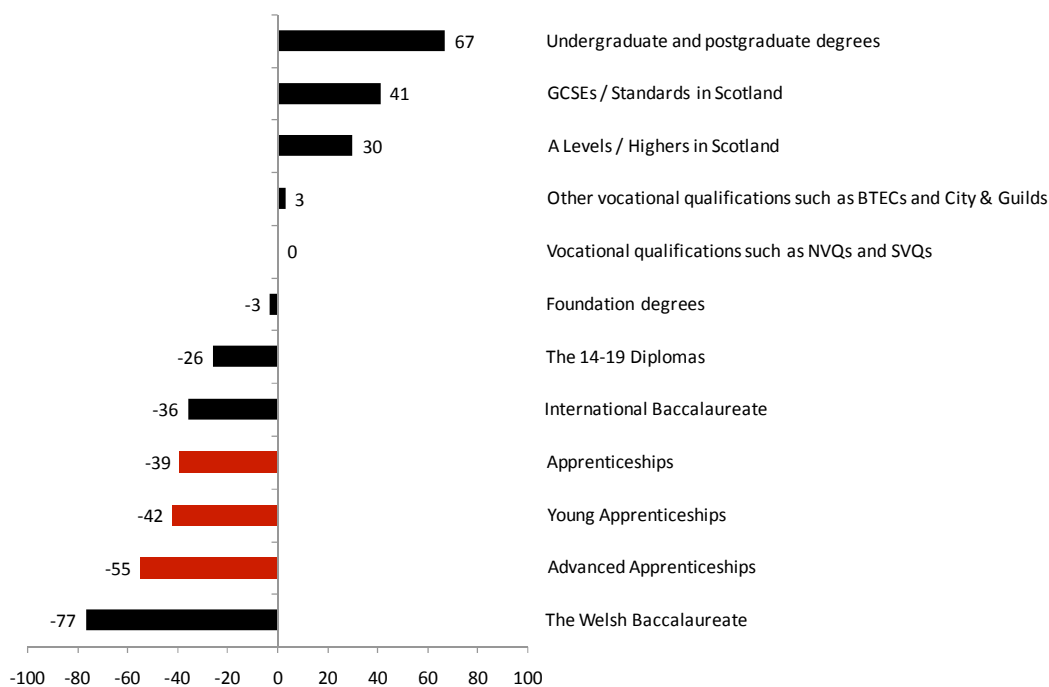


Base: Teachers (1,199) Children & Young People (376) Employers (1,001) Parents (1,030)

9.1.3 The groups most likely to think the target was too high were teachers and children and young people.

9.1.4 Despite Apprenticeships being around for some time, teachers' level of knowledge about them is extremely limited. The figure below shows net knowledge scores among teachers, across a range of qualifications. Net knowledge scores were produced by subtracting the percentage of teachers who said they had good knowledge from the percentage who had poor knowledge.

Figure 61: Level of knowledge among teachers for specific qualifications



Base: Teachers (1,199)

9.1.5 Aside from the Welsh Baccalaureate, net knowledge scores for Apprenticeships were the lowest of all qualifications listed in the survey, and stand in marked contrast with positive scores for undergraduate/ postgraduate degrees and GCSE's/ Standards in Scotland. This gap in teachers' knowledge and understanding is a clear cause for concern.

9.1.6 By comparison, parents claim a fair understanding of Apprenticeships, with a net knowledge score of +10, 49 percentage points higher than the score for teachers. However, this figure should be treated with a degree of caution as it represents what parents say they know – their actual knowledge of Apprenticeships may in practice be

weaker than this suggests. Being closer to the education system, teachers may be giving a fairer answer.

9.2 Apprenticeships – a good alternative?

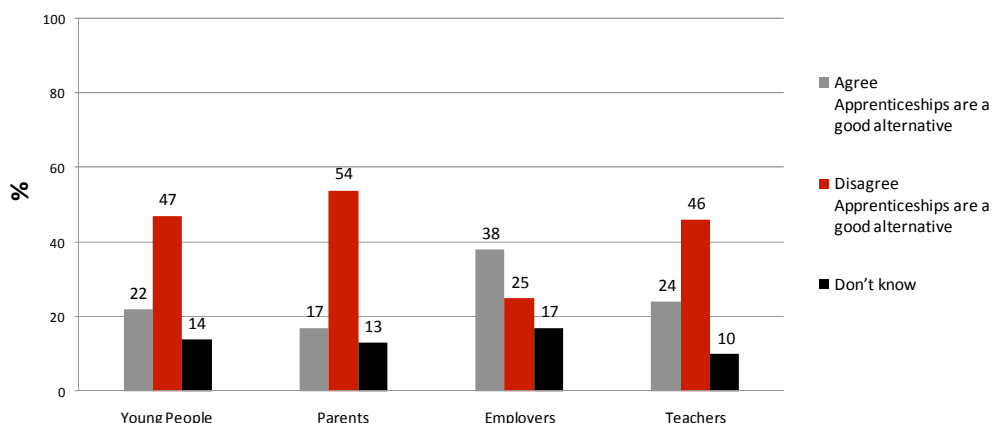
9.2.1 The four stakeholder groups were asked their opinions of Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-levels or equivalent qualifications. Each stakeholder group was firstly asked their opinion on Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-levels or equivalent qualifications and then how they think other stakeholder groups would feel.

Teachers – are Apprenticeships a good alternative?

9.2.2 One in four teachers (24 per cent) agree that Apprenticeships are a good alternative to A-Levels or equivalent qualifications. However, 46 per cent disagree despite the fact that 47 per cent believe that Apprenticeships are suitable for individuals of all abilities. A further 10 per cent of teachers don't know if Apprenticeships are a good alternative to A Levels.

9.2.3 As identified earlier, teachers' knowledge of Apprenticeships is very limited. This lack of knowledge could be a factor in why so few teachers see Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A-Levels or equivalent qualifications. In addition, the vast majority (85 per cent) of teachers feel there is a clear progression route for academic qualifications but only a third (35 per cent) feel the same is true for vocational qualifications. It is likely that they see academic qualifications as a better stepping stone to higher education than Apprenticeships.

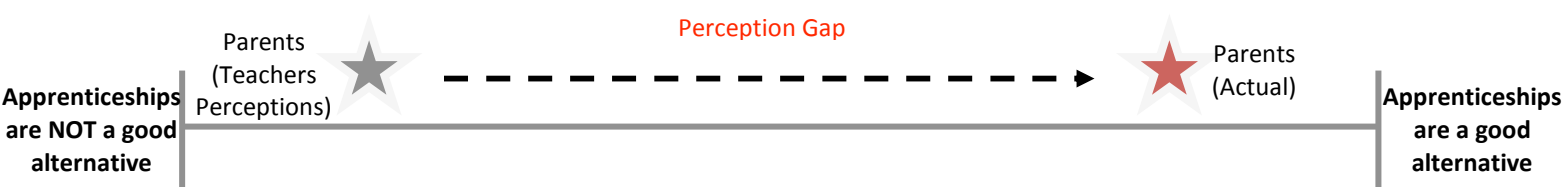
Figure 62: Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-Levels or equivalent: what teachers say themselves, and what they think other stakeholders will say



Base: Teachers (1,199)

9.2.4 As we will discuss in more detail later, many parents and young people consider that Apprenticeships are a good alternative to A levels and equivalent academic qualifications. This will come as a surprise to many teachers. Figure 62 shows that only a small percentage of teachers believe young people and parents regard Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A levels. Figure 63 shows that there is a very large gap between what teachers think parents believe, and what parents actually believe.

Figure 63: Teachers' perception of parents' view of Apprenticeships, compared with what parents actually think

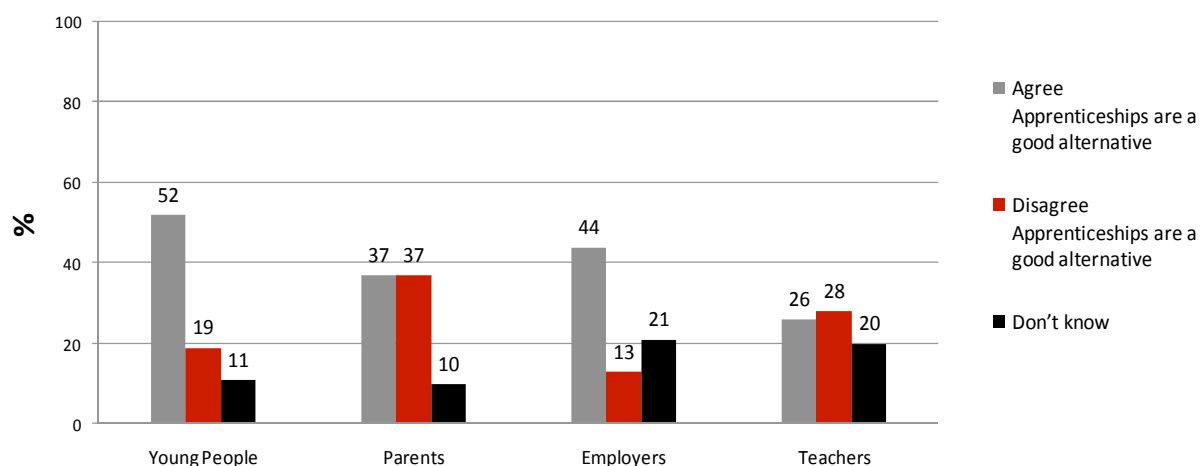


Children and Young People – are Apprenticeships a good alternative?

9.2.5 Young people are generally more positive towards Apprenticeships than expected by teachers with over half (52 per cent) agreeing that Apprenticeships are a good alternative to

A-Levels or equivalent qualifications. Young people in group C2DE are more positive towards apprenticeships than those in group ABC1 (56 per cent compared to 48 per cent).

Figure 64: Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-Levels or equivalent: what children and young people say themselves, and what they think other stakeholders will say



Base: Children at Key Stage 4 (376)

9.2.6 Some other survey findings may also shed light on young people's attitudes:

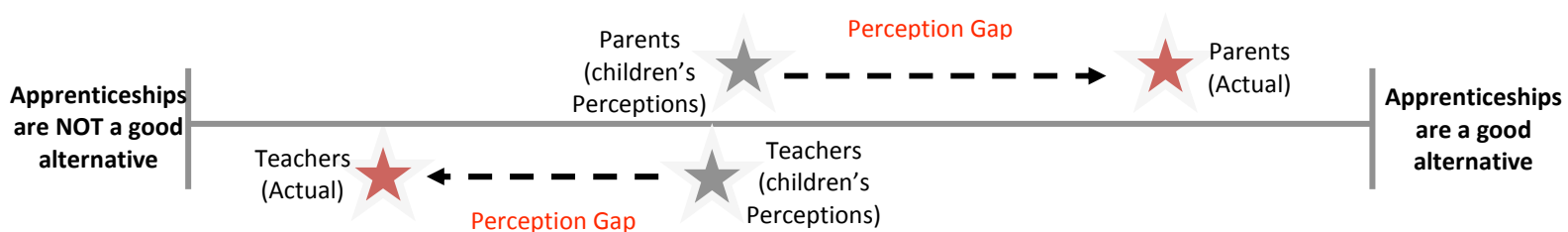
- A third (32 per cent) of young people at Key Stage 4 agree that learning by doing things is more fun than academic learning. Apprenticeships could be seen by these young people as 'fun learning' which might result in a positive outlook.
- Of those young people at 'Key Stage 5' (age 16 to 18) who said the information and advice provided in schools and colleges about learning, jobs and careers was poor, 70 per cent would have liked better advice on jobs. Apprenticeships may be seen by some young people as better preparation for the working world. Lack of advice in school/ college could also be a contributing factor as to why Apprenticeships are viewed as good alternatives.

9.2.7 When asked how they think their parents perceive Apprenticeships, young people are evenly divided: 37 per cent think their parents would see Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A Levels, and 37 per cent think the opposite. This indicates there may be some confusion among young people as to their parents' attitudes. Half (51 per cent) of those at key stage 4 feel their parents think academic qualifications are more important

than vocational. That said, a further third (33 per cent) think their parents regard academic and vocational qualifications as equally important.

9.2.8 Overall, young people underestimate their parents' support for Apprenticeships. They also underestimate teachers' lack of support for Apprenticeships, as illustrated in Figure 65.

Figure 65: Children & young people's opinion on Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-Levels or equivalent

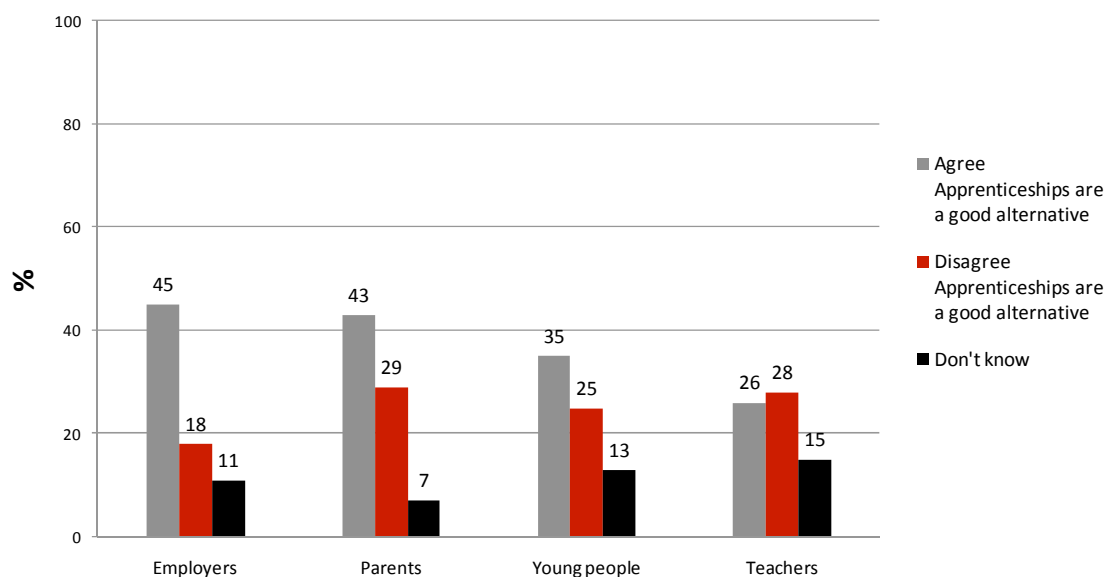


9.2.9 Teachers and young people think, correctly, that employers are likely to regard Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A Levels.

Parents – are Apprenticeships a good alternative?

9.2.10 As noted already, parents are much more positive about Apprenticeships than teachers expect. As figure 66 shows, 43 per cent of parents agree that Apprenticeships are a good alternative to A Levels or equivalent qualifications.

Figure 66: Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-Levels or equivalent: what parents say themselves, and what they think other stakeholders will say.



Base: Parents (1,030)

9.2.11 Again, other survey findings might shed some light on why parents are relatively well disposed towards Apprenticeships:

- 43 per cent of parents with a child at key stage 4 think children prefer a mixture of 'academic' and 'practical' learning. Though young people think their parents favour academic rather than vocational qualifications, it seems this may not be the case.
- 48 per cent of parents state that there is too little practical learning in school. Parents perhaps see Apprenticeships as redressing the balance between different types of learning.

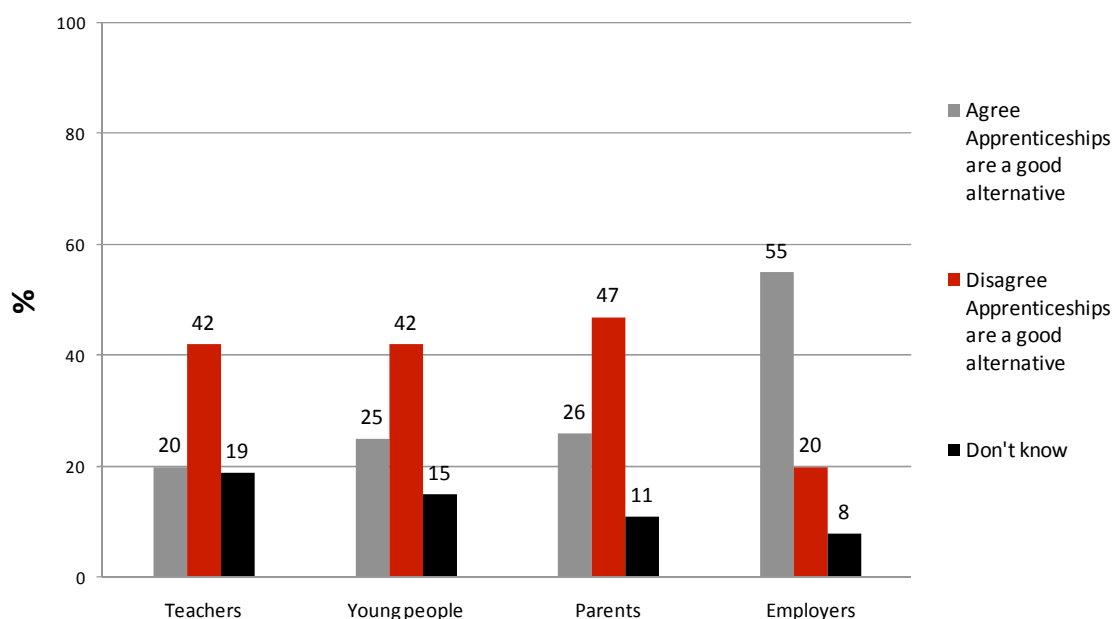
9.2.12 Social grade also influences parental attitudes, with parents from groups C2DE being more favourable towards Apprenticeships than parents in ABC1. We noted earlier that parents say they have a good level of knowledge of Apprenticeships. They also have a positive view of vocational qualifications more generally. However it is possible that parents overestimate their understanding of Apprenticeships; it is also possible that they see Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A Levels for other people's children, rather than their own; this could be explored in greater depth in future research.

9.2.13 As before, parents were asked how they think Apprenticeships are regarded by other stakeholders. A quarter of parents think their children do not regard Apprenticeships as a good alternative and one in eight do not know how they would feel. As with all other stakeholder groups, parents feel that employers will be most likely to agree that Apprenticeships are a good alternative.

Employers— are apprenticeships a good alternative?

9.2.14 Employers are the most positive towards Apprenticeships of all the stakeholder groups. Over half (55 per cent) of employers agree that Apprenticeships are a good alternative to A-Levels or equivalent qualifications. When considering other stakeholders groups, however, employers tend to think that parents, teachers and young people do not view apprenticeships as good alternatives.

Figure 67: Apprenticeships as alternatives to A-Levels or equivalent: what employers say themselves, and what they think other stakeholders will say.



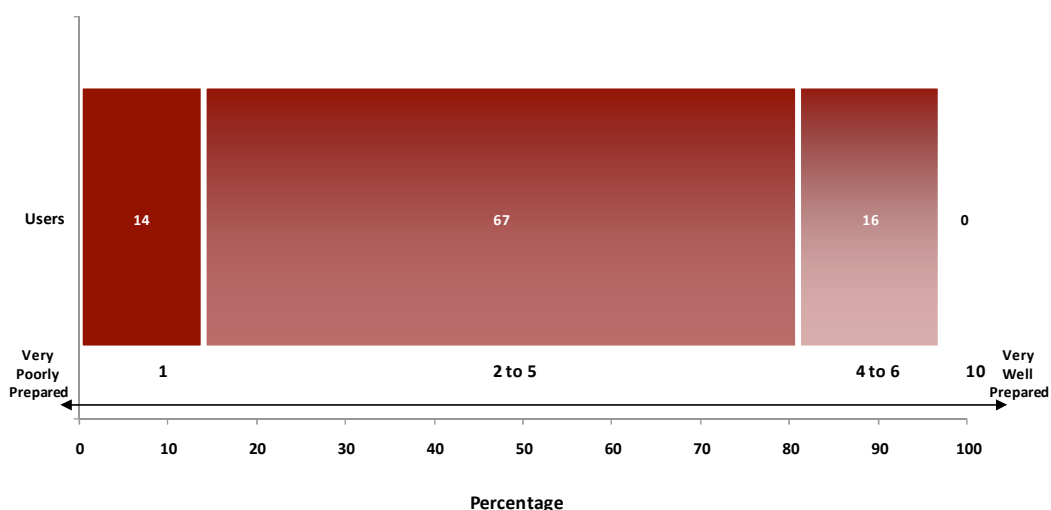
Base: Employers (1,001)

9.2.15 Almost half (47 per cent) felt that parents would not see Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A Levels of equivalent qualifications, and 42 per cent thought this opinion would be shared by young people and teachers. One in five (19 per cent) did not know

whether teachers would regard Apprenticeships as a good alternative to A-Levels or equivalent qualifications.

9.2.16 When asked about school leavers' readiness for the world of work, most employers gave a score between 1 and 5 (a score of 10 means very well prepared) as shown in figure 68. None of the employers felt that school leavers were very well prepared, demonstrating that there is a real concern here.

Figure 68: Employers opinion on how prepared school leavers are for the world of work



Base: Employers (1,001)

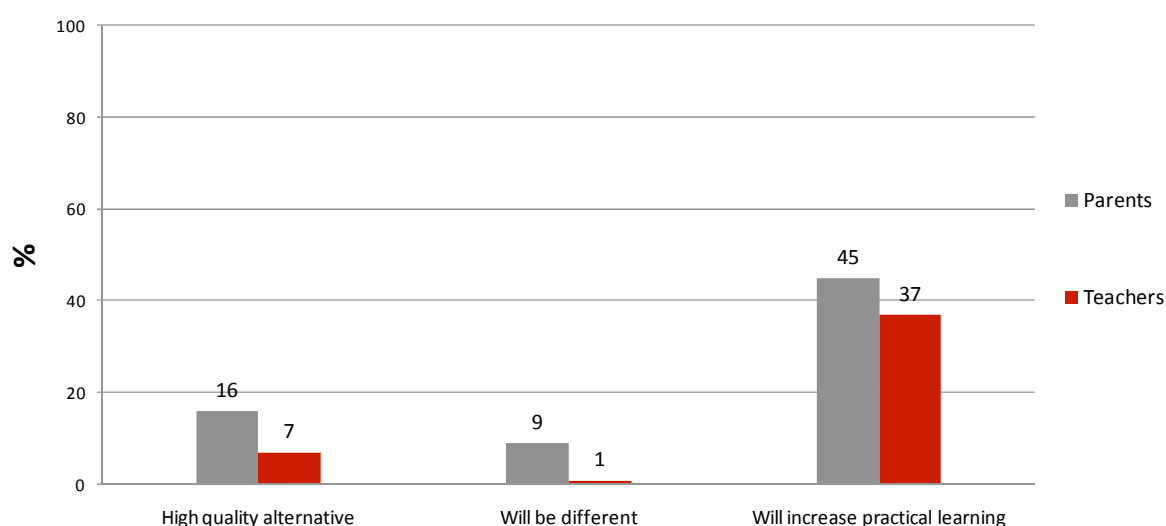
9.2.17 In addition, almost three quarters of employers agreed that there is a mis-match between the skills of young people and the requirements of their organisation. Over half (55 per cent) of employers think schools place too much emphasis on academic achievement and not enough on vocational achievement. Employers clearly perceive that there is a skills gap: this is perhaps one of the reasons why employers feel so strongly that Apprenticeships are a good alternative to A Levels.

10 14-19 Diplomas

10.1.1 Awareness of the new diplomas among employers is low with only nine per cent rating their knowledge of them as good or very good. Seven in 10 rated their knowledge as poor. The situation is slightly better for parents with 39 per cent stating that they had heard of the diploma before doing the survey. In relation to teachers about one third of teachers state that their school offers the diplomas as an option.

10.1.2 The relatively low awareness figures are probably not surprising given that the diplomas have not been fully rolled out across the country. With this in mind the surveys gave teachers and parents an early opportunity to give some thoughts on the diplomas. The chart below uses net agreement scores to demonstrate the strength of feeling that parents and teachers have on specific aspects of the 14-19 diplomas. The net agreement score is calculated by taking away the proportion of respondents who disagreed with a statement from the proportion who agreed.

Figure 69 : Net agreement scores in relation to 14-19 diplomas



Base: All teachers (1,079), all parents having heard of 14-19 diplomas (368)

- 10.1.3 Parents seem to have a more positive view of the new diplomas than teachers. Parents have a net agreement score of +16 for the view that the diplomas will offer a high quality alternative to traditional qualifications. Parents are also more likely to agree that the diplomas will be different from past and present qualifications although the net agreement score is lower for this statement. Teachers seem to be more divided on this issue with a net agreement score of +1 indicating that the proportion who agree is only very slightly higher than the proportion who disagree. Both parents and teachers strongly believe that the new diplomas will increase the level of practical learning in schools.
- 10.1.4 On the other hands, nearly two thirds of employers (65 per cent) believe that diplomas will be seen as having a lower status than GCSEs and A levels. Clearly these are early days and employer knowledge of the diplomas is poor, but there is a need to work with employers to raise their awareness of the diplomas and what their intended outcomes are.

11 Year on year comparisons

- 11.1.1 This is the first full annual stakeholder survey undertaken for Edge. In future years, it will be possible to draw comparisons with this year's findings and to consider whether there have been significant shifts in perceptions among any of the stakeholder groups. Obviously, such comparisons are not possible this year.
- 11.1.2 However, it is interesting to note that YouGov conducted surveys of adults and young people for Edge in 2004 and 2005 respectively. There is relatively little overlap in the questions used in 2004, 2005 and 2008, and even where apparently similar questions were asked, there were differences both in the way they were phrased and in the make-up of the survey samples. Comparisons should therefore be approached with caution. Nevertheless, it might be interesting to note similarities and differences in two particular aspects.
- 11.1.3 In 2005, YouGov surveyed year 11 students for Edge. They were asked "Are you ever involved in learning by doing at school?" 42 per cent said "fairly often", 2 per cent "all the time", 47 per cent "not very often" and 8 per cent "rarely" or "never". In 2008, Key Stage 4 students were asked "During your lessons at school, are you ever involved in practical projects?" 47 per cent said their lessons "fairly often" included practical projects, and 5 per cent "all the time". 30 per cent said they were involved in practical projects "not very often", 14 per cent "very rarely" and 3 per cent "never".
- 11.1.4 Comparing these results, the 2008 survey suggests that young people may be experiencing more practical learning opportunities than they were in 2005. 52 per cent of Key Stage 4 pupils now say they lessons include practical projects fairly often or all the time, compared with 44 per cent of year 11 pupils saying they were involved in learning by doing fairly often or all the time.
- 11.1.5 This trend appears to be borne out by the answer to another question. In 2005, 64 per cent of year 11 students agreed with the statement, "there aren't enough opportunities to learn by doing". In 2008, Key Stage 4 students were asked "Do you think schools have too many, not enough, or about the right amount of practical projects?" 55 per cent said "too few".
- 11.1.6 To repeat, the questions asked were not identical, and neither are the two groups under comparison (Year 11 and Key Stage 4) identical. These results should therefore be treated with caution and should be seen as indicative only. However, if there really is a trend

towards more practical learning in schools, it will be interesting to see whether it continues in future years.

11.1.7 In 2004, YouGov surveyed adults on Edge's behalf, without differentiating between parents and non-parents. They were asked, "If you could have your school days again and could change the balance between 'academic' and 'practical' learning, what would you do?" 54 per cent gave the response "more practical learning", 14 per cent "more academic learning" and 28 per cent "keep same balance". In 2008, parents were asked a different question: "Do you think schools have too many, not enough, or about the right amount of practical projects?" 48 per cent said "too few", 4 per cent "too many", 37 per cent "the right amount" and 12 per cent "don't know". This suggests that there continues to be a view amongst adults that schools do not provide enough opportunities for practical learning. Again, however, the question wording and sample groups are different. In addition, respondents in 2005 were asked to think back to their own school days, while those in 2008 were asked about schools currently. This comparison results should therefore also be treated with caution.