

PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT OF SCOTTISH SCHOOL STUDENTS: TOWARDS EVIDENCE BASED POLICIES

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ABSTRACT

The employment histories of 716 school students in urban and rural Scotland were analysed. Questionnaire responses obtained while the students were in S3 and S4 revealed that a clear majority had had paid employment, with more students in the rural area working than in the urban. Different types of jobs are prevalent in the rural and urban areas. Rural students tend to work longer hours. Gender differences in types of employment also emerged. It is argued that these findings are significant for emerging debates regarding the possible accreditation of part-time employment in a student's educational profile. The variations found in the work undertaken by these students suggest that regulations concerning such accreditation should not be based on mere common sense assumptions about the character of school students' jobs.

INTRODUCTION

The extent of interest shown in child employment in Britain has varied considerably in modern times. In 1972, a study by Davies appeared to show that working had a detrimental effect on school students' commitment to, and performance at, school. An Employment of Children Act (1973) was hurried through parliament but never enacted. Public debate on the subject declined until the early 1990s when the government was required to react to a draft European Union Directive on the Employment of Children and Young People. Ministers resisted the notion that such a directive was relevant to Britain, arguing that child employment here was limited in scale and confined to traditional children's jobs such as newspaper delivery (House of Commons, 1993). A growing body of research has shown such a position to be untenable (see Stack and McKechnie, 2002). Part-time work is a common experience for school students and the jobs they undertake are varied. Furthermore research has demonstrated that legislation controlling child employment is widely ignored (Hamilton, 2002; McKechnie, Hobbs, Anderson and Simpson, 2005).

The current interest of policy makers in child employment is two-fold. One perspective may be termed 'protectionist'. For example, the governments in Edinburgh and London have issued model byelaws which they recommend local authorities adopt to ensure that school students work only with permission and in jobs, and at times, which are approved. Noting that many local authorities have been unsuccessful in carrying out their responsibilities in this area, the Better Regulation Task Force (2004) has recommended that rather than licensing school-aged children to work, which is the existing method, employers who wish to employ young people should be licensed. The other current perspective is an educational one. Both in England and in Scotland, tentative proposals have been made that employment might be treated as providing opportunities for learning. *Determined to Succeed* (Scottish Executive, 2002) and the "Tomlinson Report" (Final Report of the Working Party on 14–19 Reform, 2004) both allude to the possibility of some form of accreditation of work-based learning. The recent White Paper, *14–19 Education and Skills (2005)*, also discusses linking learning and work but does not deal specifically with the part-time employment undertaken by school students, which is the central focus of this paper. This positive view of work is also reflected in research commissioned by Careers Scotland which explored the possible role part-time employment may play in school students' career development (McKechnie, Hobbs and Anderson, 2004).

Research over the last decade and a half has successfully established the extent of child employment in Britain (see Stack and McKechnie (2002) for a summary) but, as Mizen, Bolton and Pole (1999) have argued, there is much more to understanding the phenomenon than simply establishing its scope. It is commendable that policymakers have taken on board the results of this research but they also need to show awareness that there is much about the character of school students' jobs that has still to be discovered. It would be inappropriate to start devising schemes for accrediting work-based learning without much more detailed information becoming available about what seems to be the quite varied character of child and adolescent work.

Some progress has been made. For example some studies have explored the link between part-time work and academic performance (see McKechnie and Hobbs, 2001), other researchers, adopting qualitative approaches, have focused on the pupil's views, experience and interpretation of employment (Leonard, 2004; McKechnie, *et al.*, 1996; Mizen, *et al.*, 2001; Penrose Brown and Blandford, 2002) and some have begun to explore specific types of employment in more detail (Leonard, 2002). However, it is apparent that there are still a number of unanswered research questions in this relatively neglected area of study (McKechnie and Hobbs, 2000).

The aim of this paper is to highlight four specific gaps in knowledge. First, are there regional differences in school pupil's part-time employment? To date research in this area has been dominated by individual researchers carrying out local studies in a specific region. Second, do pupils' patterns of work change over time? The traditional survey approach in this area provides only a snapshot of employment at the time of the survey.

Third, what is the extent of a family relationship between employer and employee? Previous studies have focused on part-time employment outside of the family when studying school students' employment. This excludes those students who are employed within their families with the potential for under-estimating the level of employment.

Fourth, what about students who do not work? Although the majority of pupils will have experience of paid employment by the time they reach the end of compulsory education, there is a substantial minority who will not have worked. Researchers have largely ignored this group. The need to understand them will be greater if work is to be treated as an educationally positive activity.

We begin to address these questions by drawing on research gathered in Scotland. The project allowed us to compare part-time employment in two contrasting areas and to follow a cohort of students over time. In addition we collected information on the employer-employee relationship and collected information from the students who had never worked within the cohort.

These questions bear a significant relationship to the proposals raised in *Determined to Succeed* and the Tomlinson Report. For example, what impact on these proposals would there be if it were established that there are significant regional variations in the opportunity to undertake part-time work? Would views on part-time employment change if it were found that students move in and out of employment with some regularity? What of those students who do not work? Is this a conscious choice or a failure to secure employment? What are the implications of accreditation of work when the student is employed by his or her parents?

METHOD

School students were followed from S3 (14–15 years of age) through to S4 (15–16 years of age). They were surveyed twice, once in S3 and once in S4. (A small sub-sample were subsequently interviewed, but this paper focuses on the survey data set.)

Seven schools participated in this project. The selection of schools was intended to draw schools from contrasting geographical environments. Three of the schools

were based in the North-West of Scotland in areas where students live predominantly in small communities and where tourism-based employment is important. We refer to these as the ‘rural’ schools. The remaining four schools were based in a large new town in the central belt, close to major cities and towns. We refer to these as the ‘urban’ schools.

The target populations were the entire S3 and S4 cohorts. In total, 803 S3 pupils participated in the first survey and 807 S4 pupils participated in the second survey. In this report, we focus on pupils who participated in both stages of the project, n= 716, 269 in rural schools and 447 in urban schools. The completion rate for this group was 77%. (For a fuller discussion of both data sets see Stack, 2004).

Information was collected by means of a questionnaire administered by members of the research team. Pupils provided information relating to employment status (past and present), number of hours worked, type of job, rate of pay and their employer. Additional information on students’ views about education, accidental injury and possession of work permits was also collected (these areas are not addressed in this paper but see Stack (2004) and Hobbs, *et al.* (forthcoming). A series of questions targeted at pupils who had never worked sought to gain some insight into the reasons for not seeking part-time employment.

Employment was defined as “paid employment”, including paid work for family and non-family members. Based on their responses, pupils were classified as “current worker” (employed at the time of the study); “former worker” (had worked but not at the time of study); and “never worked”.

RESULTS

Employment status: Rural and Urban

Table 1 provides details of student’s employment status when they were in S3 and S4. To ensure that within group variation in employment status was not confounding the picture in Table 1, an analysis was run to check for variability in work status between the schools within each area for the two stages of the study. The results indicated that there was no significant differences in work status between the urban schools in either stage ($\chi^2 = 5.18$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.52$, $\chi^2 = 5.11$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.53$, respectively). Similarly, the analysis for between school differences in work status in the rural schools found no significant differences for either stage ($\chi^2 = 7.87$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.09$, $\chi^2 = 1.57$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.81$, respectively).

Table 1: Employment Status (percentages)

	Region	Current Worker	Former Worker	Never Worked	N
		%	%	%	
S3	Urban	42	21	37	447
	Rural	46	21	33	269
S4	Urban	46	21	33	447
	Rural	56	25	19	269

The majority of pupils surveyed in S3 were either currently employed or had worked in the past. This pattern was found in both the urban and rural areas. Comparison of the work status of pupils in S3 found that there was no significant difference in the work status associated with region ($\chi^2 = 1.80$, $df = 2$, $p > 0.05$).

When pupils were in S4, it is apparent that a greater percentage in the rural schools were currently working. Analysis of this data found that the difference in work status

between urban and rural areas was now significant ($\chi^2 = 16.28$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$).

It is apparent from Table 1 that the percentage of pupils currently working increases from S3 to S4. Comparison of this change over time in the urban region found that the change in work status was not significant ($\chi^2 = 2.40$, $df = 2$, $p > 0.05$). In the case of the rural area the change in work status was significant, more pupils than expected were working or had worked by the time the S4 survey was carried out ($\chi^2 = 13.28$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$).

Figure 1 shows the range of jobs that pupils were working in S3. The jobs were categorised as: delivery, hawking, shopwork, babysitting, farming and fishing, hotel and catering and 'other'. The 'hawking' category refers to door-to-door sales such as sweets and cosmetic sales. The 'other' category was used to refer to jobs which did not sit comfortably in the other categories, but had small percentages of students working in them.

Different jobs are prevalent in the different regions. The variation in the distribution of job types between urban and rural areas was significant in S3 and S4 ($\chi^2 = 169.4$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.001$; $\chi^2 = 204.6$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.001$). As Figure 1 shows, delivery work, hawking and babysitting were more likely to be found in the urban sample of employed students. In contrast, shopwork, farming and fishing, hotel and catering and 'other' forms of employment were more likely to be found in the rural sample. This pattern was consistent across Stage 1 and 2 of the study.

Figure 1: Job type in urban and rural areas, S3 (percentages)

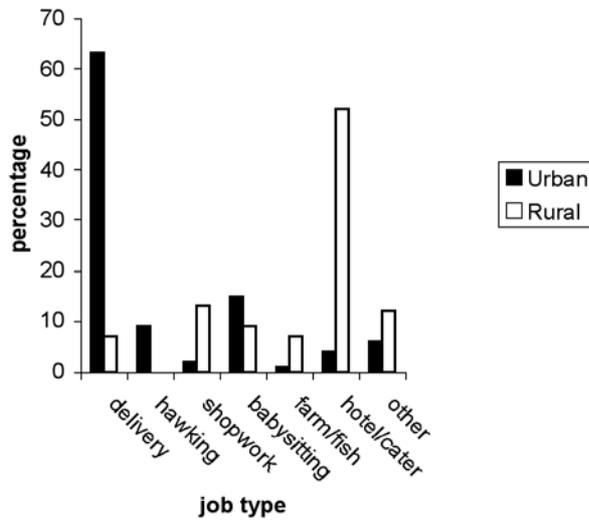


Table 2: Mean hours and pay for currently employed pupils

		Hours	Pay £'s (Hourly/Weekly)
S3	Urban	5.6	3.91 (15.09)
	Rural	10.7	2.96 (29.36)
S4	Urban	5.6	3.79 (16.00)
	Rural	11.7	3.16 (31.79)

In both S3 and 4, rural pupils work significantly more hours than their urban peers ($t(269) = -6.01, p < 0.001$ and $t(330) = -9.06, p < 0.001$, respectively). This is reflected in the significantly higher weekly wages of the rural pupils compared to their urban peers in Stage 1 and 2 ($t(265) = -6.45, p < 0.001$; $t(327) = -9.38, p < 0.001$, respectively) even though the mean hourly rate is lower in the rural area. Further analysis failed to find any significant changes in hours worked or pay rates across S3 and S4 for urban or rural employees. Thus the amount of time committed to work, and the rewards received, remained consistent over the period of the project, or as students moved from S3 to S4.

Gender differences

Analysis of types of job undertaken indicated that gender differences existed. In S3, males were more likely to be involved in delivery, farming and fishing and 'other' job types. Females were more likely to be employed in hawking, babysitting and hotel and catering ($\chi^2 = 64.5, df = 6, p < 0.001$). This pattern was maintained in S4 ($\chi^2 = 68.6, df = 6, p < 0.001$), with one exception. Males and females were equally likely to be employed in the 'other' job category, indicating that types of job vary more as the students get older.

In S3, urban males were more likely to have worked compared to females ($\chi^2 = 6.75, df = 2, p < 0.05$); for rural students there were no gender differences in work status ($\chi^2 = 3.85, df = 2, p > 0.05$). In S4, urban male and females were equally likely to have worked ($\chi^2 = 4.78, df = 2, p > 0.05$), while in the rural area the results indicated that females were more likely to be working ($\chi^2 = 12.93, df = 2, p < 0.01$).

This pattern may arise from an interaction of job type and age. For example, the delivery jobs that are commonly found in the urban areas are typically taken by males. In S4, females are now a little older and start to enter shopwork and a range of other non-delivery based jobs.

How consistent is a student's work status over time?

Previous studies have shown that the percentages of students working tend to increase as they move through the school system. However, there is little previous evidence of the extent of variation in an individual's work status over time. Table 3 compares the consistency of pupils work status across Stage 1 and 2 of the study.

The pattern of results suggest that a majority (77%) of those working in S3 remained in employment in S4. Similarly, most (62%) of the students who were not working in S3 remained in this category in S4. The greatest change emerged amongst the former worker group. Forty percent of students in this category in S3 had moved into employment again by the time they were in S4.

However, Table 2 also highlights a slight anomaly. In S4, 6% of the pupils who had stated that they were currently working and 14% of those who said they were former workers now reported never having worked. Such a result could be due to a failure of memory or a changing conception of what constitutes a job. We shall return to this issue in the discussion section.

Table 3: Consistency in Work Status in S3 and S4 (percentages)

	S4		
	Current Worker	Former Worker	Never Worked
	% (n)	% (n)	%(n)
S3			
Current Worker	77 (238)	17 (54)	6 (18)
Former Worker	40 (60)	46 (69)	14 (22)
Never Worked	23 (59)	15 (38)	62 (158)

The employer-employee relationship

Some researchers have suggested that the experience of employment may be related to who the young person’s employer is. For example, if parents employed their own children they may be more flexible, or more protective, in their approach than with a non-family employer.

Table 4: Relationship between employer and employee

Year group		Parent%	Other Family Member %	Other %	N
S3	Urban	6	9	85	180
	Rural	17	8	75	124
S4	Urban	7	12	81	203
	Rural	9	5	86	149

In both S3 and S4, the majority of working pupils were employed by non-family members. However, analysis of S3 data showed that rural students were more likely to be employed by their parents. In contrast urban employees were more likely to be employed by non-family members and relatives ($x^2 = 10.38$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$).

In the rural areas, students in S4 were less likely to be employed by their parents or other family members than they had been in S3. The urban pupils show a slight increase in employment by family members. However, these changes are not statistically significant.

The ‘never worked’ group

Table 1 showed that, in S3, 33% of urban and 19% of rural students reported that they had not been involved in paid employment. In the urban area females were more likely to be in the never worked category, while this pattern was reversed for the rural area where males were more likely to report themselves as never worked ($x^2 = 16.51$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$).

The evidence suggests that for a student never to have worked does not imply a lack of interest in employment. Of those who had never worked, 13% of the urban and 33% of the rural had applied for a job in the past. This variation between regions was significant ($x^2 = 10.76$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.01$).

When asked if they would seek work in the future while still at school the majority of the pupils in both areas indicated that they would. In total 82% of the urban and

76% of the rural students without jobs indicated that they would seek to combine part-time work and schooling in the future.

We provided pupils with a list of reasons for not currently working and asked them to choose the main reason that applied to their non-work status. In this analysis we have excluded those who had applied for work since we were interested in the reasons given for not having engaged with the job market at this point in their school life. Table 5 provides a summary of the responses to this question by area.

Table 5: Reasons for not working (percentages)

	Urban	Rural
Parents Disapprove %	10	0
No jobs available %	13	18
Have enough pocket money %	21	9
Concentrate on school %	30	12
Interfere with hobby/sport %	12	33
Can't be bothered %	14	27
Total N	126	33

The differences between areas were significant. "Can't be bothered" and interference with pastimes were significantly more important in the rural area while concentrating on school and having enough pocket money were more likely to be given as reasons in the urban area ($\chi^2 = 19.15$, $df = 5$, $p < 0.01$). It is worth noting that parental disapproval while more likely to be cited as a reason within the urban area, in total accounts for only a small percentage of the reasons given.

It is possible that gender differences may be related to the main reason indicated for not working, however, the sample size precluded an analysis of this within each area. An analysis was carried out for gender combining both areas. The significant pattern that emerged indicated that males were more likely to state interference with hobbies or sport or "can't be bothered" as their main reason for not working. In contrast the dominant reasons provided by females were that they were concentrating on school, that they had enough pocket money or that there were no jobs available ($\chi^2 = 23.55$, $df = 5$, $p < 0.001$).

DISCUSSION

It is clear that school student employment in the urban and rural areas surveyed differ in potentially important ways. By S4 more rural students have had experience of work. Rural students tend to work longer hours. The types of jobs tend to differ between the areas. This is most clearly shown when we look at two types of work, delivery and hotel and catering. The former dominated in the urban setting, while the latter dominated in the rural setting.

Several possible explanations are available to account for such differences. Obviously the nature of the local economy has a part to play, tourism being a source of hotel work in the rural area.

Rural students may work longer hours in order to earn higher wages because their earnings are of more importance in the rural setting. However, it should be noted that researchers have disagreed about the role of children's earned income in the context of family finance (see Mizen, *et al.*, 1999 and McKechnie, *et al.*, 2000 for opposing views on this issue).

Urban students may work fewer hours because facilities such as large shopping plazas, cinemas and clubs have a more substantial influence on how they allocate their time than for students in rural areas which lack such amenities. However, an alternative hypothesis is that the work ethic in the rural and urban areas differs, encouraging different patterns of employment

In interpreting the work patterns of child employees we need to gain a better understanding of the factors influencing the motivation to work, the amount of time worked and earnings. The regional variations in this study suggest the importance of attending to context. Furthermore, it should be stressed that the urban and rural areas studied are not necessarily representative of all urban and rural areas in Scotland.

A unique aspect of this study is that it is, to our knowledge, the first in Scotland to follow students over time when considering their employment. The results show a remarkable consistency in terms of levels of employment, types of jobs that are done, hours worked and earnings. It is apparent that even though S4 is an important exam year in the Scottish education system, students do not drop out of employment. The results from this study suggest that children who enter the employment market are likely to maintain that status over time.

We noted that a small number of students who when in S3 reported having worked failed to do so in S4. How might this be explained? One explanation would be to question the reliability of memory over time. It is possible that students simply forgot jobs that they have had in the past. It is to be expected that in studies over time memory may be unreliable to some extent. The fact that such a small percentage of responses are unreliable suggests that this is a minor issue and does not call into question the validity of the study.

However, recent experience has suggested an alternative explanation. Students' views on what constitutes employment may change over time. For example, in one ongoing study a student had indicated on a survey questionnaire that they were currently employed. When interviewed approximately six months later they indicated that they had never worked. Later the student acknowledged that she had indeed worked before but that it was just door-to-door sales and not a "proper" job. Such evidence, albeit anecdotal, suggests that students change their views on what constitutes employment over time. Perhaps such judgements vary depending on an implicit comparison with the jobs their peers are doing. Over time, students may think of working in a shop or hotel as differing in quality from activities such as door-to-door sales and babysitting. This latter explanation indicates the importance of future research not only adopting longitudinal methodologies but also investigating young employees' interpretation of the work. Some research on the meaning and interpretation of work by young employees has been carried out within the framework of the 'new sociology of childhood' (see Mizen, *et al.*, 2001). While this research has offered new insights the 'new sociology of childhood' approach is not without its critics (Hobbs, 2002; Lavalette and Cunningham, 2002; McKechnie, 2002).

The majority of students are not employed by their parents or relatives in either the rural or urban setting. However, rural students are more likely to be employed by their parents. The importance of this type of employer declines as students move from S3 to S4. Some students may be introduced to employment in family contexts and then move on to working for non-family members. It should be remembered that this study has focused on paid employment and as such ignores many children who work in unpaid capacities for their families (a group studied by Song, 2001). Future research should address this gap in our knowledge.

Our final focus was upon students who have never worked. The main point to note is that they do not necessarily form a homogeneous group. Substantial numbers have applied unsuccessfully for jobs. Most state an intention to work before leaving school.

Urban students were more likely to have never worked compared to their rural peers. However, the picture is complicated by gender. In the urban "never worked"

group there was a lower than expected number of females, while in the rural group males were over represented in this group. Such gender differences may reflect the dominant jobs available in these different areas.

Regional differences were also found in the main reason students chose for not working. Researchers have emphasised that the main reason given for working by young people is money (Mizen, *et al.*, 2001). One might assume that for those who do not work then having access to sufficient money from other sources such as pocket money would justify not working. The data from this study did find this to be a significant justification for the urban, but not the rural, non-workers. Other differences were found in the justifications for not working. In the urban setting, more students indicated the desire to focus on school than their rural peers. In contrast, rural students were more likely to choose involvement in sports or hobbies and lack of interest as reasons for not working.

The reasons that students indicated for not working are similar to those found in a recent study in Ireland and Scotland (McCoy and Smyth, 2004; McKechnie, *et al.*, 2004, respectively). These studies did not consider regional comparisons and in the case of the Scottish study involved S5 and S6 students. However, the degree of consistency in the reasons for not working is notable.

It is worth noting that parental disapproval was rarely perceived by students as the main reason to explain their never worked status. This finding, coupled with the number of students who are employed, suggests that parents may approve of their children being employed. Clearly further research is needed to investigate this claim; however, support for this position can be found in American research (Mortimer, 2003).

The results from this study suggest that it is important to attend to the never worked group and to differentiate between those who have tried, and failed, to gain employment and those who have not attempted to find work.

If there is a possibility that part-time work may be factored into the educational profile of the school student, it is important that educationalists do not simply rely on “common sense” assumptions about the nature of young people’s jobs but that they take account of the varied nature of students’ work. Although this study has told us a good deal about the work undertaken by school students it also suggests that there is a great deal more to be discovered, through both qualitative and quantitative approaches. At present, no detailed plans have been proposed for how experience of employment might be recognized. Some of the questions which need to be faced are obvious without considering the research findings. What types of work will be included and excluded? How long will a job have to last to be worth recording? Will the mere fact of being employed be recorded or will there be some sort of assessment of learning? If the latter, will it be self-assessment, assessment by the employer or assessment by some third party?

Decisions on such crucial issues become more difficult when one considers the research evidence. The key finding of this study has been the variability that lies beneath the apparently simple concept of a “part-time job”. Would four hours per week delivering newspapers have the same status as twelve hours per week serving in a shop or waiting at tables? Will work for a relative be included with the same status as work for someone else? If work for one’s own parents were to be excluded, would this not be regarded as disadvantaging students in the rural area where working for one’s parents is more common?

If part-time jobs were to be given added credibility by being officially treated as opportunities for learning, the possible side effects and ‘dangers’ would need to be considered. If employers were asked to appraise their employees’ learning, would this discourage them from employing young people and hence make work harder for school students to find? Would the existence of accreditation for employment experience encourage some students to devote more time and energy to their jobs

at the expense of school learning and pastimes such as sport and hobbies which are usually considered valuable? A key danger is that in linking part-time employment and education it changes the meaning of employment for this group of employees. It is conceivable that from the young persons perspective a primary benefit of employment is that it is separate from school. Linking part-time work and education may also impact on young employees status. Rather than being another part-time employee their *student* status within the workplace may be accentuated by any recognition system. These are considerations which we hope policy makers will be bearing in mind. More generally, we believe that the results of our research, in that it demonstrates the varied nature of school student's jobs, reinforces the need for a cautious, evidence-based approach in this area. In particular, our understanding of what work means to students, what they learn at work, and in what circumstances, needs to be increased. We are doubtful whether at present there is sufficient known about the impact of students' jobs to justify accreditation.

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