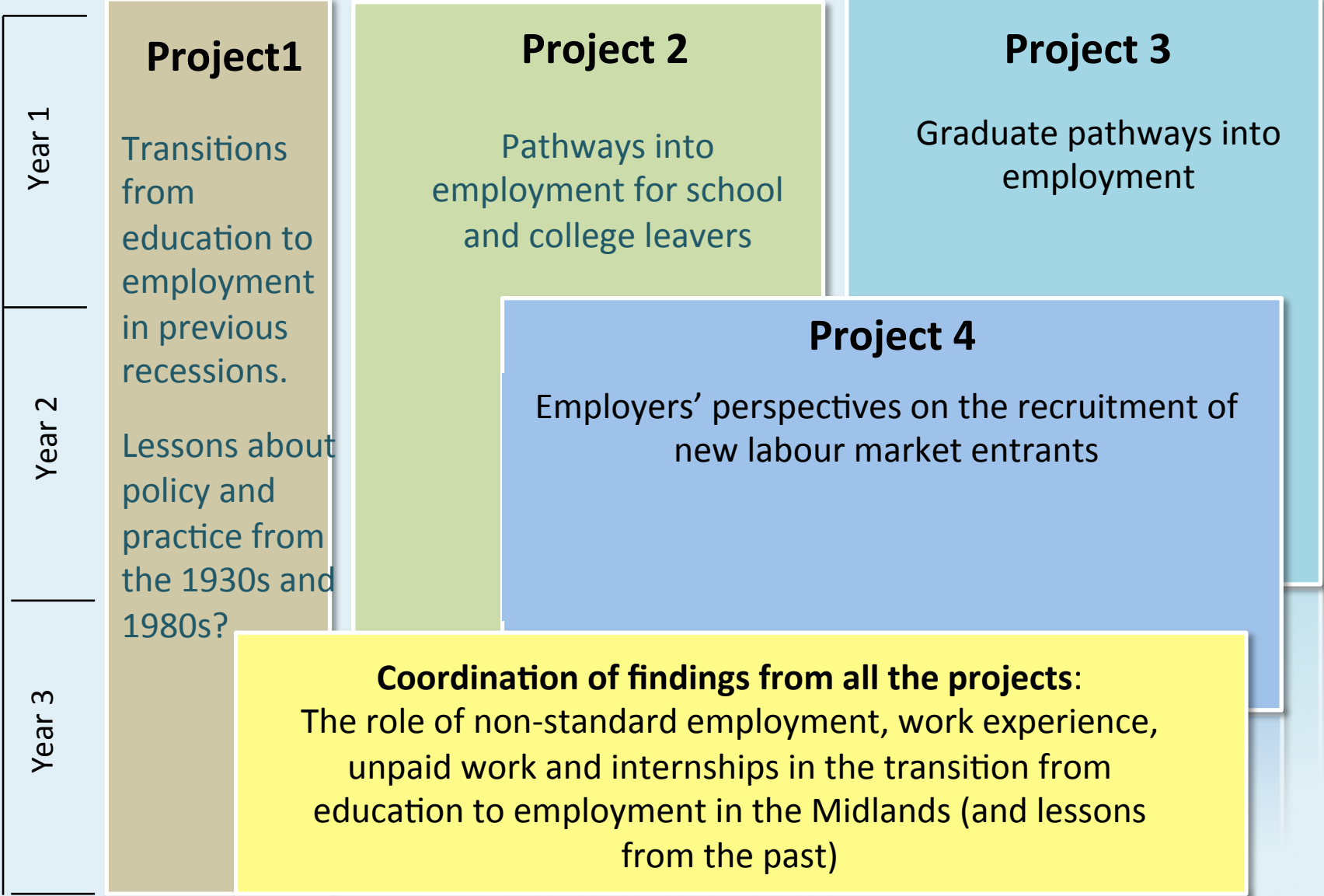


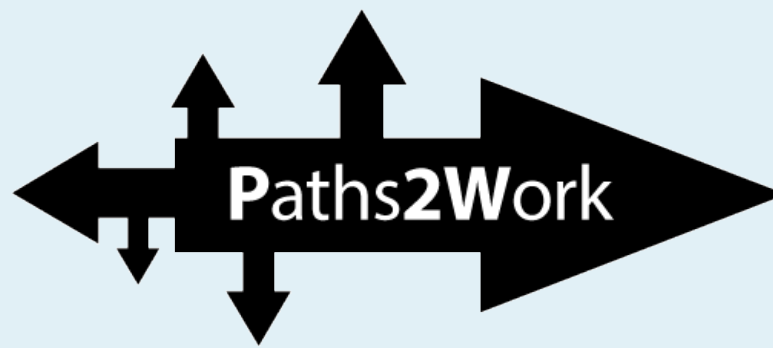


Precarious pathways from education to employment for young people

Precarious pathways from education to employment for young people



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Delivering youth employment services- the evolving role of the voluntary sector (VS) (Project 1)

Sharon Chohan, PhD candidate, IER

- Introduction

This presentation will consider how changes in public sector funding and management have influenced the *efficiency* and *effectiveness* of policy delivery and the *accountability* of voluntary sector organisations





Historical Perspective

1980s – Revolution in governance;
rethinking of efficiency and effectiveness

- * Changes in public sector funding and management
- * Shift from state-agency provision to contracted public services

The VS' role as efficient providers assessed in the context of:
Public Choice Theory, Neo Liberalism and New Public
Management

Subcontractors- Background

Rise of the Voluntary Sector

The VS has evolved considerably in recent years. It now constitutes big business and has extensive responsibilities for delivering major welfare services

'At a time when many public sector organisations are perceived to be inadequate at dealing efficiently with the social problems of today, the voluntary sector itself has the potential to play an expanded role' (Hudson 2005:13)

Research Strategy - Case Study

Adopting a case study approach: a registered charity in Coventry. Established in late 1970s.

Last year supported 180 young people through employability programmes such as:

- Evolution 3 (16-18 years old) ESF Funded
- Talent Match (16-24 years old) Big Lottery Funded
- Coventry BootCamp (16-18 years old) DWP Funded
- The Whole Shabang (16-25 years old) Big Lottery Funded
- Jumpstart (16-29 years old) ESF Funded (Ambition Coventry)

Research Questions

1) What motivates the VS to become involved in youth unemployment interventions?

Existing literature on the VS centres on its **ethical premise**, highlighting that the sector comprises '**value driven organisations**' (Murray 1997)

2) *How has their role and involvement changed since the 1980s?*

“Over the years we have had to position ourselves adapting to policy changes and strike the balance between generating income to deliver projects but equally staying true to our mission statement which is supporting young people in a flexible way to meets their needs. Our role and involvement has become bigger both in scale and income”

(CEO quote)

3) ***How are VS organisations accountable for their work and to whom, and what are the impacts on efficiency and effectiveness in policy delivery?***

“Accountability should push us to be more efficient and effective. However in practice this is not always the case. There are situations where conflict arises i.e. commissioners and the way they commission services.

There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach in the work we do. Our young people often have very chaotic and complex needs. We need flexibility to best support the vulnerable young people we work with. Some funds are too bureaucratic which is why we often face difficult choices in deciding which funding to pursue”

(Project Director quote)

Ambition Coventry

- The project is aiming to work with over 2400 young people - **Case study organisation target 350 young people.**
- *Multiple Delivery Partners including:*
Coventry City Council - Employment Team; Shared Apprenticeship Scheme; Adult Education Service; Intensive Families Support Team; City College; Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce Training, Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Partnership Trust
Coventry and Rugby IAPT; CSW Sport; Dame Kelly Homes Trust; Henley College Coventry; Highlife Centre; Orbit Heart of England; Positive Youth Foundation; Princes Trust; Prospects; Radio Plus; SCCU Ltd; Valley House; Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action and WM Housing
- Interesting contemporary example of layers of subcontracting - *who is accountable to whom and for what?* Subcontracting in tiers.

Issues for discussion

- How the VS has transformed over time?
- Can the contemporary VS be more 'efficient' than was the case in the past?
- What does being 'business-like' mean in real terms for the VS and for people who work in it?

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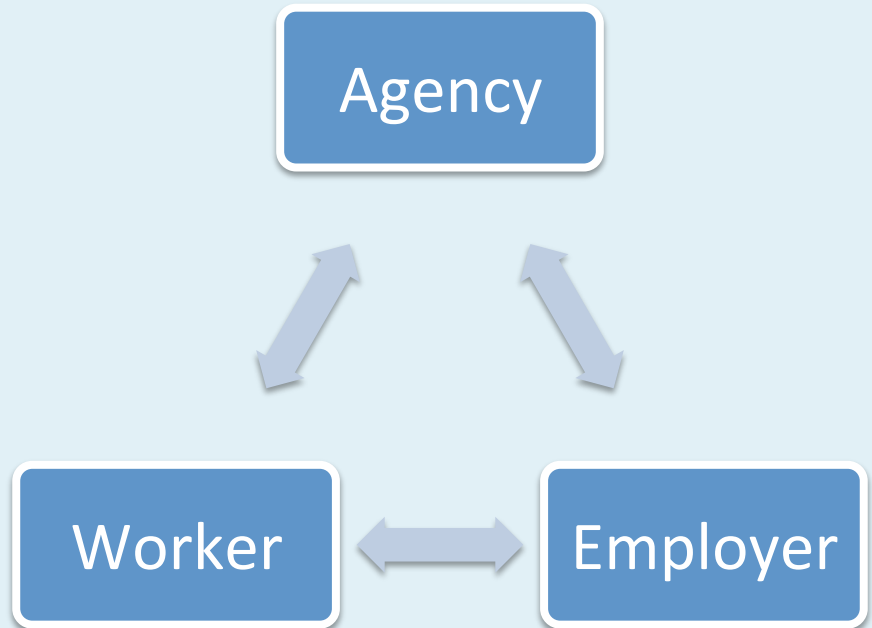


Project 2: 'And Click. That's All I Do': Young People's Uses of Temporary Work Agencies in the Transition to (Precarious) Work

Phil Mizen,
Gaby Atfield and Arlene Robertson

Why Focus On Employment Agencies

- Long term increase in agency working
- Labour Force Survey (winter 2012) – 320,000 agency workers or 1.27% of the workforce
- 1.15m agency workers ‘on any given day’ (WEF/CIETT 2015)
- Patterns of employment (WEF/CIETT)
 - 51% < 3 months
 - Female (55%/45%)
 - Service (52%) and manufacturing (36%)
 - ¾ medium or low skill assignments



Research Suggests That

- Agency – Employer
 - ‘a complex and dynamic’ (Purcell et al 2004) relation
 - Short-term cover
 - Seasonal fluctuations
 - Control of labour costs and flexibility
 - Recruitment and selection
 - Staff planning
 - Day-to-day management of temps
- Employer – Worker
 - ‘Warm bodies’ (Parker 1994) for semi/unskilled assignments
 - Low wages, fewer benefits
 - Insecure, unpredictable work
 - Underemployment (Knox 2010)
 - Largely ‘involuntary’
 - Tensions between perms and temps

Research Suggests That

- Agency – worker
 - Important for ‘peripheral’ workers (Gray 2004)
 - Agencies are enabling i.e. open doors otherwise closed for some
 - Assignments as ‘stepping stones’ for human capital
 - Source of employability and work experience (Gray 2004)
 - Changing ‘worker preferences’ (Friedman 2014)
 - Create surplus ‘on the books’ workers (Forde 2001)
 - Few workers experience continuity in assignments

Why Focus on Young People's Uses and Experiences of Employment Agencies

- An 'intense relationship' (Nunez 2014)
- Students and young workers (ILO 2010; CIETT 2015)
- Temps younger than perms (Morris & Vekker 2001)
- Young workers
 - 'Prefer' to escape 'traditional' employment (Friedman 2014)
 - Are unwilling to invest in their human capital
 - Want to combine human capital and work experience (i.e. earning and learning)
 - Have little choice/alternative (Standing 2011)

Methodology

- 10 focus groups with young people in Birmingham (3), Coventry (4) and Leicester (3)
 - ⇒ 84 participants
- 100 semi-structured interviews
 - ⇒ Consisting of approximately 70 'first round' interviews and 30 'follow-up' interviews, approximately 6 months after the first interview.

Sample

- Current activity
 - Approximately a quarter were in employment, while a similar proportion were unemployed and looking for work, in education or training and on apprenticeships
 - Catering, hotel, restaurants, fastfood, clubs and bars, cleaning (commercial and domestic)
 - Shop work, selling, door-to-door
 - Warehouse and distribution, labouring/construction, industrial/factory, security
 - NHS (cleaning, catering), social care (children and the elderly)

Benefits of employment through TWAs

- Accessibility
- Immediacy
- Flexibility
- Progression
- Lack of other options

Accessibility

- There are a lot of agencies, and it is easy to sign up with them (especially online agencies that allow applications for multiple jobs with a single registration/CV)

I could say I've used, like all of them. I've got an account with them all (Ella, 18, Leicester)

I've just got an iPad, so I get my iPad, type in Google: 'Jobs in Coventry'. Lots of pages come up like Gumtree, you've got Indeed, you've got Reed comes up and loads of job sites. My favourite one is Indeed cause it's so easy to use (Sophie, 18, Coventry)

Immediacy

- Gap between signing-up and starting work can be short

I went in to fill in some paperwork and gave them my number and occasionally, every week, they would call me, not occasionally, every week I think, they would call me on a Friday, and ask me if I'd want to work on the Saturday or Sunday at weekend, so yeah, I'd say yeah. I'd tell them yeah, I want to work

(Aqeel, 18, Leicester)

Flexibility

- Fitting around other commitments

I have Wednesdays always free, I have the whole weekend, Friday I'm free so it's basically, Friday I finish [classes] at 10 in the morning, so if I get a job from Friday in the afternoon then plus the weekends or Wednesday (Maarif, 18, Birmingham)

- Giving choice, declining undesirable jobs
- Temporary work to meet temporary need unrelated to career ambitions

There is a difference between being a shop worker and a receptionist (Evelyn, 19, Coventry)

Agency work as a stepping stone

- Source of (paid) work experience

I've updated my CV, so I've got experience on there now, because of my waitressing and agency [work], so hopefully I'll find something because I have experience. (Bless, 18, Birmingham)

- Access to internal labour markets (NHS, local authorities, large private sector organisations) or 'temp-to-perm' possibilities

When I started doing care work the manager wanted me to become permanent, but that wasn't the thing for me, I didn't want to do care work". (Evelyn, 19, Coventry)

Lack of other options

....there's so little out there, and it's trying to pick through the haystack to find that needle, like that is literally what it is. So it really is so hard to find a job and where the expectations are so high, it gets to the point where they expect too much of you, you know, they don't help you, they expect you to do it, they don't help you to find work, the job centre (Danielle, 21, Coventry)

It's not nice, it's never is nice, just feel worthless, like because there's no jobs, there's no jobs in Coventry really and it's hard to get a job (Simon, 22, Coventry)

Who benefits from agency work?

- Generally more educated / literate
- Young people who can be flexible, particularly those with other means of support

“If you need money quickly, and they’ve got a shift there for you, that’s fifty quid there for you, but if it’s not worth your while there’s not much point in doing it really. Say someone who lives at home with their parents, it’s good for them because then they’re making money and they pay their parents a bit of rent, but they won’t be having to go out and pay £150 rent or something like that, especially if they’ve only made £50” (Kyle, 20, Coventry)

- Strategists with clear ambitions

Limitations in terms of TWAs facilitating access to jobs and meaningful work experience for young workers

- **Identification of job opportunities:** TWA practices viewed as a hindrance to the job search process
- **Access to opportunities:** Limits to the opportunities on offer, while long-standing barriers to labour market entry are reproduced
- **Maintaining employment:** Difficulties due to the nature and characteristics of agency working

Some TWA practices not conducive to the identification of viable employment opportunities

Because you are applying on sites like (online recruitment site) and stuff like that, its mostly agencies you are applying for, so yeah, they are calling you and they are saying come register with the agency.... so we go down, take all our ID and stuff and they're like, if anything comes up, we'll let you know and I kind of think 'well you've called me because I'm applying for a job, and suddenly that job's not available'.....so it's just a lot of going and registering but getting nothing, so it's really hard. (Danielle, 21, Coventry)

"Most of them have the same jobs on there, that's what I've noticed. Like the same job will come five or six [times]. I get like five emails about the same job" (Chloe ,17, Leicester)

Reinforcing barriers faced by young labour market entrants:

*I presented my CV, presented my passport, and then when I showed them my passport they realised oh, **you're 17, you can't do this job**....even the guy in front of me, I think he got turned away for some reason as well, he had all that sort of college experience but he never had any real life experience, what I call real life experience of actually working..... you're stuck in that position where you have to find a job, and a lot of the time those college grades don't make a difference.*

(Sahib, 18, Leicester)

Difficulties maintaining employment due to the nature and characteristics of agency working:

- Worker substitution in order to circumvent equal treatment provisions which take effect following the 12-week qualifying period

As soon as our wage is gonna go from £6.31 to like nine, ten pound (after 3 months), they stop phoning us.....then they just find another couple of Tom, Dick and Harrys, yeah, who are hungry for a job'.

(Habib, 19, Leicester)

*I was with there for six months, it wasn't the agency that got rid of me anyway, it was the actual company. I was actually doing quite good for a while and then, I was getting a lot of praise saying I was being noticed, **and then one day they fired me** for something, like I got the wrong pallet or something, and tested the wrong Sky boxes which was a mistake..... you haven't got really anything to stand on, you got no rights or anything this day and age..... that's I went unemployed for a long time and just pretty much hit a slump. (Jason, 24, Coventry)*

The characteristics of some forms of agency working (e.g. zero hours) leaves young workers with little choice other than to **withdraw from the employment relationship**:

*When I was on the **zero hours contract** with the train tracks it was very frustrating because, it classes you as having a job but you're on a zero hours contract. The Job Centre don't really offer you much they'll say 'oh you can't sign on because you know, you are an agency worker', but at the same time you find yourself, there's not many shifts about, so then, you're finding yourself in a loop of going back to them and then trying to get your claim resorted out, and then by the time that's sorted out, you get a shift, and then you get sanctioned, and it's like a repeating process. (Teddy, 23, Birmingham)*

Concluding comments

- Extensive and routine use of TWAs by young people looking for work
- Quick and easy sources of paid work
- As a means of selecting between different types of work opportunities
- For instrumental purposes – experience, access to employers or internal labour markets
- To accommodate other commitments – study, leisure, family
- To sift out unwanted/undesirable employment

- Practices of TWAs not always conducive to the identification of viable employment opportunities
- Reproduce existing barriers – e.g. age, lack of work experience, skills/qualifications
- Difficulties maintaining employment due to the characteristics of agency working
- Not concerned with needs of young workers



Project 3:

The value of different forms of work experience in building a graduate career

Kate Purcell and Gaby Atfield (*Institute for Employment Research*),
Charoula Tzanakou (*Department of Politics and International Studies*),
University of Warwick

This month we've learned...

The big lesson



Graduates increasingly find themselves working in 'non-graduate' roles

{Labour market}

We've got too many graduates

People Management, November 2016, p.6.

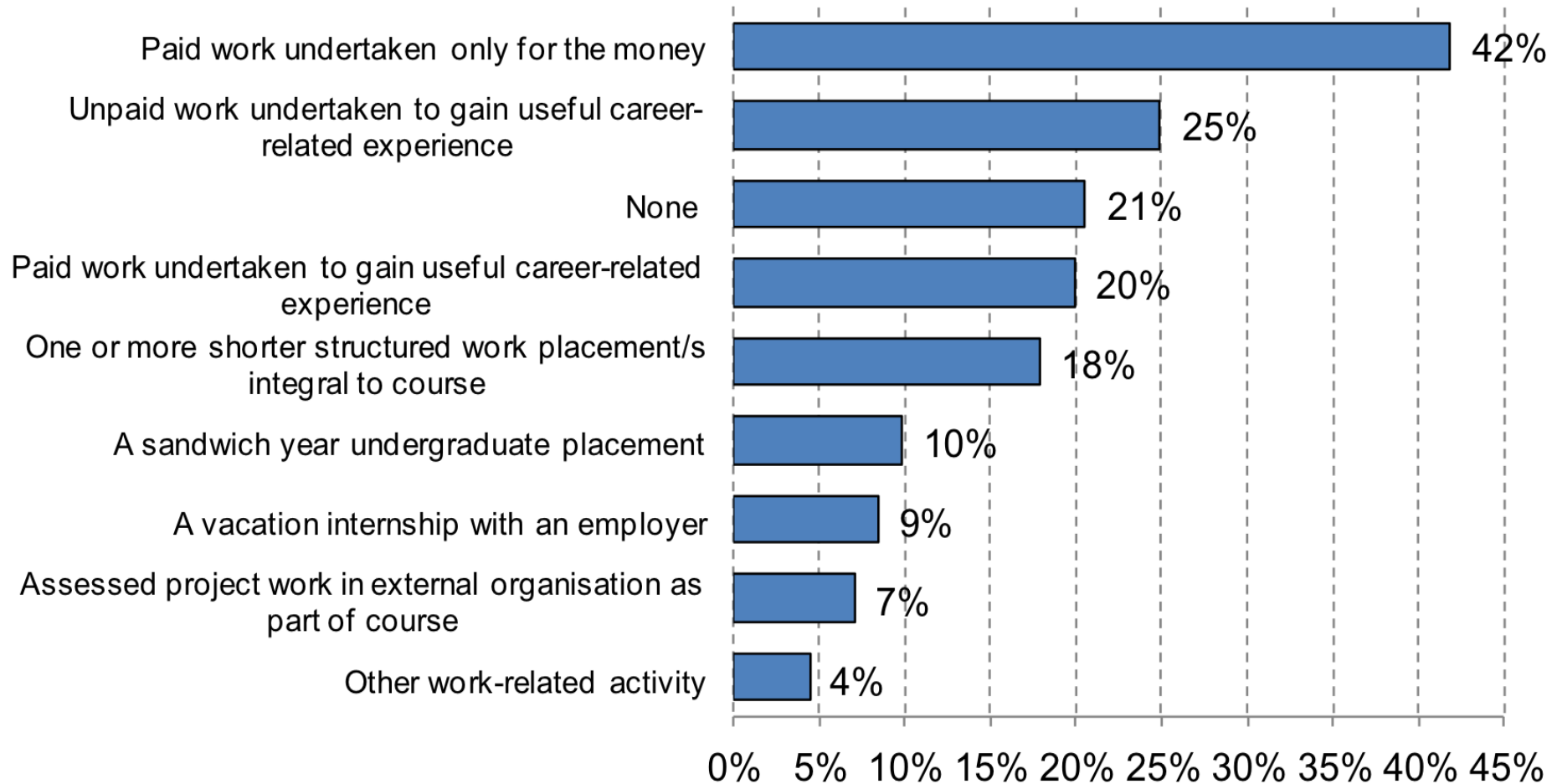
Graduate labour market context

- Expansion of higher education in the UK - 2008/9 recession – increase in graduate underemployment alongside skills shortages in key areas.
- Changes in HE funding; increasing levels of graduate debt.
- Increasing concern among all stakeholders about the costs and benefits of HE.
- Economic restructuring, technological change and the fragmentation of jobs.
- Global economic restructuring of services as well as manufacturing and increasingly international graduate labour market. And impact of BREXIT??
- Increasing requirement of students and graduates to acquire and demonstrate ‘employability skills.’

Research questions in relation to student and graduate work experience

- Where does work experience before and after graduation fit into career development?
- Statistical issue – there are no statistics!
- Lack of reliable data – How extensive is incidence? Who does what? For how long? Where and when? Paid or unpaid? What counts?
- Ethical issues – When are internships/unpaid work/work experience placements a good thing or a bad thing? What are the costs and benefits to individuals, employers and society?

Students' work experience and reasons for undertaking work experience during their courses



Source: Futuretrack Stage 4, all UK domiciled graduates (weighted) who have an undergraduate degree and are no longer in full time study only.

Which students worked to gain career-related experience?

Sandwich placements: Engineers, Business and Admin, Languages, Creative Arts and design; Medium and High Tariff HEIs and Specialist HEIs

Shorter structured placements as part of course: Medics and allied, Education, Mass Communication, Social Studies, *not* Highest or high-tariff unis

Paid work to gain career-related experience: Engineers, Business and Admin, Languages, Creative Art and design; Specialist HEI, Highest tariff HEI

Vacation internship: Engineering, Law, Social Studies, Specialist HEI

Unpaid work to gain career-related experience: Law, Creative art & design, Mass Communication, Linguistics & Classics, Education: Specialist and Highest Tariff HEI.

In unpaid internship after graduation: Architecture, Law, aspiring Media entrants, Medium, High and Highest Tariff HEIs.

How did the students access work experience..?

- Via university or department connections (including Careers Advisory Services)
- Some (e.g. summer placements) had been competitively advertised by organisations.
- Proactively, by approaching potential organisations and asking to be taken on.
- By accessing mentors or via personal networks through whom informal arrangements could be made
- Often, by drawing on more than one of these approaches.
- By obtaining temporary work through agencies or directly.

POINTS THAT EMERGE:

Informal networks are VERY important, **proactivity and persistence** are VERY important, **HAVING FINANCIAL SUPPORT THAT FACILITATES UNPAID WORKING IS ESSENTIAL IN MANY SECTORS...**and **some HEIs have better links** with potential providers of both paid and unpaid opportunities than others.

Main types of work experience during and after HE

- Sandwich placements
- Voluntary work
- Temporary Agency work
- Internships: paid and unpaid
- Non-graduate paid work

Sandwich Placements

The most frequent type of work experience that led directly into career-related employment, most frequently available to students on vocational undergraduate courses.

[A sandwich year] was compulsory and pretty much all of my friends all went off and got very good jobs within six months to a year and we've all done very well since. Even people who, how do I put this, who I did course work with and didn't really rate, let's say that, who I see on LinkedIn or Facebook, many of them have got fairly good jobs or got reasonable jobs anyway, off the bat, so yeah, so **I think it was a really successful strategy** in terms of, **it was one of the reasons that drew me to [university]** to be honest.

Male, Business and Management. Industrial placement year at a technology company. Now working in HE.

It was probably I was the cheap option in terms of paying a consultancy to do the job and pay a placement student, but you know, **it ultimately gave me the opportunity to work for 12 months in a relevant area** with enough support so I didn't feel lost and helpless. [...] Ultimately it helps as 'value add' [compared to] working at Tesco on the checkouts or sort of part-time university work, **if you've got a year of directly relevant stuff, it's much easier to talk at job interviews about what you've done and how relevant it is.**

Male, Design. Sandwich year at a company in the automotive sector. Now working at a different company in the automotive sector.

Voluntary work

Usually during undergraduate study. Unlikely to lead directly to employment, with the hosting organisation. Generally not directly career-related, but provided experience and transferable skills that were useful when seeking further work placement experiences and post-graduation employment.

There is a selfish element to that because **it was going to help my career**, but also I've always wanted a career that's helping other people so indirectly I knew that it was going to help me achieve that in the future hopefully, which it has.

Nobody's ever asked me what I got in my degree. Actually, no, that's not true, my second, when I was running the [...] programmes, it was a prerequisite for the job that you had a 2:1 or relevant equivalent experience [...] And they did say to me in my interview, 'well, you didn't get a 2:1 why should we hire you?' but I was able to say 'yeah, okay, this is why I got, this is why I only got a 2:2, I got all this experience', so that was, yeah, that's why I got the job in the end.

Female, Biological Sciences. Volunteer at a youth organisation. Now working in events management

Temporary Agency work

Direct progression through 'temp to perm' roles. Compared to non-graduates, more likely to be focused on access to a particular career and gaining experience to facilitate this. Graduates received more support for identifying opportunities that were specifically matched to their skills and career aspirations.

Male, Sports Science. Now working as a teacher.

[The agency] rang me and said 'Someone's off sick, can you come in and cover them up to half term?', so six weeks, they said 'Are you doing anything?' I said 'Well at the moment I've got an interview with another agency, tomorrow, so I can rearrange that', and they said 'no, no, cancel it, we'll need you for the six weeks'. **The six weeks turned into 12 weeks, the 12 weeks turned into six months, six months turned into a full-time contract.**

Female, Business and Admin. Now working in a temporary role as an HR officer.

It was initially a six month fixed term contract to cover some maternity leave, and then it's been extended. So it was initially due to finish around the end of August time, **it was then extended and extended again** and this week, I received a notification that it's been extended again until mid-April this year. [...] Obviously they have consultants that deal with different sectors and different entry levels of the business. **[The agency] could advise me and see from my experience and my interests what company would be looking for an individual like me and then following on from that the roles that were available in those companies.**

Internships

Clearly used by leading employers for 'careful recruitment'; could lead directly to employment or indirectly, via mentors, references and as evidence of having completed them successfully. But what exactly *is* an internship?

Internship: definitions, theory and practice

- Wikipedia: Internships for professional careers are similar in some ways to apprenticeships for trade and vocational jobs but lack of standardisation and oversight leaves the term open to broad interpretation – interns may be college or university students, high school students, or post-graduate adults. These positions may be paid or unpaid and are usually temporary.....Generally, **an internship consists of an exchange of services for experience** between the student and an organization.
- The realities (as indicated by research findings so far...):
 - structured/unstructured, formal/informal, anything between one week and up to twelve months, paid, ‘facilitated’ and unpaid, sometimes involving training and development, often constituting cheap labour, ranging from wonderful opportunities to exploitation.
 - Offered by employers *planning to recruit*, as an *alternative to recruiting*, and as *ethical professional practice/future skills investment*.

Types and durations of internships described to us

- Year long 'Sandwich Year' internships
 - (usually organised by HEIs, sometimes by students, built into curriculum, usually paid, structured learning opportunities,)
- Summer/vacation internships
 - Often competitively offered by employers to attract specific categories of student or driven by proactive people and their contacts, paid, full time, 'talent seeking' element
- Short 'taster' internships (1-2 weeks)
 - Often offered by employers and industry sector or occupational interest groups to attract excellent candidates and provide insight into the organisation/industry
- *Ad hoc* 'internships' for variable periods
 - Often private arrangements, relying on personal contacts or proactivity and initiative. Could be effective but normally unstructured and rarely paid

Paid and unpaid Internships

PAID: *Male, Business, IT and Computing, High Tariff Uni, working as freelance project manager*

‘As part of the year long [Sandwich placement] internship I was in touch with the graduate and intern recruiters, and he said “Yeah..have you thought about doing a summer internship as well?” and I thought “Okay, I’ll give that a try!” Didn’t particularly have to go through the full assessment, the full application process - um, **it was more a few informal chats over coffee before I was offered it’.**

UNPAID: *Male, Psychology, High Tariff University, now Advertising Accounts Manager*

‘I’ve actually had three different internships that were all unpaid or expenses only, over the course of being a student. **When I was in sixth form, I had a family friend that had an advertising firm in the Midlands,**[After graduation] My current organisation] was one I particularly wanted to work at, so I emailed them and said I’d be willing to come in, just do some non-paid work experience and would they be interested in having me? I just emailed them my CV, a kind of bit about my background and why I was interested in advertising and what I was offering, so I could come in, **I was happy to do anything for that two-week work experience period**...and they got back to me and said “Yes. Would you be available on these dates? We could use the help on one of our projects.” A couple of days before I finished my placement, the team that I was working within just said “Do you want to stay for longer? We’ve got a position that we’d like to offer you..” which was a content authoring position - so just putting information on a website and they asked if I wanted to carry on and come back the following week, as an employee.”

Which students access good work experience opportunities? (The crucial influence of cultural capital...)

Male, Middle class background, selective school, High tariff HEI, Management with marketing, good degree.

‘Somebody gave me **advice on when I was younger, was the key to getting out of university wasn't just getting the degree, it was, you know, getting the experience.** I made sure that I did, I did get experience, and I did a couple - I guess the prominent ones that were done were during the summer, while I was doing my degree.

The first one was .. a week long internship, it was unpaid... I went to London for a week and stayed at Imperial College London and it was sponsored and organised and managed by [a group of] five large solicitors and barristers in London and it was designed for undergraduates who are considering law as a degree and a career. So I spent a week there, you know, working with the various companies and learning how to debate and how Law works and the life of a solicitor in the City, so that was one of them. **It was completely unpaid but it was was competitively selective,** I think it was only 200 people out of the country that were selected to do that for the one week, and so that was the first one....

...The second one was with [an international car hire firm].. Resulted in offer of place on Graduate Entry Scheme

....and which have more restricted options?.....

Female, working class, neither parent has degree, state school, good degree, Highest Tariff HEI. Now Secondary school teacher in state comprehensive school.

‘Whilst I was at [university] I became increasingly aware that someone from my background doesn’t have as many opportunities, even when you get into a Russell Group university, as someone from a rich family, because the kind of internships that get you into the big business, they **were unpaid, a lot of them... and there was no way I could ever consider doing so I couldn’t find any private sector internships that I could apply** for because I couldn’t afford them. [...] I’d like to have tried something in advertising and something in publishing just, you know, ‘cause that’s sort of the main areas that an English degree can lead to’.

Work experience helps to clarify career aspirations

‘..It galvanised the fact that I definitely wanted to work in creative and radio advertising, that was a huge thing. **What I definitely didn’t want to do ,** effectively, was to be come a commercial radio producer. Being able to see the day-to-day workings of it – it’s fun to get involved in making an advert and getting the sound of it perfect, but actually seeing [how they worked] how flexible they have to be in terms of taking direction from people who don’t necessarily know best..I think it helped me I realise I want to be a writer...to be more innovative..[not] stifled by brand..’

Female, Low Tariff HEI, Media and Communications

‘that was conserving artefacts and recording and, you know, things like that, **whereas that experience taught me that I want to be more involved with people,...I’m not the kind of person that wants to conserve artefacts or things like that,** I’m more a person who wants to work with people and do interesting things, maybe some sort of training or teaching. [...] I did acquire skills in how to conserve objects, how to clean objects in a professional way, that I wouldn’t have done otherwise. I didn’t hate it, you know, I thought it was still interesting, and I think it was a valuable skill to have had, and I appreciated that I was given the opportunity to do it but I realised that **although I enjoyed it, it wasn’t something that I wanted to do long-term’.**

Female, Archaeology, Highest Tariff HEI, currently working in Public Sector Marketing

..and provides insight into how different types of organisation work.

Male, International Relations with Language, Highest Tariff University

‘The [leading independent Think Tank], it gave me useful experience firstly **because it allowed me to just see a bit more about how a think tank works** and I was able to see how they work and, you know, how the research is designed, etc, - **not so much from the actual work I was doing, but from the fact that I was sitting in the offices and I could watch what was happening and listen to what was happening and ask questions**, and obviously it gave me useful experience and, in the understanding of that specific organisation which then gave me a good argument for taking on the part-time work with them.....’ [he got a second paid part-time internship]...

Interviewer: Okay, and the second internship which was sort of almost indistinguishable from a job...?’

Interviewee: ‘All the skills I learnt there, **all the skills I learnt there were sort of relevant job skills**, ...from communicating with clients through researching profits, through to writing presentations, and writing memos and understanding specific issues, and I mean all the skills that I learnt there were relevant job skills: **none of them were qualifying me to make coffee..**’

Extremes of unpaid graduate work experience

Female Law graduate, Highest Tariff HEI, now working as Trainee Solicitor who did two periods of unpaid work experience

[After graduation, she wrote to a local solicitor's firm, offering to work for experience]

'The woman was a sole practitioner, she got in touch and said she didn't have any full-time vacancies, she could offer me a placement for a few months....

Interviewer: What did you actually do, on an average day..?

'So mainly it was drafting letters that she was sending out to clients, answering phone calls, arranging post, photocopying, those sort of general sort of admin related tasks. So I was living at home at the time .. - I mean the only cost really was running my car [!!!], other than that I was living at home so there was no rent or anything like that...'

[She felt the experience was not useful, so she applied to do work for a voluntary advice unit providing legal advice to disadvantaged applicants]

'... one of the lead volunteers ...allowed me to sit in on one of his interviews with a client and then he said, "Would you be happy to do the work we're doing?" and I said "yes", and then it just kicked off from there, really, and so I was doing **that for a year and a half**. It was quite hands on, so pretty much from the first two weeks, when I was just sitting in with him with his clients, in the third week I had my own clients'.

Emerging findings....

- Grads who had had experience of paid and structured work experience placements were universally enthusiastic about their positive impact on career development but reports on unpaid work experience were more diverse.
- Paid internships and placements were mainly highly selective and fiercely competed for....but informal contacts could override formal access protocols.
- Voluntary work often provided useful experience and skills development opportunities.
- Access was often cumulative...one opportunity led to another, often better opportunity.
- Contacts and networks were almost always essential to get either paid or unpaid work experience.

...and emerging conclusions

- Subject studied and HEI attended facilitated or restricted access to opportunities (c.f. Private sector internships clustered in a few industries).
- Many excellent internships provided by charities and third sector organisations – but less likely to be paid, so discriminatory.
- Proactivity on the part of students and graduates themselves was nearly always essential; but proactivity was related to cultural capital, etc.
- Work experience placements (paid and unpaid) appeared to involve students and graduates making valuable contributions to organisational productivity.



Project 4: Employers' Perspectives

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The Project

- 7 sectors capturing a range of norms for labour market entry
 - Food processing, automotive manufacturing, hospitality, NHS, voluntary sector, creative industries, business services
- Chosen to select:
 - Large vs. small employers
 - Structured vs ad hoc transitions
 - Different levels of skill and qualification required
- Overview of sector followed by interviews with key employers
- Not yet complete

How do employers understand some of the changes in labour markets?

- Little sense of agency – even the very large employers operating in local labour markets e.g. NHS
- Serious concerns expressed by most employers about:
 - Extent to which young people are work ready
 - How to attract future talent
 - How to retain young workers
 - How to offer flexibility to allow them to experience a range of roles

Approaches to recruitment

- **Serious attention being given to how to target appropriate recruits**
 - At all levels of skills and qualifications
 - Tensions within organisations
 - Local context shaping recruitment (practices and challenges)
- **Concern about diversity and representativeness**
 - Even among small employers that have relatively little specialist HR support
- **Generally happy to talk about unpaid work experience**
 - Keen for it to be framed as providing a leg up; an opportunity to develop skills and to try out different roles
- **Wide range of recruitment channels being used to target young workers**
 - Employment via temporary employment agencies entails both risks and benefits

Selection

- **‘Experience’, but not necessarily ‘work experience’, is highly valued by employers when recruiting young workers for entry level jobs**
 - How this is gained is of less importance than the qualities it is taken to indicate
 - Participation in extra-curricular activities, voluntary work etc. signals commitment, motivation, reliability, time-keeping etc.
 - duration important
- **Unpaid work experience programmes (provided by the employer) an important part of the recruitment and selection process**
 - Some benefits for employer: indirect channel of recruitment
 - But also constraints and limitations

Approaches to training

- **High level of acknowledgment that employer provided training of some kind is necessary**
 - Extent to which this should be formal and/or paid for by the employer varies between sector norms and size of employer
 - Different forms of flexible employment have different implications for training provision
- **Engagement with formal policies such as apprenticeships, traineeships etc. varies**
 - Rationale for employer engagement with apprenticeships varies considerably
 - Larger employers typically better placed to engage.....but face significant barriers
 - Apprenticeship levy – uncertainty and mixed views

Experiences of retention

- **A serious concern for all employers, despite some sectors being subject to considerably higher turnover rates**
 - Generally, reflects cost and effort of recruitment and training
 - But also sector specific concerns. e.g. productivity concerns in food processing
- **Some sectoral differences**
 - Hospitality – ‘revolving door’ scenario
 - Food processing – involuntary turnover of low skilled workers and ‘poaching’ of high skilled workers by larger industry players
- **How do employers respond?**
 - Retention risks can undermine career pathways and training available to young people
 - But some evidence also of positive impact on pathways for young workers

Some takeaways

- Clearly and consistently frame issues of recruiting, training and retaining young people as bringing additional issues to other age groups
- Happy to acknowledge the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sides of how employers behave (not necessarily them!)
 - Little reflection on the more negative aspects of precarious work for employees
- Government policy (e.g. apprenticeships) not always seen as helpful

Thank you for your attention.

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