



Department
for Education

Analytical Associate Pool

Summary of projects

May 2016

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The Analytical Associate Pool

Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) uses high quality evidence and analysis to inform policy development and delivery to achieve [our vision](#) - to provide world-class education and care that allows every child and young person to reach his or her potential, regardless of background.

Within the DfE there is an analytical community which comprises statisticians, economists, social and operational researchers. These specialists feed in analysis and research to strategy, policy development and delivery.

While much analysis is undertaken in-house, and substantial projects are commissioned to external organisations, there is often a need to quickly commission small-scale projects.

We have therefore created a pool of Analytical Associates who can bring specific specialist expertise, knowledge and skills into the department to supplement and develop our internal analytical capability.

In June 2014 we invited applications from individuals to join the pool. We received an overwhelming response and, after evaluating the expertise of everyone who applied, we established the Analytical Associate Pool.

Over 160 independent academics and researchers are in the pool, and they can be commissioned to carry out small-scale data analysis, rapid literature reviews, primary research and peer review. They also provide training, quality assurance and expert advice on an ad-hoc basis. Most projects cost less than £15,000, and more than 80 projects have been commissioned since the pool opened in September 2014.

We welcome new Associates to join the Pool. The application form is available on the DfE [research page](#).

Summary of projects

At DfE we aim to make analysis publicly available and we follow the Government Social Research (GSR) [protocol](#) for publishing research. Much of the analysis undertaken through the Associate Pool is too small-scale to be published on its own, and this report summarises these smaller pieces of analysis. More substantial work is published in stand-alone reports throughout the year. See page 10 for details and links to projects already published.

Peer support and children's and young people's mental health

Associate: Nick Coleman, Nick Coleman Research Ltd

Key findings

This literature review looked at available models of peer support that aim to support and improve children and young people's mental health, describing their key features and evidence of their effectiveness. The review covered peer support interventions for young people (of school age) from the past 10 years and considered evidence from the UK alongside international evidence.

The review looked at the main features of peer support for mental health including school based support, one-to-one models; community settings and online support. It reviewed the evidence on the effectiveness and robustness of the models as well as the impact on a range of outcomes, considering the reasons for the success and failures of the programmes.

The key aspects of good practice that emerged from the review were:

- effective leadership;
- design and organisation;
- supervision and support;
- skills and training;
- project longevity;
- confidentiality;
- and effective risk management.

This review will form part of a package of evidence, including stakeholder workshops and on-line call for evidence, that will be used to help develop government policy and peer support for mental health.

School performance in coastal communities

Associates: Lucy Stokes & Jake Anders, National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR)

Colleagues: Michele Bernini and Helen Bewley

Key findings

This analysis compared the 2014/15 performance of primary and secondary schools in coastal communities (using ONS coastal communities' classification) with the performance of schools in non-coastal areas and explored possible reasons for the observed differences. It aimed to address whether there is a distinct coastal schools problem, or whether this is simply a result of the more disadvantaged nature of many coastal communities. Schools in coastal communities were also compared with schools in non-coastal communities with similar area characteristics. The analysis also explored differences in attainment among those schools with a high proportion of White British pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM).

The results showed that:

- On average, coastal schools showed lower attainment than non-coastal schools. However, among similarly disadvantaged coastal and non-coastal communities performance is no worse in coastal schools.
- Much of the difference in average attainment between coastal and non-coastal schools reflects the greater level of disadvantage faced by many coastal communities. This does not mean there is not a “coastal schools problem” – but the issue seems to be the greater levels of deprivation in the areas in which these schools are located.
- When focusing solely on those schools with a high proportion of White British pupils eligible for FSM, there is no difference in average attainment between coastal and non-coastal schools.
- The apparent gap in attainment between coastal and non-coastal schools is largely accounted for by the higher proportion of White British pupils eligible for free school meals in coastal schools likely reflecting the greater levels of deprivation present in coastal areas.
- Much of the concern around lower attainment among White British FSM children has focused on White British boys eligible for FSM. However, the analysis finds that both the proportion of pupils who are White British boys eligible for FSM, and the proportion of pupils that are White British girls eligible for FSM, are associated with lower attainment.

The findings are being used to develop an approach to improve the performance of schools across the Regional Schools Commission (RSC) South East/ South London region (for whom the work was for). High performing South East/ South London coastal schools will be contacted to further develop an understanding of 'what works' in these contexts and what effective support the RSC can offer.

Teacher workload rapid review summary: marking, planning and data management

Associate: Sarah Gibson, CooperGibson Research

Key findings

Following the Workload Challenge^[1] in February 2015^[2] three groups were set up and charged with creating principles for teaching practice and making recommendations on the key areas respondents thought caused unnecessarily burdensome teacher workload: (1) marking, deep marking and feedback; (2) planning and resources; and (3) data management. To inform the work of these three groups, a rapid evidence review of publically available material for each key area was undertaken.

The review found that:

- There is a distinct lack of robust evidence and examples of evidence-based practice which identify the nature of marking, planning and data management tasks that are burdensome and unnecessary, reasons behind this or any potential solutions and effective practice.
- Pressures of accountability and perceptions of Ofsted requirements were perceived to be key drivers of unnecessary and excessive workload. A solution, called for by many teaching unions, is the need to clarify Ofsted requirements for marking, planning and data management^[3]. Limited evidence is available however, on how workload had been reduced through alternative or streamlined practices.
- The level of detail required in marking and the rise in dialogic or triple marking was felt to be unnecessary and excessive by teachers responding to surveys about their workload. The use of formative assessment and the increasing need to

^[1] [Workload Challenge Analysis of Teacher Consultation Responses](#)

^[2] [Workload Challenge Government Response](#)

^[3] Some clarification has been provided by Ofsted and is now included in the School Inspection Handbook [Ofsted \(September 2015\) School Inspection Handbook. See particularly paragraph 28.](#)

provide detailed written feedback, has been questioned by teachers, unions and workforce representatives.

- Lack of training and support for school staff in the use of data and data management systems, access to suitable Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resources along with duplication of data tasks were identified in literature as problematic.
- Although not fully evaluated, examples of improvements in marking workload included: a whole-school approach to marking, focusing on closing the gap, reflecting on the purpose of marking, a strategic approach to reducing bureaucracy, collaborative marking, re-defining non-teaching periods, combining assessment across units, alternative forms of marking such as the use of signs, class codes and symbols, Dedicated Improvement and Reflection Time (DIRT), self and peer assessment, periodic depth marking, targeted marking, a marking rota and in-class feedback.
- Research has suggested that ICT can reduce planning workloads but only if staff are confident in using it. Other research has suggested that ICT is not always used effectively in schools to address workload issues. One study suggested that interactive whiteboards and online resources can reduce time on lesson planning.
- Research suggests that textbooks can aid teaching and learning. There is little reference however, to how they can reduce or contribute to planning workload.
- Some research has suggested that support staff can have a positive effect, such as by taking on some resourcing tasks and adding value to the planning process. Their impact on workload however, is not clear. Collaborative planning and training and development for more efficient planning were highlighted as potential solutions, although evidence of this is limited.
- Surveys of the profession have suggested that there is potential for teachers to delegate some relevant bureaucratic tasks to support staff. Other research has recommended simpler, more effective data management systems and professional development in this area.

The findings from the reports have been shared with the Working Groups and helped contribute to their [final reports](#).

Young people's experience of careers education and guidance

Associate: Sarah Gibson, CooperGibson Research

Key findings

This project aimed to gather information on young people's experiences of careers education and guidance and strengthen our understanding of the points at which young people make decisions. It involved focus groups and interviews with 150 young people and 12 careers staff in four schools and four colleges across four English regions.

The research found that young people were offered a wide range of activities and experiences, but that they were not always fully aware of what was on offer. However, where careers education and guidance was embedded within an institution's culture and planning, and where institutions pro-actively engaged parents, students appeared more informed and engaged.

Institutions provided a wide range of activities, including curricular time devoted to careers, careers fairs and employer visits, with content becoming more personally tailored and sector-specific as young people progressed. Young people reported that they particularly valued:

- one-to-one career guidance and planning sessions
- work experience placements
- direct engagement with industry professionals (guest speakers, mock interviews), or with peers who had attended specific institutions or taken particular courses
- careers fairs, industry days and visits to businesses

Young people valued personal contact and careers education and guidance that was related to their aspirations or particular vocational routes that they were interested in. They considered work experience to be important in terms of learning about the world of work, experiencing an area of work that may be of interest to them and finding out whether the career choice suits them.

They felt that careers education and guidance could be improved by providing more of these activities and by providing more and better information on vocational options, with students in some institutions feeling that there was insufficient focus on these compared with academic routes.

Institutions faced a number of challenges in careers provision, including difficulties with engaging a sufficient number and range of employers, transport issues, lack of resources and capacity of specialist careers staff.

The research was commissioned in response to a ministerial request to include student voice within the Careers Strategy and has been used to inform its development.

Published projects

Many Associate Pool projects have been published as a full report on the [DfE Internet site](#) or on Associate's own websites. See below for more information and links to these publications.

Table 1 Associate Pool Published Reports

Title	Summary	Date
Newly qualified teachers (NQTs): annual survey 2015	Summary of newly qualified teachers' responses to a survey on the quality and effectiveness of their initial teacher training.	November 2015
Newly Qualified Teachers 2015: An investigation of attitudes in terms of route and context	Summary of newly qualified teachers' responses to a survey on the quality and effectiveness of their initial teacher training.	November 2015
Teaching Schools Evaluation: Final Research report	This report contains analysis of NPD data commissioned through the Associate Pool to look at association between pupil performance and membership of a Teaching School Alliance (TSA). The work was commissioned as a supplementary strand to the wider teaching schools evaluation and its findings are referenced and discussed in the evaluation's final report.	February 2016
Mapping User experience of education, health and care process: a qualitative study	A qualitative study of examine user satisfaction with the education health and care process for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities	April 2016

Further information

If you would like any further information about the Associate Pool or the projects included in this summary please email us on: associate.pool@education.gsi.gov.uk



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