



Department
for Education

Analytical associate pool

**Summary of recent small-scale research
projects**

January 2019

Contents

Introduction	3
Summary of projects	4
Literature review: Credible voices and how they can positively influence young people	4
Schools' buying strategy survey	5
Skills Advisory Panels - feasibility study	6
High level mapping of STEM careers promotion interventions	8
Changes to the teaching of sex and relationship education and PSHE	10
Published full project reports	13
Further information	15

Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) uses high quality evidence and analysis to inform policy development and delivery to achieve [our vision](#) - to achieve a highly educated society in which opportunity is equal for young person no matter what their background or family circumstances.

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 200 independent academics and researchers are in the pool, and they can be commissioned to carry out small-scale data analysis, rapid literature reviews 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 180 projects have been commissioned since the pool opened in September 2014.

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 only small in nature and we are publishing a summary of findings here to ensure that they are shared. More substantial work is published in stand-alone reports throughout the year. See page 14 for details and links to projects already published.

Literature review: Credible voices and how they can positively influence young people

Associates: Dr Stephen Boxford (Cordis Bright)

The research

DfE commissioned a rapid assessment of literature regarding which individuals and organisations are most able to positively influence young people (up to the age of 21) in the UK to protect against extremism, and by what means. The review focused on three key issues: what young people view as ‘authentic’; what makes certain voices more credible; and the most effective ways of communicating messages concerning extremism to young people.

The review, carried out between December 2017 and February 2018, looked at both academic and grey literature¹ published in the last 10 years, with a focus on (but not limited to) UK-based studies.

Key findings

The review showed that research on extremism prevention measures has in general been descriptive in nature, and lacks empirical evidence for success. However, while researchers acknowledged that it is difficult to provide ‘proof of a negative’ – in other words, to show the effectiveness of attempts to divert or dissuade individuals from the path to extremism – they also contended that it should be possible to measure the impact of these interventions in terms of attitudes or actions.

The same is true for work on credible voices and modes of communication for delivering messages about extremism to young people. Much of the research identified in this review relied on evidence from people who work with young people, rather than from

¹ This means it is published outside traditional channels such as journals and books

young people themselves. There was very little research that measured the impact of communication on the behaviour or attitudes of young people, and none that clearly indicated the cost effectiveness of how the messages were delivered.

Other key findings included:

- The most important aspects of credibility may vary along more than just demographic lines, since young people may be drawn to extremism for different reasons – such as ideology or search for belonging – which are likely to be countered in different ways.
- Expertise on an issue was seen a key factor to establishing credibility and authenticity. This could be expertise from lived experience, or the appearance of expertise in well-informed external facilitators. A willingness to admit knowledge gaps can help avoid undermining this credibility.
- Lived experience made facilitators appear more credible. For example, peer educators who had previously gone through the intervention programme they delivered were reported to provide credibility and authenticity that participants responded well to.

Schools' buying strategy survey

Associates: June Wiseman (BMG Research)

The research

The Schools' Buying Strategy (SBS) was published in January 2017. It aims to support the schools sector to save £1 billion a year by 2019-20 on non-staff spend, including goods and services.

In November and December 2017, 323² maintained schools and trusts responded to an online survey in order to determine levels of awareness, use, the perceived impact and usefulness of certain Schools' Buying Strategy initiatives such as the DfE's financial benchmarking website, its Recommended Deals and efficiency metric tool.

Key findings

Nearly three-quarters of all schools taking part in the survey (73%) were at least slightly familiar with the Schools' Buying Strategy. Maintained schools were significantly less

² 103 Multi-Academy Trusts (MAT); 120 Single Academy Trusts (SAT); 84 local authority maintained; 8 Free schools and 8 of another type. The sample size is not representative.

likely than academy trusts to be familiar with it. Familiarity was at higher levels amongst members of a School Business Member network than amongst those who weren't members of a network; seventy nine percent of members were at least slightly familiar, compared with sixty seven percent of non-members.

Nearly three quarters of schools and trusts that undertook financial benchmarking (73%) used the Government's schools (DfE) financial benchmarking website. Of these, just under two thirds (64%) found it useful.

Few schools and trusts used any of the 'Better Deal' initiatives, reflective of the number of initiatives 'live' at time of asking. Sixteen percent used at least one deal, with a high proportion (91%) making savings as a result. More than a third of all respondents (36%) intended to use at least one deal in the future.

Nearly half of respondents (48%) were members of a School Business Manager (SBM) network in their region. Non-members exhibited a high level of interest in joining a network; sixty three percent thought it likely they would join one.

The majority of respondents (84%) compared their school's budget with those of similar schools to see if spending could be more efficient in the 12 months to Nov 16 to Nov 17.

Skills Advisory Panels - feasibility study

Associates: Peter Dickinson (IER; University of Warwick)

Anne Green (City-REDI; University of Birmingham)

The research

Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) are a 2017 Conservative manifesto commitment to *"deal with local skills shortages and ensure that colleges deliver the skills required by employers through SAPs and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) working at a regional and local level"*. To ensure local decisions are informed by more robust evidence, DfE developed an analytical framework which this feasibility study tested in 7 local areas – known as Phase One³. DfE commissioned this research to review how the proposed analytical framework and methodology could support the design and delivery of this initiative.

³ The Phase One areas include Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly LEP; Greater Lincolnshire LEP; Lancashire LEP; Leeds City Region LEP; Thames Valley Berkshire LEP; Greater Manchester Combined Authority; and West Midlands Combined Authority.

The aims and objectives of this research were to undertake:

1. A critical review of the analytical framework and the proposed methodology - including aims and objectives, coverage and detail, analysis and presentation, and validity and reliability.
2. An audit of the proposed variables, including: data collection methods; data sources; potential for other data to be included; data validity and reliability.
3. Expert advice on the information needs of LEPs and Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs); how these will/will not be met by the analytical framework and methodology; what could/should be in scope for strategic decision-making; and areas for further development.

The research included interviews with local skills leads and data analysts of the Phase One areas and an expert review of proposed indicators and data sources. It took place in January and February 2018.

Key findings

Overall, the aims and objectives of the analytical framework complemented the current analytical work undertaken by the LEPs/MCAs consulted. However, the research found that there were considerable variations in local areas' in-house resource for collecting and analysing labour market information (LMI). Authors considered that local areas are already developing some work in this area and some of them have already undertaken a great deal of LMI analyses and have ongoing means of collecting intelligence. The report identifies the tension between providing a consistent national overview while at the same time serving differing local needs – especially given differences in existing local activity on skills which LEPs/MCAs are committed to continuing with their local partners and the variation in resources and priorities across local areas.

Analytical framework and methodology

There are four types of skills issues identified in the framework – skills shortages, gaps, underutilization/mismatch, and low skills traps – and they should be treated as interrelated rather than separate. The researchers considered further development of skills mismatch/underutilisation within the framework would be beneficial. The study also highlighted that the wording and language could be reviewed to ensure consistency across the proposal.

Recommendations

- SAPs should be flexible enough and continue to be complementary to whatever work is already being undertaken in local areas to avoid duplication or increased burden.

- DfE should provide guidance on certain data issues to support LEPs and MCAs to improve their analytical capability.
- The research highlighted that DfE could consider providing support to SAPs through, for example, dealing with data requests (for sources not routinely available), sharing good practice, and specific analyses on particular topics.
- The LEPs and MCAs consulted would welcome examples of approaches to bringing the place, skills demand and skills supply framework, methodology and data together to shed light on key skills issues.

High level mapping of STEM careers promotion interventions

Associates: Sarah Gibson (Cooper-Gibson Research)

The research

DfE commissioned a brief and exploratory mapping of provision of national and regional activities that promote interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) careers among children and young people. Undertaken in February to March 2018, it intended to identify potential avenues for development, further testing and research. The mapping exercise was a non-systematic desk-based investigation supplemented by 14 interviews with providers of STEM inspiration/promotional activities in England.

Key findings

Nature and scale of provision

The mapping exercise identified 59 organisations providing 118 STEM career promotion/inspiration activities. Activities were only included in the mapping exercise which addressed STEM careers promotion directly. Of these activities:

- Most covered either generic/multiple STEM subjects (just over 40%), or were engineering specific (just over 40%). Few related to specific science subjects, technology or mathematics.
- Delivery was most commonly as courses and presentations/interactive activities (or events combining several approaches).
- Most were short events, although longer mentoring style activities were offered by some providers. Nearly half were delivered annually (e.g. large-scale conferences and science fairs).
- Most were delivered in school (39%), or as a university day/residential course (25%)
- The majority (58%) were provider-led, with employer-led career learning also relatively popular (23%).

- Target groups for activities tended to be broad to ensure that hard-to-reach, disadvantaged or disengaged learners were also accessing opportunities.

What works

Evaluation of provision was patchy and, where undertaken, was rarely independent or robust. However, insight provided by interviewees suggested the following were effective:

- **Exposure to industry role models** that are strong and relatable and represent a range of backgrounds, skill levels and occupations.
- **Improving teacher awareness and understanding about STEM careers** so that they can share up-to-date information.
- **Responding to school need** – for example, by offering free/subsidised activities, contextualising learning to everyday situations.
- **Offering breadth of experience** so that young people were aware of the range of different types of STEM opportunities available to them.
- **Using a comprehensive approach** (sometimes referred to as Science Capital) which aims not only to address young people’s knowledge about STEM, but also their attitudes and their everyday engagement with science.

Challenges

Providers of STEM inspiration/promotional activity identified several challenges during the interviews:

- Obtaining buy-in and engagement from school and employers due to lack of time (staff/curriculum time) and resource; lack of awareness and understanding of its value; the difficulty of establishing and maintaining the necessary links with schools and employers.
- A complex system of provision, with multiple providers offering a range of often overlapping activities to various groups. This was compounded by the complexity of the STEM field – in terms of skill levels, occupations and specialisms - which was reported to be challenging to communicate clearly and in an engaging way.
- Ensuring that provision was accessible to all groups and abilities, given that provision tailored to specific cohorts (e.g. girls, particular attainment levels) was relatively uncommon.

Areas for development were suggested around simplifying the system, providing up-to-date STEM careers Continuing Professional Development for teachers and ensuring engagement with a wider range of groups. Exploring the contribution of Science Capital, the relative effects of short and longer term provision, targeted versus inclusive approaches and the effect of location of provision on inclusion of disadvantaged groups, were also suggested.

Changes to the teaching of sex and relationship education and PSHE

Associates: Dr Miguel Garcia-Sanchez (Aldaba Limited)

The research

DfE ran a call for evidence on proposed changes to the teaching of Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) and Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE). The call for evidence ran between 19 December 2017 and 17 February 2018 and sought public views from adults (including parents, teachers, educational professionals and organisations) and young people on the content of the new Relationships Education and whether it make PSHE or elements of it compulsory. The responses to the consultation informed the drafting of the new regulations and statutory guidance for the new subjects and the government's decision to make Health Education compulsory in all state funded schools.

Out of 18,404 online responses received, 57 percent were from parents and 13 percent were from young people (aged under 16). The online responses were analysed by two external contractors Aldaba Limited and Ipsos MORI using a text analysis approach to analyse all the online responses. Aldaba was commissioned to draw out the views of a random sample of 750 respondents from each of these groups (parents and young people) using content analysis. This is a more time consuming analytical approach so it was decided that undertaking this more detailed analysis on a sample of the cases was a proportionate approach.

The analysis below covers:

- the topics in SRE and PSHE which young people have previously learnt about and considered to be important;
- topics in PSHE and the new Relationships Education and Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) that young people and parents thought should be taught as part of these subjects.

Key findings

Important topics in Relationships Education (RelEd) and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

Subjects which young people most frequently identified as important and which had already been covered by their particular school in SRE included avoiding pregnancies (including the use of contraception and more specifically condoms), sexually transmitted infections, and diseases and subjects related to relationships (including consent, abuse, and marriage).

Young people were also asked about subjects which they had not yet covered but would like to know more about in RSE. As well as being mentioned by some as having been covered already, subjects related to relationships (including consent, abuse, and marriage), avoiding pregnancies, (including contraception, and more specifically condoms) were also mentioned frequently for this question. Other things frequently mentioned were lessons on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) relationships. These topics were also cited by pupils when asked about topics in PSHE that they would like to know more about.

Parents were asked about the topics that could be covered in the new subject at primary schools and secondary schools. The topics they identified as important for primary school children to learn in Relationships Education included relationships (including consent), abuse, bullying, family and marriage, values and beliefs and internet safety. Parents frequently expressed a preference for teaching about relationships to remain the exclusive responsibility of parents.

Subjects which parents identified as important for secondary school children to learn in RSE were relationships (including consent), avoiding pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and diseases, puberty and internet safety. Many parents highlighted the importance of ensuring that lessons are age-appropriate and that safeguarding requirements are met at all times.

Parents were also asked what they thought should be taught as part of RelEd or RSE regarding online safety that would not already be covered in the computing curriculum. Parents most frequently mentioned cyber bullying, pornography and information sharing.

Important topics in PSHE

The variety of topics which young people identified as important and had already covered at their schools during Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons, included general information on safer sex, substance misuse, relationships including consent, health and wellbeing and wider economic well being. The subjects which young people had not already covered and wanted to learn more about in PSHE lessons also included health and wellbeing and wider economic wellbeing as well as topics relating to citizenship. Some of the topics young people gave overlapped with those that were mentioned in relation to SRE (relationships and consent and avoiding pregnancies and LGBT relationships).

The subjects which parents identified as important for primary children to be taught in PSHE included puberty, relationships and consent, health and wellbeing, wider economic wellbeing and topics related to citizenship. Subjects which parents identified as important to teach secondary school children in PSHE include substance misuse, relationships including consent, health and wellbeing, wider economic wellbeing and how to be a responsible citizen.

The right to withdraw

Parents often said that they should have a right to withdraw their children from some or all of the subjects in Relationships Education or RSE following a review of the content. Parents frequently specified that this should particularly apply to Relationships Education in primary schools. Only a few thought that there should be no right to withdraw.

School flexibility

Parents were asked how much flexibility schools should have to meet the needs of individual pupils and to reflect the diversity of local communities and wider society. They frequently said that flexibility is necessary to accommodate parents' requests and preferences. There were also frequent references to the fact that communities are different and children and young people mature at different paces, making flexibility necessary. Of the respondents that commented on the extent of flexibility that schools should have, the majority said that it should be high.

Published full project reports

In addition to these summaries, some 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 since March 2018

Date	Title	Description
10 March 2018	Exploring teacher workload: qualitative research	This research follows up a sample of respondents from the Teacher Workload Survey 2016 to learn more about their workload.
10 March 2018	Factors affecting teacher retention: qualitative investigation	Findings from qualitative interviews with former teachers to explore reasons for leaving teaching.
10 March 2018	Mapping professional development for reducing teacher workload	Research on the spread and use of professional development support to reduce teacher workload in schools in England.
10 March 2018	Workload challenge research projects: summary report 2018	Findings from the NCTL-funded workload challenge research projects.
11 April 2018	Strategic school improvement fund: process evaluation of round one (summer 2017)	An evaluation of the processes relating to the first round of applications to the strategic school improvement fund (SSIF), which closed in June 2017.
27 May 2018	Annex A of Implementation of T Level programmes: Government consultation response	Summary of the consultation response analysis.
13 June 2018	Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying: case studies	Research into anti-bullying practices used by schools to prevent and tackle bullying, including case studies.
9 August 2018	Evidence on school leadership in an international context	Review of leadership practices and continuing professional development in 6 high-performing countries to inform policy development on school leadership.
9 August 2018	Secondary school choice and selection	Insights from new national preferences data.

Date	Title	Description
14 August 2018	<u>Good practice in level 4 and 5 qualifications</u>	Literature review into good practice in level 4 and 5 qualifications.
27 August 2018	<u>Analysis of responses to the call for evidence on returning to work after time out for caring</u>	Summary of the views of those that responded to the call for evidence on returning to work after time out for caring.
11 October 2018	<u>Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools</u>	Research on the information schools provide to support their pupils' wellbeing and mental health.

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.gov.uk



Department
for Education

© Crown copyright 2019

Reference: DFE-RR901

ISBN: 978-1-78105-989-0

You may re-use this document/publication (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v2.0. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/2 or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:
associate.pool@education.gov.uk or www.education.gov.uk/contactus

This document is available for download at www.gov.uk/government/publications