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Article Title: Earning not learning? An assessment of young people in the jobs without training (JWT) group

Year of publication: Forthcoming

Link to published article:

<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/>

Publisher statement: © SAGE Publications Ltd.

Accepted for publication
Sociological Research Online
Special Section: Young People, Education and Inequality
Spring/Summer 2012

Abstract

Earning not learning? An assessment of young people in the jobs without training (JWT) group

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In recent years, mass participation in post-16 education and training in England has led to a diminishing understanding about young people who leave education at the end of compulsory schooling to enter 'jobs without training' (JWT). Drawing on data from three recent studies, this article argues that the JWT group is not homogeneous in its composition. Similar findings led to the development of a common typology across all three studies to define young people's position in the labour market, their motivations and aspirations, and their access to training and development. It concludes with a series of recommendations for addressing the deficit in knowledge about the composition of the JWT group, and the learning and training needs of young workers. This discussion is set in the context of the implementation of the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) in England for all 17-year olds from 2013 and for all 18-year olds from 2015, although within the Coalition Government's current proposals, its delivery will lack any form of immediate enforcement. Therefore, unless young workers and their employers are committed to the acquisition of accredited qualifications, RPA delivery will be seriously undermined and intervention to support school to work transitions among the JWT group will remain negligible.

Key words: Young people, employment, training, jobs without training, school-to-work transitions.

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Introduction

Over the last 30 years, the position of young people in the labour market in the UK has radically altered. The demise of the traditional youth labour market, the shift away from the majority of school leavers entering employment at the end of compulsory education, and the creation of government supported training programmes to address youth unemployment is extensively documented (Ashton et al, 1990; Bynner and Roberts, 1991; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Mizen, 2004). In recent years, delayed labour market entry has primarily been driven by education policy which has encouraged increasing proportions of young people to participate in post-16 education and training (Maguire, 2010). Despite these trends, the UK has a larger than average proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), in comparison with other OECD countries, more young people in the labour force and more young workers with low level qualifications (OECD, 2008). In order to ensure that more young people remain in learning and training, legislation will be implemented in England to raise the participation age (RPA) among young people to 17 from 2013 and to 18 from 2015 (Spielhofer et al, 2007). This will extend the potential for greater numbers to enhance their qualification attainment, while either remaining in full-time education or through work based learning and it will seek to remove significant numbers of young people from the NEET statistics, albeit in a changing policy and economic context with changes in funding for post-16 study through the ending of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and an overall increase in unemployment particularly among young people.

In recent years, very little policy attention has been given to young people who move into the labour market outside of accredited training programmes and who are classified to be in 'jobs without training' (JWT). The label of 'JWT' warrants definition in order to quantify the size of the population of the group. Furthermore, the level of understanding about the composition, needs and motivations of the group is limited. The demand from the labour market for young workers generally and young people in JWT, in particular, as well as the level of training and development that is available for them within the workplace, is ill-defined. This paper will map the challenges facing the implementation of the RPA by drawing on the findings from three recent complementary research studies, which highlight a diversity of experiences of young people in JWT and question the validity of the term 'JWT' as a definition of some young people's position within the labour market.

The Youth Labour Market

The 2008 Education and Skills Act confirmed a policy commitment to ensuring that all young people remain in some form of post-16 accredited education or training. This has since been endorsed by the Coalition Government in its White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching' (DfE, 2010). The Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) agenda feeds into debates about the extent to which young people have increasingly protracted transitions into adulthood (Bradley, 2005; Brooks, 2009), and about the position of young people in the labour market. The RPA will seek to engage all groups of young people in learning, including those who have chosen to move into the labour market without accessing accredited training (i.e. in 'jobs without training' [JWT]) and those who are NEET. Over the ten years to 2010, prior to the significant rise in unemployment resulting from the economic downturn, the proportion of 16-17 year olds NEET had fallen from 6.8 per cent in 1999 to 5.1 per cent in 2009, although the proportion of 18-year old NEETs had risen from 10.4 per cent to 16.9 per cent over the same period. Since 1999, the proportion of 16-18 year olds in employment without receiving recognised education or training has fallen from 15.1 per cent to 8.3 per cent in 2010, although this figure still equates to just over 160,000 young people (DfE, 2011). Analysis from the Youth Cohort Study (YCS) and the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LYPSE) also show that social class is a strong determinant of a young person's post-16 trajectory, with lower-socio-economic groups having a far greater propensity to choose vocational routes into work (DfE, 2010a). A combination of poor employability skills and not having the vocational skills which are relevant in the local labour market can also prove a real barrier to entering and staying in work, especially for young people with no clear work history (BIS, 2010).

There is a dearth of recent research exploring the structure and functioning of the youth labour market and the attitudes and motivations of employers to recruit school leavers into jobs with or without training. In contrast, during the 1970s and the 1980s, when the majority of school leavers entered the labour market at the end of statutory schooling, there was considerable academic debate about young people's position in the labour market and the existence of a distinct 'youth labour market' (Ashton et al, 1982; Ashton and Maguire, 1988; Bynner, 1990; Roberts and Parsell, 1992; Raffe, 1988; Furlong, 1992). Government intervention in work-based learning for young people centres round apprenticeship delivery. While the government's intention is to expand the number of apprenticeship places available and to widen access (DfE, 2010a; BIS, 2010), competition for places is intense; there are high entry requirements into some occupational areas and many apprenticeship places are offered to young people who are already in employment, so limiting new job opportunities for labour market entrants (Anderson et al, 2009; Steedman, 2010).

The challenge for the RPA will be to meet the learning and training needs of young people in employment, while at the same time responding to and meeting the labour and skill needs of their employers. Crucially, it will be important to establish the value attached by both young workers and their employers to acquiring additional training and qualifications. Keep and James (2010) argue that more and better education provision is considered by policy-makers to be the only way forward for those at the lower end of the labour market, despite a growing body of evidence which suggests that the wage returns to some lower level NVQs is limited (Dickerson and Vignoles 2007; Jenkins et al, 2007, McIntosh and Garrett 2009). There are also findings suggesting that, within low paid employment, the role of prior education and training and qualifications in terms of accessing employment is weak (Spilsbury and Lane, 2000; Newton et al, 2005; Bates et al 2008; Keep and James, 2010).

Defining the 'Jobs without Training' (JWT) group

The jobs without training (JWT) group in England, comprises young people aged 16-18 who are in full-time work and not in receipt of accredited training. There are currently two working definitions of the JWT group. The Customer Information System (CCIS), which is utilised by Connexions Services to collate information about all young people aged 13-19, defines young people who are in full-time work and not in receipt of training which reaches the standard of an NVQ level 2 (or above) qualification as the JWT group. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the Youth Cohort Survey (YCS) data define a young person as being in JWT if they have not participated in accredited training in the last four weeks. Therefore, depending on the definition used, there are substantial variations in the estimated size of the population. Using LFS and YCS data, Department for Education (DfE) statistics show that, in 2009, 17.3 per cent of all 16-18 year olds were in the JWT group (DfE, 2010b). Unlike the NEET group, young people in JWT have not been a priority area of work for Connexions Services and therefore have not been subject to regular tracking, thereby making the acquisition of accurate and reliable information using CCIS data problematic (Maguire, 2010).

Research evidence

Drawing on evidence from three recent studies on the JWT group (Maguire et al, 2008, Spielhofer et al, 2009 and Maguire et al, 2010), it is possible to dispel the notion that young people in the JWT group are 'all the same', that is that they are concentrated in jobs which offer no training and low pay and that young people in the group have few qualifications, low aspirations and limited opportunities for career progression. These findings mirror a growing body of research evidence which has identified that young people in the NEET category are similarly not a homogeneous group;

rather, it comprises individuals from a range of backgrounds with a range of experiences (Maguire, 2007; Spielhofer et al, 2009; Audit Commission, 2010; Gracey and Kelly, 2010).

An examination of existing literature also suggested that young people in JWT would have very similar characteristics to some young people in the NEET group - i.e. low academic achievers with poor school records in terms of attendance and school completion at the end of Year 11, together with negative attitudes towards learning (Middleton et al, 2003, and Anderson et al, 2006).

Evidence from two qualitative studies of the JWT group and one which was part of the RPA sub-regional trial in Greater Manchester (Maguire et al, 2010), provide an insight into the difficulties that exist in both defining the JWT population and in understanding the characteristics of the group. These studies explored the characteristics of young people in JWT and the barriers to their participation in learning. The ESRC qualitative research comprised a study of young people, employers and parents in the two contrasting local labour markets of Tees Valley and Warwickshire. A total of 36 in-depth interviews were carried out with young people. The majority of interviews were conducted face-to-face during summer 2007. For the RPA sub-regional trial, in-depth interviews were carried out in 2010, within three local authority areas in the north west of England, with 19 young people in JWT and 17 employers. In addition, a telephone survey of 44 young people in the JWT group was completed by local Connexions staff.

This evidence is further complemented by a mixed method research study commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) (Spielhofer et al, 2009). The research combined an analysis of Youth Cohort Survey (YCS) data to provide quantitative data of the characteristics of young people who move in and out of JWT, together with a qualitative study involving interviews with 40 young people in JWT. The analysis was based on young people who were NEET or in JWT in sweep 1 of cohorts 11 and 12 of the YCS. This included a total of 1,878 young people who were identified in the YCS data as being in JWT when they were surveyed in Spring 2002 and 2004, having completed Year 11 the previous summer. Young people's responses in subsequent sweeps (2 to 4) of the YCS enabled the analysis to explore their future activity and therefore the extent to which they moved out of the cohort of young people who were in JWT. Latent class analysis was used to identify sub-groups within the group of young people who were in JWT.

In all three studies, securing samples of young people (and employers) was problematic. In Tees Valley and Warwickshire, a total of 950 telephone calls were made to young people to secure a sample of 36 in-depth interviews. Difficulties in securing a sample were due to: problems in establishing contact with young people (27% of the non-participant sample); a lack of willingness among some young people to take part in the research (25% of the sample); and inaccuracies in the

data available from Connexions Services about the target group (14% of sample). While in Warwickshire there was an even split between the proportions of male and female participants in the sample, two thirds of the Tees Valley sample were female. As the respondents were young people who were willing to participate in the study and fulfilled the criteria of 'being in the JWT group', they could not be regarded as being statistically representative of young people as a whole. Most of the respondents were in their first year beyond statutory schooling and therefore their experiences of school, teachers and learning were very recent.

Despite young people in the JWT group in the North West having been subject to more rigorous follow-up in recent years, due to the introduction of a pilot policy initiative which had sought to identify the group and engage them in accredited training, problems did arise in the recruitment of both young people and employers to take part in the research. The main issue was establishing initial contact with the target young people, so that approximately 150 telephone calls were made to secure 19 interviews. However, a relatively small number of those targeted (20) refused to take part in the study once contact had been made. Young people were difficult to contact because calls and messages were unanswered, parents were unclear about their location and whereabouts, and there were sudden variations in young people's working/social patterns. The sample of in-depth interviews with young people consisted of 14 females and four males. At the time of interview, they were 18/19 years of age and two years beyond the statutory school leaving age.

Transition from school to work

The majority of young people in all three qualitative samples had completed Year 11 and had taken and passed GCSEs. The range of attainment at GCSE varied enormously from a broad range of subjects at A-C grades at GCSE, to one GCSE pass at Grade E.

*'Yes, I got two A*s, two As, five Bs and one C ... Well I did do them (A Levels). I started them first and I dropped out of college but it wasn't so much that I didn't enjoy it, it was more that I didn't fit into college ... I didn't like going to college very much, I didn't settle ... I didn't have a job or anything, so I was just looking around for jobs and I got into the apprenticeship by wanting to have a job. So, I went and I seen an advertisement in a hairdressers for a job but I didn't know that it was an apprenticeship at the time. I learnt that after I'd already started'.*

North West Study: Interviewee 12/ Female

A small number of respondents had also undertaken vocational courses, such as NVQ programmes in engineering and hairdressing, whilst still at school. Pre-16 vocational courses were completed by young people with low/no GCSE attainment levels. Perceptions about school ranged from 'good' to 'alright' to 'hating it'; while almost all felt that they could have done better in terms of their examination results.

Two years on from leaving school, many young people in the study of young people in JWT in the North West (Maguire et al, 2010) wished that they had worked harder and applied themselves to a much greater extent, while still at school. They felt that working for a living had made them more mature and had enabled them to develop a greater respect and regard for learning and training. Most young people, even including respondents with high GCSE scores (5+ A-C GCSEs), did not regard their academic achievements as being high. Among average achievers (5 A- D GCSEs), many referred to their 'practical' abilities and were less confident about their academic attainment levels. Young people's apparent lack of confidence in their academic abilities, often coupled with their discomfort in a school environment, undoubtedly contributed to their rejection of the post-16 full-time learning route. Despite the higher than expected levels of academic attainment within the sample, the lack of confidence among young people about their academic and learning abilities was a widespread and consistent finding.

'I should have done better, but I started messing about within school. I shouldn't really have done it but ... I could have done better. I didn't really like my lessons but I could have done better in, like maths or something.' (Achieved five GCSEs A-C grades, including maths)

North West Study: Interviewee 18/Male

Given the recruitment problems which have already been outlined, the qualitative samples comprised young people who were willing to take part in the research and fulfilled the criteria of 'being in the JWT group' and were therefore not statistically representative of the group as a whole. Two respondents had moved into post-16 education for a period of approximately four months before dropping out, while the remainder of the sample had left school at the end of Year 11. The majority of young people still lived at home with their parents, with the exception of two young people, one of whom lived in the Midlands with her boyfriend. At the time of interview, one young person was pregnant and two respondents had each had a baby since leaving school.

Awareness of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and post-16 full-time learning options was high. The vast majority of young people in the qualitative samples had intended to leave school at the end of Year 11 to find work or an apprenticeship. Their reasons for doing so were: a strong desire to find a job; to have the 'best of both worlds' by finding employment which would enable them to work and train at the same time; to earn money; and to achieve independence. While most young people were indifferent towards post-16 full-time learning when they had left school, most recognised the importance of finding a job which offered some training. In the majority of cases, their parents were supportive of their decision to leave school at 16, although a small number stated

that, while their parents had wanted them to 'stay on', they had 'gone along' with their decision to leave full-time learning.

Young people were asked about the sources of advice and guidance, which they had received at school. Advice from schools had focused on providing young people with their options with regard to staying in full-time learning. Most of them could recall receiving information from Connexions staff and the feedback was generally positive. They had been provided with information about full-time learning and training options and had been supported with their applications for both.

In terms of looking for employment, young people were largely left to their own devices, and relied on support from family or friends. 'Word of mouth' recommendation by family members and friends and accessing employment in a family-run business were the mechanisms through which most young people found jobs in the labour market. Examples included young people working for a family member while still at school and moving into full-time employment at the end of Year 11, or finding a job through a family connection with a local firm. A small proportion of the sample had progressed from a part-time job into full-time employment either before or shortly after leaving full-time education. These are crucial findings, as they demonstrate that young people's ability to access the labour market were heavily reliant upon their background and the established links that family and friends had with the labour market.

'It was through word of mouth, really, one of my friends, like knew someone who worked as a manager of a hairdresser's and she asked me if I wanted to do it - if so, to come down for an interview.'

North West Study: Interviewee 1/Female

Some young people had sought advice and guidance on CV preparation from Connexions advisers and had subsequently sent their completed CVs to local companies or visited firms to enquire about vacancies. It is notable that, while Connexions offices appear to have been active in placing a number of young people into apprenticeships via referrals to a number of training providers, they did not have a 'hands on' role in supporting young people's movement into employment which did not offer formally accredited training. Furthermore, some young people had applied for apprenticeship places in, for example, construction and engineering and, having failed selection tests, they decided to move directly into a job in the hope of being offered 'on the job' training in a related area.

Training activity

A significant finding was the extent and range of training that was provided for young people who were classified as 'in JWT', and the importance and value that was attached to training activity by both young people and their employers. Training activity fell into three distinct categories: induction and Health and Safety; in-house training; and externally accredited training.

Induction and Health and Safety training offered basic training and constituted a minimum of two hours to a maximum of two days' entitlement, which entailed some on-the-job, as well as off-the-job training, as in watching videos and attending oral presentations. Within the retail sector, the use of training manuals, which enabled young people to progress their training activity alongside their practical on-the-job work experience, was in evidence across all retailers within the sample. The completion of training manuals brought with it bonuses and/or pay increases (which were usually quite small), as well as the possibility of promotion. Respondents also recognised that they would use their training record to gain employment with other retail companies, thus illustrating that the training they received was transferable. There was no evidence to suggest that young people or their employers felt that their training was 'second rate' to that which was offered within government supported training provision or within full-time vocational learning.

In the North West study, a small number of young people described how they had secured 'an apprenticeship' in hairdressing and construction, although they had not been in receipt of either accredited on- or off-the job training courses. This calls into question the validity of their apprenticeship offer or 'informal apprenticeship'. Moreover, as they were in receipt of a 'training wage' of between £80-£100 for working 37 hours or more each week, this falls well below the minimum wage entitlement for a young person who is not completing a formal apprenticeship. The extent to which young people are being recruited into informal apprenticeship arrangements, which lock them into low pay and little or no accredited training, warrants further research.

'It was £80, and then because I started my second year, it went up to £90, and then it's just gone up. Well, it's not just ... last year it went up to £95.'

North West Study: Interviewee 13/Female

Typologies of young people in JWT

Drawing on evidence from both qualitative and quantitative data on the JWT group (Maguire et al, 2008, Spielhofer et al, 2009), similar typologies were developed to help explain the motivations of young people entering JWT. From the qualitative study of young people in Tees Valley and

Warwickshire, three broad categories were identified: 'Taking a year out'; 'Making a career'; and 'Doing odd jobs' (Maguire et al, 2008).

The segmentation analysis of the YCS (Spielhofer et al, 2009) identified three categories of young people in JWT using the statistical technique of latent class analysis. Latent class analysis is a statistical method that searches for underlying types of individuals (known as latent classes) in a data-set, such that the proportion of individuals within each type, and the probabilities of different responses within each type, serve to explain the relationships that exist between variables within the data. The latent class model is estimated using a maximum likelihood approach that directly searches for the parameters that define the response patterns of the latent classes. Once the latent classes have been defined, it is possible to calculate the probability of any individual belonging to any of the defined latent classes. This approach contrasts with classical cluster analysis, which attempts to break individuals into groups initially and then looks at the overall response patterns of individuals within each cluster.

The YCS is a large, nationally representative survey designed to follow cohorts of young people from when they reach the compulsory school leaving age (at 16) up until they reach the age of 20. Analysis of the YCS using latent class analysis identified the following segments of young people, characterised by their post-16 trajectories, as well as their attainment at GCSE, attitudes towards school, and personal characteristics (including gender, parental employment and learning difficulties or disabilities):

- Young people who were only temporarily in a JWT (and were likely to move into education or training), who constituted 17 per cent of the JWT group.
- Young people sustained in a JWT – these constituted 48 per cent of the whole cohort in JWT one year after completing Year 11.
- Young people at risk of becoming NEET – these made up 35 per cent of the JWT group.

The analysis showed that those young people categorised as being in a JWT but at risk of becoming NEET, were most likely to have had negative experiences at school, achieved well below average at GCSE, and were least likely to feel optimistic about the future. More specifically:

- They were more likely to be male (59%).
- Around half (52%) felt that their post-16 choices had worked out well.
- Only 21% said that they had never truanted, while 29% described their experience of school as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

- 7% of them had been excluded permanently, while 35% had been excluded for a fixed term.
- 37% had attained below Level 1¹, while only 4% had achieved Level 2² by the end of Year 11.
- Less than three quarters (72%) were optimistic about the future, and almost a quarter (23%) thought that making plans for the future is a waste of time.
- They were the most likely group to have parents employed in semi-routine and routine occupations.

Case study 1: Young person in a JWT at risk of being NEET in the future

Kevin³ was 17 and had always done well at school until his father died just before he started Year 11. After that, he had a lot of problems at school, *'I didn't want to go, but I used to make myself go'*. He received help from a counsellor and managed to achieve *'three C-grade GCSEs and a few Ds'*. After leaving school, he has had *'a hard time'* and had no permanent residence: *'I've lived at my mate's, then my mum's, then she kicked me out, then my nan's, then my mate's, then my auntie's, then she kicked me out, then somewhere else, and now I'm back to my auntie's'*. He received Jobseeker's Allowance for around five months and then signed up with a recruitment agency, which managed to get him various short-term jobs, including warehousing and factory jobs. He had no fixed hours of work, but said that he usually worked about ten hours per week, at a rate of £6.50 per hour. Kevin said he would consider doing an apprenticeship, but said that he was more likely just to try and find a more permanent job.

Those young people in the sample who were found to be sustained in a JWT contrasted with the 'at risk' group in many striking ways. In particular, the large majority of the 'sustained' group were happy with their post-16 choices. Most of them had achieved at Level 1, they were generally optimistic about the future and the majority were open to participating in further learning. More specifically:

- They were more likely to be male (60%).
- 92% felt that their post-16 choices had worked out well.
- Only 17% said that they had not completed a post-16 qualification that they had started.
- 76% said their experience of school in Years 10 and 11 was either 'good' or 'very good', while 63% said they had never truanted.
- 71% had attained Level 1 and 20% Level 2 at the end of Year 11.
- 83% said they would consider engaging in education or training in future.
- 93% felt optimistic about the future.
- They were more likely to have both parents in employment and less likely to have both parents unemployed in comparison with those 'at risk' of becoming NEET.

¹ At least five GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to G

² At least five GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C

³ Pseudonyms used in all case studies.

Case study 2: Young person sustained in a JWT

Markus⁴ was 16 and left school with seven GCSEs, although only one was above grade D. He also achieved an NVQ Level 1 in Motor Vehicle Maintenance as part of a college course he did while still at school. He subsequently got a place at the same college to continue his training to become a fully qualified mechanic, which would have lasted three years. However, *'I got chucked out by my mum for being naughty and moved in with my dad'* who lived some distance from the college. So, he looked for a job instead and eventually found one with a furniture retailer: *'I do a bit of everything, mainly dispatch - wrap the furniture up and unload the vans'*. His job was full-time, and he earned £180 per week. He still wanted to work as a mechanic and would have considered completing an apprenticeship. However, he thought he would probably still be working for his current employer in one or even two years' time *'because I'm earning good money. If I did an apprenticeship, I'd only be on, like, 100 quid a week'*.

Finally, those categorised as being only temporarily in a JWT were most likely to have dropped out of a post-16 education or training course. However, they were very likely to re-engage in learning and were most likely to have done well at school, although a higher proportion than those 'sustained' in a JWT had truanted while at school. In particular:

- They were slightly more likely to be female (53%).
- Around (54%) half felt that their post-16 choices had worked out well and only 57% felt they had received enough support when deciding what to do post-16.
- 96% had started a post-16 qualification which they had not completed.
- They were unlikely to have been excluded (90% had not been), but were more likely to have truanted than those sustained in a JWT – only 42% said they had never done so.
- All had achieved at least Level 1 and 60% had attained Level 2 at the end of Year 11.
- 93% felt optimistic about the future.
- They were the least likely of the three groups to have parents who were unemployed and most likely to have both parents in employment.

Case study 3: Young person who was in JWT as a stop gap before re-engaging in education or training

Jennifer was 17 and went into the sixth-form to study A-levels after her GCSEs, having achieved nine GCSEs at grades A*-C. She said that she had not considered any other options since her school had *'just assumed everyone with the grades would stay on'*. However, she had not liked *'the atmosphere in the sixth-form'* and not enjoyed the subjects she was studying. She had, therefore, left after a few months and started working in a clothes shop, while considering what course to start the following September. She had really enjoyed her experience of working and it had made her realise that she wanted a career in retail. Jennifer had subsequently enrolled on a BTEC National Diploma in Business Studies, which she hoped would help her to become an area manager in the future.

The qualitative component of the study undertaken by Spielhofer et al confirmed the validity of these three categories and provided further insights into the reasons why young people are likely to follow particular trajectories, the barriers they faced and possible strategies to engage them in learning (Spielhofer et al, 2009). These are summarised in Table 1 below.

| Segment | Barriers | Strategies |
|--|--|--|
| Temporarily in a JWT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some low level truanting and exclusion pre-16 suggests some dissatisfaction with formal education • Do not feel they were supported to consider all post-16 options available to them • Are motivated to engage in further learning but can lack direction or be undecided | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better pre-16 guidance and support • Support when dropping out of post-16 learning before taking a JWT could help re-engage them sooner • Need unbiased advice to explore a range of learning options and locations, including apprenticeships |
| Sustained in a JWT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contented with their jobs • Often ignored pre-16 guidance or changed mind after leaving school • Chose JWT sometimes because of lack of apprenticeship placement opportunities • Financial incentive is key reason for working • Often do not see benefits of achieving qualifications • Lack awareness of work-based learning opportunities available to them and are not pro-active in seeking training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering a viable work-based route that offers clear future benefits and financial incentives • Encouraging more employers to offer apprenticeship placements • More opportunities for work-based learning below Level 2 |
| In a JWT and at risk of becoming NEET | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low attainment and negative experiences of school • Lack planning skills • Lack support and guidance while they are in a JWT to help them re-engage in learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering a viable work-based route that builds on their motivation to work • Remaining in contact when they start on a JWT after school so that they are contacted before they leave their job and become NEET |

The three broad JWT groupings identified by Spielhofer et al. mirror the categories identified by Maguire et al in the study of young people in the JWT group in Warwickshire and Tees Valley (Maguire et al, 2008).

- **Taking a year out /Taking some time out of education and training**

For some young people, being in employment was a transitory phase in their life. They had intended to move into full-time post-16 education and, for a number of reasons, had failed to do so or they had started a course, but dropped out as it had not suited them for various reasons. Being unable to find a course they wanted, applying too late, courses being fully subscribed, or course tutors being unwilling to accept their applications because GCSE results were lower than expected, were cited as reasons for not continuing in full-time education or training. The latter also included several young

people who had stayed on at school, but who discovered that they were more interested in practical or work-based learning. For some, finding a job and being in employment was essentially a 'gap year', before accessing the provision they wanted. In general, their employers were not aware that they regarded their job as a temporary measure until they returned to education or training.

- **Making a career/ Sustained in a JWT**

For a substantial proportion of young people, leaving school, and finding a job which offered training and financial independence, had been a positive move. In the majority of cases, young people had intended to move into work at the end of Year 11, although included within this group were some who had started college courses and dropped out. They were clustered within the retail, engineering and business administration sectors. Some young people had applied for apprenticeships and had failed to secure a place. These respondents did not perceive themselves as being 'disadvantaged' or 'insecure' in comparison with their counterparts who had remained in full-time learning. They spoke positively about the benefits of working, in particular the changes in self-image they derived from being away from the classroom and in an environment where their skills and abilities were being utilised, valued and extended. In turn, their employers and parents did not regard them as 'marginal workers' or 'failures', but as young recruits who had the potential to build upon their skills and abilities within an applied training environment.

In addition, young people in the 'taking a year out'/'taking some time out of education and training' and 'making a career'/'sustained in a JWT' groups were much more likely to have received, or were in the process of receiving, further in-house training and were positive about it.

- **Doing odd jobs/At risk of becoming NEET**

Young people in this group fulfilled the stereotypical image of those who are classified as 'in JWT', having low levels of Year 11 attainment and turbulent trajectories before and since leaving school, including time spent at school or college, on training programmes, doing different jobs and being unemployed. While the value they attached to education and training was high, their personal experiences had clouded their views about their own abilities to progress through this route. Therefore, having a job was more about 'earning money', which fulfilled their immediate needs. Work involved cleaning, re-cycling, sales work and catering (fast food), training was minimal and wage rates were generally lower than for the other two groups. Going back into education or training involved 'taking risks', not only in terms of the drop in income that would result from leaving work, but also in terms of the apprehension and insecurity felt about what this might involve.

Both sets of findings (Maguire et al, 2008, Spielhofer et al, 2009), identified similar typologies to explain the position of young people in the JWT group and clearly dispel the notion that it is homogeneous in composition. The evidence points to a group of young people who have been given an identical label, yet have contrasting experiences and expectations with regard to their position in the labour market and, more importantly, in terms of their hopes and aspirations. These are significant findings, since they provide a much more accurate understanding of the position of some groups of young people in the labour market and, more specifically, what the term 'JWT' really means.

Conclusions

In recent years, the decline in the number of job opportunities available to young people, together with education and training policy, which has largely focused on boosting post-16 participation rates in full-time learning, has led to a void in understanding about young workers who fall outside of apprenticeship training. The 'jobs without training' (JWT) group has become a 'catch all' phrase to define young people between the ages of 16 to 18 years, who are in work without accredited training. The research evidence on the JWT group, which is presented in this paper, suggests that its composition is diverse in terms of the motivations and aspirations of young people who enter the labour market at the age of 16 or 17, their commitment to employment, and their ability and willingness to access training. The typologies presented suggest that the group is segmented and the quantitative evidence (Spielhofer et al, 2009) indicates that nearly half of the JWT group in the YCS sample were in employment because they wanted to be and were 'sustained' in that position in the medium to long-term.

The implementation of the RPA provides an ideal opportunity to tackle the deficit in knowledge about the needs of young workers and their employers, in that from 2013 all 17-year olds and from 2015, all 18-year olds will be expected to participate in an extended period of education or training. While the original proposals were draconian in their approach by setting out plans to criminalise young people who failed to participate in any form of post-16 education and training (DfES, 2007), within the Coalition Government's current proposals, RPA implementation will lack any form of enforcement in the immediate future, thereby implying a voluntary commitment on the part of young people to participate (DfE, 2010). Therefore, unless young workers and their employers are committed to the acquisition of accredited qualifications, RPA delivery will be seriously undermined. This may reflect a realisation among politicians and policy makers that in a climate of reduced policy funding, implementing the original RPA proposals would be costly, both in terms of identifying and meeting the multiple post-16 learning and training needs and in ensuring that young people

participate in some form of post-16 learning. Also, with regard to the JWT group, given current concerns about escalating levels of youth unemployment, the impetus to address the learning and training needs of young people who are in work, but lack accredited training and qualifications, may be lost in the quest to find any form of employment for young people.

This would appear to be a missed opportunity in terms of:

a) identifying how young people who are motivated to enter the labour market at the age of 16 or 17 can best be supported. Greater involvement is needed in facilitating young people's entry into the labour market, as well as negotiating suitable post-16 learning opportunities;

b) determining labour market demand for young workers and the types of jobs that young people in JWT enter. A more active and responsible role in job placement, on the part of guidance services, would improve labour market intelligence and would help avoid some young people being exploited through the receipt of low wages and lack of training;

c) quantifying young people's and their employers training needs and achieving greater flexibility within the accessibility and delivery of education and training provision. Flexibility is essential in terms of what is delivered, where it is delivered and how it is delivered for successive cohorts of young people entering the labour market; and

d) determining the extent to which incentives, such as paying bonuses to young people and offering support towards the costs and delivery of training to employers are required to encourage their participation in post-16 education and training activity. Allied to this point is the need to establish whether labour market regulation is the only way forward to prevent some groups of young people from becoming locked into low paid and low skilled work.

Acknowledgement

The study of young people in jobs without training in Tees Valley and Warwickshire was funded by a grant awarded by the ESRC – Grant reference number: RES-000-22-1786.

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