

Businesses in the classroom: how corporate social responsibilities are being undertaken in schools in South Wales

Hannah Rose Blake

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School of Social Sciences
Cardiff University

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Abstract

There is a common view amongst businesses and within government that business involvement in schools can be regarded as a positive component to a pupil's school experience. In Wales, this view is reinforced by the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification and the impending implementation of a new school curriculum aimed at introducing new ways of learning into the classroom environment that will enhance young people's employability. Despite the role of businesses in schools being a relatively under-researched topic, there are claims that the undertaking of corporate socially responsible activities by businesses in schools is a win-win concept. This thesis takes a qualitative interpretive epistemology approach to understanding the increasing engagement of businesses in schools due to the growing emphasis on corporate social responsibility and interrogates some of the above claims through attempting to understand the justification provided by both businesses and schools for engaging with each other.

Looking at what businesses do, this research finds that activities and support provided by businesses to schools are extremely varied and rely largely on the capacity of the business. The findings from businesses suggest that, on the basis of this research, the most common form of engagement is performed by businesses in the form of 'life-skills' sessions and workshops. Businesses stated the development of their educational programmes was a method used to ensure the sustainability of the business and that by undertaking this new form of employer engagement they found that their current employees appeared to be more motivated and happier in their jobs.

The research reveals that school experiences of, and attitudes towards, receiving engagement from businesses vary significantly, with those schools who benefit most from the engagement activities unsurprisingly providing a more positive view of their experience. Despite the promotion of careers and skills acquisition workshops by businesses, schools were more vocal about how the school gained through financial donations and the procurement of financial resources.

The findings suggest that the increasing role of businesses in schools may increase the inequalities in the education system by creating disadvantage between those pupils who engage with businesses compared to those who do not. This project provides a new piece of empirical research to the under-researched area of employer engagement in education and provide a more thorough understanding of how businesses undertake their CSR activities in schools and its benefits, but more importantly, the issues that can be raised from this phenomenon.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Tables and Figures	ix
Acronyms.....	x
Chapter One - Introduction	1
1.1 Chapter Summaries.....	9
Chapter Two - Literature Review	12
Introduction.....	12
2.1 An Historical Background.....	13
2.2 Defining Corporate Social Responsibility	15
2.3 Understanding the development of CSR initiatives.....	17
2.4 How do businesses undertake their corporate social responsibilities?.....	21
2.4.1 Environmental concerns.....	22
2.4.2 Financial and resource donations.....	23
2.4.3 Employer engagement as a form of CSR.....	24
2.5 The business case – advocates of CSR.....	29
2.5.1 Extrinsic values - Stakeholder Theory	30
2.5.2 Intrinsic values	33
2.5.3 Why do extrinsic and intrinsic values matter?	35
2.6 Criticisms of Corporate Social Responsibility	36
2.6.1 Businesses should stick to business.....	36
2.6.2 Businesses’ lack of appropriate skills	37
2.6.3 A lack of accountability.....	38
2.6.4 Simply a PR opportunity.....	40
2.6.5 A criticism of intrinsic factors	41
2.7 Business engagement in schools	42
2.7.1 Understanding the changing roles of businesses in schools	43
2.7.2 Advocates of school-business partnerships.....	45
2.7.3 Critics of business involvement in education	51
Chapter Three - Methodology and Research Design.....	57
Introduction.....	57
3.1 Research method, design and sample	57
3.1.1 A qualitative approach.....	58
3.1.2 Semi-structured interviews	59

3.1.3	Focus group.....	62
3.1.4	Participant and non-participant observations	64
3.1.5	Sample	66
3.2	Establishing contact and recruitment.....	67
3.2.1	Brokers and businesses	68
3.2.2	Schools.....	72
3.2.3	Pupil focus group	74
3.3	Research location	75
3.4	Conducting the interviews	76
3.4.1	Interview questions.....	76
3.4.2	Arranging interviews.....	78
3.4.3	Recording of interviews	79
3.4.4	Justification for a qualitative approach.....	80
3.5	Ethical considerations	81
3.5.1	Informed consent	82
3.5.2	Anonymity	82
3.6	Analysis	83
3.6.1	Transcription.....	84
3.6.2	Coding.....	85
	Discussion.....	86
Chapter Four	- What do businesses <i>do</i> with schools and why?.....	87
	Introduction	87
4.1	The rise of brokers in school-business engagement.....	88
4.2	How do businesses create engagement opportunities?	98
4.3	The changing landscape of corporate social responsibility in schools	99
4.3.1	Engaging Employees	103
4.4	Terms and Conditions – what do businesses look for in schools?	106
4.5	What engagement activities take place?.....	111
4.5.1	Careers and Skills Acquisition	112
4.5.2	Resources and finance	118
4.6	The business case for school engagement	124
4.6.1	‘Work-ready’ students	125
4.6.2	Suggested increase in image and reputation.....	128
4.6.3	Improved capacity to recruit.....	130
4.6.4	Increase in staff morale	133
4.7	Conclusion	135

Chapter Five - Employer Engagement in Education – The School’s Experience	138
Introduction.....	138
5.1 How are schools’ relationships with businesses formed?	138
5.1.1 Types of engagement.....	139
5.1.2 Proactive or reactive approaches	140
5.2 What do schools state as the rationale for engagement with businesses?	144
5.2.1 Policy Requirements.....	144
5.2.2 Finance and resources.....	148
5.2.3 Serendipitous Encounters.....	150
5.3 In what ways does the engagement take place?	151
5.3.1 Careers and skills acquisition.....	152
5.3.2 Curriculum	160
5.3.3 Resources and finance.....	165
5.3.4 Community engagement.....	171
5.4 What are the benefits of employer engagement to the schools?.....	173
5.4.1 Classroom experience.....	174
5.4.2 Work readiness.....	175
5.4.3 Procurement of resources	176
5.4.4 Pupil confidence and engagement	177
5.5 Conclusion.....	179
Chapter Six - What issues does employer engagement raise for schools and the education system?	183
Introduction.....	183
6.1 Lack of engagement	184
6.1.1 Locality.....	184
6.1.2 Engagement in private schools.....	194
6.2 Inequalities between schools.....	196
6.3 Parental and pupil power	201
6.4 Pupil engagement	203
6.5 Impact of engagement.....	204
6.6 Welsh Baccalaureate	207
6.7 Difficulties with partnerships	209
6.8 The purpose of education - who really benefits?.....	211
6.8.1 Are businesses in it for themselves?	215
6.8.2 Are there really any educational benefits to engagement with businesses?	218

6.9 Conclusion	222
Chapter Seven - Conclusion	224
Introduction	224
7.1 Summary of key findings.....	225
7.2 Repositioning of the literature	234
7.3 Implications, recommendations and limitations.....	237
7.3.1 Implications.....	237
7.3.2 Recommendations.....	239
7.3.3 Limitations and future research	244
References.....	247
Interview Schedule	263
Information Sheets.....	265

Tables and Figures

<i>Figure 1 – Carroll’s ‘Pyramid of CSR’</i>	20
<i>Figure 2 – Personal impact of volunteering data</i>	34
<i>Figure 3 - Diagram showing operating process of the partnerships division of the national brokers (Wales)</i>	91
<i>Figure 4 – Mapping of Cardiff used by the Cardiff local authority broker to distinguish between Northern Arc and Southern Arc schools in the Local Authority</i>	108
<i>Figure 5 – Frequency of engagement for businesses in schools</i>	112
<i>Figure 6 – A diagram created from research data to show forms of engagement between schools and businesses from frequent to infrequent</i>	152
<i>Figure 7 - How schools and businesses prioritise the purpose of education</i>	213
<i>Figure 8 - How schools and businesses prioritise different forms of engagement</i>	213
<i>Figure 9 – Perceived benefits of engagement as seen by schools and businesses</i>	219
<i>Figure 10 - Summary of problems associated with employer engagement in education</i>	222
<i>Table 1 - List of businesses and brokers who participated in the research and the interviewee's job role</i>	72
<i>Table 2 - List of participating schools, interviewee and type of school</i>	74
<i>Table 3 - Table showing use of brokers by school and their approach to engaging with businesses</i>	141

Acronyms

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DCF	Digital Competency Framework
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
MNE	Multi-National Enterprise
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
WJEC	Welsh Joint Education Committee

Chapter One - Introduction

Corporate social responsibility developed as a concept around the mid twentieth century as part of businesses' corporate agendas and has subsequently grown into a term widely used in the private sector. In this research, the term corporate social responsibility will be explored in relation to the way that CSR policies are being increasingly undertaken by businesses in educational settings. This research has taken a qualitative approach and the experiences of businesses and schools has been explored through a myriad of methods, including interviews, focus group and observations. The narratives expressed throughout the fieldwork found a hectic and haphazard expression of CSR policies in schools and concluded that school engagement with businesses is perhaps not as simple or successful as has been previously suggested.

The idea of a company being socially responsible is not a new concept, with businesses having worked with local communities for centuries, engaging in philanthropic gestures to create healthy current and future workforces (Rahbek and Pedersen, 2015). Corporate social responsibility policies relate to the self-regulation of businesses that helps ensure a business is socially accountable to itself, its stakeholders and the public (Griseri and Seppala, 2010). For many medium and large businesses corporate social responsibility has become an integral part of their published annual reporting as a means of demonstrating the charitable and socially responsible activities that they have taken part in each year. More recently there has been a change in the ways in which businesses are developing their CSR policies to not only demonstrate to stakeholders that the business is socially responsible, but also to meet the demands of the

stakeholders who are increasingly requiring businesses to be responsible in their actions and adapt to changing societal needs.

The responsibilities of a for-profit organisation can be divided into four dimensions, legal, ethical, economic and philanthropic (Carroll, 1991). The corporate social responsibility that businesses are increasingly wanting to focus on is their philanthropic ability. Historically, philanthropic gestures from businesses would take the guise of financial donations or the building of a school for example, however, more recently businesses have started to develop formal programmes in order to achieve their corporate social responsibilities. These programmes vary from business to business and can often depend on both the sector of the organisation and what it perceives to be an important topic, and can therefore be in the form of links with charities, environmental initiatives, and is becoming more popular in the emergence of educational programmes (Manteaw, 2008). The development of these CSR programmes has allowed for businesses to create a more structured and sustainable way of being socially responsible, enabling the annual reporting of 'social responsiveness' to become more straightforward, this is particularly the case with educational programmes (Hoffman *et al.*, 2014).

The role that businesses play in education is typically displayed through voluntary assistance for student help to read schemes, careers fairs, work experience, or through the provision of day-to-day services (Muir, 2012). A form of long-standing school-business partnership is work experience. Work experience has played an important part of secondary education since 1972 when the school leaving age

was raised to 16 (Stanley *et al*, 2014). The aim of making work experience accessible for all pupils was that it would enable greater proportions of young people to experience the workplace environment whilst still in education. The changing role of business engagement with schools has seen new forms of engagement opportunities arise for schools and pupils. This has been seen in the development of educational programmes and the prioritisation of school engagement for the purpose of corporate social responsibility, something which can be understood as a strategic move made by businesses. The educational CSR programmes delivered by businesses in schools are often aligned to the aims and composition of the business, however engagement in the form of sponsorships, resource and financial donations, work and life skills also frequently take place (Stanley *et al.*, 2014). These educational programmes frequently involve active participation from businesses in the form of employer engagement or volunteering. Indeed, the delivery of the educational programmes is reliant on the increase in, and the willingness of, employees to volunteer.

Despite literature arguing that businesses have been present in schools for decades (Stanley *et al.* 2014, Muir, 2012), the undertaking of social responsibilities in the form of employer engagement is a continuously growing phenomenon. One consequence of the increase in businesses wishing to engage with schools has been the development of educational brokers whose aim it is to create strategic and sustainable partnerships between schools and businesses. The most recognised broker of this kind is Business Class, a branch of Business in the Community, an outreach programme aimed at promoting responsible business. Business Class, like Business in the Community, have offices in

England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales and work with schools and businesses throughout the UK to promote collaboration. Due to this research being situated in Wales, specifically South Wales and Cardiff, it is important to acknowledge and be aware of the brokers that are operating in this part of the United Kingdom. Business Class has been running in Wales since 2014, and more recently, in 2016, a new brokerage system established by Cardiff City Council saw the formation of the Cardiff Commitment, a broker run exclusively for schools in Cardiff.

The reason for the increased interest by businesses in schools is down to a multitude of explanations. The business, and political, argument for employer engagement in schools and the development and implementation of school programmes is that the businesses are providing young people with the necessary skills needed for them to successfully enter the labour market once they leave school. This focus around careers and skills provision has arisen from an awareness by businesses of the perceived lack of work-ready skills young people are possessing when they are attending interviews or applying for jobs (UKCES, 2012). The aim, therefore, is that with businesses engaging with schools to act as career advisors and provide skills acquisition lessons, these young people will develop the knowledge and skills that businesses say young people are lacking.

In addition to the perceived benefits for students, the strategic move into education engagement programmes has resulted in a variety of different benefits for the businesses. One of the benefits directly linked to the undertaking of skills

workshops in schools is the belief by businesses that it will be beneficial to themselves in the long term by supposedly making future recruitment easier. The hope is that the young people will possess the skills to be able to apply for a job and attend an interview, something that businesses suggest is currently a problem. Further to this, businesses also perceive benefits such as an increase in company reputation and a happier, more productive workforce.

The increase in business engagement in schools cannot be solely attributed to businesses and corporate social responsibility initiatives. There has also been a governmental push for the presence of businesses within schools, particularly in the area of careers and skills guidance, with policies from the Department for Education (England) and the Department for Education and Skills (Wales) both providing recommendations for school/business interaction. This has subsequently led to the evolution of school curricula which recommends that all pupils must go through several forms of engagement with businesses throughout their school lives. The new reliance on businesses to provide school assistance in the form of careers advice follows governmental funding cuts which once ensured the access to careers advisors in all schools. An example of this was seen in England in 2010 when the Government cut £200m of annual funding to Connexions career advice service, shifting the authority of careers guidance to schools to provide their own in-house career guidance (Moote and Archer, 2018). As such, schools are being pushed to engage with businesses to provide their students with the opportunities to gain an insight into career options.

The emergence of more frequent interactions between schools and businesses is perhaps a result of government literature and research which suggests that significant benefits can be gained by schools, teachers and pupils from engaging with businesses. These benefits range from: a perceived increased attainment and concentration for pupils as business employees allegedly bring a new, more exciting atmosphere to the classroom; better confidence; and a better knowledge of the world of work through the delivery of careers talks and fairs and skills acquisition workshops (Percy and Mann, 2014).

In Wales there has been a particular focus on business involvement in schools through the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification. The Welsh Baccalaureate in its current format was introduced as a qualification in 2015 and is available in four levels, National/Foundation (Key Stage 4), Foundation (Post 16), National (Post 16) and Advanced (WJEC, 2016). The National/Foundation phase is the level most applicable when considering compulsory education up to and including pupils aged 16 years old. The National/Foundation level of the qualification runs alongside GCSE subjects and is aimed at preparing 14-16 year olds for their future 'by developing skills, attributes and behaviours valued by post-16 educators and potential employers' (WJEC, 2016). The Skills Challenge Certificate is the main aspect of the qualification and comprises of four features; an individual project, a global citizenship challenge, a community challenge and an enterprise and employability challenge. It is the enterprise and employability challenge where most business engagement takes place, where business intervention takes the form of providing business related advice to students who are required to develop and create a new business idea and then put a business

model together. It is this qualification which sees schools in Wales increasingly willing to engage with businesses and is part of what makes this piece of research unique.

Not only can the Welsh Baccalaureate be associated with the increased focus on business engagement in schools in Wales but so can the new Curriculum for Wales due to be rolled out in 2022. The new curriculum follows recommendations made by Professor Graham Donaldson's report (2015), *Successful Futures*, and data which suggest that achievement levels of pupils in Wales could be improved (Education Wales, 2019). The new curriculum focuses on six areas of learning and the development of wider skills which are more aligned to the world that we live in today. The aim is that through the new curriculum, which will be taught to all students by 2026, will prepare young people for modern life, and enable them to thrive in the world of work.

This thesis explores the types of educational programmes offered by businesses and the explanations behind their development. The research also engages with schools to discover their experiences of working with businesses and why they choose to engage. Whilst existing research on corporate social responsibility is vast, the same cannot be said when discussed in accordance with educational involvement. Much of the literature and research relating to business engagement in education relates to the privatisation of education and academies, something which is not specifically relevant for this piece of research based in Wales. Furthermore, there is a significant amount of grey literature and a lack of empirical qualitative data which sees both businesses and schools interviewed

about their experiences. Additionally, much of the literature does not attempt to consider possible issues that could be associated with such partnerships. The gap in research comes from a lack of combined research amongst both businesses with CSR programmes and schools with whom the businesses engage.

This thesis aims to tackle this gap in the current literature and research through the following research questions:

RQ1 – What do business actually *do* with schools to discharge their CSR?

RQ2 – Why do businesses engage with schools and what benefits does it bring them?

RQ3 – What are the schools' experiences of this engagement?

RQ4 – What issues does this raise for schools and the education system?

This piece of research will address some of these issues in the gaps in the literature by undertaking a study on how education-business relationships are played out in one geographical area. This research focusses on understanding the ways in which businesses are undertaking their corporate social responsibilities in schools in South Wales by exploring the viewpoints of both businesses and schools to discover the experiences and development of the relationships between businesses and schools. The research will be based on interviews with a range of businesses from small and medium-sized enterprises to multinational corporations and public and state primary and secondary schools in South Wales. By undertaking one piece of research that incorporates both schools and businesses the aim is to create a comparative understanding of how

each side views the reasons or needs for business engagement in schools, as well as their experience of engaging with one another.

1.1 Chapter Summaries

Chapter Two sees an introduction to the literature relevant for this research project and is divided into four sections. The first section explores the term corporate social responsibility and assesses the definitions behind the term before outlining the concept of CSR and providing an overview of its historical development. The second section of the chapter explores what is understood by employer engagement before continuing to the third section which assesses the arguments for and against businesses being socially responsible. This is followed by a review of the literature on corporate social responsibility in terms of its link with education and the arguments for and against schools developing relationships with businesses, with the suggestion that businesses are increasingly using schools as an integral way to achieve their CSR targets.

Chapter Three is a reflexive account of the research methodology used for this study to address the research questions. The chapter details the decision to undertake a qualitative study and provides an outline of the research procedure detailing sampling, data collection, access, coding and analysis. This chapter also highlights and considers the ethical dimensions of the research including consent and anonymisation.

Chapters Four and Five are two of the main analysis chapters. Chapter Four details the findings from the interviews with brokers and businesses and starts by

providing an explanation of how businesses forge partnerships with schools, with an insight into the role of brokers in this new phenomenon. This chapter will then acknowledge and explore the changing roles businesses are playing in schools and sees businesses move from the provision of services to the provider of more curriculum-based assistance. The fourth chapter then highlights the forms of engagement that were undertaken by the businesses in this research before exploring the business case for the increasing engagement with schools. Chapter Five then follows, which assesses the findings from the schools and school children who participated in the research. Like chapter four, chapter five begins by explaining how the schools engaged with businesses. This is then followed by an understanding of the rationalisation given by schools as to why they believed there was a need to engage with businesses in the way that they did. Following this, the chapter details the forms of engagement that schools experienced with businesses whilst extracting key policy and curriculum related explanations. Chapter five concludes by discussing the perceived benefits of an employer presence in education.

Chapter Six explores the issues that have emerged through the research project. By conducting a new piece of research that explores businesses and schools side by side it has allowed for a comparison of what the businesses believe they are achieving and how the schools regard their experience of engaging with businesses. As such, this has resulted in the emergence of issues raised by the schools, and deeper issues that have only emerged following the analysis of the interview data. This chapter will discuss concerns for the role of employer engagement in schools going forward.

The seventh and final chapter of this study concludes by considering the role of businesses in education and the steps that need to be considered as a consequence of the increasing role of businesses in schools. The chapter also reflects on the views and experiences of all participants in the research and acknowledges a need for better communication between schools and businesses particularly in light of the Welsh Baccalaureate and the new Curriculum for Wales. The chapter concludes by identifying limitations to the research and highlighting opportunities for future research.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

Introduction

This literature chapter is divided into four sections. Firstly, the chapter undertakes an historical enquiry into the background of philanthropy in businesses, exploring the emergence of 'giving' amongst industrialists in the 18th Century, before explaining the development of this form of 'corporate giving' into something which is now known as 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR). The section will uncover debates over the definition of the term CSR, before exploring what CSR looks like in the 21st Century, with a focus on employer engagement as a form of corporate social responsibility.

The second and third sections of the chapter explore the critiques of corporate social responsibility. Section two identifies the perspectives of advocates of CSR and why there is a belief that this social action is now a necessity in the business community. The third section assesses the critical perspectives associated with businesses undertaking CSR activities, where it is argued that the role of a business is to concentrate on making profit rather than 'doing good'. The fourth and final section of the chapter will explore the literature identified with the role of businesses undertaking CSR activities in an educational environment. Here, it becomes clear that current literature on the topic of employer engagement in education is approached from a simple binary, as something which is either good or bad. In this section both the perspectives of advocates and critics will be included to demonstrate an understanding of this new and increasingly popular phenomenon. Together, these sections pave the way for the research questions.

2.1 An Historical Background

Despite the term 'corporate social responsibility' being 'mostly a product of the 20th century' (Carroll, 2008, p.19), for centuries early business leaders demonstrated how philanthropy can be used to better local communities. Since the mid to late 1800s philanthropic gestures have played an important part in how businesses are run, with businessmen such as Henry Ford (1863-1947), Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) and Joseph Rowntree (1836-1925) donating substantial proportions of their wealth to needy causes such as medical research, churches, and the building of public libraries (Rahbek and Pedersen, 2015), something that today might be considered as being socially responsible. Gradually, over a number of years, what was once a relatively simple but unprecedented belief became an important part in many businesses' ethos.

It was not until the 1930s and 1940s that literature began discussing 'what were the specific social responsibilities of companies' (Latapí Agudelo *et al.*, 2019). In fact, this growing attitude towards being socially responsible was demonstrated in 1946 by Fortune Magazine who published a poll on social responsibilities where 93.3% of businesses involved said businesses should recognise their responsibilities (Bowen, 1953). Indeed, it was only in the 1950s and 60s that literature began discussing these new corporate social responsibilities in terms of the practical implications that they hold for businesses. This led to Bowen (1953) setting forth the designing of principles which would define CSR. Bowen defined these social responsibilities as

‘the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society’ (Bowen 1953, p. 6).

It is this definition set out by Bowen (1953) which leads to Carroll (1999) describing him as the ‘Father of Corporate Social Responsibility’.

The growth of interest in CSR escalated in the 1960s as a consequence of the growing awareness of society and social movements at the time (Latapí Agudelo *et al.*, 2019). Concerns over rapid labour growth, pollution and human and labour rights alongside increasing war protests were at the forefront of societal concerns. This period of CSR growth is referred to by Murphy (1978) as the *Awareness Era* whereby there was a recognition of the responsibility held by businesses and the need for an increased interest in community affairs. The important social, economic and political changes taking place were described as representing ‘a pressure for businessmen to re-examine their role in society and their social responsibility’ (Latapí Agudelo *et al.*, 2019, p.4). It was with this increasing pressure that Davis (1960) began to suggest that engaging in corporate social responsibilities could lead to economic returns for businesses.

The 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill in the Pacific Ocean and an energy crisis in the 1970s sparked environmental concerns across the world. This period brought a heightened awareness by businesses of the ‘negative impacts of production [which] became harder and harder to ignore’ (Rahbek and Pedersen, 2015, p. 14). This period, known by Murphy (1978) as the *Issue Era*, resulted in an increase in government regulations regarding health and safety as a means to be seen to act socially responsible to the society issues at the time. Indeed, this period also saw the emergence of new businesses renowned in modern times for

their socially responsible attitudes, for example, The Body Shop and Ben & Jerry's ice cream (Latapí Agudelo *et al.*, 2019)

During the 1980s awareness of corporate social responsibilities steadily grew. In the 1990s the development of international bodies and agreements such as the European Environment Agency (1990) and the Kyoto Protocol (1997) saw international efforts for tackling environmental issues and climate change. Carroll (2015) suggests that the process of globalisation and the increase in the number of businesses expanding across the globe increased reputational risk due to increased visibility and demands.

According to Murphy (1978) from the 1990s to the modern-day can be described as the *responsiveness era*. This era of CSR has seen businesses take formal action regarding management and board directors in order to establish CSR policies and reporting strategies. In more recent times businesses have started to publish their CSR reports as a way to demonstrate their social responsiveness. With this gradual change in the understanding of business responsibilities over time, it has seen a growth in 'the case for innovation and creativity, rather than indulgence and sameness within philanthropic action' (Harrow, 2018, p.121), and as such this has led to the new forms of corporate social responsibilities that modern day businesses are now undertaking.

2.2 Defining Corporate Social Responsibility

The concept of corporate social responsibility is hotly contested, resulting in a term which is not easily defined, and often resulting in competing understandings

of what is meant by, and what constitutes as, CSR. The suggestion that 'there is no strong consensus on a definition for CSR' (McWilliams *et al.*, 2006, p.8) is present in much of the literature. The many attempts to define 'corporate social responsibility' has led to the term being considered a 'slippery phrase' resulting in the concept being 'accused of vagueness, ambiguity and lack of clarity' (Rahbek and Pedersen, 2015, p.12). As such, the lack of an agreed upon definition for the term hampers the debate on the topic (van Marrewijk, 2003) and weakens its agenda (Jones, 2011), 'making theoretical development and measurement difficult' (McWilliams *et al.*, 2006, p.1). Perhaps a significant reason as to why there is difficulty in defining this term is because of the variety of actions that are associated with it, in that 'socially responsible corporate behaviours may mean different things in different places to different people at different times' (Campbell, 2007, p.950).

In light of this, 'corporate social responsibility' has come to be used as an umbrella term to refer to a set of policies and practices within a business which 'seek to reconcile the pursuit of profit with the well-being of the environment and people impacted by business' (Smith, 2017, p.119). For the sake of this research van Marrewijk's (2003, p.102) definition stating CSR as voluntary company activities which demonstrate 'the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in business operations' will be referred to. With a topic whose definitions are conflicting, van Marrewijk (2003) provides a simple and clear understanding as to what is understood as corporate social responsibility.

2.3 Understanding the development of CSR initiatives

The development of CSR initiatives in an organisation are the result of a 'level-by-level process along which internal capabilities gradually get applied to societal issues' (Maon *et al.*, 2010, p.21). The term 'corporate social responsibility', suggested to have initially emerged as a result of businesses becoming 'increasingly eager to present themselves as good corporate citizens', has become a significant part of business policies in the twenty-first century due to an increasing pressure put on businesses by stakeholders concerned with environmental issues (Grisei and Seppala, 2010). Maon *et al.* (2010) suggest however that the development of CSR strategies is much more complex than the desire by businesses to become better citizens. In fact, it relies on businesses to internalise CSR policies into the organisation and adopt a long-term strategy in which the organisation must be willing to make the move from being economically and profit-driven to being value-laden (Ibid, 2010, p.21).

It is argued by Maon *et al.* (2010) that the term corporate social responsibility has seen a gradual development from negative duty-based morality to positive duty-based morality. By this, it is meant that there has been a strategic move by organisations who had once adopted CSR policies and initiatives to prevent harmful corporate actions, to the development of CSR policies that are based on institutional, organisational and individual levels and can be understood as 'willing active commitment' (Maon *et al.*, 2010, p.21). This change has seen a development from the belief that 'businesses that are the most socially responsible will be the most successful' (Jones, 2011, p.XIV) into a drive by businesses to become socially responsible for the sake of their community. In the

long term this has resulted in an increase in businesses creating formal corporate social responsibility policies to appeal to the demand of their stakeholders.

Maon *et al.* (2010) explain how an organisation's development of CSR strategies can be categorised into three main phases; cultural reluctance, cultural grasp and cultural embedment. The phase of cultural reluctance sees the idea of corporate social responsibility as a constraint which goes against the fiscal requirements of a corporation. Organisations are dismissive of any form of responsibility towards their social or environmental impact and contest any idea that they should be, as such, the organisation's culture is unable to support any form of CSR. The cultural grasp phase sees the progression towards forms of corporate social responsibilities. In this phase, an increased awareness and acknowledgement of CSR concepts emerge, and businesses become concerned with the social and environmental effects of their operationalisation (Moan, 2010). Despite the increased awareness, organisations in this phase are still significantly focused on the financial interests of the company, and CSR initiatives are yet to be formally incorporated into business policies, and any that do take place are concerned with risk management.

The cultural embedment phase sees the full undertaking by an organisation of CSR practices. Maon *et al.* (2010, p.32) explain how organisations in this phase

'extend their CSR-related knowhow, deepen their key stakeholders' relationships and mobilize their internal resources to address CSR related demands from their environment proactively.'

This development in attitudes from businesses sees any corporate social responsibility initiatives move from being short term and results-based, to long term and value-driven. This phase also demonstrates the extent to which

stakeholders are influential in an organisational decision-making process. As such, in the cultural embedment phase, CSR policies and practices are understood as a long-term, sustainable action, implemented to facilitate innovation in the organisation (Maon, 2010). It is important to understand however that cultural embedment is dictated and shaped by organisational culture. If organisations lack social responsiveness and do not have the culture needed to create an embedded CSR strategy it will go no further than the cultural grasp phase.

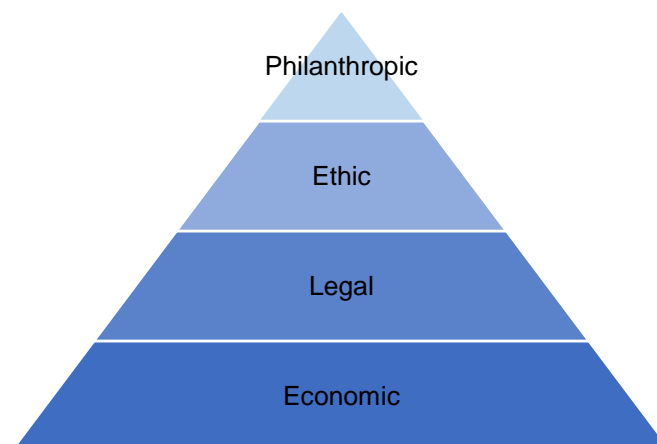
The implementation of CSR practices through cultural embedment began to be integrated into business models in the 1960s (Griseri and Seppala, 2010). Consequently, there has been the mobilisation of internal resources within organisations to address the demand for CSR policies. This has resulted in the development of new management teams, reporting, policies, CSR programmes and initiatives with dedicated funds to be spent on improving communities and the environment. CSR has now become such an integral part of many company's ethos that many larger enterprises are required to provide detailed annual corporate social responsibility reporting demonstrating how they are ensuring sustainability and participating in community involvement (Rahbek and Pedersen, 2015).

One of the key components in CSR literature is Carroll's (1991) 'pyramid of CSR' (Figure 1). In his pyramid, Carroll (1991) suggests that there are four key obligations that encompass the responsibility a business has towards society; economic (be profitable), legal (obey the law), ethical (be ethical) and

philanthropic (be a good global corporate citizen). These responsibilities are not in any way mutually exclusive, and can often be found to conflict with each, for example, a decision made for ethical reasons, such as a business no longer using sweatshops, can be against the economic interests of the business (Griseri and Seppala, 2010).

With the increasing implementation of CSR strategies in businesses, there has been a move away from the focus that a business's main obligation is economic. Added to this, there is a mutual expectation that all businesses will oblige by their legal and ethical obligations as part of their daily operations. As such, this leaves the philanthropic obligation of a business, often enacted as a result of social expectations from the sphere of the financial, political and social networks all of whom put pressure of businesses to become socially responsible.

Figure 1 – Carroll's 'Pyramid of CSR'



Source: (Carroll, 1991, p.42)

As the understanding and undertaking of CSR policies have developed, so have the reasons for undertaking CSR and the areas in which CSR activities are

undertaken. The strategic move that businesses have made from the cultural reluctance and cultural grasp stages to embracing cultural embedment has seen the CSR debate become 'shaped by trends and fashions as well as more fundamental changes of the political, social, and economic spheres of life' (Rahbek and Pedersen, 2015, p.5). It is for this reason that the development of CSR can be described as a dynamic and continuous process (Maon, 2010).

2.4 How do businesses undertake their corporate social responsibilities?

Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) suggest that the discussion on CSR has made a move from arguing *why* businesses should be involved in philanthropic and community activities to the more practical discussion of *how* businesses can be involved. This argument by Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) suggests that there is now an acceptance and understanding by the business community that adopting CSR practices makes good business sense, and therefore the focus needs to move to the ways in which businesses can put this into practice. The types of CSR activities can vary widely, much like its definition, depending on who is involved (both givers and receivers).

The heterogeneity of businesses who undertake CSR activities, regardless of whether or not they have specific policies, means that the suitability and feasibility of activities can vary from business to business. The differing size of businesses, staff numbers and resources of the business all determine the extent to which businesses undertake socially responsible actions. Indeed, the inclination within a business, whether it be the CEO or the CSR manager, often determines the

extent to which a business will participate in this new form of social responsibility. Gössling and Vocht (2007, p.371) argue that 'different companies can have different views on what their role in society should be and that this influences their involvement in social issues', this consequently leads to the varying forms of CSR that are seen amongst businesses.

2.4.1 Environmental concerns

The term corporate social responsibility covers a wide range of practices, however for most businesses the act of being socially responsible can be understood in relation to environmental and philanthropic concerns. Environmental policies centre around the environmental impact of business, product production and emission reduction. In recent decades concerns over climate change and sustainability have grown exponentially and businesses have seen an increase in the pressure to act on these concerns (Griseri and Seppala, 2010). As such businesses, particularly those in the manufacturing industry, are being forced to assess not only the way in which they manufacture products but also the emissions that go into the transportation and shipping of such items (Griseri and Seppala, 2010). Furthermore, there has been an increase in awareness in recent years of the problems that single-use plastic is causing the ecosystem and the oceans. Indeed, this has seen companies such as LUSH cosmetics producing products which are not only not tested on animals but are also sold without packaging or in recyclable plastic. This fight on single-use plastic has become so prevalent that in 2018 over 40 major companies signed a pact to cut plastic pollution over the next seven years (Shukman, 2018). Through their corporate social responsibilities businesses are participating in these forms

of responsible practice not only to be 'environmental concerned citizens' as a means to satisfy their stakeholders.

2.4.2 Financial and resource donations

Financial giving as a form of corporate social responsibility is one of the biggest, and perhaps easiest, forms of corporate philanthropy for all businesses, from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to multinational enterprises (MNEs), because of the minimal time and resources it takes away from daily business (Griseri and Seppala, 2010). A 2014 report from 2,500 interviews across 34 economies found that 68% of businesses donated money to a community cause/charity in a twelve-month period (Grant Thornton, 2014). In Canada and North America financial donations took place in over 90% of all businesses interviewed, this was followed by 69% of European businesses. Donations by firms can range from small scale involvement, for example, donating to a local sports club or school, to donations to nationwide or international causes and charities.

As well as being possibly the easiest form of corporate social responsibility, the enticement for businesses to undertake this form of corporate social responsibility is borne from the indirect impact on the businesses' bottom line through a tax break. This raises issues over the philanthropic nature of the financial/resource donations for the purpose of CSR policies. For example, in the UK, the government allows for businesses to deduct the value of their charitable donations from their end of year profit, therefore reducing the amount of tax the company is required to pay (UK Government, 2019a). Financial donations are not

the only way that businesses can claim tax reliefs, for the donation of used equipment such as office furniture allows for capital allowance to be claimed through a company tax return. This begins to demonstrate how there appears to be some form of benefit that is borne from CSR activities of most kinds.

Philanthropic corporate social responsibilities go beyond environmental concerns and financial donations, and instead concern and involve actively engaging with society to make it a better place for everyone to live and work. Whilst financial donations by businesses do frequently take place, philanthropic practices also include employee volunteering and community give-back programmes (Griseri and Seppala, 2010). It is this form of philanthropic social responsibility that is of importance to this new piece of research as it relates directly to CSR practices that are undertaken in schools, this will be further developed later in this chapter.

2.4.3 Employer engagement as a form of CSR

As the previous literature and discussion has demonstrated, how businesses undertake their corporate social responsibilities is continuously changing. More recently employer engagement, or volunteering programmes, have emerged as an increasingly popular form of corporate social responsibility amongst businesses, with 65% of businesses participating in community or charitable activities¹, only 3% behind financial donations (Grant Thornton, 2014). Employer engagement can be defined as a 'range of activities, activities and approaches which are best conceptualised as a continuum' (Kettle, 2013, p.4). Indeed, in modern society, the activities associated with employer engagement are vast and

¹ Based on 2,500 interviews in 2014 (Grant Thornton, 2014).

can vary from ensuring the mental and physical wellbeing of staff to active engagement in social programmes.

Employee volunteering

Possibly the most ubiquitous form of employer engagement is employee volunteering. Employee volunteering is defined by Rodell *et al.* (2016, p. 57) as 'employed individuals giving time during a planned activity for an external non-profit or charitable group or organisation'. This definition by Rodell *et al.* (2016) emphasises the importance of volunteering in terms of giving time as opposed to financial donations, a distinction made to highlight volunteering as active involvement.

In recent times employee volunteering has emerged as a 'popular way for businesses to engage with their surrounding communities' (Griseri and Seppala, 2010, p.380), whilst also serving as an opportunity to develop contacts in the local community which in turn can enhance the company's reputation. This activity is something that is carried out worldwide, demonstrating how business support of employee volunteering as part of corporate social responsibility initiatives is seen as a worthwhile investment (Rodell *et al.*, 2016).

Why engage in this way?

Through employer engagement activities businesses are able to contribute to the idea of a 'shared value', where economic value is created 'in a way that *also* creates value for society by addressing its needs and challenges' (Porter and Kramer, 2011, p.4). As such, businesses adopting an employer engagement

approach to their CSR duties are allocating 'corporate resources to some activity that the company views as socially desirable' (Griseri and Seppala, 2010, p.15). This significant change from simple financial donations means that businesses are required to dedicate considerable effort in the form of time and volunteer resources to their CSR engagement activities.

The dedication of volunteering hours by businesses suggests that there is an increasing awareness of the role that businesses can play in society and the benefits that can be gained from it. Volunteering schemes in businesses are often dependent on the nature of the company and the interests of its employees (Griseri and Seppala (2010). Whilst Griseri and Seppala (2010, p.382) assert that

'little research has been carried out on why some employers are more interested than others in supporting employee volunteering',

they explain how existing evidence shows that larger businesses are more likely to be engaged with employee volunteering than small and medium-sized enterprises, this is perhaps due to the time and resources that are at the businesses' disposal.

Types of employer engagement

Employee volunteering can be described as both episodic and continuous, depending on the nature of its intensity. Both types of employee volunteering take place in CSR practices, with larger businesses likely to undertake both episodic and continuous forms. Episodic volunteering relates to employee volunteering that takes place on an ad-hoc basis. Engagement or activities that are classed as episodic generally take form as a 'day of service' or community challenge, where employees will typically spend a day out of the office to litter pick, paint a

community room or garden in the community (Rodell *et al*, 2016). Where episodic volunteering schemes are in place with businesses there also tends to coincide forms of community give back programmes such as the donation of educational resources, building construction, sponsorships, vaccinations and hygiene education (Griseri and Seppala, 2010). These programmes are generally developed and delivered by larger companies, but this is not to say that smaller and medium-sized businesses do not also engage in this way. Community programmes such as these are developed in a way that mirrors the forms of philanthropy during the late 1800s and early 1900s in regards of the 'giving' being directed towards improving social welfare and economic development (Griseri and Seppala, 2010). This form of volunteering limits the extent of disruption to an organisation and can often be carried out with little organisation and few resources.

In comparison, continuous employee volunteering is more closely associated with volunteering schemes that are undertaken on a more frequent basis, generally performed in a more structured format. This form of volunteering is suggested to result in a greater return on business investment as opposed to concentrating volunteer effort on a single specific event once a year (Cycyota *et al.*, 2016). Griseri and Seppala (2010, p.382) propose six different ways that CSR volunteering can be carried out in a continuous nature by companies; unpaid work, team challenges, development assignment, secondment, mentoring and board membership. These forms of employee volunteering require a more organised approach and will typically find employees spending more time away from their place of work.

Can it be classed as voluntary or volunteering?

The distinction of unpaid work as its own category (Griseri and Seppala, 2010) suggests that all other forms of employer engagement, such as a team challenge or mentoring are undertaken during paid employment. This is an interesting point as it questions the term 'volunteering'. As its name suggests, employee volunteering relies heavily on the willingness of employees to volunteer. For some businesses, volunteering schemes have been designed so that employees have the choice to volunteer or not. Other businesses, however, have employee volunteering schemes where it is mandatory for all employees to undertake some form of volunteering activity every year.

For those businesses where volunteering is voluntary, a range of factors affect an individual's decision to participate; *individual factors*, *workplace characteristics*, and *company-level factors* (Rodell *et al*, 2010, p.62). Individual factors influencing workplace volunteering can depend on demographics such as age and gender, personality traits and motives; for example, the chance of a pay rise or job promotion. With regards to workplace characteristics, factors such as the type of job an employee holds are regarded as a significant indicator as to whether an employee will choose to volunteer, as this is largely dependent on their work schedule, i.e. their work hours and flexibility (Rodell *et al*, 2010). In contrast, company-level factors are often associated with formal volunteering, which is encouraged, if not made mandatory, by a business – this again questions the 'voluntary' aspect of the volunteering.

2.5 The business case – advocates of CSR

An earlier look at the historical background of corporate social responsibility gave an understanding of the emergence of CSR activities amongst businesses. However, with the development of CSR policies and practices and the increased awareness of societal issues in the twenty-first century, there are ever emerging reasons for businesses to be adopting CSR initiatives. Despite businesses varying in the extent of their corporate social responsibilities, whether they are episodic or continuous, short term or long term, the business case for these socially responsible actions, and the measurable effects of CSR can be attributed to any type of organisation.

The business case, or benefits, for businesses adopting CSR initiatives can be understood in terms of extrinsic and intrinsic values and motivations (Graafland and van de Ven, 2006). It is these motivations which often dictate the ways in which businesses undertake their social responsibilities. For businesses who undertake their social responsibilities through extrinsic values the motivation is argued to be strategic, with the belief that CSR 'contributes to the financial success of the company in the long run' (Graafland and van de Ven, 2006, p.111). Comparatively, intrinsic values relate to the moral motive that there is a moral duty of businesses to society – it is this value that is argued to induce stronger social involvement by an organisation (Graafland and van de Ven, 2006). This section will explore how both extrinsic and intrinsic values relating to CSR influence the drive of different organisations to become socially responsible.

2.5.1 Extrinsic values - Stakeholder Theory

The implementation of CSR policies for extrinsic purposes sees businesses adopting the view that being socially responsible will financially benefit the company. The view held by businesses undertaking CSR for this reason is that, by appeasing stakeholders' beliefs that a business should be contributing to societal issues, it will contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of the company. A key argument in the literature relating to extrinsic CSR is found in Freeman's (1994) stakeholder theory.

There are several arguments as to why businesses are increasingly adopting CSR policies, with perhaps the most widely suggested extrinsic reason being to manage and adhere to stakeholder expectations. Stakeholders can be understood as being individuals or groups who have a vested interest in an organisation and can range from employees to customers and the government. More importantly, they are described as having the ability to affect, or be affected by corporate activity (Griseri and Seppala, 2010; Rahbek and Pedersen, 2015). Clarkson (1995) categorised stakeholders into primary and secondary groups. Primary groups are described as individuals without whose continued participation the corporation cannot survive, as such there is a high level of dependence between the two groups. Primary stakeholders in this context typically comprise of employees, customers, shareholders, suppliers, communities and for the purpose of this research, schools. Secondary groups, on the other hand, can be described as those who are affected by the corporation

but who are not engaged in any transaction. An example of a typical secondary stakeholder would be a protester (Clarkson, 1995).

This categorisation of stakeholders relates closely to Freeman's (1994) argument that by satisfying those individuals for whom businesses are dependent on for continued survival, businesses gain a 'tactical advantage in the marketplace' (Detomasi, 2007, p.810). McWilliams *et al.* (2006, p.3) support this by asserting that stakeholder theory

'implies that it can be beneficial for the firm to engage in certain CSR activities that non-financial stakeholders perceive to be important, because, absent this, these groups might withdraw their support from the firm'.

Scherer and Palazzo (2007, p.1096) however, suggest that as a result of stakeholder influence, 'companies are expected to become socially committed even in areas not directly related to their business'. This in itself raises issues around the extent of knowledge employers and employees have in providing support to local communities. This approach to CSR activity suggests that the reasoning is based on the economic theory of a firm and that this is in fact a poor moral grounding for the businesses to be socially responsible.

Drivers, such as stakeholder theory, are not surprisingly a key reason behind socially responsible actions. Whilst some businesses create CSR policies because it is deemed 'good business practice', Rahbek and Pedersen (2015, p.11) suggest that institutional drivers often leads to businesses 'adopting CSR either because they are pressured to do so [or] because they want to imitate other successful organisations'. By creating an institutional business framework by which CSR is adopted, the aim is to satisfy those individuals who have a vested

interest in the business. By adhering to the notion of stakeholder theory when creating CSR initiatives, it not only results in content stakeholders but it has 'a positive effect on reputation, through which companies can gain more customers, employees and other benefits' (Griseri and Seppala, 2010, p.13).

By aiming to satisfy stakeholders with socially responsible actions, businesses are said to be creating a strategic component in 'attracting and retaining employees' (Cycyota *et al.*, 2016, 321). Gössling and Vocht (2007, p.363) explain how

'there is a trend in business that in particular young and highly trained employees want a sense of purpose in their work...they want to know that their work has a positive effect on the world'.

In 2008, research commissioned by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) on over 4000 graduates found that 88% of millennials stated that they would choose an employer based on how closely the businesses' CSR policies reflected their own values. Consequently, this means that young job seekers are wanting to align their own socially responsible beliefs, whether it is environmental, animal welfare or education, to the CSR policies that are held by a future employee. A repeat of this research in 2011 found that just over 50% of graduates still based their decisions on CSR initiatives (PwC, 2011). Despite there being over a 30% downturn in this attitude, something which PwC suggest can be attributed to an economic decline around the world, there is still evidence to suggest that CSR policies are important to many young individuals when searching for employment. The idea that young recruits are becoming more aware of the CSR policies and values of a company is further reinforced by Jones (2011) who states that individuals entering the workforce today would work for a lower salary at a firm

with CSR values, rather than for a higher salary at a competing firm that was less socially responsible.

2.5.2 Intrinsic values

In comparison to extrinsic values which focus on the performance and image of a company, intrinsic values relate to the inner dynamics of a business and how CSR policies can influence the current workforce. Literature suggests that CSR policies, particularly those relating to employee volunteering, can help boost staff morale and motivation and can provide opportunities for skills development (Rodell *et al.*, 2015). A survey of 546 employee volunteers in the UK by Corporate Citizenship (2010, p.3) found that employees benefited from

‘improved morale and increased motivation, job satisfaction and commitment to the company, all as a direct result of the opportunities afforded by their volunteering experience’.

The data from this research shows that 53.7% of employee volunteers agreed and 19.7% strongly agreed that their volunteering activities had increased their motivation at work. In addition to this, nearly 70% of employees either agreed to strongly agreed that their job satisfaction had increased, as well as 66% of employee volunteers stating that it had increased their commitment to their company (Corporate Citizenship, 2010, p.35) (Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Personal impact of volunteering data

The personal impact of volunteering						
The volunteering activity improved / increased my...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable	Response Count
Self confidence	1.7%	10.3%	66.3%	12.9%	8.7%	526
Sense of well being / happiness	0.6%	4.2%	56.7%	34.6%	4.0%	526
Understanding of and empathy with others	0.8%	2.9%	59.3%	35.4%	1.7%	526
Awareness of wider social issues	1.0%	3.0%	48.3%	45.4%	2.3%	526
Job satisfaction	2.1%	12.9%	50.7%	18.0%	16.3%	527
Pride in the company	1.1%	9.4%	50.4%	23.5%	15.6%	524
Commitment to the company	2.1%	16.0%	48.1%	17.9%	16.0%	526
Motivation	1.9%	13.2%	53.7%	19.7%	11.5%	523

Source: (Corporate Citizenship, 2010, p.35)

The research by Corporate Citizenship (2010) suggests a positive correlation between employee volunteering and increased motivation. However, a YouGov (2010) poll of over 1000 employers found that only 22% of public sector and 15% of private sector managers saw an increase in staff morale as being a main benefit from the outcome of engagement, and instead saw recruitment opportunities as being more important (YouGov, 2010, p.73). This is an interesting finding as it suggests a contrast in attitudes that whilst employees recognise the benefits they gain from their engagement and volunteering, the employers do not agree that the same benefits are important to the business. This demonstrates an incongruence between employee and employer in that it is perceived that once the businesses have attracted and recruited new employees, they had little concern over how CSR affects the current workforce.

2.5.3 Why do extrinsic and intrinsic values matter?

The comparison of extrinsic and intrinsic values attached to corporate social responsibility has shown how businesses develop different attitudes towards their socially responsible practices depending on how they perceive the benefits. By using stakeholder theory as a model for extrinsic values Freeman (1994) argues the importance of satisfying all individuals with a vested interest in the business in order to gain financially from their CSR activities. Alternatively, intrinsic values are closely associated with the internal fabrications of a company, focussing on employee satisfaction, motivation and wellbeing. Through the analysis of the intrinsic and extrinsic values of corporate social responsibility, it becomes more evident that there is a blurring of the lines particularly in the case of employee wellbeing and productivity. Both of these outcomes of CSR initiatives and activities can be understood as both intrinsic and extrinsic values as a happier, more motivated workforce will not only entice new talent to a company but it will also make an environment which improves the businesses' productivity.

The literature above has discussed both extrinsic and intrinsic values and what has emerged suggests that extrinsic values are held purely by the organisation or employers, in comparison to intrinsic values which can be linked to job satisfaction by the employees. This difference in motives between the employers and employees leads to question whether this can impact the extent and type of CSR activities within an organisation.

2.6 Criticisms of Corporate Social Responsibility

Within the literature on corporate social responsibility there are significant critical arguments and debates as to the need for a business to be socially responsible and the concern over the ethics behind these business decisions. As well as the forms of CSR activities varying, so do the arguments regarding the concerns over CSR. This section will assess the literature which criticises the undertaking of CSR initiatives and will seek to understand why corporate social responsibility causes a spectrum of attitudes towards it.

2.6.1 Businesses should stick to business

One of the original critics of corporate social responsibility was Levitt (1958) who wrote about '*The Dangers of Corporate Social Responsibility*' where he suggests that 'management's social responsibility has become more than a Philistine form of self-flattery practiced at an occasional community chest banquet'. Levitt (1958, p.42) argues that corporate social responsibility has developed to such an extent that it has resulted in the profit motive being compromised as 'it now shares the royal throne with a multitude of non-commercial motives'. This argument by Levitt (1958) sees CSR practiced for non-commercial motives as defeating the point of what a business is and as such, there is less of a focus by businesses on the need to make a profit.

Following the publication of Levitt's (1958) work, economist Milton Friedman published work which shared similar views to those of Levitt. Friedman (1962), an advocate of the free market economy, argued that businesses that adopt social responsibility are 'undermin[ing] the very foundations of our free society'

whereby the aim of a business should be 'to make as much money for their stockholders as possible' (1962, p. 133). Levitt (1958) and Friedman (1962) in their work opposing CSR also suggest that it is important that businesses do not perform roles that should be being carried out by the government, stating a 'government's job is not business, and business's job is not government' (Levitt, 1958, p.47). This view is further supported in a stronger sense by Henderson (2009, p.11) who proposes that 'the doctrine of CSR is wrong in what it says about the world' and 'putting it into effect would do harm'. Whilst admitting that businesses should act responsibly and this should be done in public, Henderson (2009) argues that businesses are already over-regulated and by taking part in CSR, profit making priorities have taken a back seat to CSR activities which bring higher costs and impede performance. This argument suggests that there should be clear lines drawn between the expectations and roles and responsibilities of the public and private sectors, ignoring the role of civil society in the process.

2.6.2 Businesses' lack of appropriate skills

The view that businesses should not be taking over the responsibilities of the government is shared by Davis (1973) and Griseri and Seppala (2010). Davis (1973) argues that business employees do not have the skills and perceptions to enable them to deal effectively with social issues. He states that 'if we are going to depend on someone to work with social problems, why chose a group which is so poorly qualified?' (Davis, 1973, p.318). While Griseri and Seppala (2010) counter this argument to suggest the businesses are resource fit and could have valuable resources to tackle social problems, they also suggest that

'businessmen' lack the appropriate social skills to be able to deal with 'highly disadvantaged clients' (2010, p.13).

A criticism borne from the view that businesses lack the necessary skills is also relatable to the argument that CSR policies designed to be socially responsible in fact lack strategy. According to Rangan *et al.* (2012, p.4) 'the fundamental problem with CSR practice is that companies usually don't have a CSR strategy, but rather numerous disparate CSR programs and initiatives'. Rangan *et al.* (2012, p.2) explain that instead of a strategic approach, businesses undertake ad hoc versions of CSR that have 'usually evolved through a variety of paths for a myriad of reasons'. Understandably, those businesses who have corporate community programmes which 'fit' the company and support a relevant cause are best received (Dawkins and Lewis, 2003).

2.6.3 A lack of accountability

Without a skill set deemed necessary to provide the social assistance expected from CSR activities, Davis (1973) and Griseri and Seppala (2010) further suggest that businesses and its employees lack accountability. Davis (1973, p.320) argues that it would 'be unwise to give businessmen responsibility for areas where they are not responsible'. By placing business employees in an environment where they are offering advice/workshops/activities in an area they are not trained in and then enabling them to walk away at the end of the session without any responsibility is considered by Griseri and Seppala (2010, p.13) as 'irresponsible practice'. This is even more important to consider in relation to CSR

in education where it is academic achievement that could be compromised as a result of ineffective and ill-advised employer engagement.

Furthermore, there is also a concern over the lack of impact measurement of CSR activities in terms of the impact of the business on a cause, rather than the impact on the business itself. Amongst any CSR actions, whether it is in the form of philanthropic donations, cash in kind or employee volunteering, they are often reported by businesses 'in terms of dollars or volunteer hours, but never in terms of impact' (Porter and Kramer, 2006, p.3). Research by Hoff (2002, p.72) on school-business partnerships found that of 488 businesses surveyed, 61% of respondents stated that they never gathered 'detailed, goal-orientated reports' from schools regarding impact and progress of the partnerships, with 58% receiving 'informal communications' only, a point that the businesses felt impeded the progress of the partnerships. Despite the lack of impact measurement, businesses who engage with CSR policies and activities still report high levels of satisfaction with their engagement (Hoff, 2002), something which is likely to be borne from altruistic feelings or perceived benefits to the company, rather than hard evidence and data. There is the argument however that impact measurement may not be a top priority for businesses as, if their engagement activities are providing the benefits that they require, the impact they have on a community or organisation may not be of high importance.

2.6.4 Simply a PR opportunity

Perhaps the most agreed upon criticism of corporate social responsibility is that CSR is often used as little more than a marketing opportunity. Bennett (1997, p.93) suggests that

‘from a marketing perspective, certain forms of giving are more advantageous to the donating company than others...which appeal to a broad cross-section of the community’.

Undertaking CSR initiatives for this purpose is viewed as a PR opportunity or marketing gimmick (Doane, 2005; Albus and Ro, 2017). Albus and Ro (2017) express that

‘many companies still consider CSR as merely a marketing gimmick to enhance their market presence through cosmetic, public relations stunts rather than as an aiding source for the community in which they operate’ (Albus and Ro, 2017, p.44).

This opinion is shared by Porter and Kramer (2006) who suggest that businesses have not responded with CSR policies that are strategic or operational, instead they can be regarded as cosmetic. As such, these cosmetic forms of social responsibility are regarded to be ‘nothing more than public relation campaigns to boost brand reputations’ (Rangan *et al.*, 2012, p.1). Research by Grant Thornton (2014) supports the argument that businesses are aware of the PR opportunities that are created from CSR activities. They found that despite ‘public attitudes/building brand’ coming fourth in the list of drivers towards becoming socially responsible, there was a 3% rise in its importance between 2011 and 2014.

Company promotion through CSR was often found to be enacted through the handing over of cheques, press releases, magazine advertising by the charity and newsletters (Bennett, 1997). Despite the use of CSR initiatives as a

marketing opportunity, Griseri and Seppala (2010) question whether the motives of a company's philanthropic gestures really matter so long as a worthy cause is still benefitting in the long term. Murthi *et al.* (2009) argue however that the intent behind CSR actions can limit the benefits of corporate volunteer programmes, particularly if the business case for volunteering is over-emphasised.

2.6.5 A criticism of intrinsic factors

With regards to employer engagement or volunteering as a form of CSR, there is much debate around whether the term 'volunteering' can be used in a genuine way. Volunteering is regarded as

'the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain' (Kearney, 2001/2007, p.6).

It is important to focus on the second part of the definition stating that volunteering is of free choice without financial gain. This is because when considering CSR in terms of employer engagement it is assumed that most of the volunteering activities will be taking place in company time, and therefore the employees will be in fact earning money whilst volunteering. This questions the extent to which businesses can consider their 'corporate responsibility' voluntary if employees are paid during the time that they are carrying out their corporate social responsibilities or if they have 'no or little free choice' (Haski-Leventhal *et al.*, 2009, p.152). Research by Low *et al.* (2007) found that 50% of its respondents who were employees in a company that had a corporate volunteer programme stated that they would be encouraged to volunteer and join the programme if they were allowed paid time off in which to participate. Rodell *et al.* (2016) explain how there has been much debate amongst scholars as to how employee volunteering

can be defined when there is no set answer as to whether it can be classed as 'volunteering'. Gray (1982, p.1) however, considers volunteering within an educational context to be 'any resource made available to the school system that the school system does not pay for', included in this are individuals who volunteer whilst being paid by their employer (Murphy *et al.*, 1998).

The previous sections to this literature review have sought to provide an understanding of the much-contested concept of 'corporate social responsibility'. By considering the many aspects of CSR, including the arguments for and against it, it now enables a discussion and review of the literature concerning how businesses are developing CSR policies and practices in which to disseminate in schools.

2.7 Business engagement in schools

Businesses have existed in schools in one form or another for decades. In today's society schools are provided with 'all sorts of day-to-day ancillary services' from private companies (Muir, 2012, p.4), such as IT support, grounds maintenance and catering services. In the past few decades, however, there has been an unprecedented transformation in relation to employer engagement in education, with most activities presenting themselves under the banner of corporate social responsibility (Manteaw, 2008). This has resulted in the private sector taking on a closer role with schools, a role that is often undertaken alongside their other CSR interests such as environmental concerns and charity partnerships. The increased interest in employer engagement and education as such has

transformed in many cases into a form of partnership, providing much more than their original purpose.

Consequently, the emergence of classroom-workplace relationships has become a foundation for political debate and policy intervention (Jones *et al.*, 2016).

Stanley *et al.* (2014, p.1) define employer engagement in education as

‘the process through which a young person engages with members of the economic community, under the auspices of their school, with the aim of influencing their educational achievement, engagement and/or progression out of education into ultimate employment’.

Through this definition the aim of a school-business ‘partnership’ is by and large enacted through work experience opportunities, support with life and career skills, help with career choices, and continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers. The businesses that are involved in this type of partnership with schools in the UK are varied and range from multinational enterprises (MNEs) to small-medium enterprises (SMEs), and with this, their level and type of involvement also varies. Research by Lee *et al.* (2019) on New Zealand industry-school partnerships found that interactions often varied with industry, with donations and visits more likely to occur with the construction industry as opposed to mentoring taking place more frequently with computing and education industries.

2.7.1 Understanding the changing roles of businesses in schools

The role of businesses in schools has changed significantly over time (Stanley *et al.*, 2014). McCafferty (2010, p.544) argues that ‘it is only in the 21st Century that the relationship between education and business...is both practically and ideologically, promoted and glorified’. Practical engagement by businesses in schools has reached a level where it is now being incorporated into formal

education policy to ensure that all school-aged children engage with businesses on a yearly basis (Department for Education, 2018a; Department for Education and Skills, 2019). This increase in business involvement in schools has also led to an increase in literature on employer engagement in education predominantly in the forms of grey literature based on government and think tank research.

Traditionally, aside from service provision, business engagement with schools has taken place through work experience opportunities. Once a statutory requirement, work experience has typically been understood as a way for young people to explore potential career pathways by providing them with hands-on experience in the workplace (Guile and Griffiths, 2001). Research has suggested that as well as individuals who take part in work experience with businesses being more likely to pursue post-16 education (Moote and Archer, 2019), students feel that the experience has had 'real value to their future progression' (Mann and Kashefpakdel, 2014, p.146). Having said this, Moote and Archer (2019, p.46) found that 'students often reported dissatisfaction with the work experience provided and complained that placements were often not well connected to their aspirations'. Following the move away from statutory work experience, Moote and Archer (2019) claim that the withdrawal of career services has led to a student led approach to gaining and undertaking work experience. Massey (2014, p.244) however argues that there are increasing claims by businesses that there are 'no suitable roles' for work experience placements and setting aside one to two weeks for placements throughout the year is no longer feasible. Consequently, Massey (2014) suggests that a broader approach in the form of mentoring, careers talks, mock interviews and challenges would be more appropriate. It is

this move towards new forms of engagement that are of interest to this research and is why work experience opportunities will not be further explored throughout the thesis.

It is this broader approach as suggested by Massey (2014) which has seen the change in CSR strategies over the last few years from informal forms of engagement in education to the development of structured educational programmes aimed at tackling a range of areas or issues. Stanley *et al.* (2014) suggest four primary objectives of employer engagement in education, these are: improving preparation for the world of work, addressing labour skills shortages, improving pupil engagement and enhancing social mobility. These areas can also be deemed to be considered as potential benefits of employer engagement and will be discussed further in the following section.

2.7.2 Advocates of school-business partnerships

The UK Commission for Employment Skills (UKCES) suggest that a school-business partnership can benefit pupils through increasing their social mobility, improving their academic performance and improving their employment prospects (UKCES, 2012). The report by UKCES (2012, p.14) also states that businesses found that, as a result of business engagement, school pupils appeared to be more 'switched on' and more willing to engage in activities, this is important to note particularly if the businesses are looking to these young people as potential future employees. These findings link back to Stanley *et al.*'s (2014) four objectives and will be addressed accordingly below.

Preparation for the world of work

Incorporating employer engagement into schools is an objective that has been adopted UK wide, and something that Huddleston and Laczik (2019) suggest has been taking place for over forty years. A key motive for introducing businesses as part of the formal school education experience emerges from government initiatives to create a successful transition from school into the workplace for young people (Stanley *et al.*, 2014). In England, the Department for Education's (2017) Career Strategy sets out that career guidance must be established to enable equality of opportunity. Indeed, since January 2018 it has been set out in guidelines by the DfE that the provision and extent of careers guidance by schools must be commented on in OFSTED reports. Furthermore, by the end of 2020, each school must have access to an enterprise advisor and each pupil must experience at least seven encounters with employers between the years of seven to thirteen, an average of one encounter per year (DfE, 2017).

Similarly, and more relevant for this current piece of Wales focused research, there is an emphasis by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) on equipping young people for life (DfES, 2019). This has developed into a DfES 'national mission' stating that by 2021 all learners will be provided with experiences that will support them in becoming young adults who are 'enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work' (Education Wales, 2017). Through the provision of experiences not traditionally available in education there is an aim that secondary school pupils will learn employability skills such as teamwork and communication skills as a means to

ensure schools leavers are ready to enter the workforce once they leave education.

Addressing labour skills shortages

Youth unemployment as a result of a changing and developing labour market has led to the increasing UK focus on how businesses can engage with schools to tackle skilled labour shortages (UKCES, 2012). Until recently, there has been a focus amongst policymakers and schools on academic performance rather than work readiness (Hoffman *et al.*, 2014), as such, Scales *et al.* (2005, p.145) argue that now 'the mission of schools is seen not just as promoting academic success but as preparing students for success in the labour market'. Scales *et al.*'s (2005) argument adds to the increasing concern about the pressure being increasingly imposed on school teachers to not only teach but also act as careers and skills tutors. Consequently, the prioritisation of school engagement programmes which are created to deliver training for a future workforce on a topic deemed to be an 'economic consideration' has now become a norm (Manteaw, 2008).

One of the biggest concerns surrounding labour shortages relates to STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects. A report by the British Chamber of Commerce (n.d) states that over 100,000 new STEM graduates are needed in the UK every year to meet demand, a figure which is not currently being met. Furthermore, in their 2016 *CR Index Insights Report* (Business in the Community, 2016), Business in the Community suggest that CSR within an educational environment is primarily directed towards improving attitudes of, and participation in, STEM. The increase in STEM based employer

engagement in schools is suggested by Stanley *et al.* (2014) as being aimed at enticing under-represented groups, primarily women, into STEM related careers. The report by the British Chamber of Commerce (n.d.) states that the A Level uptake of STEM subjects by girls is particularly low, and in addition to this there is also a low female representation in the STEM workforce. The aim behind these interventions in schools by businesses is to make STEM careers attractive, particularly to girls, whilst maximising the skills acquisition of all young people.

Improving pupil engagement and academic attainment

Through the implementation of business engagement in education there is a focus towards targeting disadvantaged and disengaged pupils. This form of engagement most frequently takes place under the guise of employer mentoring and consists of the formation of a relationship between a school pupil and an employer (Hooley, 2016). Hooley (2016) states that employer mentoring could help personal and career development, however, they note that meta-analysis comparisons show that there is little to no solid evidence to support this. Furthermore, research by Miller (1999) on employer mentoring in seven schools found that through value-added analysis GCSE grades amongst mentored students increased by around half a grade.

Despite Miller's (1999) sample not providing significant data to be able to generalise the overall effect of employee mentoring on educational attainment, a 2010 evaluation of the Business Class scheme (Cass Business School, 2010) supports Miller's (1999) claim. The Business Class Evaluation report demonstrates that there was a '38% improvement in academic achievement for

students' as a result of a school business partnership (Cass Business School, 2010). Miller (1999), however, argues that mentoring had a more positive effect on engagement than attainment. Indeed, evidence suggests that employee mentoring has the same effect on school pupils as sports participation, summer schools and teaching assistants (Hooley, 2016). In these pieces of research however there is a lack of expression as to the exact reason for increased attainment. Whilst it can be acknowledged that employee mentoring positively affects a school pupil it can be questioned as to whether this is a result of the presence of human capital in the education process or it is a consequence of the business employees raising the aspirations of the pupils.

Enhancing social mobility

By developing awareness amongst school pupils about future careers and the world of work and by engaging disengaged pupils, employer engagement can enhance social mobility through the acquisition of social capital (Jones *et al.*, 2016). Social capital can be applied to partnerships that 'further mobilise educationally-derived resources and credentials that help bridge relationships between educational and work contexts' (Tomlinson, 2019, p. 59). The development of relationships and links with businesses through employer engagement opportunities enables pupils to not only accrue increased social capital, but Stanley and Mann (2014) also suggest that engagement with employers at a school level can lead to higher earnings in the future.

Granovetter's (1973) concept of 'strong' and 'weak' ties can be applied to the understanding of social capital and social mobility gain through school-business

partnerships. Granovetter (1973) refers to 'strong' ties as being formed through family or close friendship groups and 'weak' ties as individuals who you do not come into contact frequently, in terms of employer engagement in education, the pupil's 'weak' ties would be the employers. It is argued by Granovetter (1973) that 'strong' ties can be 'counter-advantageous' (Tomlinson, 2019, p.60) if the family members have limited knowledge, in this case, on employment and the job market. It is here that Granovetter (1973) suggests that 'weak' ties can be more influential to a school pupil, as the business employees will hold the knowledge and information necessary to inform the pupil of employment skills and opportunities.

According to the UKCES (2012) report it was believed that the Business Class programme increased pupil employability by over 40%. Whilst Business Class suggest improved employability, this does not fit in line with government data on NEETs (those not in education, employment or training) which shows that from January to March 2018 there were 808,000 NEETs in the UK, an increase of nearly 8,000 when compared to the same months in 2017 (ONS, 2018). A possible reason for this could be explained by UKCES (2012) whose research also found that the priority for schools is to focus on their performance tables. This is an important focus for schools as the league tables publicly demonstrate the performance of the schools and can ultimately affect school pupil numbers and inspection reports. However, as we have seen in the literature, there is an increasing driving force for schools to engage with employers as a means to increase performance through an alternative means.

Literature also suggests that new forms of employer engagement in schools are not necessarily carried out with all pupils equally and that in fact

'the main rationale for developing PPPs (public private partnerships) in education is to maximise the potential for expanding equitable access to schooling and improving educational outcomes especially to disadvantaged groups'. (Patrinos *et al.*, 2009, p.9)

This is supported by Murphy *et al.* (1998) who argue that volunteers can be used to enhance and enrich the education that students receive and more specifically can be used in an attempt to give underprivileged pupils better opportunities. Murphy *et al.* (1998) describe how one of the main reasons behind increased CSR activities in a school environment is as a result of what they refer to as 'load shedding' where certain provisions are withdrawn by the government and businesses are stepping up to fill the gaps. An example of this can be seen with businesses offering employment skills and training to pupils following the withdrawal, specifically in England, of £200m of funding for the careers guidance agency *Connexions* which once provided these services within schools (Hooley, 2015).

2.7.3 Critics of business involvement in education

Whilst it has been suggested previously that businesses can play an important and supportive role in the school environment there still remains significant criticism of businesses building partnerships with schools through CSR policies. Hoff (2002, p.63) perceives school-business partnerships as functioning 'on the fringe of educational issues, rarely tackling the more gnarly issues of genuine educational improvement'. In fact, Cramer and Landsmann (1992, p.132) go to the extent of suggesting that the partnerships deserve 'an A+ for image and a C+ for effectiveness' based on what can be described as areas for improvement such

as establishing goals and inciting appropriate partnership activities. Whilst these statements may be true, the literature above has suggested that educational improvement is not necessarily at the forefront of employer engagement concern, rather it is the preparation for life following education. This is an example of where there are discrepancies in what businesses and schools are wanting from these relationships, and as seen earlier, schools are engaging with businesses because of the importance of performance.

A key concern links back to the earlier notion of CSR being nothing more than a PR opportunity in that businesses have the potential to benefit from their engagement more than the schools and pupils. The notion of for-profit businesses encouraging their employees to work with schools as a way to increase the future opportunities of the school children appears initially as a positive action. The UKCES (2012) report suggests however that business benefits can vary from staff development, raising the business profile in the local community, and gaining public contracts.

A further issue that is raised in the literature is that of businesses using the school environment as a marketing opportunity (Atherton and Wells, 1998). Atherton and Wells (1998, p.180) raise the concern that business involvement in schools is considered by some as the 'exploitation of a largely captive audience of young consumers'. This is supported by Harrison (2012) who states that

'over the past two decades, fast food companies, financial institutions, supermarkets and other businesses have found increasingly innovative ways to build brand awareness among not only teachers, but also a captive and impressionable audience of school children'.

A joint report published in 2009 by the Department of Children, Schools and Families (now Department for Education) and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (now Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) states that 'commercial messages and marketing activities are increasingly evident in schools in the form of sponsorship and public relations activities as well as some overt advertising' (DCSF & DCMS, 2009, p.13). The report argues that the increasing involvement of businesses in schools through mentoring and work experience opportunities is leading to young people becoming more aware of the marketing being carried out by the businesses. Furthermore, it is argued that activities such as mentoring and supplementary classes provided by these companies are aimed at reaching the parents as well and the children. This is sustained by Atherton and Wells (1998) who state that research shows how 12% of companies acknowledged that they were targeting parents through school children.

The concern over engagement as opportunities where 'teachers become complicit and unpaid promoters in a corporate marketing activity' (Harrison, 2012) can be discussed through a term referred to in the USA as 'cola-isation'. Cola-isation is not specific to employer engagement in education but can be used in reference to 'displays of logos, sponsorships and equipment promotions' (Ball, 2007, p.66) by businesses in education. The displaying of company logos in schools is not a new occurrence, however, the development of 'vouchers for schools' campaigns saw a rise in this form of advertising (Ball, 2007). By schools taking part in campaigns such as Sainsbury's 'Active Kids' and Tesco's 'Computers for Schools' there becomes active marketing by the school not only

in persuading children and parents to shop at these particular supermarkets, but also with the inevitable branding that will be emblazoned on the equipment. Furthermore, by receiving goods from businesses such as sports and technology equipment and prizes is criticised by Hoff (2002) as being what she describes as a 'superficial benefit' of engagement.

A further concern with what Robertson *et al.* (2013) refer to as public-private partnerships is that there is a fine line between having a 'partnership' and the risk of privatisation. An example of this is demonstrated by the definition of academies by the UK Government (2019b) who state that

'academies are supported by sponsors such as businesses, universities, other schools, faith groups or voluntary groups. Sponsors work with the academy trust to improve the performance of their schools... If a school funded by the local authority is judged as 'inadequate' by Ofsted then it must become an academy'.

What is interesting about this definition by the UK Government (2019b) is that it lies very closely to the literature above describing how businesses carry out their social responsibilities in schools. Whilst there is already a sense of privatisation of education in England with the emergence of academy schools, Wales has rejected the idea of academisation. What is significant here is that although the Welsh government refuses to follow the academy model adopted by English schools there is an increasing number of schools and businesses in Wales forging relationships, with BITC alone reporting that their Business Class side of the company has over 81 school-business partnerships in Wales in 2017 (Business in the Community, 2017a).

An interesting point raised by Huddleston and Ashton (2019) concerns the appropriateness of careers education and guidance in relation to the changing

job market and the reality of a precarious workplace. This is in reference to the increasing number of jobs that are becoming short-term fixed contracts and zero-hour contracts, highlighting that a job for life is no longer a feasible option for many individuals (Huddleston and Ashton, 2019). Consequently, it is argued that rather than businesses presenting the world of work through rose-tinted glasses they should instead 'tell it like it is' (Huddleston and Ashton, 2019, p.85).

The literature indicates that CSR as a topic in itself has been researched exhaustively over a significant period of time. This review has enabled a clear understanding of the development of corporate social responsibility, what it consists of and how it has led to the levels of employer engagement in education that exist in 2019. The area of CSR relating to education and specifically employer engagement in schools has been found to be under-researched, and there is a lack of empirical data and research which explores businesses with education-based CSR initiatives, in addition to empirical data gathered from schools and teachers which addresses their views and experiences of businesses in the classroom. Furthermore, the research that has been carried out regarding employers in education has predominantly been found to have been produced by a taskforce charity which works closely with the government. Due to the lack of research which explores what *actually* goes on in schools this research aims to avoid approaching the topic in a binary way as has been done previously, and as such this thesis will be bracketing out the bigger issues on the topic until the data has been analysed. The thesis will therefore focus on gaining a greater understanding of how businesses engage with schools and their

justification for doing so. Following this there will be an exploration of schools to understand why they see a need to engage with businesses and what their experiences of this engagement are, something which has not yet been researched in depth.

Chapter Three - Methodology and Research Design

Introduction

This chapter will provide a reflexive account of the methodological decisions made relating to this piece of research. The chapter moves from the more general aspects of this research design and methodology to the more specific. The chapter will begin by providing a discussion on the methods of data collection, research design and the sample selected for this study. This will be followed by an account of the fieldwork and how the interviews were conducted. This will be accompanied by an overview of the ethical consideration made prior to and during the research process. The chapter will conclude by discussing the process of transcription and data analysis.

This methods section will allow for an understanding of the process of data gathering as a means to answering the key research questions for this study:

- RQ1 – What do business actually *do* with schools to discharge their CSR?
- RQ2 – Why do businesses engage with schools and what benefits does it bring them?
- RQ3 – What are the schools' experiences of this engagement?
- RQ4 – What issues does this raise for schools and the education system?

3.1 Research method, design and sample

The choice of the research method, design and sample used for this piece of research was made after consideration of the topic that was being studied and

the best way to approach gathering rich and relevant data. When undertaking research of this kind it is important to consider the individuals that will be included in the research and how research methods and data collection are best suited to working with these individuals. This section of the chapter will address the choices made regarding the method of research for this project and will also provide an explanation for the design of the research.

3.1.1 A qualitative approach

In order to investigate the how and why associated with the increasing dissemination of corporate social responsibilities by businesses in primary and secondary schools in Wales, a qualitative approach was adopted. As is typically associated with a qualitative research project this study is interpretivist in nature. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.22) suggest that interpretivist epistemology is 'guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied'. By using an interpretivist epistemology it allows the researcher to focus on recognising and narrating the meaning human actions and experiences (Fossey *et al.*, 2002), as such the researcher 'attempt[s] to understand phenomena through accessing the meaning participants assign to them' (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991, p.5). Adopting an interpretivist epistemology allows for the exploration of the meanings that individuals associate with their actions and how they account for various social phenomena (Markula and Silk, 2011). Furthermore, by adopting this research paradigm it allows for flexibility when conducting the research, something that is necessary when researching a topic that varies widely according to who is participating in it.

3.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews can be structured, unstructured or semi-structured. Structured interviews follow a predetermined set of questions, allowing for no flexibility and little scope for follow up questions (Thomas, 2013). Beyond its quick and easy administration, 'the structured interview has not very much in its favour' (Thomas, 2013, p.196). Compared to this, semi-structured interviews are more flexible in that they allow for a set topic of conversation to be established whilst also allowing for further exploration and discussion during the interviewing process. Unstructured interviews, on the other hand, resemble a conversation in that they are free-flowing, and the topics and agendas are not set. Both semi-structured and unstructured interviews would allow for rich data to be gathered for this piece of research, however, due to the unwieldy nature of unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews were undertaken as a means of ensuring relevant data was collated whilst also allowing for freedom in conversation.

The use of semi-structured interviews for this study allowed for interviewees to provide in-depth accounts of their experiences and encounters of corporate social responsibility and education whilst also providing space and opportunity for discussions to take place. This was feasible through the use of open-ended questions which allow you to 'understand experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate' (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p.3), resulting in rich data and allowing for an insight into a wider world which would not have been possible with quantitative methods such as surveys. Using this method of data collection also enabled a more natural conversation to flow with the interviewees but also allowed for interrogation and follow up questions when necessary (Remler and

van Ryzin, 2011). This form of flexibility meant that interviews could be adapted if and when needed, depending on the business or school that was being interviewed.

Whilst most of the questions I asked my participants were the same, due to the heterogeneity of the businesses and the schools I found it necessary to alter some questions during the interview to better suit the situation. I found when conducting the interviews that, particularly businesses, were often very talkative and frequently answered my questions before I had the chance to ask them. I found that whilst all interview participants were receptive to the interview questions, businesses in particular were eager to talk, and they enjoyed the opportunity to discuss their corporate social responsibility policies and activities. Indeed, the Head of Telecoms (Wales) expressed at the end of their interview that they enjoyed the interview as CSR is something they do as a business but it not often talked about, and as that particular interview was undertaken jointly with an employee volunteer it enabled for a dialogue to be established.

Interviews carried out for this research were primarily face-to-face, unfortunately, due to accessibility and time (on the part of the business or school) some interviews were carried out as telephone interviews, however, this was chosen to be a better option than the alternative of no interview. The benefit of carrying out face-to-face interviews is that a bodily presence acts as a ready-made support (Thomas, 2013). A trait of a good interviewer is that they are observant in 'picking up subtle cues such as facial expressions, body language and tone of voice' (Guion *et al.*, 2001, p.2). Thomas (2013, p.194) suggest that interview

participants 'will usually be energised to help by your physical presence', and by observing body language it allows the interviewer to watch for nuances of their behaviour which allows for an observation as to how individuals feel about a topic.

The business focused interviews that took place in this research can be described as elite interviews. Elite interviews are considered by Hochschild (2009) as interviews with 'a person who is chosen by name or position for a particular reason, rather than randomly or anonymously'. For this piece of research, Harvey's (2011, p.433) definition of 'elites' being 'those who occupy senior management and board level positions within organisations', is best suited as a description of the participants being interviewed. For this research it was imperative that I interviewed the elite individuals that had close links to the CSR areas of the companies as this would lead to a better-quality interview and ultimately more relevant data. Whilst elite interviews were not as relevant for school interviews it was still important to interview the individual within the school who had the most experience and knowledge of engaging with businesses.

Hochschild (2009) argues that there are several issues that arise when performing elite interviews. One of these is that due to the nature of their job and seniority in their job role there is often the requirement by the interviewee to be provided with an example of interview questions prior to the interview so that they can prepare their answers. In addition to this, whilst elite interviews gain specialised knowledge, Feldman *et al.* (2003, p.76) explain how the participants often have 'very little time to impart it'. This is supported by Hochschild (2009) who states that there is often the issue of time restraint when interviewing elites,

and often interviews are limited to no more than an hour in length. Both of these issues arose when arranging interviews with businesses. With regards to the request to prepare for the interview, participants were provided with some brief examples of what they would be asked, however, there was a need to ensure that the whole interview was not prepared for in advance. This, however, did allow for many of the businesses and some schools to print off information for me that they thought would be interesting and relevant to my research. Prior to contacting the businesses and schools, there was an understanding of the busy nature of the individuals required for participation and therefore interviewees were informed that the interviews would last no longer than one hour. Prior to undertaking the interviews, I researched the businesses' CSR programmes as thoroughly as possible so to save time during the interview. There were some exceptions to the interview length, for example with the Cardiff local authority broker and the telecoms company the interviews lasted much longer than an hour, however, this was down to the interviewees rather than myself.

3.1.3 Focus group

The nature of focus groups compared to interviews warrants a separate discussion (Thomas, 2013). The decision to undertake a pupil focus group as part of the research was made at the last minute following an interview with a school with an extensive amount of engagement with one particular company. Due to the range of the activities provided by the organisation to the school and the fact that it was the whole school who 'benefitted' I actively sought to undertake a focus group as I believed that by gaining the opinions and experiences of pupils who had been affected by business engagement it would complement the core

interviews. There is a risk with focus groups that some participants are more talkative than others, and some individuals will take the lead whilst others will follow (Thomas, 2013). Having considered this potential issue I maintained my belief that the use a focus group rather than separate interviews would produce more data and provoke more conversation than one on one interviews, particularly when carried out with secondary school pupils.

Having made the decision to talk to pupils I re-established contact with the Head of Business at the school whom I had already interviewed who was more than happy to accommodate my request and organised for five pupils to attend a focus group one lunchtime. I was aware that lunchtimes are precious to anyone, let alone school pupils and so I was mindful to keep questions specific and only kept the pupils for around twenty-five minutes. I felt that although this was not a particularly long time it enabled a good discussion and the pupils were able to express their opinions and experiences of their engagement with businesses. Having acknowledged the potential issues associated with focus groups I made the effort to ensure that all pupils had the opportunity to express their experiences of their engagement with businesses.

These pupils were chosen because of the extent of the engagement that took place in the school and it is for this reason that no other pupils in any other schools were included in the research.

3.1.4 Participant and non-participant observations

A methodological development in this research took place in the form of observations. As a result of the contact that had been established with certain participants in this research, it led to a snowball effect meaning that observations were able to be carried out in addition to the planned semi-structured interviews. Following interactions with the national brokers (Wales) and the insurance company I was invited to attend some events with the organisations. I initially undertook two participant observations after being invited by the partnerships division of the national brokers (Wales) to attend two events, one was their Giving Day² Launch at Cardiff Arms Park and the second was a Business Education Symposium held at the Principality Stadium, Cardiff. The Giving Day Launch event comprised of current and potentially future members of the national brokerage firm and involved a selection of speakers recalling their experiences of participating in previous Giving days. There was a networking lunch and table discussions between businesses and schools. There were also talks by groups, both schools and communities, who had benefitted from business volunteers during this annual event.

The second event was a Business Education Symposium and was aligned with the partnership's division of the national broker which focusses on education and business engagement. The event was attended by businesses and schools and a handful of pupils. The purpose of the event was to create more awareness of what businesses can do for schools and how schools could benefit from their

² This is an annual event run by the national broker where all businesses signed up to the brokerage programme volunteer in their local community for the day.

input. There were talks by the partnership division employees, school, and business representatives as well as breakout groups held by different organisations offering education-based services. There were also talks with pupils from a school which had been engaged with businesses. Attending these events provided an understanding of the work that the national broker and their partnership division do as well as enabling an understanding of how businesses get involved with the national broker and the partnership division first-hand.

The second set of observations took place in a non-participant format following an invitation by the insurance company who wished to demonstrate the type of CSR work they do with schools. The first observation took place at an independent school in Cardiff where a team from the insurance company, along with several other businesses, had been asked to participate in an 'employment day' with the pupils. The day was comprised of fifteen-minute student/employer mock interviews with Year Ten students followed by a Question and Answer session over a networking lunch. On the day of the interviews all interviewers were provided with a pack that consisted of a score sheet to be completed for each interviewed student. As part of this observation I sat with an employee from the insurance company whilst they were undertaking the interviews and was able to witness the type of engagement that takes place for the purpose of teaching employability skills.

The second observation with the insurance company was a skills day that took place at a secondary school in Cardiff. The skills day consisted of two insurance company employees giving a presentation on what it is like to work for the

company, how individuals become an insurance company employee, and what qualities they look for in their staff. The presentation was repeated with five groups of Year Nine pupils. The presentation was one of several events that the pupils took part in throughout the day and aimed to open the eyes of young people into the types of work that are available to them once they finish school. During these observations I sat at the back of the hall where the sessions were taking place and this enabled me to witness the event without being noticed by the students and also meant that I could observe how the students behaved during the talks.

The development of the intended interviews allowed me to gain an understanding and useful practical experience of how the engagement between businesses and schools takes place and the differing formats that they take. At each observation I was able to make notes about what I was observing and was also provided with leaflets from the brokerage events which were kept for data analysis. Whilst the data collected from the observations does not play a large part in this research there are aspects of the observations which will be discussed and highlighted in the analysis chapters, and are used alongside findings from the semi-structured interviews.

3.1.5 Sample

Cleary *et al.* (2014, p.473) suggest that 'participant selection should be congruent with the conceptual framework' in that it will generate the rich data associated with a qualitative study. It is for this reason that for this research project the participants were chosen through a purposive sample. Purposive sampling is a

form of non-probability sampling in qualitative research where ‘the sample is intentionally selected according to the need of the study’ (Boeije, 2010, p.36). By being purposeful in the selection of a non-random sample it enabled me to seek out individuals and places where ‘the processes of being studied are most likely to occur’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.370). This meant that I was able to gather relevant data which offered a depth of insight into the phenomenon that is being researched.

Who and how many participants depend on ‘what you want to know, the purpose of the enquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful and what will have credibility’ (Patton, 1990, p.184). In total there were thirty-one participants in this piece of research. The sample consisted of three interviews with what are considered in this research as ‘brokerage firms’, ten interviews with business representatives who ranged from CEOs to CSR managers and community support ambassadors, five interviews with employee volunteers, eight interviews with school representatives and a focus group with five pupils from one school.

3.2 Establishing contact and recruitment

Establishing contact and participant recruitment proved difficult for many prospective interviews in this research. As Rubin and Rubin (2005, p.64) state

‘interviewees should be experienced and knowledgeable in the area you are interviewing about. Finding them may take skill and time, sometimes including a bit of detective work’.

Even after this ‘it often happens that even after finding the right people, making initial contact still requires much work’ (Feldman *et al.*, 2003, p.23) and this was particularly true in this piece of research. Due to the nature and topic of this

research, it was necessary that the most appropriate and knowledgeable individual was interviewed as 'low hanging fruit' may not have provided the information needed and as such finding interviewees with first-hand experience is crucial to underpinning the research (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). This section shows how brokers, businesses and schools were contacted and recruited for the research and the issues that ensued.

3.2.1 Brokers and businesses

Prior to undertaking any business interviews contact was made with the Welsh branch of the national brokers, a business-community outreach programme. Through this, contact was established with the Head of Partnerships, the offshoot of the national brokers which aims to create school business partnerships which are effective and mutually beneficial. Through this contact I was invited to an event at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff where I was able to meet the Head of Partnerships and a range of organisations wanting to engage with local communities and schools. This event led to an interview with the Head of Partnerships as well as the formation of some business contacts. These business contacts were directly emailed, however surprisingly this method of recruitment was not fruitful and only led to a single business interview. An interview with the partnerships division proved to be an excellent starting point with interviews as they were able to provide an overview of the work the partnerships division does and the role that they play in establishing partnerships between schools and businesses. It also provided an explanation as to why the partnership division and its associates believe that there is a need for businesses to play a more prominent role in schools.

Following the establishing of contacts, the data collection began with interviews with businesses with the intention that analysis of the interviews would allow for a better understanding of the work they do and would influence the interview questions with schools. For the recruitment of businesses, I first began with a Google search of businesses, with a UK base and CSR policies linking directly to education. Following this, I performed a search for their CSR representative, unfortunately, in most cases, this information was not readily available which consequently led to me having to contact businesses through generic company email addresses. Feldman *et al.* (2003) suggest that when contacting potential participants for research it is useful to have a 'hook' to gain access. The 'hook' that helped me gain access in this research was the corporate social responsibility nature of the research. It was considered that this would provide businesses with an opportunity to discuss their corporate social responsibilities with an individual with an interest in the topic, and also a topic that most businesses are keen to promote as a PR exercise. As such, the emails that were sent to businesses provided a brief overview of the research and the areas of CSR and engagement I was hoping to discuss in an interview, this allowed for a greater understanding by the business of what I was expecting from the research.

The recruitment of businesses through this method proved problematic as it generally relied on customer service representatives to act as gatekeepers 'to grant or deny initial access' to the relevant individual, consequently being responsible for making access 'either more or less difficult' (Feldman, 2003, p.31). Despite this potentially problematic form of recruitment, it did lead to the

arrangement of seven of the ten business interviews. There were two exceptions to the above recruitment of business interviewees, one was a business Managing Director who was recruited through a family connection and the other was gained through a Twitter direct message. Whilst the response rate for businesses was low and slow those businesses who did respond were eager to take part in the research.

The number of interviews snowballed during the data collection process through conversations with businesses with some being keen to offer employees to also be interviewed (Thomas, 2013). This was not something which had been planned into the research however I gladly accepted the offer. This led to several short interviews with employees from the Human Resources department at the insurance company and an employee volunteer at the telecoms company. The interview at the telecoms company was carried out as a joint interview with the Head of Telecoms (Wales) and provided an interesting experience as it was clear that, while the Head of Telecoms had knowledge of the CSR aspects of the programmes, the employee was more knowledgeable about the specific school-related details.

During the interview process with both businesses and schools the Cardiff local authority broker and the Welsh careers service were frequently mentioned in interviews. Consequently, I decided to approach both for an interview for the research. Initially, I failed to establish any form of contact with the Cardiff local authority broker and due to the impending deadlines in the research process attempts to further gain contact were abandoned. However, following a

conference presentation of my research, I was approached by a Cardiff council employee with connections to the education department and several days following this I was approached directly by the Cardiff local authority broker via Twitter requesting to arrange an interview. The interview with the Welsh careers service was also arranged via email following details provided by a mutual contact.

The decision was made not to anonymise the brokers and businesses in this research as it was deemed that knowledge of the business would allow for a greater understanding of the context and nature of the engagement that is being employed, something that will be discussed later in the ethics section of the chapter. Having said this, employee names have not been used and the third person pronoun has been used to avoid the possible distinction of the interviewee, and where possible job titles have been simplified. The nature of the research and the recruitment of participants has led to the participation of individuals in a variety of job roles with varying responsibilities associated with corporate social responsibility within their company. It must also be taken into consideration that the views expressed in this research are those of the interviewees only and do not necessarily represent the views of the organisation as a whole.

Table 1 - List of businesses and brokers who participated in the research and the interviewee's job role

Business/Broker	Job Role
Insurance Company	People Services
Upmarket Department Store	Civic Investment Manager
Building Company	Managing Director
British Banking Group	Education Manager
Multinational Investment Bank	CSR Associate
International Furniture Company	Community Support Ambassador
National Building Manager	CSR Manager
International Law Firm	Legal and Compliance Manager
Telecoms Company (Welsh Branch)	Head of Telecoms Company
Accounting Company	Executive Assistant
National Broker – Partnerships Division	Head of Partnerships
Cardiff Local Authority Broker	Education Engagement Manager
Welsh Career Service	Head of Stakeholder Services

Businesses ■ Brokers ■

3.2.2 Schools

Potential school participants were contacted through a posted letter addressed to the Head Teacher explaining about the research and what would be expected from the interview. It was hoped that by sending letters there would be a higher response rate than sending emails as the letters would be directed towards the relevant individual, something that was not always possible with a generic school email address. These letters were followed up about a week later with either an email or a telephone call if I had not received a response. One exception to this

was Ysgol Mynydd Mawr³ whose Head of Business was contacted via email following an interview with a national building society. The recruitment of schools for this research proved more difficult than the businesses and was time consuming and arduous (Pugsley, 2004). Many schools did not respond to the attempts at contact and those who did reply explained that they did not have the time to facilitate the research. Consequently, this resulted in the completion of eight face-to-face or telephone interviews, a small number compared to the number of schools that were initially contacted which was over 50 schools. Of those schools who did participate in the research it often took several weeks or months of back and forth communication to arrange an appropriate and convenient date to undertake the interview, and in some cases, this meant conducting a telephone interview. This difficulty meant that the range of schools in the research was limited to an extent, particularly in the case of independent schools, as only one of the seven contacted accepted an invitation to interview. Organising the interviews was made particularly difficult due to school holidays and exam periods which often caused a longer delay.

³ This school has been anonymised, along with all schools in the research. This will be discussed in the ethical considerations of this chapter

Table 2 - List of participating schools, interviewee and type of school

School	Job Role	Type of School
St Winifred's Primary	Head Teacher	Church in Wales
Riverside Primary	Head Teacher	Church in Wales
Ysgol Heulwen	Head Teacher	Community School
Ysgol Mynydd Mawr	Head of Business	Welsh Medium
Redlands High School	Deputy Head Teacher	Community School
All Saints High School	Head of Welsh Baccalaureate	Catholic
Monkswell School	PSHE Teacher	Independent
Ysgol Castell	Head Teacher	Bilingual

Primary Schools ■ Secondary Schools ■

3.2.3 Pupil focus group

Having re-established contact with Ysgol Mynydd Mawr the Head of Business agreed to arrange students to participate in a focus group. A time and date was arranged and I travelled to the school to conduct the research. The five pupils who participated in the focus groups were male and female and represented a range of ages who had all experienced different forms of CSR engagement at different times. The issue with this sample was that it was chosen by the Head of Business. As such, while the sample represented students who had experienced different types of engagement it did not necessarily represent different attitudes of pupils who had engaged with businesses (Thomas, 2013). It is difficult to establish whether this was a conscious decision made by the Head of

Businesses, however, I felt that had I chosen the sample myself it would have enabled the focus group to be comprised of pupils who had experienced different levels of partnership activities (Thomas, 2013).

The focus group took place in a classroom at the school. The Head of Business was present in the classroom during the focus group and acted akin to a non-participant observer as they were present but not involved in the interview (Hammersley, 2015). I acknowledge that this could have influenced the responses from the pupils however I believe that due to the nature of the topic, and that it did not discuss any personal or sensitive information, the presence of the teacher did not affect any of the pupil's responses. I felt that the students were open and honest with how they responded to my questions.

3.3 Research location

The geographical focus of this research was predetermined. It was deemed appropriate that due to the degree being funded through the Welsh Institute of Social and Economic Research Data Methods (WISERD) then the research would be focussed in Wales. As such all schools included in this research were based within Wales, more specifically South Wales as this was more accessible for a study of this kind and something which I acknowledge could affect generalisability (Silverman, 2005). Furthermore, it is additionally important to note that schools in Wales follow a different curriculum to schools in England for example, and so by focussing the research in Wales it allowed for an understanding of the extent to which the curriculum affected the engagement between businesses and schools. The locality of the businesses in this research

was not such a concern. It was considered that business CSR strategies would not vary throughout the UK, as such this enabled a variety of businesses to be included in this research, having said this, most of the business sample were based within Cardiff offices.

The lack of pre-existing research on this topic was also a determiner on the research location. The minimal research that had already been published focussed primarily in England and therefore neglecting other areas of the UK.

3.4 Conducting the interviews

Rubin and Rubin (2005, p.12) describe interviewees as 'partners in the research enterprise rather than subjects to be tested and examined', this is a key difference between qualitative and quantitative research. The 'partners in the research enterprise' for this piece of research were business and school representatives as well as the school pupils who took part in the focus group. This section will provide an account of how the interviews were arranged and conducted and the importance of an interview guide when conducting semi-structured interviews.

3.4.1 Interview questions

Prior to conducting the interviews, an interview guide was devised in order to establish areas of interest and topics of interest that I wished to cover in the interviews. In addition to guiding the interview, interview guides allow for interviews to be comparable, whilst still allowing the interview to follow a loose structure (Remler and van Ryzin, 2011). Due to the nature of the research four different research guides were necessary, one for brokers, one for businesses,

one for schools, and one for the school pupils. Whilst some of the questions were similar for all four groups there were also group certain questions that were created specifically to suit the interviewees, as Rubin and Rubin (2005, p.12) explain 'because interviews are invented new each time, they can be wonderfully unpredictable' and this was certainly the case in each interview that took place.

I found that as the interview process progressed the interview guide became more refined (Gilbert, 2001). As I became more experienced and knowledgeable in my subject area it enabled more precise questions to be asked. I also found that with many of the interviews an interview guide was not adhered to and was made redundant as, particularly with the businesses, they were extremely descriptive and thorough in their explanations of their CSR programmes and engagement experiences with schools. I began each interview with a brief overview and explanation of the research and what I was interested in to set the scene and allow the participant to decide where to begin with their explanations. For the focus group with the pupils, I was aware that it was vital to create a personable and friendly atmosphere which would help to put the students at ease. To do this I explained to the pupils who I was and what I was there to do and what I needed from them.

Following an overview of the research, I began the interviewing with broad questions, for businesses this was a question such as 'can you tell me about your CSR policies and activities?', whereas with schools the question was more aligned to 'what engagement has the school had with businesses?'. I was aware of the need to keep the questions broad to begin with to gain a full understanding

of all CSR activities and forms of engagement in context. As Owens (2006) explained, the role of a qualitative interviewer is to expand the conversational space, as such these broad questions then allowed for a series of narrow more challenging questions to follow as a means to gain more detailed explanations and understandings.

3.4.2 Arranging interviews

Once contact had been established with the relevant and appropriate individuals in the companies and schools, dates and times were arranged for interviews. Interviews were conducted in a range of environments at the choice of the interviewee. All but four of the business/broker interviews took place as face to face interviews within the workplace of the interviewee, two others were undertaken in a coffee shop and two were carried out as a telephone interview due to geographical differences. Likewise, interviews with school representatives also varied, with all but one secondary school interview being face to face and were conducted within the school itself, the remaining secondary school and three primary school interviews were conducted over the telephone. An explanation for lack of face-to-face interviews with primary schools could be that the secondary school interviews took place with a range of individuals from teachers to deputy headteachers, whereas all primary school interviews took place with the headteachers, who presumably have a busier schedule for whom a telephone conversation worked best to their convenience. Whilst the telephone interviews did mean that body language was not able to be observed (Guion *et al.*, 2001), this was taken to be a compromise to not conducting any primary school interviews.

3.4.3 Recording of interviews

Prior to the undertaking of the interviews verbal permission was sought from the participants to record the interviews. Interviews were digitally recorded using a voice recorder. The intention behind recording the interviews was to ensure that there was natural flow in conversation between the researcher and the participant and that the conversations were not impeded by constant note-taking. This method is supported by Wellington (1996, p.36) who explains how voice recording interviews “preserves actual natural language” whilst allowing the interviewer to contribute properly to the conversation. However, it is suggested by Wellington (1996) that the presence of a digital recording device, especially if it is placed in sight of the interviewee, can put off the interviewee and could possibly affect their answers. When deciding to record the interviews I acknowledged that a considerable amount of time would be taken up when transcribing the data. Rubin and Rubin (2005, p.204) note how ‘creating a typed transcript from a conversation is laborious and requires your full attention’, however, it was decided that it would be to the detriment of the research not to record the interviews.

Whilst Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) points were extremely valid; I believe that by recording and transcribing the interviews it enabled a better understanding of my data, it also meant that the whole conversation was recorded and nothing was left out or disregarded which could have happened if I had only taken notes. To avoid the participants being put off by the recording device I ensured that it was not visible, although still able to pick up voices clearly, by placing the device on a

surface out of eyesight. Whilst the participants were still aware that they were being recorded they became more relaxed once the device was out of sight (Wellington, 1996). Added to this, recording the interviews avoided interviewer bias as it was not possible to pick and choose what was relevant to the study and what was recorded. As well as recording the interviews, I also took brief notes during the interviews for further discussion and reference points (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Following each interview, the digital recordings were downloaded onto my laptop under a password encrypted folder as required by Cardiff University guidelines.

3.4.4 Justification for a qualitative approach

The decision was made to adopt a qualitative approach for this study as this provided thick and detailed descriptive accounts of both businesses' and schools' experiences of business engagement in schools in Wales (Gorard and Taylor, 2004). Due to the topic of the research a qualitative interpretivist approach was deemed to be particularly appropriate as 'it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth with a limited timescale' (Bell, 1991, p.6). A conscious decision was made in this research not to use quantitative methods for several reasons. The first reason for this was that a quantitative approach would 'rely on the reduction of meaning to numbers. And when meanings are intricate and complex, reduction can be incredibly difficult' (O'Leary, 2017, p.256). As such, the approach would not have permitted me to gather rich data which would provide detailed explanations related to why businesses engage in corporate socially responsible activities with schools, nor would it allow schools to detail their experiences of business engagement. If this

research was to follow a quantitative approach, then it would have risked ruling out

'many interesting phenomena relating to what people actually do in their day-to-day lives, whether in homes, offices or other public or private places' (Silverman, 2005, p.6).

The use of semi-structured interviews and a focus group for data collection allowed for thoughts and perceptions to be expressed, something which would not have been feasible through a survey. Additionally, the interviews and subsequent probing questions brought up new areas of interest that would have not been possible had a quantitative methods approach been undertaken. Furthermore, an argument for this interpretivist approach is that the minimal research that has been carried out on the topic of employer engagement in education has not created in-depth qualitative data that allows for detailed experiences to be expressed by businesses and schools.

This qualitative approach is impacted by the generalisability of the research findings since the relatively small sample of participants does not necessarily represent the perceptions of the general population. This research, however, does not attempt to, or claim to, provide a representative image of the experiences of employer engagement in schools but instead provides an insight into the perceptions of participants in a way that has not been previously done on this topic.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Undertaking ethical social research is a crucial underpinning to the transparency of data collection (Perecman and Curran, 2006). Throughout the research design period consideration was given to the ethical requirements as set out by the

Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) Research Ethics Framework and the British Sociological Association's (BSA) Statement of Ethical Practice 2017. The research was undertaken following approval from Cardiff University's School of Social Science Ethic's Committee. The process of ethical approval was undertaken twice, once for business and school interviews (March 2017) and a second time following the decision to include minors in the research (August 2017).

3.5.1 Informed consent

Informed consent is vital to any piece of research and is the responsibility of the sociologist to explain as fully as possible (Hornsby-Smith, 1993). Every participant in this research was equipped with detailed information prior to the interview process on the nature of the research, why it was being undertaken, a background on myself as the researcher and how the research would be used. Prior to each interview it was reiterated to all of the research participants that they were free to withdraw from the research at any point during or after the interview if they wished (Thomas, 2013). Whilst this was offered, the nature of the research topic for this study is not one that is likely to create sensitive data or cause harm or distress to any of the participants.

3.5.2 Anonymity

An important ethical dilemma I faced prior to the interview process related to the anonymisation of the participants in the research. Van den Hoonaard (2003) suggests that guaranteeing anonymisation can be an unachievable goal in qualitative research and this is particularly pertinent for this piece of research.

There is a trend amongst academic research that is the 'normalisation of anonymity' (Tilley and Woodthorpe, 2011, p.198) where anonymising research participants has become an ethical norm. During the data collection process respondents were not told that their participation in the research would be anonymised. However, after long consideration following the data collection process the decision was made to use pseudonyms in the form of descriptions for the companies instead of their names. All efforts were made during the reporting of the study to minimise the chance of organisations being identifiable, and whilst this is the case, some businesses may still be identifiable through the CSR work that they undertake.

Additionally, I also made the decision to anonymise the business representative that was interviewed and chose instead to use the third person pronoun 'they' when referring to them throughout the thesis. The decision was also made not to fully anonymise the job title of the business representatives as I believe that the roles of the individuals in the companies is important, I have, however, simplified and altered the job titles of participants where it is possible that they would be identifiable.

3.6 Analysis

Analysis of the research data took place in conjunction with data collection. The data was transcribed and then coded by myself as a form of thematic analysis. During the analysis process once interviews had taken place all data was downloaded onto my password encrypted laptop and was stored in a password encrypted folder as required by Cardiff University guidelines. The data was also

backed up on an external hard-drive and a memory pen which were stored securely and where no one else could access them.

3.6.1 Transcription

The data analysis process began with familiarising myself with the data. I was keen to stay familiar with the data throughout the data collection process, however, it was necessary to assess all the data again once all interviews had been completed and transcribed. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by myself following each interview as it helped to ensure that there was no lost data as is possible when transcription software is used (Boeije, 2010). I made the decision to leave out hesitations and pauses as this did not alter the transcriptions or what was said in the interviews. I ensured that the transcriptions were accurate by listening to the interviews and reading the transcriptions alongside each other. Where possible I transcribed the interviews straight after they had taken place. I chose to do this to ensure that I had a clear recollection of the interview should any confusion of words or phrases occur. The process was time-consuming and often complicated, however, I felt it necessary to transcribe the data myself rather than outsource as the 'key to successful qualitative data analysis is the need for the researcher to become thoroughly familiar with the data' (Fielding and Thomas, 2001). Becoming familiar with the data as I was transcribing also meant that the data analysis process could take place at the same time.

I came across several issues when transcribing the interviews. One of these issues was that I struggled to transcribe one interview fully as the interviewee was using a printer and photocopier in close proximity to the recorder throughout

the interview process. During the interview, however, I was aware that this may be the case and made detailed notes during the interview. I acknowledge that some interview data was lost due to the inaudibility of the interview, however, I was able to transcribe some of the data and that has been used in data analysis. A further issue I came across when interviewing was a language barrier. Having recently moved from Yorkshire to Wales I struggled with understanding certain Welsh phrases, place names and accents. When this occurred and I thought that it would be detrimental to the accuracy of the data to leave it out I enlisted the help of a Welsh colleague to listen to certain parts of the interviews (Rubin and Rubin, 2005).

3.6.2 Coding

The qualitative data gathered from the transcription of the interviews was initially self-coded in a format associated with Glazer and Strauss's grounded theory approach (1967/1999). Once I had transcribed the interviews, I manually coded the transcriptions by highlighting themes that had emerged in the research such as 'purpose for engagement', 'how engagement emerged' and 'experience of engagement with schools/businesses'. These themes also categorised the data into three sections; businesses, schools and pupils. This coding process took place as each interview was transcribed and it enabled me to see the emerging trends from each interview (Boeije, 2010). Following the completion of all of the interviews I compared the codes and created sub-categories. Following the manual coding approach that I had initially adopted I imported all transcriptions into the qualitative analysis software programme, NVivo. The use of NVivo allowed for the management and manipulation of the detailed and data-heavy

transcriptions and also enabled 'nodes' or subcategories to be created such as 'types of engagement', 'curriculum' and 'resources'. The development of these 'nodes' also allowed for themes that had emerged across all the interviews to be compared (Boeije, 2010). By engaging in theoretical coding, it enabled the conceptualisation and understanding of how nodes related to each other (Glaser, 1978, p.72). This, in turn, allowed me to compare and contrast my findings to existing literature on the existence of businesses in education.

Discussion

In this chapter I have provided a reflexive account of my research process, explaining the considerations made for the research methods and design and how the data was analysed. I have also discussed the limitations of my data. I have however attempted to provide sufficient justification for the reasons behind my methodological decisions.

Chapter Four - What do businesses *do* with schools and why?

Introduction

The way that businesses engage with schools can be hectic and haphazard in nature. On reflection of the ways that businesses engage with schools for CSR purposes their approach appears unstructured and can lack strategic purpose, particularly in terms of what they believe the schools want. The explanations given by businesses for their ways and means of engaging with schools are multifaceted and vary according to the broker or business. Through analytical debate, this chapter unravels the ways in which businesses develop relations with schools and will explore the justifications given for why they feel this form of active participation is warranted. Throughout this chapter, a picture will develop highlighting how the activities and support provided by businesses in schools is varied and is often reliant on the capacity of the business.

Firstly, the chapter will discuss how engagement opportunities are created and within this it will discuss the role that a careers service, alongside brokerage firms, play in forming opportunities of employer engagement in schools, this will then create an understanding of how different brokerage firms operate. The second section of the chapter will explore the changing landscape of corporate social responsibility with a focus on the move by many businesses from informal modes of engagement with schools to the creation of formal education programmes. This section will be accompanied by a discussion on the reliance of employee volunteers and how businesses set about recruiting employees as volunteers for

these educational programmes. Following this the chapter will seek to understand the businesses' 'terms of engagement', which will focus on what businesses and brokers look for in schools when they wish to undertake their CSR activities, exploring the push for strategic linking between businesses and schools. The fourth section will look at the different forms of engagement that businesses undertake with schools and how this differs across businesses. The final section of the chapter explores the business case for corporate social responsibility and the benefits that businesses can purportedly gain from their engagement. All businesses in this research undertook CSR activities with schools and their findings demonstrate how varied employer engagement in education can be.

4.1 The rise of brokers in school-business engagement

The increase in businesses wishing to undertake employer engagement in schools 'is reflected in the proliferation of brokers and brokerage arrangements' (Rochester *et al.*, 2012, p.108) whose objective is to forge purposeful partnerships between businesses and schools. Whilst the role of a broker can be varied, Lee *et al.* (2016, p.36) describe them as 'mediating links between groups of people, including mediating any conflicting values and expectations between the groups'. In the UK there are a range of brokers with this purpose but perhaps the widest-reaching brokerage group of its kind is Business Class, a subsidiary of Business in the Community (BITC), a Prince of Wales Charity, with The Prince of Wales as their Royal Founding Patron (Business in the Community, 2017b). For a business to become a member of Business in the Community and Business Class there are membership fees. For Business in the Community, membership costs are dependent on the size and turnover of the business and how many

opportunities within Business in the Community the businesses wish to access. Fees for Business Class for a three-year engagement partnership are £4,500 per annum if you are a BITC member and £5,400 if your organisation is not a Business in the Community member (Business in the Community, 2017c). For this fee the businesses are expected to receive one-to-one support and guidance on engaging with the school they are partnered with, something that is not provided to those businesses who do not engage through a broker.

Brokers were interviewed as part of this research because of their increasingly prominent role in creating engagement opportunities between businesses and schools. In the research location of South Wales, particularly Cardiff, there emerged three key organisations, who for the purpose of this research will be referred to as brokers. Perhaps the most significant of these brokers is the Welsh careers service, the Welsh national careers service, which was described by their Head of Stakeholder Services as 'a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government'. The careers service runs with a board of directors and a publicly appointed chair and is required to follow a remit of service provision needs as proposed by the Welsh Government. The Welsh careers service was formed in 2013 with the aim of providing independent and impartial careers advice throughout Wales.

In addition to providing careers guidance for adults and individuals facing redundancy, the Welsh careers service works closely with schools in terms of curriculum support and employer engagement, with the Head of Stakeholder Services explaining how 'we've got a team who work with teachers and lecturers

to try and drive up standards in career education'. The Welsh careers service also stated that they are responsible 'for brokering links between schools and employers', helping 'employers to support the curriculum and also making sure young people are ready for work'. The Head of Stakeholder Services at the Welsh careers service explained how this is achieved through the service's national database for educational business exchange where businesses can register their interest in engaging with schools. Through signing up for this the Head of Stakeholder Services explained how

'as part of that database we ask employers what types of activity they're prepared to support, so that could be work experience, mock interviews, masterclasses, presentations, the whole raft of education business activities'.

This allows the businesses to then be successfully partnered with the appropriate schools.

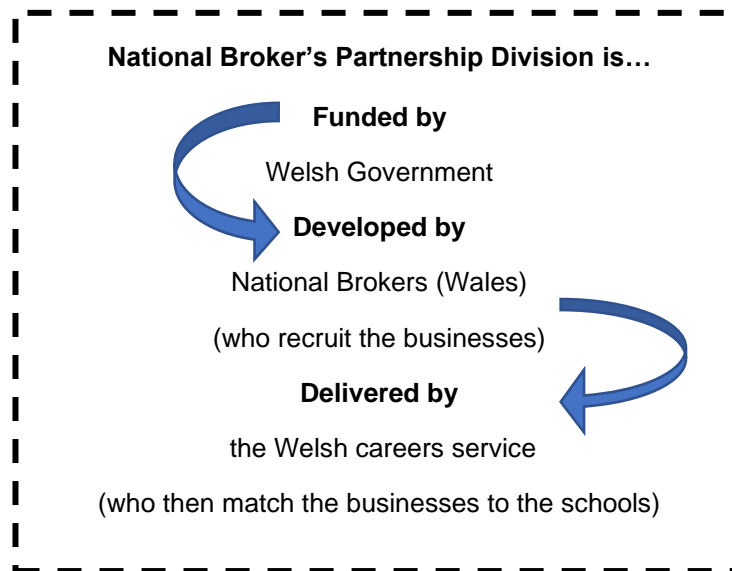
In 2014, following the success of the national brokers and their partnerships division, the Welsh branch of the brokerage firm was established, with the partnership division in Wales now boasting partnerships between businesses and schools throughout the whole of Wales. In Wales, the national broker works alongside the Welsh Government and the Welsh careers service to run the partnerships programme (Figure 3). The Head of Partnerships explained how

'our role (partnerships division) is the responsible business act so focussing on why the businesses want to do it and we try and help get people on board, [the Welsh careers service] focusses on the schools and setting up the partnerships and managing the partnerships, Welsh Government are the funders...so we report back to Welsh Government'. (Head of Partnerships (Wales), Partnerships Division, Wales).

The Welsh careers service's Head of Stakeholder Services added to this by explaining how through the maintenance of the partnerships they are also

responsible for ensuring ‘all the termly reviews happen, and all the cluster meetings happen’.

Figure 3 - Diagram showing operating process of the partnerships division of the national brokers (Wales).



(This diagram has been created for the purpose of this research)

Through their relationship with the Welsh careers service, the Head of Partnerships (Wales) explained how they have established ‘a partnership in every single local authority in Wales’. The Head of Partnerships (Wales) stated that the programme’s aim is to create sustainable and strategic partnerships through a ‘business development plan’ for each school they engage with. To enable the successful creation of partnerships the Head of Partnerships (Wales) explained how, along with the Welsh careers service, they begin with forming an understanding of how both the schools and the businesses function and what areas of a school would benefit best from a school-business partnership. The brokers then work with schools to run what they describe as a ‘needs analysis’ where they assess ‘the four areas of the school which we focus on which is

leadership and governance, curriculum, enterprise, and employability'. Following the needs analysis, the Head of Partnerships explained how they and the Welsh careers service then assess the school's preferred areas of improvement and then look at ways that a 'business can potentially enhance what they are already doing'. Once the needs analysis has taken place a development plan is established which allows the Welsh careers service to partner businesses and schools together with 'shared values' which the Head of Partnerships argues enables both the school and business 'to form a strong relationship as quickly as possible'.

One of the partnerships division's main points of focus with regards to partnerships is the use of businesses to link the curriculum as much as possible to the 'real world'. Despite research suggesting that employer engagement and CSR educational programmes are being used to push STEM subjects and careers (Stanley *et al.*, 2014), the Head of Partnerships (Wales) explained how many of the activities that take place between businesses and schools

'is sort of the ad hoc activities that always used to happen anyway. So typically, there will probably be some offer of work experiences, some sort of, you know, sort of interview practice type thing...putting CVs together, all that type of stuff'. (Head of Partnerships).

Further to this, the Head of Partnerships further explained how they have been known to use businesses to re-engage students in the curriculum through mentoring programmes. It was explained how

'it can be very specific, it can be a very specific group of, I don't know, five year nine boys let's say who are becoming disengaged, there's a danger of them dropping out, they're on the cusp and they need prevention...having mentoring sessions with those boys could potentially completely change the course of their life...giving them the time and space to actually talk to another adult that isn't a teacher, it's a totally different relationship' (Head of Partnerships (Wales), Partnerships Division Wales).

This, however, raises issues as to the real use of businesses in education, as this example given by the Head of Partnerships appears to demonstrate that businesses are being used as unqualified counsellors rather than for their business acumen and experience. It is these actions that suggest that whilst businesses may have the resources to tackle social problems, they do not necessarily possess the appropriate social skills to be able to deal with specific individuals (Griseri and Seppala, 2010). Through the partnerships division and schools promoting and encouraging mentoring, which borders on counselling sessions, by untrained individuals, there is 'no line of accountability to the people', or in this case, the students (Davis, 1973, p.320). There is, what Griseri and Seppala (2010, p.13) describe as a risk of 'irresponsible practice', which could create further issues in the long term for the pupils and the schools.

A broker on a more local scale, is the Cardiff local authority broker, a Cardiff-based local authority-run scheme. The scheme was established in 2016, having been developed and rolled out by the council's Education and Lifelong Learning Service. An Education Engagement Manager from the Cardiff local authority broker explained how the brokerage scheme was created for the purpose of tackling the city's Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) measurement, by 'ensuring that young people have access to employment post statutory education'. Research by Percy and Mann (2014) suggests that a young person's chance of becoming NEET is affected by their contact with employers, with those individuals who do not receive employer contact being at a higher risk of becoming NEET than those who have higher levels of contact with employers. For the Cardiff local authority broker, this was a concern as they explained how

'five years ago [the NEET rate] was the worst in Wales and it has gradually become a little bit better but it is still not where it should be seen as it is the capital city'. Consequently, it has become the aim of the Cardiff local authority broker for the city to achieve zero number of NEETs, ensuring that every young person in the city has access to training, further education or paid employment post 16 years old.

Much like the partnerships division of the national broker, the Cardiff local authority broker's aim is to provide young people throughout primary and secondary schools with engagement opportunities with employers to create awareness amongst young people of the opportunities that are available to them once they leave education. The Cardiff local authority broker however explained that

'What the [national brokers] in the Community team have tried to create is what they call strategic partnerships for the long term, ours is not necessarily about that, we haven't got a comprehensive a matching service as [the national broker]... We're not trying to do that, we're trying to make something much more fluid'. (Education Engagement Manager, The Cardiff local authority broker).

The Cardiff local authority broker compared themselves to the partnerships division of the national broker (Wales), stating how due to the detailed matching service that the partnerships division provides 'there's only so many partnerships they can support'. Comparatively, the Cardiff local authority broker's 'fluid' approach sees a focus on sporadic business encounters through interventions such as business inspiration and career awareness talks. The Education Engagement Manager at the Cardiff local authority broker explained how in order to encourage engagement from businesses they have 'put in place a pledging system whereby employers make a pledge and that pledge can be as flexible as they wish'. These types of pledges can not only vary in frequency, for example,

a business could pledge to attend five career fairs per year, but the activities can also range from careers talks, to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) practical workshops to offering work experience placements and help to read schemes.

As well as engagement varying according to the business, the Cardiff local authority broker explained how matching a school and a business is a complicated process in that it is imperative to first understand the structure of the school prior to any engagement taking place, a belief that was also shared by the Head of Partnerships (Wales). The Education Engagement Manager at the Cardiff local authority broker stated that by having knowledge of 'the school itself, what's the head like, what's the culture like, what's the learning like, what's the family like' it enables them to find the most relevant and worthwhile businesses to match the school with. By understanding these aspects, along with the businesses and what their aims and objective are, the Cardiff local authority broker states that 'it is a challenging process' but necessary. An example of where the structure of the school has been taken into consideration when developing school business interaction can be demonstrated by the Cardiff local authority broker's careers week. The Cardiff local authority broker explained how

'two heads [teachers] approached us at a Cardiff local authority broker event saying we've got lots of children in our schools from Muslim families, girls, and they're not allowed to work in their families, it's a tradition for the girls to not work. So we need to get people into the school to explain that you can work, these are the options'. (Education Engagement Manager, Cardiff local authority broker).

Consequently, the Cardiff local authority broker worked with several primary schools in Cardiff with a high number of Muslim students and with local businesses to create an annual week of business engagement and careers talks

for all students with the aim to dispel the restrictive gendered cultural values linked to Muslim female homelives (Archer, 2010).

The Cardiff local authority broker explained that whilst their pledge system is popular, having more than 200 businesses on their database, one of their main priorities is to encourage the Welsh Government to work with businesses when creating the curriculum, stating

‘if you want something that is systemic and sustainable then you’ve got to look at what is going to influence teaching and learning. It can’t be a one-off event and it has got to go in through the curriculum otherwise teachers won’t allow it into the school’. (Education Engagement Manager, Cardiff local authority broker).

As such, the Cardiff local authority broker believes that to successfully tackle the skills shortage and NEET rates in the city it is necessary to assess not only the content of the curriculum but also how the curriculum is taught and by whom. The Education Engagement Manager of the Cardiff local authority broker explained how

‘you could have an employer who is spending a lot of time and effort showing children how to code but then it is not in the lesson plans and it is not in the curriculum so how do you come out with the qualifications to progress into that career of choice. You’ve almost got a void because the national curriculum for Wales is completely out of date’. (Education Engagement Manager, Cardiff local authority broker).

Consequently, the Education Engagement Manager suggested ‘you’ve got to convince Welsh Government to modify the curriculum to be able to deliver these things’. The aim of the Cardiff local authority broker, therefore, is to work to push the Welsh Government for a curriculum which is heavily influenced by businesses. The interest in encouraging business engagement in schools is borne from the issue that

‘a lot of... teachers have been in school, left school, gone to uni, and gone back to school. And that might have been all you’ve done for 50 years’ (Education Engagement Manager, Cardiff local authority broker).

This opinion is echoed by the partnerships division of the national brokers who stated that teachers 'go from school to college, back to school and they work their way up'. The Education Engagement Manager at the Cardiff local authority broker furthers this by stating that '[the government] shouldn't have teachers designing the curriculum' as they lack the knowledge that is needed to design and teach a curriculum which is not based on an academic education but rather a skills-based need. This is an interesting comment by the Cardiff local authority broker as with the impending new Curriculum for Wales, whilst it has been developed by practitioner and stakeholder influence, it also allows for schools to design their own curriculum whilst meeting statutory guidance. The attitude expressed by the partnerships division of the national brokers (Wales) and the Cardiff local authority broker suggests a belief that there is a failure of the state to ensure that school teachers have been exposed to a variety of experiences before entering a classroom. Despite the 'call to action', as the Cardiff local authority broker refers to their engagement strategy, becoming increasingly popular, they explain how the whole strategy 'hasn't been without pain, there are still tensions in the system' due to conflicts between themselves, the partnerships division and the Welsh careers service 'with people saying, that's our job, well that's our job'.

What is not acknowledged by either the Cardiff local authority broker or the partnerships division of the national brokers (Wales) are the logistics surrounding a business-influenced curriculum. There are various concerns that can be raised relating to the incorporation of what businesses believe to be necessary requirements in the national curriculum. Firstly, questions can be raised as to where the line is drawn in relation to the extent of influence businesses have in

the creation of a new curriculum, and what types of business will be given the opportunity to have a say in the curriculum specification. This is a complicated issue as there would undoubtedly be a vast range of businesses who would want their requirements to be considered when creating the curriculum, but it would not be appropriate nor feasible to satisfy every businesses' needs. Furthermore, businesses are changing all the time and so are their individual needs and to develop a curriculum with business input without the knowledge of what the future needs of these businesses are would be misguided.

4.2 How do businesses create engagement opportunities?

Despite the increase in brokers and the assumed popularity of them amongst businesses wishing to engage with schools, a surprising finding from this research was that only two of the ten businesses interviewed stated that they actively worked with a broker. The national building society is a longstanding member of the partnerships division of the national brokerage firm with six partnerships across Wales and the international law firm had recently started to work with the newly formed Cardiff local authority broker. A CSR representative at the international law firm explained how 'I've just joined us this year on the Cardiff Initiative...where we work with them and make a pledge...to say undertake so many careers talks all year'.

In contrast, the eight other businesses in this research chose to engage with schools on their own terms and in their own way. While some businesses did not substantiate their reason for not using a broker, it can be understood that not working with a broker allowed the businesses more freedom in the fact that they

were not tied to providing a set amount of activities per year. Firms such as the upmarket department store, the international furniture store, the accounting organisation and the insurance company all organised their own engagements with schools, with some businesses preferring to wait to engage until they were actively sought out by schools and asked to provide school assistance. This was seen with the insurance company who stated that they had a flexible approach to their CSR strategy, with their People Service's representative explaining how 'we don't approach people, they approach us'. The People Services representative did explain however that on the day of the interview they had been approached by the Cardiff local authority broker and were looking to engage with the broker in the future. It was also found, however, that some businesses worked with a broker as well as organising other activities with schools on their own. As well as working with the Cardiff local authority broker, the international law firm explained how they were not averse to cold-calling schools looking for opportunities to discharge their CSR activities. They stated how they had frequently actively searched for schools who would allow them to 'help them out'.

4.3 The changing landscape of corporate social responsibility in schools

The emergence of brokerage firms has undoubtedly coincided with a rise in businesses developing formal corporate social responsibility programmes. According to Woolhouse (1991, p.3), the 1980s brought about 'a wave of reform and innovation unprecedented in the history of the British educational system' which gave rise to the creation of new partnerships between education and businesses. In the past, partnerships that were formed between schools and businesses could be described as 'brief and episodic, involving a school here and

a classroom there' (Clark, 1996, p.60). Indeed, in 2019 this is still the preferred form of discharging corporate social responsibility by some companies. More recently, however, the way that businesses discharge their social responsibilities in schools has changed significantly and has become more aligned with what Moan *et al.* (2010) described as positive duty-based morality. Whilst some businesses in this research still preferred to work with schools on an informal basis with their CSR interventions, other businesses had chosen to make the move towards more formal modes of employer engagement in schools through the development of educational programmes. The change in approach towards a more purposeful form of CSR in the form of employer engagement is described by Rangan *et al.* (2012, p.1) as 'creating shared value' which results in a form of CSR that not only benefits society but also the business and its shareholders, therefore 'manifesting itself as a win-win proposition'. This idea of CSR being mutually beneficial is a concept shared by both the brokerage groups and several businesses in the research. The development in these new forms of CSR activities sees businesses entering what is described by Maon *et al.* (2010) as the cultural embedment phase where businesses have addressed their CSR activities to their environment. In this phase, there is a demonstration that businesses have become fully aware of the needs of their socially responsible activities and have the knowledge to pursue them in a long-term sustainable way.

A theme that emerged from the interviews with brokers and businesses was the idea that there must be strategic links between businesses and schools to make partnerships successful. The aim behind this is that it would enable every intervention to be purposeful and meet the needs of both the business and the

school involved. The findings from this research emphasise the haphazard nature of engagement with schools, with only three of seven formal engagements being strategically linked. This section will show how the findings from this research suggest that those businesses who undertake formal engagements with schools in the form of educational programmes are more likely to focus on creating strategic partnerships compared to those who engage with schools on an informal basis. It is suggested by Russo and Tencati (2009, p.339) that 'formal CSR strategies seem to characterise large firms while informal CSR strategies prevail among micro, small and medium-sized enterprises'. In fact, this research has found that company size does not necessarily indicate whether CSR strategies are formal or informal.

Seven of the ten businesses in this piece of research had specially designed educational programmes that were created by the businesses and carried out in schools. For many of these businesses, there was a strategic move to create programmes that would be beneficial to both the schools and themselves. A CSR Associate from the multinational investment bank suggested that their educational life skills programme was developed for the purpose of benefitting the company as well as the schools. The CSR Associate explained that several years ago

'we decided to totally change our strategy and instead of giving donations we decided that we would only invest monies in a programme or a project...we used to offer volunteering opportunities for a classroom makeover but what's the benefit to [the multinational investment bank] to do that?' (CSR Associate, the multinational investment bank).

This attitude expressed by the multinational investment bank representative was mirrored by the Head of Telecoms who also stated

'if you go to a school and you do an intervention which is painting the hall then that's great for the school but it doesn't create a sustainable system, and I think if you step back 20 years we were much more about giving cash for CSR if you like, we don't do that anymore, so the big shift is about fostering partnerships which is about value in kind'. (Head of Telecoms Wales, telecoms company).

The decision increasingly made by businesses to become socially responsible in the form of educational programmes demonstrates and supports the idea that there is also an increased focus by businesses on the importance of looking good by 'doing good' (Karnani, 2011).

It has emerged from this research that businesses frequently mentioned how they may work with schools on what they described as an 'ad hoc', or simply informal, basis rather than a part of a formal partnership. In comparison to the telecoms company, the international law firm, the accounting organisation, and the multinational investment bank who all have formal corporate social responsibility programmes, other businesses adopt a more informal approach towards their 'social responsibilities' and their school interventions are limited. For some businesses there is either no structured CSR initiative, or for those businesses that do have CSR programmes there is a lack of structure in their delivery.

The Education Manager at the British banking group explained that whilst their programme is structured in that their financial capability lessons are delivered in different formats to suit Key Stages in schools, their partnerships are formed with schools that bank with the British banking group. Although the banking group Education Manager did state 'that's not to say we wouldn't be prepared to go in and actually do something in a school that doesn't even bank with us, if it came to that'. Additionally, other businesses 'carry out CSR as and when it is needed' (the insurance company), or more specifically, when schools contact them

directly. This is shown by the multinational investment bank who stated that their ad hoc engagements are often a result of when 'mum or dad work for the company and the teachers say can you come in and do something'. Despite this informal attitude to CSR both the multinational investment bank and the insurance company still had significant formal links with schools performing interventions such as Young Enterprise mentoring, skills and training, and careers fairs.

4.3.1 Engaging Employees

Due to the everchanging landscape of corporate social responsibility and the increasingly popular move away, albeit not completely, from one-off CSR activities there has developed an increasing reliance on employee volunteers to actively participate in the socially responsible activities of the business. An issue with this, however, is that having CSR programmes which involve employee volunteers relies on the willingness of employees to also be engaged in the cause (Griseiri and Seppala, 2010). The businesses in this research that had employee volunteering opportunities approached the recruitment of volunteers in different ways. One form of recruiting employee volunteers by businesses was through the company's online portal, a space that all employees had access to and could see the volunteering opportunities available. This form of volunteer recruitment was used by the international law firm, the British banking group, the accounting organisation, and the upmarket department store. The Executive Assistant at the accounting organisation explained how 'we advertise volunteering opportunities to the wider [company] community and they then register their interest to volunteer at those events', similarly the Legal and Compliance Manager at the international law firm explained that 'when we're doing events we have a bulletin

board on our intranet, so basically we put up all the events on there asking the volunteers and people just submit their names and we just allocate as we can'.

Other businesses in the research required employees to volunteer as part of their job roles. The national building society explained that they encourage all of their staff to volunteer, although it was noted that some staff are more proactive in participating than others. To tackle this, the CSR Manager at the national building society explained that new starters to the company (primarily head office) are automatically enrolled to volunteer in a community challenge team and are expected to participate in a community project every twelve months. Likewise, the People Services representative from the insurance company explained how they asked their colleagues to volunteer, however they have also recently introduced compulsory volunteering into their graduate programme which expects all graduates to be prepared to mentor a young person. In addition to offering employees the option to sign up for volunteer opportunities, the Legal and Compliance Manager at the international law firm explained how it is not unknown for managers to suggest to employees that volunteering for engagement projects 'would be useful'.

One point that was mentioned throughout the business interviews was how workplace characteristics were a determiner of who could volunteer (Rodell *et al.*, 2015). The telecoms company, the British banking group and the national building society all stated in their interviews that although employee volunteering is encouraged, for some employees, workplace characteristics, such as their job role, could often affect the feasibility of engagement. The British banking group

Education Manager explained how in 'internal roles (such as a cashier) it is difficult for people to be absent, to be absent from their place, you know, so it depends what you're doing the extent to which you can sort of absent your staff really'. This was furthered by the Head of Telecoms who conveyed how

'the volunteering days that we offer is 30% utilised, or 33%, so there's a big opportunity to increase utilisation of what the company give, erm I don't know why, there are operational reasons why it might be difficult, depending on the job you do, because if you are an operational customer-facing employee your time is, your time is apportioned to you serving the customer needs, so you need to be quite disciplined to organise your volunteering days so that your customer needs can be met as well as allowing you to go out. So we are a massive company, we've got about 4000 employees in Wales, a lot of them are front line operational roles, especially in the engineering world so it takes a lot of commitment and effort to make sure you don't impact on the customer care whilst taking people out of the system to go and volunteer'. (Head of Telecoms, telecoms company).

The increasing use of employee volunteers to engage with schools shows how CSR activities have developed from annual events or donations to structured activities which rely significantly on the willingness of employees. Having said this, the Civic Investment Manager at the upmarket department store who expressed how their volunteering numbers were actually in decline because they 'don't have, whilst still maintaining customer service, the numbers of partners on the shop floor that we would have used to', and so being able to spare staff to volunteer in work time is simply not feasible.

Further to the engagement of employees depending on workplace characteristics, both the British banking group and the national building society conveyed how there are other variables that affect the extent of their engagement with schools. The Education Manager at the British banking group suggested that engagement with schools varies by area as

'it'll depend on how much the retail directors drive it, there'll be some who will say 'we'll do what we can but...' and then there'll be others who will say 'this is

absolutely key, it's high on my balance scorecard in terms of what I want to see'. (Education Manager, the British banking group).

This supports research by Gössling and Vocht (2007) that suggests a business's CSR policies and activities can vary significantly depending on how individuals in that business see their role in society. In comparison, however, the CSR Manager at the national building society explained how engagement 'changes sometimes with the teacher' and that the school's engagement levels may change depending on the time and their needs, stating that 'a school may say we're really under the cosh this month, can we focus on an end of term event or end of year and that's fine'. This therefore suggests how the undertaking of employer engagement activities in schools is not a straightforward process and there are a number of variables that can influence how a partnership works.

4.4 Terms and Conditions – what do businesses look for in schools?

Regardless of whether businesses engage with schools on their own merit or through a broker, it has become apparent through undertaking this piece of research that most businesses, as well as brokers, had certain criteria they looked for in schools that they chose to engage with. In some instances, these criteria were dictated by the brokerage firms used by businesses and was not necessarily a direct choice made by the businesses. The Head of Partnerships (Wales) stated that

'we prioritise schools in areas of high social deprivation and high levels of free school meals because we know that they're the most in need of that support'. (Head of Partnerships (Wales), Partnerships Division Wales).

This is further supported by Cardiff local authority broker who also explained that

'our board told us that we need to focus any of the resources that we have as far as possible, but not exclusively into what we call the southern arc'.
(Education Engagement Manager, Cardiff local authority broker).

The southern arc which the Cardiff local authority broker refers to is the local authority's use of the geographical mapping of schools to determine which schools are perceived to be needier than others (Figure 4). In this case, schools in the southern arc of the city of Cardiff were regarded to be the most deprived schools, where the children were described by the Cardiff local authority broker as 'noticeably underperforming' and therefore they received the most engagement from employers. In comparison, schools in the northern arc of the city who were seen as lesser deprived were often the last to receive engagement opportunities. A clear example of this is demonstrated by the Cardiff local authority broker who explained that a local company had offered a summer internship course for girls studying A-Level Maths and ICT. The Cardiff local authority broker was tasked with finding girls wanting to take up this opportunity, however, they stated that they

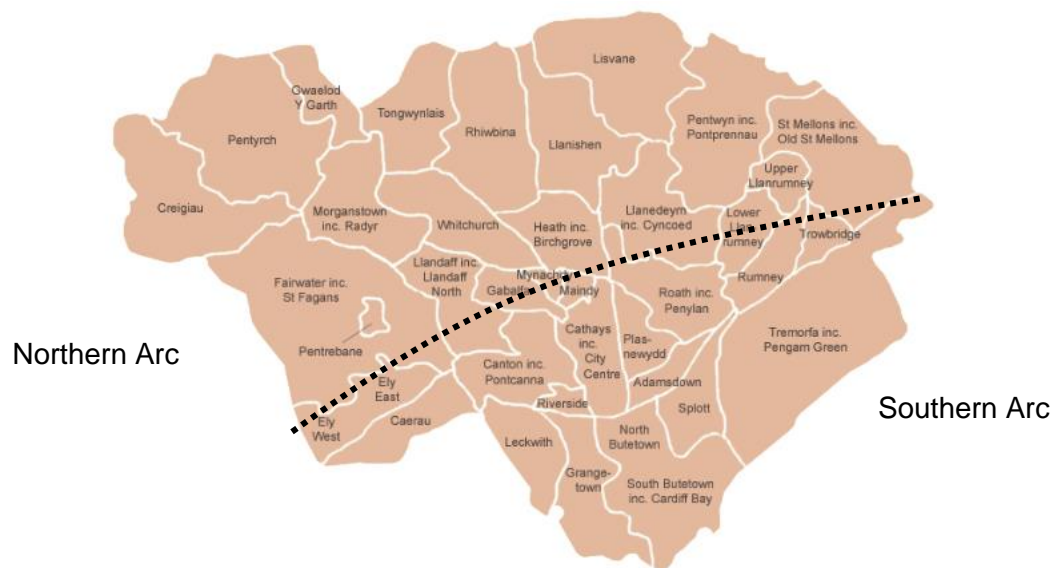
'looked at all the [A Level] offers in our secondaries in southern Cardiff, and unfortunately there is not that many offering ICT at A Level, they mostly offer maths, a small number offer ICT. I don't know if any were offering computer science. So I put the offer out to those schools and they didn't all reply'.
(Education Engagement Manager, Cardiff local authority broker).

Consequently, the Education Engagement Manager explained how they then

'spoke to our director and said we've got this amazing offer but our schools are not offering the right subjects so what do you want me to do now. So he said you're going to have to open it to the whole of Cardiff. The schools in the north of the city tend to have a better a level offer, they've got more opportunities for children to do ICT and computer science and programming'. (Education Engagement Manager, Cardiff local authority broker).

This example given by Cardiff local authority broker demonstrates how despite the push to provide opportunities to pupils in the more deprived areas of Wales/Cardiff they are still missing out because the schools do not have the available resources to be able to support the opportunities on offer.

Figure 4 – Mapping of Cardiff used by the Cardiff local authority broker to distinguish between Northern Arc and Southern Arc schools in the Local Authority.



The focus by brokers and businesses on schools they classed as being in an area of high social deprivation was often based on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSMs). A 2016 survey by YouGov on how young adults experienced employer engagement in school found that those individuals who had received free school meals remembered 1.5 occasions on which they had connected with employers, compared to 1.6 occasions experienced by those not in receipt of free school meals (Kashefpakdel *et al.*, 2019). The decision made by brokers and businesses to work with schools on the basis of free school meal allowances can be discussed in terms of social mobility (Stanley *et al.*, 2014), a concept which will be presented later in this chapter. Between those businesses who noted FSMs as a factor for school involvement there were differences in the percentage of free school meals a school needed to have before a business was willing to work with them. While the partnership division of the national brokers stated that a school’s FSM count was important to their work, they did not specify

during the interview the percentage of FSMs that a partnership school must have. In comparison, the multinational investment bank states that schools participating in their life skills programme, run in South-East and South-West Wales by the Welsh branch of the national brokers, must meet the criteria of having more than 20% of pupils who are entitled to free school meals and/or more than 20% of pupils living in some of the most deprived areas in Wales. The accounting organisation, however, stated that with their educational programme, which provides mentoring and employability sessions, specifically focusses their partnerships with schools who have a FSM percentage of 40% or over.

Whilst the use of free school meals as a determiner for engagement is understandable, as research suggests it is those individuals who receive free school meals who usually miss out on engagement opportunities (Stanley *et al.*, 2014), issues emerged regarding how employers understood social disadvantage in schools. Despite many businesses' focussing their educational programmes on increasing the social, economic and cultural capital of young people, there were incongruities found regarding how businesses defined what they classed as an 'area of high social deprivation', something which should be clarified considering their wish to target these disadvantaged groups. Following the interview with the Head of Partnerships at the national brokers a search on the brokerage website found that the brokers must ensure that over 60% of their engagement is located in the top 20% most deprived areas on the indices of multiple deprivation⁴. Whilst this is the measurement that the national brokers and

⁴ 'A measurement of relative deprivation used to rank neighbourhoods across the UK' (Social Value Portal, 2017)

their partnerships division uses, this does not mean that other businesses use the same measurement for areas of deprivation.

Whilst businesses are focusing these additional opportunities towards disadvantaged pupils, there is a lack of consistency amongst businesses as to what constitutes a highly deprived area, whether it is a governmental definition or personal interpretation is unclear. Despite businesses stating their CSR activities and employer engagement focussed on areas of high social disadvantage and free school meal numbers, many of the businesses such as the multinational investment bank and the telecoms company worked with all state-maintained schools and did not necessarily prioritise those schools that would be classed as 'disadvantaged', further demonstrating a flexible attitude towards selecting schools to engage with.

Several businesses in this research, including the upmarket department store, the British banking group, the Welsh branch of a telecoms company and the international law firm, believed that their engagement with schools provided the opportunity to improve social mobility amongst school pupils. For the purpose of this research, the social mobility referred to by businesses can be defined as

'the economic or social status between parents and their children...this may consider income or earnings, but also educational attainment, occupation or health' (OECD, 2018).

The businesses in this research therefore looked for schools where social mobility could be increased, supporting the UK Government focus on using 'employer involvement to increase pupil engagement and enhance attainment' (Stanley *et al.*, 2014, p.9). The upmarket department store explained how 'we're looking to move to be more focussed around social mobility and the role we can play within

that through educational attainment', this awareness led to the development of *Bringing Skills to Life* in 2013, a programme with curriculum links for primary education aimed at developing core skills amongst pupils.

Whilst some businesses focussed their corporate social responsibilities purely on state-maintained schools, with one business, the building company, going so far as to state 'would we sponsor a private school? I shouldn't think so, because why would they need our money?', others were more flexible in their approach. This is demonstrated by a representative from the insurance company who explained

'I'm going into [a private school] in July because one of our senior managers, her daughter goes there and they're having an employability day'.

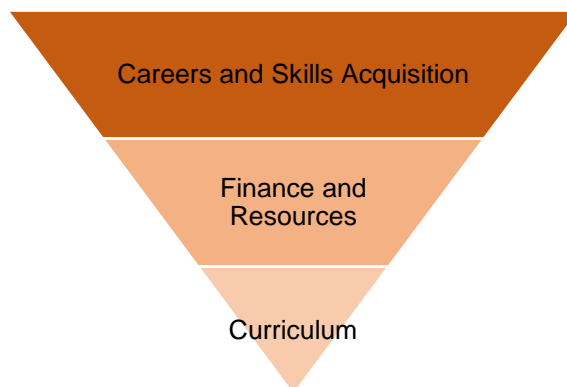
Due to the independent nature of this particular school in Cardiff it is generally not a school where businesses would undertake their CSR duties, particularly as they would not fit the 'area of deprivation' and 'high numbers of free school meals' criteria. The insurance company were not the only business in this research to work with this private school, with the telecoms company also stating how they have provided work experience and digital literacy skills to a group of girls from the same school. This highlights the difficulties in understanding how CSR works when this 'strategy' demonstrates a lack of consistency when trying to understand how the links are created between businesses and schools (Rangan *et al.*, 2012).

4.5 What engagement activities take place?

The ways that businesses engaged with schools in this research varied according to factors including, but not limited to, the size of the business and attitudes towards engagement and resources. Analysis of the data from the interviews with brokers and businesses found that the activities that businesses undertook with

schools, supports the findings of Stanley *et al.* (2014) which suggests that work experience, life and careers skills and career choices interventions were all popular forms of business engagement. What this new research allows for is the development of an understanding as to why the businesses do these particular forms of engagement and their choices for doing so. Figure 5 below demonstrates how businesses prioritise engagement with schools through a hierarchical pyramid. The pyramid was created through analysis of the interviews with businesses and based on what the companies' CSR educational programmes focussed around. The pyramid indicates that CSR focusing on careers and skills acquisition were most frequently undertaken by businesses, with curriculum focussed initiatives being less prevalent.

Figure 5 – Frequency of engagement for businesses in schools



(Figure created from research findings)

4.5.1 Careers and Skills Acquisition

The delivery of skills acquisition workshops by businesses has emerged as one of the primary ways in which businesses are engaging with schools and supports the argument by Rahbek and Pedersen (2015) that CSR activities are shaped by social, economic and political spheres. For some businesses such as the

accounting organisation, the international law firm and the multinational investment bank these skills workshops were delivered through their education programmes, for other businesses such as the insurance company and the national building society the skills workshops were offered through careers days or as part of an existing relationship with a school. There was found to be a mixture of specific and generic skills which were taught through these workshops depending on the company and what they were looking to gain from their engagement. This is an important consideration as it suggests that businesses are engaging with schools to achieve their own agenda and not taking the schools needs into account.

Many businesses in the research focussed their educational programmes around the teaching of generic skills in the form of CV writing and interview skills. The Head of Partnerships claimed that research has found that

‘businesses are saying that people don’t have the skills...they don’t have the ability to be trainable because they’ve just been so focussed on passing the exams that they don’t have any initiative’. (Head of Partnerships (Wales), Partnerships Division Wales)

This is an attitude which appears to have gone unchanged, with Wolf (2002, p.117) suggesting that the business about public education is that

‘schools turn out pupils who simply do not have the relevant skills or personal qualities. They can’t add up; they can’t write a business letter; they don’t know how to work in teams, or talk to customers, or understand the need to turn up to work on time’.

These quotes suggest that students are to blame for their lack of skills rather than the schools and the government in ensuring that pupils are equipped with these skills. As such this has resulted in businesses developing educational programmes which focus on increasing skills including critical thinking, CV writing, and interview skills, and focussing less on educational achievement. This

form of CSR performed by businesses can be associated with Murphy's (1978) responsiveness era whereby businesses are seen to mould their CSR policies around current issues. The complexity of how corporate social responsibility can be interpreted is demonstrated by the different approaches towards employer engagement by the businesses (Murphy, 1978; Mann and Glover, 2011; UKCES, 2012).

A CSR representative from the international law firm explained how their educational programme, which is undertaken in each office location in the UK, is aimed at state-educated 'children who have been identified as having potential for the legal profession'. The CSR representative stated how the programme sees the children 'spending three days doing various activities...so things like CV writing and interviewing skills'. Furthermore, the multinational investment bank and the accounting organisation educational programmes are also focussed on engaging with schools and its pupils through the provision of generic skills.

The Corporate Social Responsibility Associate at the multinational investment bank explained that currently, they have 'about 90% of secondary schools using the [Life Skills] programme across the UK' and in addition to this 'every secondary school and every college is on our mailing list and they literally receive communication from [the multinational investment bank] each term'. The multinational investment bank states that since the educational programme's launch on 30th April 2013 up to 31st December 2018 the programme had reached over seven million young people. An explanation for businesses taking on these roles in schools can be argued to be as a result of the previous withdrawal of

government funding in these areas. As such, Karnani (2011, p.83) argues that 'when the government does not fulfil its responsibility, it is good that civil society steps in and tries to fill the gap'. Karnani (2011), however, also acknowledges that it is simply not feasible to rely on civil society to undertake this new role.

The aim to influence schools on a country-wide scale is further demonstrated by the telecoms company whose education programme 'Barefoot Computing' aims to build a culture of tech literacy. The Head of Telecoms stated that their computer coding programme started later than England's and currently it 'only reaches just short of 5% of Welsh primary schools', however, they explained how with the introduction of the Digital Competency Framework in Welsh Schools from September 2017 'the big push starts...there are about 1350 primary schools in Wales and we will go to all of them'. The Digital Competency Framework (DCF) is the first element of the new curriculum for Wales which aims to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes of school pupils (aged 3-16 years old) to enable 'confident, creative and critical use of technologies and systems' (Welsh Government, 2016). The implication by the telecoms company therefore is that there will be an uptake in their educational coding programme following the implementation of the DCF as it will have more relevance to the curriculum than it has had before. Up until this point however, the telecoms company have been developing and implementing a coding education programme which has not been supported by the curriculum or had a qualification related to it. This further supports what the Education Engagement Manager at the Cardiff local authority broker said in that employers are teaching students things that are not in the curriculum. Furthermore, the coding programme at the time of the interview was

only carried out with primary schools, and this was then not followed up or continued into secondary education, so whilst it may spark the interests of young children, there is no qualification for them to be able to develop this into a career. It is here where the Cardiff local authority broker suggests that there is a void in the current Welsh curriculum.

For the three financial corporations in this research, the national building society, the multinational investment bank and the British banking group, there was a CSR initiative based on the development and teaching of financial awareness. The CSR Associate from the multinational investment bank explained how financial awareness is the third pillar of their life skills education programme. The CSR Associate stated that 'we wanted people to be financially savvy...what sort of bank account to choose and why, how to avoid getting into debt, etcetera'. This was a similar activity to that carried out by the national building society who explained that their financial capability lessons were 'part of the overall package' of their school partnerships. The CSR Manager of the national building society stated that they had recently 'arranged for 31 of our branch staff to go into schools and deliver a [financial capability] lesson'. The need for this was considered by the CSR Manager as being driven by the need to alter habits and forming new habits when it came to finance amongst young people. Unlike the multinational investment bank and the British banking group however, the national building society expressed how they use other bank's resources taken from the Personal Finance Education Group's website.

In addition to skills acquisition workshops, several of the businesses interviewed frequently engaged with schools through careers events run by the schools. The Legal and Compliance Manager at the international law firm explained how through their pledge to Cardiff local authority broker they had undertaken 'inspiring the future' careers talks on 'what it's like to work in the corporate world' at a local primary school. It was explained by the Legal and Compliance Manager that the careers talk was then followed by a question and answer session where the students were able to interrogate the business representative about their job. The accounting organisation also engaged with schools through careers fairs, with their Executive Assistant explaining how to co-inside with their education initiatives which focus around improving social mobility, their aim is to make young people aware that 'there are careers out there that are attainable for them if they do well in school'. For the British banking group, their attendance at careers events enabled them to make young people aware of the variety of roles available in the banking industry. The Education Manager at the British banking group explained how

[students] don't realise [their local bank] is the tip of the iceberg...there are lots of people working in the bank behind the scenes...I've been to career fairs before now and students come up to me and say 'you wouldn't want me, I'm not good at maths'. (Education Manager, the British banking group)

It was attitudes such as this which the Education Manager suggested needing addressing as there was a need to create an awareness that there is much more to banking than finance, such as marketing, public relations and human resources.

Whilst the building company had also participated in the occasional careers fair their approach to school engagement differed from other businesses in this

research. The Managing Director explained how one of their employees will go to schools and 'he's got a big sign up saying 'don't want to go to university come and speak to me'. So we kind of offer an alternative to university'. Additionally, the Managing Director of the building company stated that

'we went to some of the deprived areas of east London because we were doing some work down there and oddly enough the local education authority wanted our younger people to go into schools to, to actually say look this is what I've done... and almost be aspirational if you like, and say you can drive around in a big car, have a laptop and a mobile phone and all that sort of thing and I know it is a bit materialistic but they're just trying to get those kids to recognise, a role model to say, rather than a professional footballer saying I can do this and that'.
(Managing Director, building company).

This attitude expressed by the building company demonstrates not only the variety of how engagement takes place, but also attitudes towards it and how it is undertaken. The example provided by the Managing Director perhaps best demonstrates how the socially responsible actions of a small family business can vary to that of a large multinational corporation (Davis and Crane, 2010).

4.5.2 Resources and finance

Following skills workshops, the next most common type of CSR activity took the form of resource provision and financial donations, supporting data by Grant Thornton (2014) which states that 68% of 2,500 business were found to donate financially to a cause in a 12-month period. Several businesses in the research were found to donate a range of resources to schools, often in addition to either skills provision or financial donations. A Community Support Ambassador from the international furniture store explained how their Cardiff store lacked significant employee volunteers and consequently their main form of store-based CSR in education was performed sporadically and often related to product or resource donation. The Community Support Ambassador acknowledged their limited

community support and stated that a new format for their in-store CSR work is currently being trialled to encourage more staff engagement. The international furniture store justified their form of school engagement as aligning with what they do as an organisation. This justification by the international furniture store's Community Support Ambassador supports research by Lee *et al.* (2019) on how school partnerships vary by sector. Their research found that 89% of business in the manufacturing/construction sector (most closely aligned sector to the international furniture store) gave donations to schools, compared to only 44% undertaking employee visits and 11% providing student mentoring. The Community Support Ambassador explained 'we were contacted by a school asking for a donation of furniture to furnish their new student common room' and so not only did the store donate new furniture but they worked with the pupils to design furnish the school's new common space. The Community Support Ambassador explained how they had also donated recycling bins to a local school.

As well as their educational programme, the Legal and Compliance Manager at the international law firm stated that despite their employer engagement being somewhat intermittent, they are 'always looking for volunteering opportunities' where they can help with gardening or decorating at a school. The Legal and Compliance Manager explained that there is a 'trust fund within the whole firm and the partnership pay money into that annually and that money then forms the budgets for our corporate social responsibility work'. One of the ways that they had recently used these funds was through the refurbishment of a garden at a local school. The Legal and Compliance Manager explained how

‘we helped build their garden...we did all the raised beds with them and helped them with planting and the painting...and we also did a big painting and cleaning of the children’s garden’.

The nature of this aspect of the international law firm’s CSR suggests how increasing cuts in government funding could be the cause of schools relying on the CSR activities of businesses to help refresh and refurbishing school resources.

A further example of how a business has used its own skills to engage with a school through resource donation was the building company, a small family-owned construction business who created a new structural timber play area for a local primary school. The business had been approached by a local school asking for a donation of a new outdoor play area. The building company’s Managing Director (MD) explained how

‘[the school] needed a play area for the outdoor, I don’t quite understand all these modern things, where they go out of a classroom straight into a play area, yeah, seems nonsense to me but still, so we built them an outdoor area with AstroTurf and stuff like that’. (Managing Director, building company).

The MD explained that this project cost the company around £7,000 in labour and resources, he also explained how he had not done anything like this before, nor has the company done one since. This once again demonstrates how varied the undertaking of engagement with schools can be.

Amongst all the businesses interviewed as a part of this research, there were only two businesses who stated that they have helped schools financially. The national building society, whose CSR activities also fell into the skills workshops and resource donation categories explained how they were not averse to financially assisting the schools they engage with. The CSR Manager of the

national building society explained how they frequently sponsor different activities within schools, ranging from the sponsorship of school rugby teams which includes the provision of new kits with the national building society's branding, to the sponsorship of online financial education workshops for over 200 pupils across several schools. In addition to this, the CSR Manager also stated that the company has developed an 'Achievement Award' that takes place every term in each school they are partnered with and comprises of the building society donating prizes, sometimes in the form of money, to a pupil who has been acknowledged as 'doing something amazing'.

In comparison to those businesses with educational programmes and structured CSR strategies and partnerships, there was one business who understood their corporate social responsibility in a primarily financial sense. This was the building company whose Managing Director described themselves as a socialist and stated that this influenced their attitude towards social responsibility which is why they focussed heavily on contributing back to the community. This attitude supports Rangan *et al.* (2012, p.3) who suggest that businesses engage with CSR

'because it is a good thing to do, motivated by the logic that since the corporation is an integral part of society it has an obligation to contribute to community needs'.

The owner explained that 'we make money from society, so we should put it back in'. Within the building company there was no desire for there to be an official CSR programme as the owner and managing director explained

'in a FTSE company it's what shareholders expect you to do, that's what they want you to do, don't spend money unless you can actually get a return on it, we're not like that, we're a family company...we don't have that level of cynicism'. (Managing Director, building company).

This attitude from the building company supports the suggestion that FTSE businesses undertake forms of corporate social responsibility for competitive advantage that 'boosts business excellence' (Kamukama *et al.*, 2017, p. 222). The building company however claimed that as a small family business their philanthropy and the social responsibilities that they carry out are not based on the expectation that they will bring competitive advantage in the same way as FTSE companies. By this it is meant that the small family business does not undertake their CSR activities either because they are required to by policies or because they are trying to stand out against other competitors by doing so, which is often the case for larger companies.

For Build Offsite, their engagement with schools often took the form of financial donations. The Managing Director explained how 'we will give just general sponsorship, so £500 or whatever and they can spend it on whatever they want to spend it on'. The owner of the business explained how the nature of the company, in that it is a small family run firm allows them to give money flexibly 'because it's our money we can do, we don't have to sit down at the beginning of the year and say that's our sponsorship budget'.

One extraordinary circumstance that the building company were involved in was paying the shortfall of a teacher's salary at a local school following a plea from a school governor. The owner explained how the school was risking closure if they could not find the money to pay for the right number of staff, so the firm stepped up to enable the school to stay open. The Managing Director of the building company expressed his frustration at the local authorities stating 'why won't the

local authority stump this up? They just see it as a school that can close, and pupils can be allocated somewhere else'. Following the meeting with the school governor the Managing Director explained how the firm gave the school 'somewhere between, I can't remember whether it was £7,500 or £15,000, something like that'. When asked whether the school had remained open following the shortfall provision, they stated 'they haven't come back to us and asked [for more money] so my view was if they're not asking then they probably don't need [any more]'

Another way in which the Managing Director of the building company exercised their 'socialist' beliefs was through the sponsorship of 'a young lad' through Oxford University. The Managing Director explained how they had been approached by a local student who 'didn't want to take out a student loan and came to us and said 'I'm £5000 short and quite honestly I can't have a student loan, my parents can't afford for me to go to university, and pay the course fees, would you sponsor me?'. The Managing Director explained how they thought about the situation and the request made by the student and decided that 'if they're that good at maths that they can get into Oxford then it's a shame that they drop out of the system so we sponsored them'. Often in cases of university sponsorship by businesses there is the assumption that the student, on completion of the degree, will work for said business. In this case however, the Managing Director stated how they 'do not imagine' that they'll hear from the student again, and do not expect to, suggesting 'quite frankly if they get a maths degree from Oxford I can't see why they'd come and join us'.

This form of flexible corporate social responsibility with the building company demonstrates the as and when attitude that small businesses are able to adopt as they are not constrained to the same annual sustainability reporting as larger businesses (Day and Woodward, 2009). In addition to this, privately owned businesses, as Rangan *et al.* (2012, p.3) suggests 'have much greater freedom in allocating their charitable dollars in line with the philanthropic inclinations of their controlling owners'. A clear example of this is demonstrated by the company's owner stating his decision whether to give money

'depends on what side of the bed I've got out of and whether someone's story sounds genuine or not, if their story is genuine you support it, if you think this person is trying to pull wool over my eyes then you won't give a thing'.
(Managing Director, building company).

The issue with CSR of this nature is that it is sporadic and whilst this is no doubt beneficial to the business itself, it means that there is no structure to the financial giving and therefore schools cannot rely on it or think of it as any more than an isolated donation.

4.6 The business case for school engagement

The increasing popularity of businesses undertaking CSR activities in schools suggests that their activities are benefitting the businesses in addition to apparently benefitting the schools and pupils with whom they engage. This section aims to explain the perceived benefits that businesses can expect to receive as a result of their employer engagement. The undertaking of CSR activities in which to benefit the business as well as the receiver can be described as *strategic philanthropy*. Porter and Kramer (2002, p.6) suggest that 'strategic philanthropy' in a corporate sense 'generally means that there is some connection, however vague or tenuous, between the charitable contribution and

the company's business'. The findings from this current piece of research however, demonstrate how new forms of CSR programmes in schools are being used strategically by the businesses in what can be described as ensuring company sustainability (Detomasi, 2007).

4.6.1 'Work-ready' students

Businesses who were interviewed in the current research expressed that more and more frequently they were coming across young people who they believed were lacking the skills necessary for them to successfully enter employment after they leave education. These views were shared across multiple businesses and as a result, this is what many businesses based their CSR engagement on. The multinational investment bank stated how 'our clients were saying they were struggling to recruit the right people...people were coming forward to interview not prepared' and as such this was one of the reasons they made the strategic move to create an education programme with the aim of tackling this issue. Similarly, the national building society justified their educational interventions by arguing 'everywhere you turn at the moment you hear young people haven't got the right skills'. Whilst the international law firm and the insurance company did not mention that they face issues of young people not having skills, they both have schemes that support the development of these skills, with the insurance company explaining that they 'do talent spotting so children are ready for employment and job-ready when they leave school'.

In 2012, the UKCES released a paper outlining the findings from their research on perceptions of school-business partnerships. They found that when

businesses were recruiting, they looked for young people to possess employability skills and understand the world of work – these are what they class as ‘business aspirations’ (UKCES, 2012, p.10). Whilst this finding supports what has been found in this research what is notable is that these comments were made six years ago, suggesting that businesses are still finding that young people do not have the appropriate skills despite the interventions that have been developed to tackle this issue. This is also acknowledged by the Cardiff local authority broker who explained that the focus on social and employability skills

‘is not working and yet we keep doing the same. I mean if we look at what it [the welsh careers service] says on the tin, they should be solving this problem, but it’s not happening in practice unfortunately’. (Education Engagement Manager, Cardiff local authority broker).

This explains the Cardiff local authority broker’s attempt to try and focus on interventions that can be linked to the curriculum in a more sustainable way.

Stanley *et al.* (2014, p.2) argue that undertaking activities such as skills and careers lessons cannot be classed as employer engagement, suggesting that this is because ‘these schemes can be run without the involvement of employers’. Businesses such as the investment bank, the British banking group, the telecoms company and the upmarket department store who all possessed an educational CSR programme all stated that their programmes include a bank of resources to teach life and employment skills in which the schools have unlimited access to, leaving it up to the school to request an employee’s presence in the classroom. The Civic Investment Manager at the upmarket department store explained how they produce lesson plans and activity cards which can be used in store or in the classroom and similarly the CSR representative from the multinational investment bank explained that ‘teachers can download and deliver their own resources and

also request [the multinational investment bank] staff to go in if they wish'. This demonstrates a lack of business action once links have been established, it could therefore, be suggested that this can be considered to be a form of corporate social responsibility but not employer engagement (Stanley *et al.* 2014).

For some companies, discharging their CSR through a school environment was done to ensure the teaching of specific skills. This form of CSR was most prevalent with the telecoms company who discharged their social responsibilities in schools through their coding programme. Their move from 'painting the hall' or 'giving cash' to 'value in kind' through their educational programme was a decision that was made that would be beneficial to the company. Due to the nature of the company, the Head of Telecoms explained that in respect of tech literacy 'there is a real problem for us in the future if we don't tackle this...the intent is 100% around sustainability' of the company. Many of the skills that are needed to work in the technical side of the telecoms company require an ability to code and because this is a skill not taught in schools, the telecoms company explained how 'its really hard to find quality candidates' for the jobs. The international furniture store was also keen to create an awareness of jobs and services in the company that required more specific skills. By encouraging schools to visit the international furniture store to design a project or room the aim was to promote the store's interior designer as they were aware that this service was 'unknown to the public' and is a job that requires more training.

Despite the focus on increasing the number of 'work-ready' individuals, there is no current evidence to suggest that the teaching of life-skills to school pupils

creates a more 'work-ready' future workforce. Neither literature on the topic or businesses themselves has been able to prove that this form of engagement with schools and pupils has benefitted the businesses through an increased ability to recruit suitable applicants to jobs.

4.6.2 Suggested increase in image and reputation

There is no doubt that businesses undertake CSR work to grow and improve their reputation, as Doane (2005, p.27) explains 'companies are naturally keen to be aligned with CSR schemes because they offer good PR'. What differs between companies is whether they started their CSR work specifically to enhance the image of the company, or whether it is a bonus by-product of the CSR work itself. Jones (2011) refers to CSR carried out post-2010 as 'The Age of Damage' where businesses are undertaking CSR to create an image of being socially responsible in society. It therefore comes as no surprise that those companies who created their CSR programme as a means to improve their image as a business were banks. The need to cleanse the company image works 'as a strategy for presenting a friendlier face to the public' (Doane, 2005, p.24), and in the case of the banks, this was after the 2008 financial crisis. The Education Manager (Wales) of the British banking group stated,

'we could be cynical and say that we do it because of the hiatus caused by the credit crunch and the banks were everybody's whipping boys, it was a way of cleansing our image'. (Education Manager, the British banking group).

This supports the multinational investment bank who explained how as a bank they 'struggle to tell a good news story' because the media is more interested in

‘anything around Libor⁵ or charges’, and so consequently five years ago the bank changed their strategy in the hope their new interventions would gain more benefits and good press. Despite them not being in the finance sector, the Head of Telecoms explained how there was an awareness that ‘there’s been a lot of scandal, the finance sector in particular suffered in terms of being values-based as an organisation and behaving in ways that don’t...you wouldn’t want to work for an organisation that’s not honest in the way it treats its customers’.

In contrast to the banks, whilst other businesses did not necessarily set out to improve their image through CSR engagement with schools, they acknowledged that their educational involvement has undoubtedly had a positive effect on the overall reputation of the firm. The national building society explained that the ‘members expect it, our staff expect us to be doing it too’ and so their CSR programmes are created as a form of satisfying the demands of their stakeholders and workforce, who Carroll (2001, p.43) states can be of ‘central influence’ on CSR policy. The national building society’s CSR Manager stated how

‘some of the stories have been on the front pages of newspapers and that provides us with such a boost...reputation is hugely important for us’. (CSR Manager, National Building Society).

This supports Bennett (1997) who stated that businesses often undertake CSR promotion through press releases, newsletters and company magazines.

Likewise, the Community Investment Manager of the upmarket department store when asked about how the business benefits from their work with schools stated

⁵ ‘the measure of the average rate at which banks are willing to borrow wholesale, unsecured funds’ (Bank of England, 2019).

that 'we're not measuring it properly, but there'll be a huge halo effect'. The international furniture store was also aware of the effect that the school interventions can have on the company, the Community Support Ambassador explained how enabling school children to come into the store to visit and by working with them 'is a great PR opportunity'. Akin to the national building society, whilst the international law firm did not speak of their reputation growing in terms of the public perspective, they instead noted that they are aware that their CSR work is hugely important to their reputation in terms of retaining their stakeholders (Griseri and Seppala, 2010). The Legal and Compliance Manager explained how it was important to satisfy existing clients and their needs, stating that 'we work with a large diverse client base they expect us to be doing it...it is great to give back, but it is definitely about developing relationships as well'.

4.6.3 Improved capacity to recruit

Much like improving company reputation, ensuring the future of the business emerged throughout the interviews with businesses as both a purpose and a benefit to discharging their CSR in schools. This was undertaken in two parts, firstly by ensuring potential future employees possessed the necessary skills for the company and also by creating a work environment aimed at retaining current employees.

Research undertaken in 1998 in Atlanta, Georgia amongst 327 businesses found that only 31% of companies stated 'improving skills of future employees' as extremely important to their involvement with schools (Hoff, 2002). Twenty years later and the tables have turned, and a skills focus is understood to be perhaps

the main reason stated by businesses for discharging CSR in schools. Stanley *et al.* (2014, p.6) suggest that this change in school-business partnerships can be attributed to the change in labour market demand which requires 'new skills of young people' such as being able to work in a team and communicate effectively. This supports the UKCES (2012) report stating that businesses are engaging with schools as a means to tackle the labour shortage, the evidence from businesses in this research suggests that by being 'socially responsible' in the form of school educational programmes businesses can directly influence school pupils by teaching the skills that they deem will be beneficial to the company.

The aim behind the strategy of succession planning is that in several years' time when these people are searching for jobs, they will have the necessary skills that these employers desire. The national building society explained how 'when we recruit in five or six years' time, it's going to be from these schools' and therefore by teaching them financial and employability skills now it will ensure that they are potential national building society employees of the future. Likewise, the international law firm stated that the pupils who take part in their educational programme could be 'the next workforce' for the company and therefore it is beneficial to the international law firm to try and mould the children now into their way of thinking and working.

The telecoms company and the British banking group also expressed that their purpose for discharging CSR in schools was through a point of view of succession planning as they saw serious issues for the company if they did not take action.

This was, however, for two different reasons. The Education Manager at the British banking group explained how

‘we’ve got a vested interest in trying to work with young people through a point of view of succession planning, as an organisation we’re top-heavy with people like me, people in their 50s who in the course of the next 5-10 years a significant proportion of senior leaders will be retiring...we went through a period where we weren’t actively recruiting in significant numbers and that’s going to catch up with us at some point because there’s going to be a sort of gap in the workforce’. (Education Manager, the British banking group).

He stated that although this cannot be repaired straight away, through strategic succession planning they can ensure that it does not repeat itself.

In comparison, the telecoms company stated that the issue for the business in the future arises from individuals not having the coding skills necessary for many of their jobs. The Head of Telecoms explained how their Barefoot Computing Programme is a necessity for the business. They expressed how

‘We’re recruiting in the same pool of candidates [as the ONS]...obviously that’s a good thing for the candidates because it’s driving up the salaries and supply and demand, but it’s really hard to fill the spaces we have with high-quality candidates’. (Head of Telecoms, telecoms company)

When questioned about whether as a company the telecoms company felt pressured to undertake socially responsible activities, the Head of Telecoms (Wales) explained how

‘I don’t feel pressured because it’s something I believe is important...I think the pressure is, if we don’t do this we won’t get the good succession pipeline to keep the business going, and that’s more important than the interventions I think’. (Head of Telecoms, telecoms company).

On a smaller level, the international furniture store also noted how their decision to bring school children into the store to work with the designers to create a school common room was done strategically to advertise the types of jobs that are available within the international furniture store. The Community Support Ambassador at the international furniture store stated that ‘people don’t know that

we have interior designers in store' and so they use their links with schools as an HR opportunity for potential future employees.

The telecoms company also spoke of succession planning in terms of current employees, but in comparison to the British banking group and the international furniture store, it was focussed on how the company is run. The Head of Telecoms expressed how she felt that

'if we want to attract and retain talent we will not do it unless our values relate to the values of those people we want to work for us and I feel that young people these days base their decisions on core values... and if there's an incongruence in what your core values are and what the business' are, you're not going to retain talent'. (Head of Telecoms, telecoms company).

This finding corroborates the argument by Jones (2012, p.35) that

'many people entering the workforce today would actually work at a company whose values they believed in for a lower salary than at a high paying competing firm they viewed to be less socially responsible',

but that socially responsible companies 'will do better because the best talent will want to work for them' (2012, p.69).

4.6.4 Increase in staff morale

Not only is succession-planning thought of in terms of future employees, but businesses are also increasingly aware of the need to stand out in order to retain current employees. The telecoms company explained how they have found that their staff are 'elated and more energised from having spent a day doing something different'. A staff member and volunteer at the telecoms company described how since they started volunteering in schools with the telecoms company, they have become more confident, and she explained how

'It's good for my skills, so I'm not that, I am quite shy, so yeah having to interact with different people it is quite difficult but it's good for me because it

makes me grow... I've learnt so much, it has been really good'. (Telecoms Employee, telecoms company).

The international law firm and the national building society also explained how they believed that employer engagement and volunteering opportunities actively benefitted the company employees. Indeed, the national building society were sure of the positive effect of volunteering, stating that 'without doubt the staff who are more involved in our CSR work, they're happier', supporting the UKCES (2012) report that 'it is rewarding for staff to be involved' in the school engagement. While the Legal and Compliance Manager at the international law firm acknowledged that 'there is sometimes a bit of a feeling of charity fatigue...sometimes [employees] say that there's too much happening in a year and we try to rebalance and scale it back', it was nonetheless argued that 'the volunteers benefit because they get a lot of enjoyment out of it'.

The Legal and Compliance Manager explained that the company 'allows our lawyers to do 50 hours per year charitable work and that's charitable, so it accounts for their chargeable time...it is a generous scheme'. This means that the lawyers who volunteer their time can claim a 'billing rate' for their charitable work, which is the same rate that they would charge clients. The international law firm states that their lawyers have are able to record up to 50 hours of CSR-related activities which count towards their chargeable hours and in turn counts towards their annual bonus, it therefore it comes as no surprise that junior lawyers are eager to take part. It would therefore be understandable that the lawyers say they enjoy their time being out of their office if they are being paid significant amounts to volunteer. The finding from the international law firm also questions the extent to which employer engagement can be accepted as volunteering, and

this depends 'on whether or to what extent the activities take place in work time' (Rochester *et al.*, 2012, p109).

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown the findings from the interviews with three school business brokerage groups in addition to 10 businesses with offices based in and around Cardiff. Engagement opportunities undertaken between businesses and schools were created in various forms, ranging from some businesses using a broker to engage, others preferring to either organise their own engagement, or wait until they were approached, and others switched between all forms. Despite research suggesting that school business brokers are becoming increasingly used by businesses (Rochester *et al.*, 2012), the majority of businesses in this research chose to go it alone when it came to planning and organising their partnerships with schools.

The findings from the interviews with the businesses found a changing landscape with regards to undertaking their corporate social responsibilities. It became apparent from the interviews that businesses were becoming increasingly conscious of the way that their CSR policies could benefit the business itself and not just those individuals or communities that they were aimed at (UKCES, 2012). As such businesses have seen an increase in employer engagement opportunities which rely on the willingness of employees to engage, with some businesses ensuring that all employees participate in a community engagement event on an annual basis. Despite the increase in engagement, brokers and businesses emphasised the need for strategic partnerships and as such instilled

terms and conditions for engaging with schools. Criteria such as the school being situated in an area of disadvantage and the number of pupils receiving free school meals were a determiner for who brokers and businesses would work with. It emerged from the interviews however, that many businesses still frequently engaged with independent schools or schools which would not fit the above criteria but where employee's children would attend. This incongruence in the consistency of what businesses offer each school can be suggested to create inequalities amongst schools.

The forms of engagement that the businesses undertook as part of their CSR activities in schools varied but mainly focussed around careers and the implementation of life skills which were based around what businesses believed that young people leaving school in today's society were lacking (Stanley *et al.*, 2014). There was the shared viewpoint by the brokers and the businesses that young people do not possess the necessary skills to successfully enter the workforce, something which was based on the businesses' experiences of recruiting new employees. As such, the CSR education programmes of the businesses in this research often consisted of attending careers days, providing CV workshops and running interview skills lessons. While most businesses engaged in this format, other businesses preferred to engage in the traditional format of financial or resource donations. A key finding with these forms of engagement was that there was a lack of strategic linking between most businesses and schools. Whilst there are partnerships that are formed that provide purposeful links, many businesses are not using their expertise and skills to the advantage of both them and the young people they are working with.

Finally, the business case for CSR saw that perhaps that biggest influence for businesses wanting to engage with schools is for their own gain. Businesses and brokers in this research noted various ways in which the companies benefitted from this form of CSR engagement. The most notable way that the businesses hoped that engagement would benefit them was through the future recruitment of employees who will be 'work-ready' through the skills that have been implemented through the education programmes (Stanley *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, there was an acknowledgement amongst the businesses that the reputation of the company would no doubt increase as a result of the CSR engagement that they are participating in, something that would also increase revenue. Not only was the recruitment of a future workforce seen as a benefit of engagement but there was also the perception that CSR policies can aid current recruitment if the policies align with individuals own personal socially responsible beliefs. An increase in staff morale was also noted to be a significant benefit in the undertaking of employer engagement by businesses with interviewees expressing how their current workforce was more engaged and happier when they returned from their engagement activity.

Chapter Five - Employer Engagement in Education – The School's Experience

Introduction

This chapter focusses on the schools' experiences of their engagement with businesses and seeks to understand whether the dynamics of engagement varies between schools. The chapter will explore the experiences of the schools and pupils in this research who have engaged with businesses and will look to discuss their attitudes towards and experiences of business involvement in schools. The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first part of this chapter will follow a similar structure to the previous chapter and will discuss how schools in this research have formed partnerships with businesses, and the nature of these partnerships. Following this, the chapter will seek to provide an understanding of how schools rationalise their choices to engage with businesses. This will be followed by an explanation of the types of engagement that are undertaken with the schools involved in this research. The final and possibly the most significant section of this chapter will look at what the schools in this research consider to be the benefits associated with business engagement.

5.1 How are schools' relationships with businesses formed?

In recent years, a surge in businesses wanting to discharge their corporate social responsibilities in an educational setting has led to an increase in school-business partnerships and interventions (Manteow, 2008). All the schools in this research either had ongoing relationships with businesses or they had experienced some form of business engagement or intervention in the past. Woolhouse (1991, p.13)

suggests that ‘partnerships differ widely in the extent to which students in schools and colleges, teachers, and staff in participating organisations enter into agreements or undertakings’, and whilst this is true of the partnerships in this research, the type of school and its connections to the outside community also serve as a determinant for the formation of business links with schools.

5.1.1 Types of engagement

Interviews with primary and secondary schools have exposed both formal and informal variations of school engagement with businesses and their employees. What is understood as formal engagement for the purpose of this research is the formation of a clear ongoing partnership between a specific school and business (Massey, 2014). These forms of partnerships generally comprised of frequent interactions between the business and the school throughout the school year and were usually, but not always, organised by a brokerage system such as the national broker’s partnership division or the Cardiff local authority broker. The aim of these types of partnerships is that they are sustainable and will therefore last for years rather than months.

Informal forms of engagement, however, were found to take place either sporadically throughout the year (the multinational investment bank) or as one-off events (financial and resource donations). What is described by some as informal engagements, Gorman (1989) refers to as ‘accidental’ arrangements, the reason for these ‘accidental’ arrangements rather than formal partnerships is dependent on a number of variables. For some schools, there was a preference to engage with businesses on an informal basis due to the flexibility that it allowed

the school. For other schools, however, there was a consideration that informal arrangements were their only option as the opportunity for them to build partnerships with businesses was either not available to them, or they did not possess the ability to create such sustained partnership links, this is a finding that will be discussed in depth later on.

5.1.2 Proactive or reactive approaches

The research identifies two key ways in which schools approached engagement with businesses: proactively and reactively. Schools in this research were found to be proactive in their engagement with businesses if they actively searched for engagement opportunities themselves. In all but one case, All Saints High School, a proactive approach towards school business partnerships led to informal forms of engagement between the schools and businesses. By participating in these informal engagements, it generally allowed for flexibility, informality and the freedom to choose forms of engagement. An explanation for this can be linked to Gorman (1989) who suggests that informal approaches to engagement with businesses by schools are often led by members of staff with a vested interest in, or who have 'come across a scheme' which is attractive to them.

Table 3 - Table showing use of brokers by school and their approach to engaging with businesses

School	Broker Yes/No)	Proactive/Reactive approach
St Winifred's Primary School	Yes	Reactive
Ysgol Heulwen	No	Proactive
Riverside Primary School	No	Proactive
All Saints Catholic High School	Yes	Proactive
Redlands High School	No	Reactive
Ysgol Myndydd Mawr	Yes	Reactive
Ysgol Castell	No	Proactive
Monkswell School	No	Proactive

Primary Schools ■ Secondary Schools ■

For some schools such as Ysgol Castell and Monkswell School, it was difficult to find businesses who would engage with them, a point which will be discussed in further depth later. For other schools, however, the informal nature of this engagement was preferable. The Deputy Head Teacher at Redlands High School, a non-denominational high school on the outskirts of Cardiff explained that the school did not have many formal links with businesses. The Deputy Head Teacher explained how most faculties in the school linked with some form of business throughout the school year, but this was undertaken as and when the school or faculty deemed business engagement necessary. Mertkan (2011, p.165) found that 'willingness to engage with [businesses] and the projects they offer depends on the needs of the school at any given time'. Redlands High School Deputy Head Teacher explained how 'I think it is more useful for [the businesses] to come in and work with groups of pupils within the school and then leave'. She stated how for Redlands High School the priority was the completion

of the students' course content and GCSE results rather than engaging with businesses, a view which contradicts research by Kashefpakdel *et al.* (2017) which suggests that employer engagement can have a positive impact on pupil attainment.

For Monkswell School, their attitude towards engagement with businesses was borne from the proactive approach of the PSHE teacher at the school. This particular teacher expressed great interest and motivation in bringing businesses into the school environment and explained how they were working towards a sponsorship package whereby school sponsorship could be exchanged for a discount on school fees for the employees' children. The teacher stated that she believed this was a calculated way that the school could create strategic partnerships with businesses whilst providing a 'quid pro quo' situation for both the school and the company involved. This attitude by the PSHE teacher shows an awareness of a win-win situation for employee engagement with the school. This finding can perhaps be attributed to the teacher having previously entered education following a career in the army and the private sector, and consequently has a sense of business acumen. The teacher explained that the sponsorship package would come in three stages, bronze, silver and gold, and each package would be on a sliding scale of publicity for the business. The PSHE teacher described how this would be a development in their current links with businesses where

'we publicise them as a business if they support the school. So, if I do Twitter feeds, so social media, our website, our publications such as magazines, etcetera'. (PSHE Teacher, Monkswell School).

This is an interesting perspective from the PSHE teacher, as they argued that Monkswell School is a 'little bit different from a state school because we have that independence' and so they have the opportunity of being able to offer sponsorship services, something that state schools could not necessarily achieve.

In comparison, for some schools in the research, engagement with businesses took a reactive approach and did not take place until the school was approached by a broker such as the national brokerage firm or Cardiff local authority broker. Neither St Winifred's Primary School nor Ysgol Mynydd Mawr High School had any ongoing links with businesses prior to being approached by the two aforementioned brokers. This was not necessarily through lack of trying, for Ysgol Mynydd Mawr explained that they had previously attempted to engage with local businesses but the school's Head of Business explained

'we had a lot of false starts before where you paired with a local business. I don't know why, whether it's the contact with business, whether it's financial capability or staff in the businesses'. (Head of Business, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr).

Following the setbacks from small business engagement, the Head of Business at Ysgol Mynydd Mawr gave up attempting to form partnerships with businesses until, he explained, he 'had a message from a friend who said I know a guy from the national building society who wants to get in contact as a business with schools'. From here the Head of Business stated he was given a form to complete by the Welsh careers service and subsequently signed a three-year 'partnership' in September 2016. The attitude by the Head of Business expressing that they had given up trying to engage with businesses appears to demonstrate an ignorance of the consequences of this action. This is because literature and

research have shown there to be an emphasis on business engagement in schools to increase pupils confidence and network and engage with businesses (Hoff, 2002), however this cannot take place unless the school and its staff are also able to do this.

5.2 What do schools state as the rationale for engagement with businesses?

For most schools in this research, the purpose or necessity for engaging with businesses can be divided into three categories; policy, financial and resource donations and serendipitous encounters. These three areas are a mix of what was earlier identified as proactive and reactive forms of engagement, with policy and financial concerns resulting in proactive engagements. This is compared with serendipitous encounters which refers to engagements that would not have taken place had it not have been for businesses approaching the schools. Interviews with the eight schools in this research found that the main reason for schools developing links with businesses was for strategic purposes (Graafland and van de Ven, 2006). The research found that regardless of the way schools linked with businesses, either through a broker or on their own accord, that the purpose of the engagement was generally used with the aim to benefit the school or the pupils for either curriculum or financial and resource purposes.

5.2.1 Policy Requirements

Policy was a key factor for many of the secondary schools in this research engaging with businesses. The impending Curriculum for Wales 2022 and the requirement for all Key Stage 4 pupils to undertake the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification was cause for schools to develop relationships with businesses.

Perhaps the biggest influencer in school engagement with businesses was the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate, the purpose of which is to 'help learners to prepare for their future by developing skills, attributes and behaviours valued by post-16 educators and potential employers' (WJEC, 2016).

The Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate at All Saints Catholic High School, Cardiff, explained how they had recently started engaging with GE Aviation through a partnership with the national brokers (Wales). The Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate expressed how their partnership with GE Aviation developed as a result of

'the school going forward to [the national brokers] and straight away we identified with GE Aviation that the Welsh Baccalaureate and Skills Challenge would be a perfect opportunity for them to come in and support us, especially being a new subject and being a new programme of study, and the fact that we are developing essential employability skills constantly'. (Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate, All Saints High School).

This is an interesting point made by the Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate as it raises the question of how a business can be involved in a new curriculum topic of which they have no knowledge or understanding. Whilst the GE Aviation employees possess the acumen regarding having experience of the private sector, there is no guarantee that they have the ability to teach about employability and entrepreneurship. It would perhaps be beneficial for GE Aviation, as well as other businesses engaging with schools, to have an understanding of the Welsh Baccalaureate and the curriculum prior to their engagement with schools so that the content can be taught by more knowledgeable individuals.

Furthermore, the Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate explained that

‘before the Welsh Baccalaureate was in schools there really wasn’t the need to go in and now as you know it is a compulsory part of the curriculum, every student in Wales does the skills challenge at Key Stage 4...every student in Wales is expected to work with business and work with charities and organisations to get real-life experiences’. (Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate, All Saints High School).

The Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate continued to suggest that ‘until 2015, when the qualification was introduced there wasn’t an opportunity’ for business involvement in the school. This however is a questionable statement, as what the school perhaps lacked was not the opportunity but rather the incentive to engage with businesses. Consequently, the Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate expressed how the introduction of this new qualification had seen All Saints High School become actively interested in finding employer engagement opportunities. This was supported by the Welsh careers service who explained that

[engagement] has only increased because schools are duty-bound to deliver the Welsh Bac. So, what that basically tells you is that if the Welsh Bac didn’t exist and if it wasn’t one of the school performance measures they wouldn’t put anywhere near as much time into engaging employers and doing careers work’. (Head of Stakeholder Services, Welsh careers service).

This is an interesting perspective provided by the Head of Stakeholder Services at the Welsh careers service, particularly because it is their role to encourage and mediate engagement between schools and businesses (Welsh careers service, 2018). The attitude expressed by the Head of Stakeholder Services at the Welsh careers service perhaps indicates that schools are not taking the push by the Welsh Government to incorporate businesses into schools seriously.

All Saints High School was not alone in engaging with businesses for the purpose of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification, in fact, four of the five high schools who took part in this research explained that the qualification was a key reason as to why they engaged with businesses. Redlands High School, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr and Ysgol Castell all stated that the Welsh Baccalaureate had led to an increase

in business engagement with the school and its pupils. The Head of Business at Ysgol Mynydd Mawr explained how

‘we haven’t got a set of Welsh Baccalaureate teachers, it’s just who have spare lessons on their timetable. So, you could have a Welsh teacher teaching it’ (Head of Business, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr)

and so, they argued that bringing in employees of businesses with expertise to assist with aspects such as the enterprise element of the project makes more sense. Similarly, the Head Teacher at Ysgol Castell explained how

‘one of the biggest areas I guess in terms of... erm... employer engagement and the school then would also be with the Welsh Baccalaureate and the skills challenge, because obviously that’s got a massive impact on the curriculum’. (Head Teacher, Ysgol Castell).

Once again, this finding suggests that schools are not actively engaging because they want to or they see the businesses engagement as being particularly beneficial, but because it is required of them to engage for the purpose of the qualification (WJEC, 2016).

An interesting finding from this research, particularly through the interviews with schools was that there was no mention of the Careers and World of Work Framework. Despite the Careers and World of Work Framework being a statutory part of the national curriculum for the development of career choices and employability skills (DCELLS, 2008), a 2017 Estyn thematic inspection reported that there was a bigger focus in schools around the Welsh Baccalaureate than there was the Careers and World of Work Framework (Estyn, 2017). This can perhaps be understood by the further suggestion that

‘schools believe that reductions in the support available from the Welsh careers service, combined with the increasing demands of the Key Stage 4 curriculum have left them unable to deliver the Careers and World of Work as effectively as in the past’ (Estyn, 2017, p.4).

This follows figures from 2016 which suggest that a lack of funding from Welsh Government to the Welsh careers service had resulted in careers advisors being limited to one advisor per 4,500 pupils (Evans, 2016). Consequently, there is now a reliance on the Welsh Baccalaureate to encourage engagement between schools and businesses as a means to demonstrate the different career opportunities that are available to school pupils once they leave their educational setting. Not only is this something that the Head of Stakeholder Services at the Welsh careers service was aware of, stating that if the Welsh Baccalaureate did not exist then schools would not be engaging with businesses for employability training, an Estyn (2017) thematic review found the Careers and World of Work Framework to be ineffective.

5.2.2 Finance and resources

For some schools the eagerness to engage and work with businesses as a form of engagement has developed as a result of a lack in government funding (Ratcliffe, 2017). Both Redlands High School and Ysgol Mynydd Mawr explained how they had been aided financially through the provision of school sports kits by businesses which had eased a financial burden on the school, with Ysgol Mynydd Mawr explaining how it had saved them over £1000 and Redlands stating it had 'benefitted us financially'. Whilst this is an interesting standpoint from these two schools, and something that is clearly a shared experience, it is noteworthy that the pupils at the two schools would have still had sports kits, the donation had simply meant that they were now newer than before.

Whilst Redlands High School and Ysgol Mynydd Mawr had already benefitted from the provision of sports team kits, this is something that Ysgol Castell was still hoping to achieve. The Head Teacher of Ysgol Castell explained how the school was newly established, having been formed from two failing schools within close distance of each other. It was explained that

‘as a new school we wanted all of the team sports kits, for when we go and play other schools...we wanted to have a corporate look...but you’ve got two teams for just about everything, the cost was phenomenal, it was about £12,000’.
(Head Teacher, Ysgol Castell).

As a result, the school had contacted ‘as many local businesses as possible with the view of asking for sponsorship’, which was described as being ‘successful to a degree’. In addition to Ysgol Castell engaging with businesses for the benefit of sports kits, the Head Teacher explained how they had resorted to engaging with businesses when the local authority failed to provide sufficient support. This is demonstrated by Ysgol Castell successfully procuring, through business engagement, two new mini busses for the school. The Head Teacher explained ‘we were given some mini busses by the local authority, oh they were shocking, they were absolutely appalling’, through business links associated with one of the school governors the Head Teacher expressed how

‘because of [the governor’s] knowledge we were able to find two nearly new mini busses, traded in the old grotty ones that we had inherited against them’.
(Head Teacher, Ysgol Castell).

It is through these links with businesses that ‘schools are gaining much needed pragmatic support’ (Murphy *et al.*, 1998, 197).

Further to this, the Ysgol Castell’s Head Teacher also explained how when the two schools merged ‘there was some transition money’ to address the poor condition of one of the school sites. The Head Teacher expressed how

‘the local authority didn’t have the capacity to do [the development work] and so with the governing body we sourced external contractors and brought them in to project manage that work over the summer. That was highly significant because a) we did it for half to cost that the local authority could do it for, which was obviously very significant, but also it had to be done in the summer holidays and effectively it was done in four weeks, the local authority had said you’re looking at months to do that’. (Head Teacher, Ysgol Castell).

This example provided by Ysgol Castell demonstrates, not only what can be achieved outside the local authority controls, but also when schools collaborate with businesses, supporting the idea that ‘private firms are almost always far more efficient than government enterprises in providing a wide array of services’ (Bennett and DiLorenzo, 1987, p.14). This once again highlights a way in which, despite government efforts, schools are increasingly imitating the ways that academies in England operate.

5.2.3 Serendipitous Encounters

For some schools, the rationale for engaging with businesses was simply because they had been approached by brokers or businesses looking to engage and build a relationship, prior to this the schools lacked any ongoing association with businesses. In comparison to All Saints High School who had actively approached the partnership division of the national brokers to source a business to engage with, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr were approached by the national building society, who were actively searching to engage with schools. The Head of Business at the school explained how

‘I have to say I was sceptical when I first met [the national building society]...because we’d had all those false starts and Career Wales honed their budget...chances were [they’re] going to be enthusiastic and motivated in the meeting and I’m not going to hear from [them] again after that’. (Head of Business, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr).

Instead, the relationship between the national building society and Ysgol Mynydd Mawr has succeeded, and despite the budget cuts of the Welsh careers service

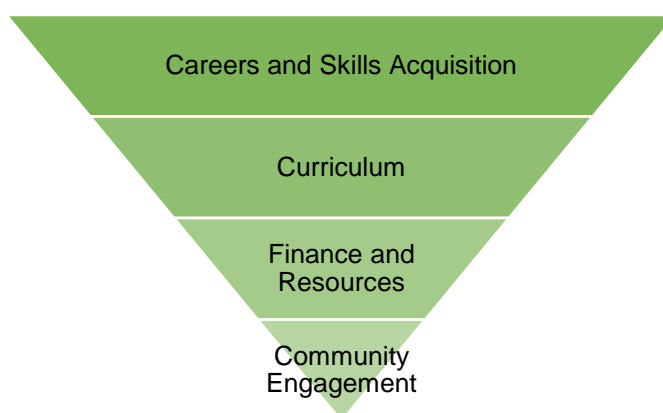
(BBC, 2017) resulting in a lack of their presence, the partnership has developed from strength to strength and the Head of Business at the school expected that the partnership would be extended beyond the initial three-year deal.

Despite the Cardiff local authority broker being newly formed (2016) by Cardiff City Council, it has already established itself with many schools and businesses. One school in this research that had benefitted from links with the Cardiff local authority broker was St Winifred's Primary School, situated close to Cardiff's City Centre. The school experienced a varied amount of business engagement that developed from the links with the Cardiff local authority broker, however, the Head Teacher did explain that much of the engagement is generally centred around the older pupils at the school in Key Stage 2. There was however no explanation for this and it is unknown as to whether this is the choice of the school, the Cardiff local authority broker or the businesses.

5.3 In what ways does the engagement take place?

Engagement between businesses and schools takes place under numerous guises and the interviews with schools who participated in this research have shown that the forms of engagement can be categorised into four areas of interest; careers and skills acquisition, curriculum, finance and resources and community engagement. Figure 6 below shows the frequency of the forms of engagement based on analysis of interviews with schools. The pyramid indicates how the school representatives noted careers and skills acquisition as being the most frequently received intervention from businesses, whilst community engagement did take place it was not as common.

Figure 6 – A diagram created from research data to show forms of engagement between schools and businesses from frequent to infrequent.



Some schools in this research benefitted from multiple forms of engagement seen in Figure 6 and this will be shown throughout the chapter.

5.3.1 Careers and skills acquisition

This research has found that the most popular form of engagement that schools had with businesses was around careers guidance and skills acquisition. Jones *et al.* (2016, p. 835) suggest that

‘the policy push for closer ties between schools and employers has been primarily driven by an expectation that employer engagement will enhance young people’s labour market prospects’.

This argument by Jones *et al.* (2016) would explain why it was found that of the eight schools that were interviewed in this research, engagement in the form of careers guidance was only absent from one, Ysgol Heulwen, a primary school which had minimal business engagement. The remaining seven schools engaged with businesses to provide career support and guidance to pupils at some point throughout the school year varying from generic skills and knowledge such as CV writing to deeper insights into specific careers (Huddleston, 2019). The age

groups who engaged with businesses varied, with some schools focussing the engagement with younger pupils who would benefit on a longer-term basis (particularly the case in primary schools) and other schools prioritising GCSE level students who would benefit in the near future. The forms of careers guidance that took place in the schools varied from CV writing and careers fairs, to career talks and work experience, but all were undertaken to meet the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills' Careers and World of Work requirements which emphasise the need for career guidance and business encounters (DCELLS, 2008). For some schools, there was a focus on exposing the younger year groups to career guidance in the hope of encouraging the pupils to think about careers from a younger age, something which a recent OECD report has said is vital in breaking the barriers to social mobility (Coughlan, 2019), however, career-centric events for schools in this research were mainly prioritised for and tailored towards pupils who were starting to make their GCSE options.

The Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate at All Saints Catholic High School explained how careers guidance was the predominant way that they engaged with businesses. The teacher states how

'we invite role models into the school right from just before [the students] leave year nine and the role models are supplied by Big Ideas Wales who bring these business people into school to give the students an understanding of what it's like to be at the front of running a business'. (Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate, All Saints High School).

The teacher believed that through this engagement, which consists of building 'a business plan through a business proposal', the confidence of the pupils involved is boosted. A further way which the school had experience of careers guidance was through the multinational investment bank life skills programme. At the time

of interview the multinational investment bank had only visited the school once, however, during this time the multinational investment bank team had undertaken a session with Year 9 pupils, 'showing students how to write a CV, how to write a personal statement' which the Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate said was 'really really useful' and 'hugely beneficially that we're hoping to reap the rewards for when [the students] come into year 10'. Whilst acquiring skills such as CV writing is undeniably 'really useful', questions can be raised as to how the school feels the skill of CV writing will be beneficial whilst the pupils are still at school.

Another form of engagement that took place in schools were career talks by third parties, ranging from parents employed in jobs in various sectors, to formal arrangements with local businesses. Redlands High School explained how year 9 pupils had benefitted from

'links with the bookstore in [the local town]...they come in and they've supported or sponsored an author to come in...and she talked about her book and then the book store came and they had her book to sell and she signed them for pupils'. (Deputy Head Teacher, Redlands High School).

The Deputy Head Teacher at the school also explained that recently the school had been contacted by several ex-pupils who were wanting to engage with the students. These ex-pupils were now apprentices at an aerospace company and the Harbour Authority and the Deputy Head Teacher explained how

'part of what they do is that they have to come back into school and run a workshop for a day or do an activity and they do a problem-solving activity with some of our pupils over a day and it's part of their apprenticeship that they go back to their school and do this'. (Deputy Head Teacher, Redlands High School).

As such, both the Design and Technology and the Engineering departments had engaged with these alumni to widen the knowledge of possible future careers as well as running problem-solving workshops with the pupils at the school. In addition to this, the Head of Faculty for DT and Engineering at Redlands High

School runs an annual trip to Alton Towers for their engineering students where 'there's a lecture, they sit in a lecture theatre and they use the rides to talk about the physics and the engineering of it and they then go on the rides as well'. This shows a further way in which businesses are creating a win-win situation from their school engagement forms of CSR.

A secondary school for whom career engagement was the focus of their links with businesses was Monkswell School. The PSHE teacher explained how much of their engagement with businesses was based around ensuring the girls were ready for employment once they leave education. One of the ways that this took place was through guest talks from parents, alumni and local business owners, which Huddleston *et al.* (2014, p.171) suggest is 'one of the most common methods used to engage employers [in private schools]'. An example given by the PSHE teacher was a talk by the CEO for Dynasafe, a global ordinance mine clearance company, who spoke to the girls about 'coping with challenge, not to worry about taking risks... and what you plan may not be what plans out'. Additionally, the teacher explained how they welcome talks from parents, stating how

'one of our parents is a GP partner at a GP practice, whilst the daughter is here we use her because once she leaves we won't, but she also did careers advice...to have her a) to do talks on sensitive issues and to have her as a business contact was fantastic'. (PSHE Teacher, Monkswell School).

Whilst this is a useful connection that the school has made, the comment that there will no longer be that connection once the GP's daughter leaves the school is an interesting point. Although the comment by the PSHE teacher suggests a sense of inconsistency in engagement and, to an extent, a lack of long-term reliability, the fact that the comment was made indicates that the teacher is

speaking from experience and this is a frequent occurrence. Whilst similar links may be made with the parents of new pupils it does not mean to say that there will be any connections to the medical industry.

In addition to guest talks, the PSHE teacher at Monkswell School explained how 'we have run a business networking breakfast...we get, we invite local businesses to the school once a month and the aim is that through this the girls learn to network'. The teacher stated how the girls are

'set homework, I've set them that they've got to get three business cards from three people, so they've actually got to go out, you know, in whatever world you're in you need to cold speak to people, and they find that really difficult to do, so that is one of the skill sets we're hoping to encourage'. (PSHE Teacher, Monkswell School).

The PSHE teacher saw this as an important aspect of not only their engagement with businesses but also consider it to be a necessary step towards ensuring the girls were ready for the 'real world' once they leave school, and that by acquiring this skill it would promote and enhance confidence amongst the pupils (Hoff, 2002). The teacher believed that the

'cold approach is something we lack in industry and here they find it quite challenging because they are quite sheltered and shy and no matter what industry they go into they're going to have to talk to people they don't know'. (PSHE Teacher, Monkswell School).

These are the types of personal and social skills that Huddleston *et al.* (2014) argue are most likely to be gained through business engagement in independent schools. This is an interesting finding as it highlights the difference in priorities between state and private schools. It emerged from the interview with Monkswell School that skills acquisition and career advice are not considered to be a necessary form of engagement for the pupils, perhaps due to the pre-existing social capital that the students possess (Huddleston, *et al.*, 2014).

A further way in which schools in this research worked with businesses for career guidance purposes was through the provision of specialised unique experiences that are provided by the businesses to school pupils. For Ysgol Mynydd Mawr this was one of the many outcomes of their partnership with the national building society. The school's Head of Business stated how the building society had provided experiences such as an iBroadcasting workshop which they explained as being

'a digital news broadcast and it was a three-day intensive course held at the stadium and Aspire 2Be⁶ ran it, and Shaun Holley is the face of it. So, Shaun Holley is the ex-Ospreys coach and he does rugby chat shows, radio, so forth so what they do is video analysis, interviewing, commentating, presenting and they did their own sports partner show over three days'. (Head of Business, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr).

Mann and Kashefpakdel (2014) suggest that careers experiences such as the iBroadcasting workshop that was offered to pupils at Ysgol Mynydd Mawr are a significant factor in influencing pupil career decisions. One of the pupils at Ysgol Mynydd Mawr who took part in the iBroadcasting workshop explained how he felt that 'as someone who, someone like me who has already wanted a career in broadcasting, I felt that it really opened a lot of doors for me personally... I really enjoyed that', as such he explained that he has recently started volunteering at his local hospital radio showing the positive impact that CSR initiatives can have.

Whilst this is an example of how engagement opportunities can impact and benefit the pupils at the schools it also raises a concern for those students who are being taken away from other learning activities and are left having to catch

⁶ A learning technology company with bespoke digital solutions

up in their own time. The pupil who engaged in media training was questioned as to how they made up for lost school time, in which they stated,

‘luckily for me my teachers were very generous, and they understood that this was an area I was passionate about so I just went in at lunch to catch up, so I didn’t miss too much’. (Pupil, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr).

Whilst research claims that there is a concern over pupils missing out on engagement activities (The Careers and Enterprise Company, 2018), there seems to be a lack of concern for pupils missing their timetabled lessons. Although the above pupil may have been able to catch up on their work, there is little doubt that all pupils who have missed classes would have the same inclination or motivation to catch up on missed lessons, something which is perhaps affected by the child’s attitude towards education.

Although it is understandable that secondary schools experienced more careers-based engagement with businesses than primary schools, through the research it became evident that there was an increasing interest by businesses of engaging with primary schools for the purpose of careers-based interventions. At St Winifred’s Primary School, the most significant engagement the school had taken part in was the careers week organised by Cardiff local authority broker. The school’s Head Teacher explained how the event took place amongst local schools in their cluster⁷ where 10 businesses visited the schools over a week for the careers event. The Head Teacher described the event as a chance for the older pupils to explore different types of jobs and it was a ‘week of learning where the children think of questions to ask the different businesses who are also interviewed by the children’. Another primary school who encouraged careers-

⁷ Groupings of schools who share the same geographical location

based engagement was Riverside Primary School who held a STEM week throughout the school on an annual basis. The Head Teacher described how

‘during our STEM week we invite any parents who have got jobs elsewhere and they come in and talk about their work. There was a day when they came into classes and shared their jobs with the children, so we had a scientist in, we had an IT technician...we had a farmer in, we had a photographer in, a microbiologist came in and that was fascinating’. (Head Teacher, Riverside Primary School).

The aim of this was to spark interest amongst the pupils about STEM subjects and the jobs available in the industry, this comes on the back of research which states that in 2018 there was an estimated shortfall of 173,000 STEM skilled workers in the UK (STEM Learning, 2019).

Whilst it has been demonstrated how schools are using businesses for the purpose of the Welsh Baccalaureate and to fill the gap of in-school careers services, there was a sense of ambivalence amongst most of the schools towards this form of engagement. Not only did schools only refer to engagement with businesses for careers and skills in passing, but schools were also unsure as to whether these forms of engagements with businesses would be ongoing. This concern could be rationalised in that it is not the businesses’ sole responsibility to be providing educational programmes, it is as Friedman (1962) argues, to make a profit. Likewise, whilst there are DfES policies in place which require schools to work with or engage with businesses there are no such policies requiring businesses to engage with schools or provide these kinds of services. In addition to this, the national brokers and their partnerships division are currently funded by the Welsh Government, however, if the government pulled the funding there is a high likelihood that the partnerships will collapse. Consequently, this ultimately risks leaving the schools in the lurch.

5.3.2 Curriculum

Curriculum emerged as an important factor for schools to consider prior to entering into a partnership with businesses. As discussed previously the requirement of pupils to undertake the Welsh Bacculaureate has led to an increase in business engagement in schools, particularly for the qualification's Skills Challenge Certificate. The skills challenge part of the Welsh Bacculaureate comprises of three components; an Individual Project, an Enterprise and Employability Challenge and a Global Citizenship Challenge. The Head Teacher at Ysgol Castell stated that local businesses come to the school to help the pupils with their projects whilst also providing advice and acting as judges at the end of the qualification. What is important to note here is that, much like the career advice and skills acquisition, there is a reliance on businesses and their engagement relating to a whole section of a qualification for tens of thousands⁸ of GCSE students in Wales (WJEC, 2019). Much like the careers and skills acquisition aspect, concern should be raised over what happens should businesses no longer be able to provide this form of support.

The partnership All Saints High School had with GE Aviation was focused on Year 10 and 11 pupils for the purpose of the bacculaureate qualification and the projects within it. The Head of the Welsh Bacculaureate explained how

'GE Aviation, who are based up in Caerphilly, come in and work with the students at various times through the [Welsh Bacculaureate] course...and they support us for our community challenge in helping our students to actively plan an event or an activity'. (Head of the Welsh Bacculaureate, All Saints High School).

⁸ 2018 candidate entries – 27,782 (WJEC.co.uk)

By engaging with a business for this purpose the aim was that business-minded people would be able to guide and mentor the students through the Welsh Bacculaureate qualification. The Head of the Welsh Bacculaureate stated how GE Aviation come in 'between Christmas and say March or April, so for three months they come in at various points' to work with the students and support them on their projects. The Head of the Welsh Bacculaureate stated that since the business engagement the school has been monitoring the pupil's grades and they have noticed that

'on some of our challenges the girls do better than the boys and then on other challenges boys do better than the girls so we're looking at the context of our challenges and looking at how we can engage all of our students by having really exciting real-life briefs'. (Head of the Welsh Bacculaureate, All Saints High School).

All Saints High School was the only school in this piece of research who had actively monitored the effect business engagement had on its pupils since the partnership began, a point that will be raised in more detail in the following chapter.

The Deputy Head Teacher at Redlands High School identified a concern over engaging with businesses for the sake of it. The Deputy Head Teacher explained that 'the teachers have increasingly got so much pressure and content to cover...they're thinking very carefully about pupils missing or doing things that aren't directly relevant'. As such, a conscious decision had been made by the school to prioritise business engagement which links directly to the curriculum.

The Deputy Head Teacher explained

'when I look at emails I will send them on and then people will decide if we've got the capacity to do that or if it links to this aspect of the curriculum so we'd like to take it forward. So, I don't think anyone does anything, just because it would be nice for the kids to do it, it has to have an impact on their learning and be relatable'. (Deputy Head Teacher, Redlands High School).

It can be understood here that there is a sense of feeling that engagement with businesses must serve a purpose in that they should focus on enhancing the learning of pupils. Furthermore, the Deputy Head Teacher stated how

‘the pressure on subject areas to complete the content of the course is enormous, and so taking pupils out of lessons to do other things has got to be central to the course. This is always the issue, you’re always trying to balance, it could be extra-curricular, it could be wider reading, widen their experiences, but what are they actually going to get from that in order to, you know, improve their GCSE result for example, or have a better chance in that module...so there’s always that sort of tension’. (Deputy Head Teacher, Redlands High School).

Consequently, before bringing a business into the school the Deputy Head and the subject teachers will assess whether there is the capacity to run a business intervention and ensure that it links to the curriculum the pupils are being taught. This is a view shared by the Head of Welsh Baccalaureate at All Saints High School who expressed the importance of

‘coming to a compromise with [businesses] to make sure that we still use them but put ourselves under pressure then and our curriculum under pressure too much because you have to be careful with the students especially in year ten and eleven we can’t be pulling them out of lessons all the time, because everything else will suffer as a result’. (Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate, All Saints High School).

Ysgol Mynydd Mawr also expressed their own concern over taking pupils away from timetabled lessons. The Head of Business stated how

‘If I want to go off timetable and miss a lesson with year 10 and 11, so if they miss lessons I’ve got to justify it. Not for the senior staff because they trust me, but for myself and for the parents for them to see’. (Head of Business, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr).

While the Head of Business does not directly refer to concern over the pupils’ grades and the school’s targets it is implied that by justifying the engagement with businesses it takes into account the affect it may have on the pupil’s attainment.

There were also instances in this research where curriculum engagement was not carried out in relation to the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification. Guest lectures and additional classroom assistance was provided in some schools, often as a byproduct of a previous engagement with the school. These forms of engagement were generally carried out in a format that varied from the normal classroom activities. The Head of Business at Ysgol Mynydd Mawr explained how through their partnership with the national building society the business students had frequent interaction with employees from the building society. An activity which had been organised but had not happened at the time of interview was a classroom session with the national building society's Financial Director. The Head of Business explained that

'I asked [the CSR manager] for the last two years of accounts and [they] sent those over and the pupils will now be doing financial analysis and they will present the findings to [the financial director] and then they are going to be questioning them on their findings. So rather than a lecture it is going to be more interactive, like a seminar type thing'. (Head of Business, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr).

This was a new idea that was being trialled by the teacher with the aimed that it would provide a more interesting and hands on learning environment for the pupils.

The current literature on employer engagement in education suggests a focus of business engagement in schools around STEM subjects, however, curriculum engagement of this kind was rarely found in the schools in this research. The idea behind STEM engagement is based on a skills shortage in these areas of employment (British Chamber of Commerce, n.d). Aside from Riverside Primary School who held STEM career talks, the only other school where STEM-based activities were a predominant form of CSR engagement was at Redlands High

School where students took part in a range of STEM-related engagements. The Deputy Head Teacher explained how the younger students in the school had taken part in a 'School of Dragons' roadshow, a science workshop

'based around the book 'How to Train Your Dragon'...she shows them experiments and things to do with fire and light but all through the idea of dragons'. (Head Teacher, Riverside Primary School).

Additionally, there were also links with Sony and annual visits to the Sony factory as well and visits from forensic teams for a BTEC qualification that they run. This finding suggests a conflict between what literature, and even brokers, are saying in that with regards to business engagement in schools there is a focus around improving awareness in STEM subjects however the findings in this research have shown that this is not necessarily the case (British Chamber of Commerce, n.d) .

Whilst Ysgol Mynydd Mawr school and its pupils had not experienced STEM engagement from businesses, the Head of Business told how through the partnership with the national building society it had been arranged for the school to have a digital competency review. The reasoning behind doing this was the impending implementation of the Digital Competency Framework⁹, which the Head of Business acknowledged the school 'were way behind' with. The Head of Business explained how the national building society

'organised with us for Aspire 2Be to come in and do a whole school audit of this is where you are at the moment and a comprehensive report, developmental plan for it. We are then looking to implement those strategies, improving the while school ready for the curriculum next September, before it becomes compulsory'. (Head of Business, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr).

⁹ The first element of the New Curriculum for Wales – the DCF refers to the acquisition of specific skills to successfully use technologies and systems

The Head of Business expressed how he believed it was important when linking with businesses to not only think in the present tense, but also to acknowledge 'the way the curriculum is going'.

The use of business engagement by schools for curriculum enhancement is a popular way for schools to make the curriculum more engaging for the pupils (Stanley *et al.*, 2014). The schools in this research have demonstrated how they have used business engagement in a variety of ways to enhance the teaching of the curriculum. Whilst some schools focused on typical school topics, much of the engagement takes place for the purpose of the Welsh Baccalaureate and is a way for the schools to bring business employees into the school and provide a range of skills and knowledge that the teachers can not necessarily give their pupils.

5.3.3 Resources and finance

Not surprisingly the most well-received form of engagement between businesses and schools was in relation to finance and resource donations. Despite there being fewer schools in this research who benefitted from financial assistance and resource donations than careers and skills workshops, it is important to discuss those who did as it demonstrates a way that some schools are using their partnerships with businesses to procure new learning materials without incurring a cost. This is demonstrated in the partnership between Ysgol Mynydd Mawr and the national building society. The school's Head of Business explained how following the iBroadcasting workshop they had spoken to the national building society's CSR Manager and told him 'oh it would be great if we could do this in

the school, but we just haven't got the infrastructure from the IT standpoint'. As such, the CSR Manager bought the school an iPad pro, a tripod and a microphone so that it can be set up in the school for the pupils, with the Head of Business explained 'it's the legacy of it' that makes the engagement worthwhile. In addition to this, the national building society also provided new sports kits which the Head of Business at the school estimated cost over £1000 and sponsored the school production with £200 towards costs and its programme.

New sports kits were something that Redlands High School had also benefitted from as the Deputy Head Teacher explained how 'a local business is one of our uniform suppliers, but they've also sponsored kits for teams' in addition to the provision of the uniform. The presence of the businesses' logos which are present on the school kits which is the case for both of these schools raises concerns as it can be linked to Ball's (2007, p.66) discussion of 'cola-isation' where brand identity is expressed through the displaying of logos and sponsorships to demonstrate when a brand has a significant presence in schools. This is raised as a concern as young people are already described as 'captive consumers' who are exposed to substantial advertising in their daily lives and it is not necessary to impart it onto them in their educational environment (Harrison, 2012). This was a concern acknowledged by the PSHE teacher at Monkswell School who stated that where advertising in school is concerned

'these are vulnerable youngsters, they are susceptible to persuasion, so that's the issue with have, which I think the government should look at actually because I think it is a bigger issue'.

Equally, the PSHE teacher expressed how one of the things 'you have to consider is people who own the company, make sure they're okay, because if you link up

with a company, you don't want to be associated with a company that got into trouble'.

For some schools, financial assistance or donations were the only form of engagement the schools had with businesses. Despite the Head Teacher of Ysgol Heulwen primary school stating that they 'won't ask for money' and that they believed engagement with businesses was all about 'partnership, partnership, partnership', the school had no real engagement with businesses apart from financial donations. The Head Teacher described their willingness to engage with businesses, however, at the same time they explained 'we've got no time for meaningful relationships', stating how

'the pressures on teachers are enormous, we're already acting as social workers, we probably should use parents more, but we just don't have the time to be organising these links and engaging with businesses'. (Head Teacher, Ysgol Heulwen Primary School).

This comment by the Head Teacher at Ysgol Heulwen is supported by findings from a 2016 Teacher Workload Survey which found that 52% of respondents saw their workload as a *very serious problem* (Higton *et al.*, 2017). Attitudes like this from schools were also discussed by the insurance company who, when talking about their new relationship with the Cardiff local authority broker, explained 'it's been really difficult to get schools involved, the teacher's workload means they don't want to give up time or lose a lesson'. The Head Teacher explained how previous engagements with businesses 'can only be described as niceties, nice additional opportunities'. The finding from this school implies a sense of idealism versus reality in relation to business engagement in schools. The Head Teacher explained how apart from income generated from the after-school club room hire, there is a local estate agent who occasionally 'pumps money our way'.

Similarly, whilst Ysgol Castell also lacked any form of sustainable engagement with businesses, there was a significant attempt by the school to approach businesses for financial engagement (Lewis, 2019). The Head Teacher at the school expressed how their reliance on the donation of monies and resources is borne from the fact that ‘the tragedy is that there’s so, to say so little money doesn’t even cover it, there is no money, less than no money’. As such, much of the school’s engagement resulted from contacting local businesses for donations and sponsorships of gift vouchers for prize giving, but perhaps the biggest form of financial gain they received was from the school’s annual litter pick after the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show. The Head Teacher explained how

‘we masquerade [sic] a significant team of volunteers and you have to be on the showground at 4 am in the morning and clean all the litter from the previous day...but that’s a significant financial earner for the school, you’re looking in the order of £12,000 a year for a day which is highly significant’. (Head Teacher, Ysgol Castell).

Despite this bringing in a significant amount of money for the school, this raises ethical issues as the extent to which the school is using the school pupils as free labour is questionable, particularly considering there is no guarantee that the pupils will directly benefit from the income. There is however an argument that this could be classed as a form of civic pride or participation aimed at promoting future community engagement amongst young people as research suggests that ‘people who volunteer in their youth become better citizens’ (Musick and Wilson, 2008, p.303).

The Head Teacher at Ysgol Castell High School expressed how this lumpsum of money ‘allows [the school] to buy things, essentially sort of luxury items that we wouldn’t have been able to afford’, for example, the school was able to use the

money to purchase new pieces of equipment for the design and technology department. Following this financial remuneration, the Head Teacher explained how they

'invited the Chief Exec [of the Royal Welsh Show] to come in and see this equipment in situ and then as a result of that whilst he was there we made samples on these machines and so on and he said I think there's a market for these at the royal welsh so back in the summer we had a commercial venture'.
(Head Teacher, Ysgol Castell).

This opportunity allowed the school to raise more funds for the school and the design department, something that the Head Teacher hoped could be 'taken forward in terms of the winter fair'. This form of marketisation sees schools becoming increasingly responsible for finding income to subsidise parts of education that are lacking as a result of funding cuts, but it also leads to question whether schools are 'purveyors of education or businesses that need to operate with an eye to the marketplace in order to survive' (Tait, 2016).

In comparison to Ysgol Heulwen and Ysgol Castell, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr High School's partnership with the national building society is built on the premise, described by the Head of Business, as 'anything I ask for I get'. The Head of Business explained how their partnership with the national building society has led to the building society setting up 'a hardship fund which is £300 per annum which is to help underprivileged pupils with sports kit, activities and so forth'. Whilst this appears to be a generous provision by the national building society, £300 spread over a year is not a significant amount of money to benefit those pupils who need it. The emergence of businesses providing hardship funds to school pupils suggests that there is not only a lack of funding provided by the National Assembly for Wales to tackle issues of student hardship, but also perhaps financial difficulties that are being faced by families.

In addition to the hardship fund, the national building society had also provided achievement awards in recognition of school or extra-curricular success. As well as being awarded to students, there had also been a staff member benefit from the award for his dedication to his local rugby team. From the interview with Ysgol Mynydd Mawr, it became clear that the national building society's sponsorship of a major sporting and events centre played a huge part in their partnership. Not only did many of the events that the school participated in take place at the stadium, but free tickets to large events such as concerts and rugby games were frequently provided to the school's pupils as prizes for their achievement awards. In addition to this, the Head of Business at Ysgol Mynydd Mawr explained how the national building society 'always pays for the transport to send us up [to Cardiff] as well, he always says send me the bill and he covers the cost of the transport then' further demonstrating the extensive benefits the school gains from their engagement with business.

In some cases, in addition to event tickets, if a charity event has been undertaken by a pupil/s then the building society had been known to match fund what is raised. The Head of Business at Ysgol Mynydd Mawr explained how a student had completed a sponsored bike ride in aid of a hospice that had helped their mother and grandmother through cancer and had raised £2000. In response, the national building society 'match funded and made it up to £4000' which was described by the Head of Business as 'just standard'.

5.3.4 Community engagement

For some schools in the research, certain forms of business engagement can only be understood as directly benefiting the business rather than the school and pupils which they engage with. In the eight schools that took part in the research, three schools experienced engagement of this kind. The first example comes from Ysgol Mynydd Mawr's partnership with the national building society. The Head of Business explained how it is a frequent occurrence for pupils to be asked to undertake a charity bucket collection at rugby games in return for free tickets to the match. An example of this was described by the Head of Business who stated, 'they had a bucket collection for the [rugby] match for Cancer Research who are Principality's charity partner so [the CSR Manager] asked me to get fifteen pupils to do a bucket collection, they have free tickets as part of it'. The charities in question, however, are those that are supported by the national building society, which highlights the moral decisions by the business as it could be argued that the company is bribing the school pupils to undertake charity fundraising for the benefit of the business and its employees.

Another way in which pupils at Ysgol Mynydd Mawr experienced community engagement was through the provision of Welsh language lessons. The Head of Business at the school explained how the local town is traditionally Welsh-speaking however the branch of the national building society in the town does not have any Welsh speakers. A task was then created by the Head of Business and the national building society's CSR Manager for a selection of sixth form students from the school's brokerage forum to go out and 'teach Welsh to the branch and invite Welsh Television over, do a big publicity with it'. The hope was that this

would then be followed up with a mystery shopper to see whether the staff were using their newly acquired skill. While this serves as an opportunity for the school pupils to practice their Welsh-speaking in a new context and environment as well as providing them with a CV worthy experience, there are undoubtedly significant benefits that are to be gained by the national building society by doing this, not least the satisfaction of Welsh-speaking customers.

Additionally, St Winifred's Primary School and Redlands High School had both taken part in an engagement with businesses which did not benefit the school, staff or its pupils. The Head Teacher at St Winifred's explained that whilst business engagement with the younger pupils is not a frequent occurrence at the school, they had recently engaged with a local housing association. According to the Head Teacher, the school was

'contacted by [the housing association] following a concern in the local community about the imminent construction of houses made of shipping containers on a piece of land close to the school'.

The Head Teacher explained that the housing association 'wanted to show that they were doing good community work where they are building' so they contacted the school to recruit pupils in years three and four to design artwork for the inside of the new homes. Whilst this was no doubt an enjoyable experience for the young children it served no purpose to their educational attainment, it could however, be suggested that the engagement with the housing association in this way could lead to skills acquisition in the form of teamwork. There does appear to have been a missed opportunity as the engagement with the housing association could have been incorporated into a classroom activity which included an aspect of learning. The Head Teacher did, however, explain that they

hoped that the building firms and housing association would participate in reciprocal engagement in the future through business community payback schemes when they require help with the construction of a new school building.

Likewise, Redlands High School had also experienced a form of engagement similar to this where the Deputy Head Teacher explained how

‘there was a housing estate being constructed not far from the school and the children were invited on a workshop last summer and I think they had Year 9s and 10s, a small group of pupils, and they looked at designing a play area which was part of the planning agreement and what they had to provide’. (Deputy Head Teacher, Redlands High School).

Like St Winifred’s and Ysgol Mynydd Mawr, these are forms of engagement where it is clear that the business is benefitting significantly more than the school from the engagement with the pupils. These forms of engagement do not follow the defined forms of CSR in that the pupils designing artwork is not ‘directed at alleviating or averting some social ill’ (Young *et al.*, 2003, p.5), instead it could be understood to align more closely with public relations.

5.4 What are the benefits of employer engagement to the schools?

As with the literature on corporate social responsibility and employer engagement in education, this research has found there to be both advocates and critics of the role of businesses in schools in Wales. Krachai argued in 1991 that ‘education is currently under-valued, under-achieving, and under-resourced in the UK and requires a fundamental and radical transformation’ (1991, p.139). Indeed, twenty-eight years later views like Krachai’s (1991) still exist. The rise in businesses in schools has been regarded as a means for this transformation to take place. The schools in this research, regardless of their current situations, had both positive and negative experiences of business engagement. The benefits that the

schools, the staff and the pupils in this research gained from employer engagement were dependent on the school and how they experienced employer engagement. Indeed, with some schools in this research receiving significantly more support and engagement from businesses than others, one school's benefits were found to differ from another's.

5.4.1 Classroom experience

Possibly the biggest consensus amongst the schools in this research was that the engagement with businesses, regardless of its frequency, brought an experience into the classroom that could not have been provided by the subject teachers and 'offered young people a new perspective on the value of education and qualifications' (Kashefpakdel *et al.*, 2019, p.171). This attitude was particularly evident amongst secondary schools where curriculum-based engagement was more prevalent. The Head Teacher at Ysgol Castell explained that despite there always being 'a percentage of staff who will always see [engagement] activities as taking away from their particular subject areas and detrimental to the curriculum', business engagement 'supported [the teachers] and the learning in their classroom' whilst the Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate at All Saints High School said that in the Welsh Baccalaureate lessons 'we sometimes break the class off into groups and they go and work with different people who come in'. The school participants in this research stated that when they were supported by businesses in the classroom, they felt that it provided the pupils with a greater experience of learning.

Whilst the provision of skills-based exercises did not go unacknowledged, four of the five secondary schools were vocally appreciative of the employer engagement that they had received in terms of the Welsh Baccalaureate, something they did not demonstrate clearly for skills-focused engagement. Schools were aware that they often lacked the ability to be able to support the newly introduced qualification in terms of the knowledge of the teachers regarding finance, entrepreneurial skills, product design and marketing. The Head of Business at Ysgol Mynydd Mawr explained how they ask themselves 'can we improve the quality of the teaching standards or improve the learning opportunities' and as such, they see employer engagement in the school as something of a necessity when it comes to a key part of the school curriculum, this can be seen in their work with the national building society and their use of employees to present guest lectures.

5.4.2 Work readiness

A further benefit that schools saw with engagement with businesses was that the businesses assisted in preparing pupils for employment and therefore meeting the Welsh Government Careers and World of Work Framework (DCELLS, 2008). With businesses such as the multinational investment bank and the British banking group going into schools delivering their Life Skills and Financial Awareness programmes pupils are being prepared for life post 16 education. The PSHE teacher from Monkswell School stated how they believe that 'the preparation for people for work, it is absolutely essential...you forget that actually we're meant to be preparing these people for working'. Similarly, the Head Teacher at Ysgol Castell explained that preparation for the world of work and

university is 'highly significant' which is the reason behind their strategy of inviting 'employers to come in and we do mock interviews with everyone in Year 11... we give them job adverts and they apply...they come dressed for their interview...they get treated as if it were a real interview'.

Whilst schools are clearly aware that this form of engagement benefits the pupils it leads to question what is the role of the education. Traditionally the role of the school and its teachers has been to educate its pupils and provide a learning environment in which to promote academic success. More recently there has been a move towards incorporating learning that would have once typically taken place in the workplace into the school and its curriculum, ultimately turning schools into vocational education training (VET) providers (Gleeson and Keep, 2004, p.40). Consequently, this could be seen as a move by businesses wishing to poach schools in the hope of training a future workforce and potentially saving the company thousands of pounds a year.

5.4.3 Procurement of resources

One opportunity that has been given to schools as a result of employer engagement is the ability to procure new resources and equipment (Griseri and Seppala, 2010). Examples of this have been demonstrated in this chapter, with Ysgol Mynydd Mawr gaining sports kits, iPads, broadcasting equipment, with Ysgol Castell being able to source nearly new mini busses, and with Redlands Secondary School also receiving sponsored sports team kits. The provision had meant that the schools had not had to use money out of their own budgets to pay for the resources, nor have they had to simply 'cope' with what existing resources

they already had. This has resulted in schools having doors opened to them in terms of opportunities available to its pupils. An example of this can be seen with the broadcasting equipment that was provided by the national building society to Ysgol Mynydd Mawr. Since the provision of the equipment pupils have been able to develop their media skills, something that would not have been possible without the procurement of the items through the employer engagement of Principality.

5.4.4 Pupil confidence and engagement

Ismail *et al.* (2014) suggest that soft skill development such as a confidence-building amongst pupils can be considered as a successful outcome of corporate social responsibility programmes. In the schools involved in this research, an outcome of the engagement of businesses which has been noted by both staff and pupils in schools is the increased confidence amongst the pupils. The Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate at All Saints High School stated that their pupils 'typically are very low in confidence, they're not able to speak confidently about the skills that they've got'. He explained that through their engagement with businesses they have been able to develop their skills which are consequently making the pupils more confident.

The increase in confidence as a result of employer engagement can also be supported by pupils at Ysgol Mynydd Mawr who also took part in this research. The pupils had all been involved in some form of engagement with the national building society ranging from being a scholarship pupil, undertaking work experience, having a guest lecture or attending a workshop run at the events

centre. One pupil expressed how 'it is quite a nice change from sitting in lessons all day...you're able to properly get stuck in and learn more whilst you're working as well, it's quite nice and refreshing'. Another pupil described their engagement with the national building society as a 'confidence-building exercise' while another pupil described how being accepted onto the scholarship programme has

'given me a lot more confidence, actually. I feel like if I could do that then there's other things that I could do as well'. (Pupil, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr).

Another pupil who had spent three days on the iBroadcasting workshop explained how prior to the event 'I wasn't not confident but I wasn't extremely confident, I was somewhere in the middle', and since taking part in the workshop she explained how 'my confidence has definitely got better and I can easily stand up in front of an audience and just speak now. Like, I don't exactly have any fear'. This is something that will benefit the pupils for the remainder of their school lives and will be beneficial to them when applying for university or jobs (UKCES, 2012).

An observation that was made when accompanying the insurance company to an event at a local private school, was the school's attempt to build confidence in an unconventional manner. Prior to the commencement of mock interviews all businesses were provided with mark sheets for each student to rate different aspects of the interview and write feedback. The businesses however were told by the school's Head Teacher to avoid scoring low, as this could affect the pupil's confidence. This action can be looked upon either negatively or positively. For instance, while a higher score may be accompanied by constructive feedback it may increase the pupil's confidence, it does not reflect real life, and this would have perhaps been an opportunity for the students to develop the skills that they were lacking.

Employer engagement was also considered by brokers and businesses as a way to engage pupils in learning. The Head of Partnerships stated how some of their partnerships had been created to engage students at risk of disengagement and the international law firm explained how 'people are really engaged' when they undertake their company educational programme. What emerged from the interviews with the schools, however, was that the engagement of students was not mentioned on any occasion in relation to the school's links with businesses. This is an interesting point to raise as pupil engagement is one of the points that are raised in current literature as benefits of business engagement in education, another example of how a lack of impact measurement is resulting in conflicting perceptions between businesses and schools (UKCES, 2012).

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the ways schools engage with businesses and their reasons for doing so. The schools in this research varied in regards of the format that they engaged with businesses, with some schools explaining how they engaged on a formal on-going basis, often organised through a brokerage group such as the national broker (Wales) or the Cardiff local authority broker. In comparison, other schools engaged with businesses on an informal one-off basis, which were either by preference, or because they lacked the ability to engage in a formal manner. Approaches to engagement were discussed as either proactive, where schools looked for engagement opportunities, or reactive where schools engaged when they were approached by businesses or a broker. These

approaches to engagement were seen to be affected by the rationale that schools gave for their engagement.

The most frequent form of engagement that took place in schools related to policy requirements in terms of imminent changes to the national curriculum in the form of the National Curriculum for Wales 2022 and the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification (Education Wales, 2017). An interesting finding was that it was believed that schools would not engage with businesses in their current manner if it was not for the policy requirements. Second to policy requirements was schools rationalising their need to engage as a result of fiscal restraints from government cuts to funding, and as such approached businesses for assistance in purchasing items such as sports kits. Some schools in the research only engaged with businesses through serendipitous encounters, when businesses approached the school wanted to engage.

It was found that the main way that schools engaged with businesses in this research corresponded with the same finding with businesses, in that careers and skills acquisition was the most frequent form of engagement. This engagement took the form of careers fairs and workshops provided by not only businesses but also parents, as for some schools they were the closest access the school had to businesses. Despite this being the most frequent form of engagement by schools it was also one that ambivalence was expressed over, suggesting that the schools engaged in this way for necessity in order to meet the demands of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification. For some schools, they expressed that they would only engage with businesses if there was a direct link

to the curriculum as there was an acknowledgment of the pre-existing heavy workload that teachers were already facing.

In contrast to the findings from the interviews with businesses, schools expressed how engagement in the form of financial or resource donation was always the most well-received. This is possibly the result of funding cuts and lack of available resources that schools are able to access and so the ability to engage with businesses for these reasons was seen as a highly significant benefit. One interesting form of engagement that emerged was community engagement through businesses whereby businesses 'recruited' school pupils to participate in activities which would ultimately benefit the company but not the school or the pupil.

Despite the schools in this research expressing ambivalence towards certain forms of engagement with businesses there was the agreement that pupils did benefit from the engagement through a varied classroom experience, acknowledgement of work-ready skills development, procurement of resources and pupil confidence and engagement, despite this being something that was disputed by the experience of some business employees.

From the research undertaken there appears to be no systematic commonality of how schools experience business engagement, there are many different factors affecting engagement ranging from time and resources to enthusiasm from staff. Woolhouse (1991, p.9) explains that

‘the motives for the partners are mixed and are not necessarily either consistent or compatible; agendas are of an infinite variety, and may or may not constitute an effective means of conciliating the problems that they address’.

This statement establishes an understanding that employer engagement undertaken in a school setting is complicated and not necessarily there to benefit the school, the staff or the pupils. Whilst it cannot be disputed that there are benefits of certain forms of engagement it has been demonstrated that employer engagement in schools raises an array of concerns as to the legitimacy of why it is undertaken and what the outcomes of the engagement are.

Chapter Six - What issues does employer engagement raise for schools and the education system?

Introduction

Despite the mainly positive remarks from schools regarding their experiences with business employer engagement, through the analysis of the interview data issues have been dissected relating to the presence of businesses in schools. The nature of the partnerships between businesses and schools are complex in that the 'motives of the partners are mixed and are not necessarily either consistent or compatible' (Woolhouse, 1991, p.9). This chapter will firstly discuss how despite evident examples of business engagement in schools, there are still schools that lack any significant form of engagement. Following this, the chapter will bring to attention the inequalities that arise as a consequence of the varieties of business engagement activities that take place. Thirdly, the chapter will explore school stakeholder engagement and the extent to which parents and guardians are involved in the school's decisions to engage with businesses. The fourth section of the chapter assesses how the implementation of the Welsh Baccalaureate can often exacerbate problems for engagement and this will be linked to the emergence and design of the new Welsh curriculum. Finally, and most importantly, the chapter will discuss the extent to which there are educational benefits to these forms of engagement.

6.1 Lack of engagement

This research has demonstrated the varied way that schools engage with businesses, whether it is through a structured partnership or on an informal basis. It is, however, easy to overlook the schools who were involved in the research who significantly lacked any form of engagement with businesses. The reasons for the lack of engagement was generally found to be two-fold, with three schools suggesting that their rural location was to blame, and one school who blamed their status as an independent school, not for a lack of engagement, but a reason as to why businesses were reluctant to work with them.

6.1.1 Locality

Three schools in this research, Ysgol Castell (high school), Ysgol Heulwen and Riverside School (both primary schools), all stated in their interviews that they not only struggled to form partnerships with businesses, but even struggled to work with them on an informal basis. For these three schools, they perceived their locality and accessibility to businesses to be significant reasons as to why they struggled to engage with businesses.

The Head Teacher of Ysgol Heulwen, a primary school 20 miles from Cardiff, explained how they had been involved with businesses significantly at their previous schools, however in the two years they had been at Ysgol Heulwen the links with the outside community had been lacking. As such, the engagement that did take place with the school was ad hoc and infrequent, this was something the Head Teacher explained they wanted to change in the future. The school's Head Teacher suggested that the reason for this lack of business involvement was due

to the locality of the school in that 'it is in the middle of a large housing estate mushroomed into a small town' and the only local businesses are 'a small Tesco, betting shops, cafes and a tanning salon'. This lack of opportunity faced by the school and its pupils leads to concerns expressed by Kintrea *et al.* (2011) over the aspirations of pupils who are not exposed to industry or business outside their immediate surroundings. For pupils at Ysgol Heulwen, this raises concern as to the opportunities afforded to them and the influence this has on their career aspirations. Spielhofer *et al.* (2011) suggest that the lack of employment choice and opportunities is characteristic of the rural economy which is generally made up of small employers and consequently

'this may reduce young people's belief that they can achieve their aspirations in the local environment and may, therefore, either encourage them to migrate to a different, more urban location, or may make them pursue less ambitious aspirations' (2011, p.4).

For the pupils at Ysgol Heulwen, the presence of private sector service industry jobs in the school's vicinity could result in a lack of engagement and the resulting lower aspirations which can be linked to the issue of youth unemployment in rural areas (Cartmel and Furlong, 2000).

The statement by the Head Teacher at Ysgol Heulwen is interesting as it demonstrates how schools and businesses experience engagement differently. The Head Teacher explained that although the school does benefit from businesses through room hire for afterschool activities, there was no business engagement present in the school. He stated that the local estate agent occasionally 'pumps money our way' by means of financial donations, and they have held a Mothercare fashion show where the school benefitted from the profit of the ticket sales. The Head Teacher saw the 'lack of industry nearby' to blame

for the lack of engagement opportunities at the school (Spielhofer *et al.*, 2011). The Head Teacher at Ysgol Heulwen however, only appears to consider engagement with businesses in the school's locality, whereas other schools in the research have demonstrated how they are working with businesses based a distance away from the school. For example, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr is nearly 60 miles away from their partners the national building society, and education skills programmes by companies such as the upmarket department store and the investment bank have most of their resources online which can be accessed without direct engagement, although engagement can be arranged if requested by the school. The power of influential and elite individuals in these situations is important as it is these individuals who have 'the power to frame aspirations and capabilities as possible and realistic' (Corbett, 2016, p.279), and whilst the Head Teacher at Ysgol Heulwen acknowledged that the school's lack of engagement with businesses was something they wished to change in the future, they had no plans as to how to move forward.

The experience of engagement, or lack of, by Ysgol Heulwen begins to show the limited opportunities faced by some schools because of their locality and limited access to businesses and as such begins to demonstrate how inequalities between schools may widen. Whilst it cannot be generalised that rurality results in lowered aspirations, Spielhofer *et al.* (2011, p.11) argue that 'there are some distinct characteristics of rural areas that have a role in influencing and potentially constraining young people's aspirations'. This in itself highlights how the educational experiences and opportunities available to school pupils can vary

significantly and how these inequalities begin from children entering the education system.

Likewise, Riverside Primary School, just outside Cardiff, explained that they lack significant engagement with businesses. The Head Teacher explained how 'we're quite rural, there's very little involvement [from businesses]', this, however, was not through a lack of not wanting to engage with businesses. The Head Teacher stated how there were lots of opportunities within the school to engage with businesses, she explained

'we're looking at aquaponics at the moment, you know hydroponics with fish and the way the waste from the fish is fed through the cable to feed the plants and there must be business opportunities there but it is knowing who to contact and how they engage with schools, that's not clear really'. (Head Teacher, Riverside Primary School).

This finding differs from a UKCES report which states that

'some schools do not recognise the role that businesses can play in working with them to enhance and enrich the educational experience for their students' (UKCES, 2012, p.4).

The schools in this piece of research have demonstrated their awareness of the potential prospects that business engagement could provide the school and its staff and pupils, what was lacking amongst some schools could be described as both a lack of knowledge and/or motivation to engage with businesses. Whilst the schools in this research who lacked engagement expressed their interest in engaging with businesses, none expressed that they had actively searched for ways to engage with businesses.

The Head Teacher at Riverside Primary School further explained that every Wednesday afternoon the school has 'wacky Wednesdays' where

'the children go off-timetable and we mix all the ages up so from year three to six children are mixed into groups, say twenty in a group, and the same in

foundation phase, and they just do exciting enriching learning'. (Head Teacher, Riverside Primary School).

Through this off timetable learning the Head Teacher explained how, as well as their aquaponics group, 'you've got your fitness group, you've got your arts group, so lots of opportunities as part of that curriculum work'. The Head Teacher added how

'we teach modern foreign language right across the school...each year group does a different language...we believe that if you expose them young enough to the outside world, and we're quite rural, it's important that they don't become too introverted and look outside their local areas and outside of Wales and outside the UK'. (Head Teacher, Riverside Primary School).

The Head Teacher expressed how they believed that these school activities and styles of educating would be an ideal opportunity and time for business connections to be made, however they did not know how to approach businesses who would be interested in engaging. Furthermore, they explained that despite the school having an array of different opportunities for business engagement she was not 'aware of any businesses that want to work with primaries or have the capacity or the will to do it'. This experience by the Head Teacher at Riverside Primary School supports Lee *et al.* (2016, p.36) who argue that 'a lack of understanding by rural school staff on the methods for obtaining support' is often a reason for fewer forms of employer engagement with schools in rural locations, and demonstrates how inequalities may be widened between schools who receive these different opportunities and those who do not.

The blame, however, cannot be entirely attributed to the teachers in these schools. Despite a push by the Welsh Government for schools to engage with businesses, and the existence of brokers such as the national brokerage firm and their partnerships division, whose purpose is to develop partnerships between schools and business, there appears to be a lack of knowledge by the rural

schools of these kind of brokerage firms who have the skills to form engagement opportunities. The inner-city urban schools and the schools in deprived areas are being supported by the Welsh careers service, the Cardiff local authority broker and the partnerships division of the brokerage firm but there appears to be a lack of support for those schools who are not being reached by these organisations. It is therefore becoming more visible in the unequal ways in which the brokerage firms operate and is having a knock-on effect and creating inequalities between the schools in the South Wales region.

The Head of Ysgol Castell explained that due to the formation of the new school from two old schools 'there's a huge amount of engagement that needs to be done' through networking to create awareness of the new school amongst businesses in the local area. Despite Ysgol Castell being situated across two sites in mid-Wales, the Head Teacher explained how 'this isn't an area where you have big employers, the big employers here are forestry, farming and the council'. There is no doubt however that these employers would still have the expertise and experience that could be offered to the school and its staff and pupils, so it could be suggested that the school just lacks the knowledge of how to engage with the businesses. The Head Teacher at Ysgol Castell also noted how local businesses are 'always really pleasant, but you know, despite it being green and leafy in this area, there is a significant hidden rural poverty'. An example of this given by the Head Teacher was with regards to a recent prize-giving, 'the receptionist sent out 40/50 letters in terms of sponsorship and I think she had about half a dozen back'. The Head Teacher suggested that they were unsure whether this response was a clear unwillingness to engage or whether simply

‘£20 is utterly too much when you are talking generally about sole traders who have a little shop, butcher, baker that kind of thing...I think it is because they don’t have the capacity perhaps or the structure larger organisations in perhaps an urban area would perhaps have’. (Head Teacher, Ysgol Castell).

This belief by the Head Teacher at Ysgol Castell was also shared by the Head of Business at Ysgol Mynydd Mawr who explained how they had moved away from trying to partner with smaller local businesses for this very reason. Again, as mentioned earlier, there is a pattern with the schools who lack engagement in that they are limiting their opportunities to the immediate locality and not thinking about engaging with businesses further afield. Whilst the location and access to resource-rich businesses can be attributed to a lack of engagement there also appears to be a lack in forward-thinking from the teachers.

Despite the shared attitude amongst the rural schools that businesses in the immediate locality are small and independent and difficult to engage with, the Federation of Small Businesses Scotland (FSB) argues that it is ‘vital for schools to engage with small businesses’ (FSB, 2016, p.5) particularly in a rural location where they provide most of the local opportunities. The FSB does, however, acknowledge that a small business with less than four employees who engage for two hours per month is equivalent to a business with 250 employees engaging for three and a half weeks a month, it is therefore understandable as to why there is so little engagement from local businesses in schools. The issue with this argument by the Federation of Small Businesses Scotland (2016) is that through engagement with local businesses it does not expand the knowledge of the young people to opportunities that are available outside of the local community, and therefore risks restricting social mobility. This is particularly the case in areas of

disadvantage where there is a lack of access to more privileged social networks (Reay, 2017).

The Head Teacher at Ysgol Castell also explained how they had worked with the Welsh careers service and the national brokerage firm (Wales) to find a business partnership following the school going into special measures. The Head Teacher stated how '[the Welsh careers service] came and said okay we'd like to match you up [with a business] so they did a really detailed audit in terms of the school needs and so on'. It was explained by the Head Teacher how

'at that point in time I'd only just taken over as Head Teacher, the rest of the leadership were completely new to it...we really said that one of the biggest things we needed was support in term of leadership and management on every level, not just senior leaderships, certainly middle leaders who you know had been in their comfort zone really and hadn't driven things forward'. (Head Teacher, Ysgol Castell).

After failed attempts to be matched with the National Farmers Union, who were unable to facilitate the arrangement, the school was provided with two Information Technology companies, which did not fit their original requirements, and contradicts the Head of Partnership's statement that they provide business expertise for the school's preferred area of improvement. The Head Teacher stated how

'the original need we'd had as a school took them two, two and a half years to try and do that match, well the school needs had moved significantly since then so their ability to respond quickly was lost and so it ended up instead of being that more strategic support it ended up looking at more curriculum-based support'. (Head Teacher, Ysgol Castell).

This support was described by the Head Teacher as being 'helpful, but it wasn't that helpful, it didn't have the impact', as such, the school now relied on trying to work with local businesses independently. This is a pertinent finding as Mertkan (2011) suggests that distributing employee volunteers within school leadership teams appears to be less prevalent but is, in fact, an area that would benefit from

business support. The findings from Ysgol Castell present the Head Teacher as someone having a clear idea of how businesses can support the school and its staff and yet a brokerage firm has been unable to achieve this for them, a point that has not been mentioned in previous literature. It is perhaps worth noting that the partnerships division of the national brokers have partnered schools and businesses that are not local to each other and so it is interesting to consider they were not able to facilitate this request by the Head Teacher at Ysgol Castell.

Whilst lack of engagement can be attributed to a lack of knowledge of how to engage with businesses, the socio-economic aspects of a school's locality is a significant factor in understanding links between schools and businesses. It can be suggested that a school's location and its lack of local businesses can hinder a rural school's business engagement opportunities, and in fact 'urban schools are able to find financial support and resources from private enterprises much easier than their rural counterparts' (Lee *et al.*, 2016, p.36). For example, while the Cardiff local authority broker will work with any business, they will only engage with schools situated in the Cardiff local authority (as earlier seen in Figure 3). Additionally, in an urban setting such as Cardiff there are a myriad of different business opportunities for the schools to engage with and being closer to businesses will no doubt also increase knowledge and proactivity in searching for opportunities. This is an interesting finding as it supports Hoff's (2002) research which suggests that a school's proximity to a business is of crucial importance when a business decides to engage, which could explain why the urban schools in this research generally had more links with businesses and there was a lack of engagement between businesses and rural schools.

The lack of engagement experienced in schools in rural locations also risks inhibiting the acquisition of cultural capital by its pupils. As Stanley and Mann (2014) suggest, individuals who are exposed to increased amounts of employer engagement during their school life, regardless of whether it is on a formal or an informal basis, have a better chance of improving their social capital. This is further supported by Spielhofer *et al.* (2011, p.23) who argue that through the broadening of horizons through the provision of opportunities it has 'enabled young people to interact with employers and ask questions'. However, whilst considering this, and acknowledging the argument that without these opportunities, pupils in rural schools risk losing the opportunity to increase their cultural capital, which in turn can affect their social mobility, without any significant impact measurement or longitudinal research the claims by Stanley and Mann (2014) and Spielhofer *et al.* (2011) are questionable. This is important to acknowledge particularly as increasing social capital and social mobility is the foundation of many of the businesses' educational programmes.

Spielhofer *et al.* (2011, p.17) emphasise the importance of expert advice and practical guidance 'when helping young people to consider the obstacles to achieving particular career objectives' and suggest that this can be achieved through role models, employer events, early input on professional guidance and positive ambassadors who share similar experiences to the pupils, such as having a rural upbringing. These are factors that need considering in ensuring engagement in a rural setting is meaningful to both schools and students.

6.1.2 Engagement in private schools

Whilst the private school in this piece of research did not specifically lack engagement from businesses, what they did lack was the presence of large businesses and business educational programmes. The reason for this was primarily found to be due to the fact that many businesses chose to focus their engagement on schools with high FSMs and in more disadvantaged areas, ignoring private schools for the independent, financially capable status that they possess. The PSHE teacher at Monkswell School explained how ‘sometimes we have that barrier because we are independent, they think that they can sort themselves out, which is a shame’. As such, the idea that ‘less educationally advantaged students have access to less prestigious or relevant engagement opportunities’ (Jones *et al.*, 2016, p.842) could be contested. Whilst the findings from this research suggest that state schools appear to have significantly more formal engagement opportunities with businesses than private schools, whether the engagement is less prestigious or relevant is contentious.

On the one hand, the businesses, and to some extent the schools, in this research argue that the development of work-ready skills is important and highly regarded when entering the workplace for the first time. On the other hand, however, Monkswell School, the independent school in this research, is particularly focussed on the development of networking skills and is able to do this through a strong alumni system and parental contacts, something which state schools do not necessarily have access to. It is therefore a matter of opinion as to what is considered as relevant and/or prestigious. Indeed, for the girls at Monkswell School, engagement for careers purposes was not considered

necessary as the pupils were deemed to already be aspirational in their future career choices, as such, the focus on engagement was around networking skills.

Despite their engagement with parents and alumni, Monkswell School's PSHE teacher explained how their status as an independent school has impacted on their ability to bring large businesses with CSR educational programmes into the school. Not only had the school been overlooked by companies such as Nationwide Building Society who the PSHE teacher had stated they had 'sent in quite a few applications' to, but they had also experienced companies who had stopped working with the school because of a change in the business's priorities.

The PSHE teacher explained how

'Dove [beauty] ran self-esteem workshops and then suddenly they said oh we've got to be more strategic in the areas that we are targeting...so suddenly we were like oh okay you're not coming in anymore then?' (PSHE Teacher, Monkswell School).

Consequently, the school has set out to engage with local businesses, alumni and parents as a means of bringing businesses into the school. This is an interesting finding as Monkswell School did not appear to struggle to engage with local businesses, unlike its comprehensive school counterparts. This could be explained again by looking at the school's locality. Although the school is situated in a relatively rural setting, it is in a particularly affluent part of South Wales where local businesses perhaps have the time and resources to engage with the school. The findings from Monkswell School also contrast with findings from research by Huddleston *et al.* (2014, p.173) who found that 'direct, unsolicited approaches from employers...were common' amongst private schools. This is interesting as it directly contrasts with the findings from this research, however, despite efforts to undertake this research at other independent schools, Monkswell School was

the only independent school in this research and as such it is difficult to ascertain whether this is an incongruence associated with this specific school.

Due to the reliance on alumni by Monkswell School, the PSHE teacher stated how the school had recently recruited someone to

‘consolidate our Old Girls contacts and what they’re doing now...and she’s actually making contact with them through social media and she’s said that because she’s contacted them personally, some of them left ten years ago and they’ve done incredibly well and so she’s starting to make those connections to bring people back, to give something back’. (PSHE Teacher, Monkswell School).

Whilst these findings fit with Huddleston *et al.*’s (2012, p. 18) suggestion that ‘one of the most common methods used to engage employers is alumni networks’ in independent schools, what Huddleston *et al.* (2012) do not note is the possible reason for a reliance on alumni is that many businesses are reluctant to work with these schools in the first place.

6.2 Inequalities between schools

The lack of engagement that takes place amongst some schools demonstrates the increased inequalities that emerge from the presence of businesses in schools. This is a concern for several reasons in that some pupils are benefitting from engagement through increased skills and knowledge, whereas those schools who do not engage are restricting the opportunities for their pupils. A significant issue that has emerged throughout the interviews with schools is that there were inequalities between what schools received from businesses.

These inequalities can be discussed in terms of whether the engagement from businesses took the form of targeted or pan-school activities. Two extreme examples of this can be seen with Ysgol Mynydd Mawr and All Saints High School. Ysgol Mynydd Mawr received significant amounts of support and engagement through business engagement in the form of financial and resource donations, classroom activities, skills enhancement, and out of school workshops. In comparison, All Saints High School's engagement was subject-specific and directed towards the delivery of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification.

Those schools who were in receipt of more engagement from businesses generally benefitted from pan-school activities which covered curriculum, financial and resource donations and careers and skills advice. For example, those schools who had benefitted from financial and resource donations through prize giving donations or the procurement of resources such as iPads, sports kits, and mini busses can be argued to have an advantage over other schools. As well as this benefitting the schools and pupils by providing the pupils with more opportunities and better learning resources, the schools also benefit financially. For those schools who have acquired free resources it has meant that they have been able to save money and spend it in other areas of the school, comparatively, those schools who engage in more targeted, often subject related, activities do not gain such significant financial benefits from businesses.

Whilst it is clear how targeted versus pan-school activities can lead to inequalities between schools, what is unclear is which form of engagement is more beneficial,

and to whom with. Targeted activities, particularly those which prioritise the curriculum, such as the Welsh Baccalaureate, it could be argued that they are more beneficial to students as they are developed in more detail and are more purposeful, and potentially more impactful than other forms of engagement. However, it also depends on what is understood as beneficial, although pupils benefit directly in targeted activities, through pan-school activities it is not only the school and the current students who benefit, but also future students through a legacy that is being left by business engagement.

Inequalities are not only caused by the amount of engagement that is present in a school, but also the enthusiasm to engage not only by the schools, but also by the businesses, and it is this that leads to some schools benefitting more than others. An example of this can be seen in the partnership between the national building society and Ysgol Mynydd Mawr which benefits the whole school, whereas the similarly brokered partnership between All Saints High School and GE Aviation is confined to curriculum-specific needs. The Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate at All Saints High School suggested that this was the fault of the other departments in the school which they stated, 'are focused on results in their own areas and not thinking about the links with businesses, whereas that could really benefit them'. It could, however, also be considered to be the role of the Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate, as someone who has experience with working with the businesses, to demonstrate to other staff good practice for the benefit of all the pupils and not just those undertaking the qualification. A business teacher at the school suggested that GE Aviation's lack of resources and time restricts their involvement with more departments within the school. The business teacher

explained how a visit from the GE Aviation staff into his business lessons, or a trip to GE Aviation would help bring what the students are learning in the classroom to life, but as yet the company have not been proactive in being able to provide this help.

Inequalities do not only exist between schools with different forms of engagement, but they also exist amongst those who engage with the *same* businesses. An example of this is the relationship between the national building society's CSR Manager and Ysgol Mynydd Mawr's Head of Business. It is undeniable that there is a close bond between these two individuals, with the Head of Business explaining how

'because we get on so well it's almost like a friendship... we went to watch the rugby last week, as we get on with each other, I think that's important...he's great with me and we just get on and it's good, very good'. (Head of Business, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr).

The relationship between the CSR Manager and the Head of Business has enabled the partnership between the school and the business to develop to the extent that the Head of Business described the school as a '[national building society] School', referring to the fact that their branding is all over the sports kits and the school's social media outputs. It was not until conducting an interview with Ysgol Mynydd Mawr that it became apparent that this school appeared to benefit from more opportunities than other partnership schools that had been discussed in the interview with the national building society CSR Manager. The introduction of the scholarship, which was exclusive to Ysgol Mynydd Mawr, and the fact that the national building society's CSR Manager was described to be visiting the school 'every other week at least' demonstrates how inequalities were occurring.

Whilst this relationship between the school teacher and the CSR manager is beneficial to the school with regards to what the national building society provides them, it questions the extent to which Ysgol Mynydd Mawr benefits more from the national building society than other schools who also have a partnership with the building society. The CSR manager at the national building society acknowledged that 'somewhere like north Wales for example, it's a long way from our head office, so that can be harder to service sometimes'. Consequently, the CSR manager explained that as part of their relationship with the partnerships division of the national brokers (Wales) they do still work with schools in areas such as Wrexham, nearly 150 miles away, however, the approaches undertaken would be different. This once again demonstrates the inequalities that are emerging in schools because of what could be described as a 'proximity' lottery.

Furthermore, it is important to consider what would happen to the Ysgol Mynydd Mawr /national building society partnership, or any close partnership, in fact, should either the teacher or the CSR manager leave their position, and whether the partnership would be able to be sustained without the close relationship between its two instigators. Research by Hoff (2002, p.73) found that 59% of 488 businesses surveyed in Atlanta, Georgia stated how 'change in key personnel' was a significant factor for partnerships 'losing momentum or failing'. This is an interesting point as many of the schools in this research relied on one single member of staff to establish and maintain engagement opportunities with businesses. The Head of Business at Ysgol Mynydd Mawr explained in his interview that the school had already had experience of this, stating that before

he took on this current role 'we had a few stopgaps of people doing it and schemes stopped running', supporting the findings by Hoff (2002). The Head of Business stated how he 'could easily hand [the partnership] over to' the school's career advisor if he wanted to, however this would not guarantee the successful continuation of the partnership with the national building society as much of its success appears to be a result of the close relationship between the Head of Business and the CSR Manager.

6.3 Parental and pupil power

An interesting finding in this research was the lack of communication between schools and parents as to the engagement of businesses in the school and with the pupils. It was found that the only occasions parents were made aware of the engagement was when they were involved, such as presenting careers talks, this however did not take place at every school. The Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate at All Saints Catholic High School explained how 'some parents have very little understanding of what the Welsh Baccalaureate is, especially living in our area, so it is difficult'. This is an important factor as Olmedo (2016) suggests that the increase in the involvement of businesses in schools is concerning as it raises an issue about democracy. He argues that whilst parents have a voice in their child's education through political voting, they do not have this same choice for the CEOs of companies who are influencing their child's learning and educational experiences.

Not only are parents not being given a voice in the providers of their child's education, but literature also suggests that the lack of engagement between the schools and parents can be attributed to a lack of aspirations amongst children from rural schools. 'Strong ties', as discussed by Granovetter (1973), such as family can be considered as 'counter advantageous' if they possess limited knowledge in areas such as post-16 education and employment (Tomlinson, 2019, p.60). This is an issue which was raised by the Head of Partnerships who expressed how they are continuously trying to involve parents in their child's education and post-16 choices as they explained 'it's not because they don't want to, or they can't, it's because they don't know how'. There is therefore a reliance on the influence of 'weak ties' in the form of businesses and employers to impart their knowledge and information onto the young people. Through the targeting and engagement of parents by the schools it would allow for parents as well as pupils to be educated on the activities within school as well as opportunities post-16 education. The lack of knowledge of post-16 education by parents can inhibit the pursuing of aspirations by pupils (Speilhofer *et al.*, 2011), which is even more prevalent when pupils are not being exposed to external professions as seen in schools in rural localities.

This research also found that, like the parents, students were not given a voice in the partnerships that the schools used and their participation in them. It was expected by the schools that pupils would engage with the businesses as they would their normal curriculum-based lessons. Theories surrounding effective schooling however suggest that high levels of pupil and parental involvement is just one of many variables associated with an effective school (Teese and

Polesel, 2003). Through the involvement of students in the daily running of the school by giving students a say in what they do, how they learn and what they learn, it is believed that it is more likely to create motivated individuals (Promethean, n.d).

6.4 Pupil engagement

Rathunde (2009, p.190) suggests that educational approaches which require students 'to sit quietly, listen to lectures, do homework, and focus only on the symbols and concepts they are manipulating' can damage student motivation. It would therefore be reasonable to suggest that business engagement in schools would offer opportunities to engage and motivate students in ways they have not previously experienced. Pupil engagement with businesses is often discussed in terms of physical engagement but not often in terms of mental engagement. Interviews with employees at the insurance company found that despite the push for engagement by the government, businesses and most schools, the willingness to engage was not necessarily expressed by pupils themselves.

Several of the insurance company employees noted how their experiences with engaging with pupils could often be challenging, especially in the classroom. One employee explained how there was an issue that occurred during one of the sessions that they had led and 'the teacher dealt with it because it was outside of our remit'. Furthermore, another employee stated that 'a couple of times I had concerns over the way people behaved, there was a lack of respect'. Whilst this can be blamed on pupils for their lack of engagement in the activities, it can also be linked to the lack of experience of those individuals running the engagement

sessions and can be considered to be what Griseri and Seppala (2010, p.13) refer to as 'irresponsible practice'. The employees in this research lacked any teaching experience which could be argued to inhibit their knowledge of, and ability to, present a session to young pupils and how to control the behaviour of the students (Davis, 1973). The Cardiff local authority broker acknowledged this issue in feedback that they had received from schools who had stated how they had found some employers 'were presenting to an adult audience' rather than designing an interactive lesson aimed at young people.

Furthermore, during the observation of several of the insurance company presentations at a school skills day, the participation from the student audience was lacking until free pens were offered out to individuals who were answering questions being posed to them. Additionally, an insurance company employee who had engaged with students previously during a school visit to the company offices in Cardiff, stated how 'the students do get bored'. This suggests that the way that businesses perceive the benefits of their CSR engagements in schools are not mirrored in the outcomes for the schools or the pupils. These issues were not raised by the business CSR representatives in the research, however it could be that those individuals oversaw the CSR activities but did not necessarily experience it.

6.5 Impact of engagement

Despite the CSR activities that take place through business engagement in schools being varied there is little evidence to suggest that there is any systematic attempt to measure the impact of these activities. Brokers, schools and

businesses in this research were all questioned with regards to the impact of the engagement. Both the partnerships division of the national brokers and the Welsh careers service as forms of brokers explained how they run feedback sessions with schools and businesses in addition to feedback surveys which are completed by those involved in the interventions. What is concerning, however, is that the national broker's partnerships division stated that from the start of their links with the Welsh careers service to deliver the partnerships programme

‘we weren't set any specific targets in terms of what sort of activity might happen with each partnership, what sort of impact or outcomes you might want to see from each of the partnerships so there were no targets’. (Head of Partnerships (Wales), Partnerships Division, Wales).

This is concerning as it not only highlights concerns about how the Welsh careers service keep track of what the partnerships division are delivering, but it also a worrying finding where schools are concerned as there is no universal understanding as to what the aims and objectives of the national brokers partnerships division. This is a striking finding particularly because of the argument by the UKCES (2012) that school business partnerships increase social capital, academic performance and employment prospects, however, without significant impact measurement, these claims are questionable.

Whilst the point raised by Mann *et al.* (2018) that impact is dependent on a certain individual at a specific point and time is reasonable it still does not justify the lack of impact that was measured throughout this research. Surveys were frequently used by businesses as impact markers for their CSR initiatives and particularly their engagement with schools, and the research found that generally, schools did not make an attempt to formally measure any impact of the engagements. With businesses however, these impact measurements

were generally understood in terms of perceived benefits and enjoyment from both the employees' and schools' perspectives. Many of the schools when questioned about impact simply stated that they 'thought' that the interventions were beneficial to the students, however, there was no evidence to support this.

Redlands High School went so far as to say that they do not get feedback from students about sessions and the only impact measurement 'would be in their [Welsh Baccalaureate] portfolios'. There is therefore a lack of measurement of the value-added of engagement activities, and whilst success is relative to what is wanted to be achieved from the links with businesses, there is nothing to suggest, or evidence to prove, that pupils are more engaged, attainment is improved or the skills workshops are improving employability. This is acknowledged by the Cardiff local authority broker stating 'what does success look like and how can you measure it? It is really hard'. They did however suggest that 'we need to do more work on like a labour market intelligence for Cardiff, where the gaps are, where the jobs are etcetera, over time we would expect that picture to change'.

Ysgol Mynydd Mawr explained that the school and the national building society had started working together in the attempt to demonstrate impact. To do this, the Head of Business at Ysgol Mynydd Mawr explained how between themselves and the national building society a two-year scholarship was set up for three students from years ten and twelve with 'tracking at the start, tracking data throughout'. The Head of Business stated that

'as part of the scholarship they get various sessions with a suitable mentor, they get a laptop or something of their choosing, plus loads of experiences, such as next Friday we're taking them up to Cardiff and they're having workshops and guest lectures there, then we're going to the stadium and having a VIP tour'. (Head of Business, Ysgol Mynydd Mawr).

The scholarship was established in the hope of demonstrating the impact that business engagement in schools has on the pupils. Whilst an attempt at evaluating the impact of these activities can be seen, it is difficult to see how these forms of extra support that are taking place at Ysgol Mynydd Mawr could be rolled out on a larger scale.

6.6 Welsh Baccalaureate

The issues raised from business engagement go further than inequalities and stakeholder presence, but findings from the school interviews demonstrate how when business engagement is strongly encouraged within the curriculum, as is the case with the Welsh Baccalaureate, the problems are exacerbated. The Welsh Baccalaureate, established in its current format in 2015, is a qualification undertaken by all schools for GCSE level students. The aim of the qualification is to develop the understanding of, and proficiency in, employability skills such as communication, critical thinking, digital literacy and creativity and innovation (WJEC, 2016). The National/Foundation Level which is targeted at GCSE level is structured in a format which consists of a Skills Challenge Certificate in which students must complete an individual project, an Enterprise and Employability Challenge, a Global Citizenship Challenge and a Community Challenge. The engagement with businesses is present throughout the qualification and businesses are often brought into schools to assist with project design and management (WJEC, 2016).

The stipulations of the Welsh Baccalaureate that students need to engage with businesses to complete the qualification adds pressure to an already demanding curriculum and its teachers. This is even more so when, as discussed in the previous chapter, the communication between businesses and schools and the organisation of the engagements can often cause hassle and unnecessary stress for the teachers. The structure of the qualification means that schools need businesses to provide the skills and expertise needed for the pupils to successfully undertake the Welsh Baccalaureate and consequently there is no choice as to whether to engage or not. This is requiring schools to engage with businesses out of necessity rather than choice, 'not because they don't want to, but because they can't afford not to' (Tait, 2016).

This is something that needs to be borne in mind in terms of the new Welsh curriculum which is gradually being introduced. The Curriculum for Wales 2022, which concluded its feedback phase in July 2019, is due to begin being rolled out in schools from September 2022. The new curriculum puts emphasis on equipping young people for life, stating that 'young people need to be adaptable to change, capable of learning new skills and equipped to cope with new life scenarios' (Welsh Government, 2018). The aim of the new curriculum is to create new areas of learning, allowing teachers to teach as they see appropriate for the learners. This new flexibility and freedom that schools and teachers are receiving raises concern as the current sporadic and ad hoc nature of engagement between school and businesses is not 100% successful. As this research has shown, despite schools and businesses praising links with each other, the ad hoc

nature of some engagements has meant that these links cannot be relied on to provide continuous support to the schools and its pupils.

6.7 Difficulties with partnerships

Most of the schools in the research did not state that they had any issues with the businesses with whom they had engaged, however, there was one school who had, and the nature of the complaint makes it an important issue to raise. Despite the Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate at All Saints High School suggesting that their engagement with businesses was enhancing pupil's grades, they also explained how the school's partnership with GE Aviation had not been without its issues. At the early stages of the partnership, organised through the national broker's partnership division, the Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate stated that there were numerous occasions where they felt the school and the pupils had been let down by GE Aviation. The teacher explained how the company 'weren't very good to start off with...they work on different time frames to us, so there's been the logistics of organising for them to come in, and they also have different training events going on in their own' which in themselves create issues.

The Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate also explained how they had been let down at the last minute by GE Aviation due to a lack of communication where staff did not attend the school when activities were arranged, and explained that consequently

'that throws everything up in the air then as, as a teacher in a school you need to know that those people are going to be supporting you'. (Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate, All Saints High School).

The Head of the Welsh Baccalaureate rationalised these issues on GE Aviation's lack of experience with engaging with a school. The teacher stated 'it's the first school they've linked with so far...it's a big learning curve for them', but the teacher hoped that by the third time they delivered the challenge 'they'll probably be there when we need them to be there'. There was no suggestion from All Saints High School that they had raised this concern with the brokerage firm or GE Aviation, and it was implied that the school was allowing GE Aviation to avoid any confrontation.

This is important to note as Coleman (1999, p.172) states that in order to have successful links with businesses the 'activities must be managed...they should be linked to a strategic plan and take into account the aims or objectives of the school'. The responsibility that a business has to a school when undertaking these CSR activities is something that is not always taken seriously by businesses and something that the insurance company employees struggled with, with one employee explaining 'sometimes I think I can't justify going [to the school] today if something crops up'. This is furthered by the Cardiff local authority broker who stated that 'what we find is businesses don't have a lot of time' to engage, whilst this is undoubtedly true, there is no acknowledgement that schools are also lacking time to support these engagement programmes. The creation of a strategic plan is something which the national brokers state that they do from the start of a partnership but in this case their strategic linking appears to have been unsuccessful.

The actions of GE Aviation here can be understood in terms of lacking accountability, supporting Davis' (1973, p.320) argument that it is 'unwise to give businessmen responsibility for areas where they are not responsible'. This is an important finding and issue to raise as schools need to be able to rely on businesses, particularly when the engagements are being run as part of a qualification the pupils are undertaking. This would be a pertinent point to raise with the partnerships division of the national brokers to ensure that a more cohesive approach is adopted by ensuring that incoming businesses have the capacity and understanding of what is expected of them prior to engaging with schools.

6.8 The purpose of education - who really benefits?

Finally, there must be questions asked about the *educational* benefits of the engagement between businesses and schools, and what the ultimate purpose of education is. Understanding the purpose of education means understanding much more than the process of schooling. Woods (2011, p.65) argues that 'we cannot tackle education without addressing the fundamental issue of what it is for and about', however with this is the issue that the purpose of education is not often freely discussed (Bass, 1997). Twenty-three years after this was suggested by Bass, the sentiment appears to remain unchanged and with an increasing demand to focus education and the school curriculum towards work skills and future careers it is a topic which needs considerably more attention. Bass (1997, p.128) argues that we need to start asking 'what is the point of all this? Exactly what are we trying to accomplish here?' as a means to understand the real purpose behind education.

Through the analysis of the data from the research it has become apparent that schools and businesses differ significantly in the way that they prioritise the purpose of schooling and education. Whilst there are many aspects of what the 'educational' benefits of engagement between businesses and schools are, and there are wide-ranging implications for the outcomes, perhaps unsurprisingly, there are significant disparities between school and business priorities.

Figure 7 below shows a comparison between businesses and schools and how they differ in what aspects of education they perceive as high and low priority, and as such Figure 8 below demonstrates how this affects how schools and businesses prioritise different forms of engagement. As can be seen in Figure 7, what emerged from the interviews with businesses in this research is that they want young people to leave education with specific skills rather than good qualifications and therefore this aligns with the forms of engagement they are offering to schools. This strategy and attitude goes against what students and teachers have previously been working towards which is the importance of good qualifications. In fact, Beder *et al.* (2009, p.153) goes so far as to suggest that it is necessary to persuade 'young people to view the world through the eyes of the employers and to accept that what is good for employers is good for them', in itself reinforcing the 'contemporary embedding agenda' (McCafferty, 2010, p.55).

In comparison, schools unsurprisingly give high priority to academic achievement and the gaining of qualifications which is mirrored in how they prioritise engagement (Fig 8). This could be attributed to two main reasons, firstly schools

are measured on their value added and ability to produce good exam scores. Secondly, despite the push by businesses, and to an extent the government, for the accruing of specific skills (coding/financial awareness etc) by school pupils, further education colleges, sixth forms and universities still require academic qualifications, further demonstrating the disjunct between businesses and schools in relation to employer engagement.

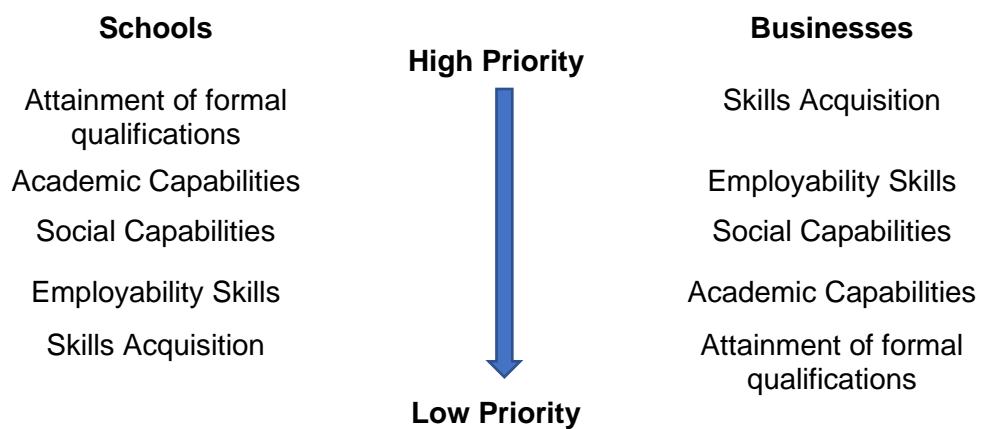


Figure 7 - How schools and businesses prioritise the purpose of education

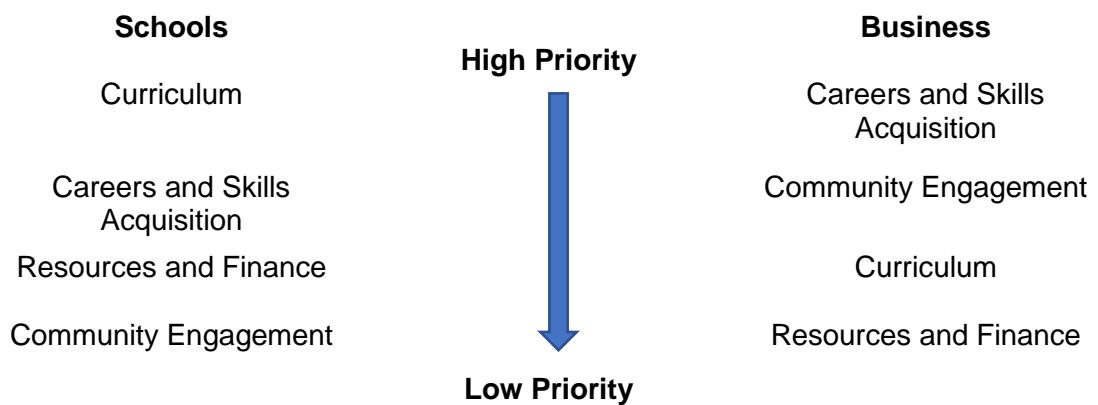


Figure 8 - How schools and businesses prioritise different forms of engagement

While it is understandable that there is a difference in prioritisation of pupil outcomes between sixth forms/colleges and businesses it is important to consider

the statistics behind school leavers and their destinations. Data published by Careers Wales on 2018 leavers destinations show that 84.8% of pupils aged 16-18 continued into full-time education, 7.8% entered work and training routes, whilst only 2.3% went straight into employment (Careers Wales, 2018). Similarly, data from 2016/17 in England shows how 86% of pupils continued into sustained¹⁰ education, 5% entered sustained apprenticeships and only 3% entered sustained employment (Department for Education, 2018b).

These recent statistics lead to the suggestion that there is perhaps a need for a more cohesive approach to school-business engagement as a result of the multiple routes learners take after they leave school. Following the findings from this research it would be wise to suggest that businesses begin to think about the wide range of ways in which they can engage with and contribute to schools that is not based purely on skills acquisition. It is also appropriate to suggest that schools are more aware and forthcoming in the ways that businesses can help within the educational environment. By adopting these methods it could lead to a more harmonious and impactful relationship between schools and businesses and thus avoid issues that have been experienced by the schools in this research. At the same time with businesses focussing on skills acquisition for the future workforce it is worth considering whether business engagement would be better undertaken in a further or higher education environment.

¹⁰ Sustained – 6 month period of employment/apprenticeship/employment in year 2016/17

6.8.1 Are businesses in it for themselves?

The business case argument behind public-private partnerships in education is that 'the current education system doesn't teach the practical skills needed to do well in work' (Jones *et al.*, 2016, p.844). Education International (2009, p.147), however, suggest the increasing use of the term 'partnership' in this context 'is being used to render "privatization" more palpable to public opinion', a move that whilst not currently present in Wales is increasingly present in the English schooling system. This research has highlighted how the focus amongst businesses is for schools to prioritise the teaching of soft skills such as financial awareness, CV writing, team-work and interview skills. This, however, is a contentious subject as it questions what schools should be really teaching their students. For businesses, their eagerness for young people to be taught these skills is for the benefit of the company, often as a result of them struggling to employ people with the necessary skills for their jobs. It was clear from the business interviews in this research that one of the key reasons for businesses undertaking new engagement programmes with schools is so that they can influence the school pupils and the school curriculum. Business input in educational policy has historically however had 'no great triumph', with Wolf (2002, p.129) suggesting that 'there is nothing in the history of national targets, NVQs or core skills to suggest that business representatives have any clear answers on how to make education 'work' for the economy'.

For the businesses in this research the understanding of the purpose of education was that it should be there to provide the pupils with skills and career knowledge that they will inevitably need once they leave education. Consequently, there is

the concern that school-business partnerships are prioritising the training of a potential new workforce 'whose values are shaped by economic considerations that are steeped in competition and the control of nature for financial gain' (Manteaw, 2008, p.122).

This belief by businesses raises the issue as to whether the role of education, referring particularly to primary and secondary schools, should be to prepare young people for the world of work with skills required by businesses, or whether it should be, as it always has been, to teach and educate pupils in key subject areas. Gibbs (2016) suggests that

'education fails if it does not engage and motivate learners and provide them with understanding and skills that enable them to contribute as creative social beings now and in the future. At the moment education systems are not fit for purpose'.

This interesting statement from Gibbs (2016) suggests that education in its current form does not suit the needs of young people or their future employers. This opinion sits alongside that of businesses and an increasing government belief as to the need for business influence in the running of schools and the layout of the curriculum across the UK. Critics, however, argue that previous business involvement has 'proved no better than central-government...at getting detailed education policy right' and in fact, the effects have 'ranged from neutral to expensively harmful', and in the process, businesses have 'promoted their own interests in some very effective ways' (Wolf, 2002, p.99).

Despite the increasingly positive attitudes expressed in this research towards education preparing young people for the world of work and providing them with skills missing in the UK workforce, there are still debates relating to the

philosophy of education and its goals and methods (Biesta, 2008). Whilst there is a gradual move towards more modern methods of teaching there are still individuals who believe in the more traditional aspect of schools being for an educational purpose and should focus on academic subjects. There is an importance to recognise and understand universally what children should be learning in schools. Whilst it is important that children have skills that will enable them to successfully enter the workforce when they leave education, it should not necessarily be the responsibility of the school to train the pupils to develop skills that they would traditionally be learning in employment. Furthermore, there is the concern of where these additional lessons will fit into the curriculum and the typical school day, as has been already established, teachers are more concerned with covering curriculum content than engaging with businesses. Skills for employment can be seen with the push for coding through businesses such as the telecoms company and the multinational investment bank, but additionally, the Cardiff local authority broker explained how they were encouraging companies into schools to work with students. The aim with these engagements is to develop specific skills such as 'tech' knowledge and skills in the hope that it will provide them with easier entry into the workplace once they finish school, therefore reducing the city's NEET rate.

There are varied opinions of the purpose of education and this is something that needs to be addressed and agreed on by government and education authorities to ensure that school pupils are benefitting from equality of opportunity from their experiences of school, regardless of what country or local authority they are based in. The issue with there being a lack of agreement as to what the purpose

of education is, leads to a societal divide (Reay, 2017). There is an increasing concern that young people are leaving school without skills for specific jobs, however, this is more of a concern for businesses who are not wanting to spend the time, money and effort training new people for their job roles. Indeed, they want people to be able to come into the company with already existing knowledge on what they are going to be working on. This viewpoint, however, goes against what the traditional form of education is and how it is supposed to benefit young people. A further issue is that throughout the research businesses and brokers have spoken about skills in the present tense without the acknowledgement that, by the time these young people enter the workforce in five or more years time, job roles and priorities will have changed and developed in a way that it could mean that the what the young people have been 'trained' in is out of date. This is particularly poignant with the impending Brexit meaning certain jobs and industries are facing uncertain futures.

6.8.2 Are there really any educational benefits to engagement with businesses?

The answer to this question depends on what is understood as educational benefits. Is it purely attainment and exam results or does it extend to attendance, concentration in class, engagement or employability? Again, attitudes to this vary across schools and businesses. Figure 9 below shows how schools and businesses have very different perspectives as to the forms of engagement they perceive as being most beneficial. This is perhaps because they are both looking at the benefits in an instrumental way and how they can gain from engagement and therefore it is perhaps understandable that they both differ in opinions.

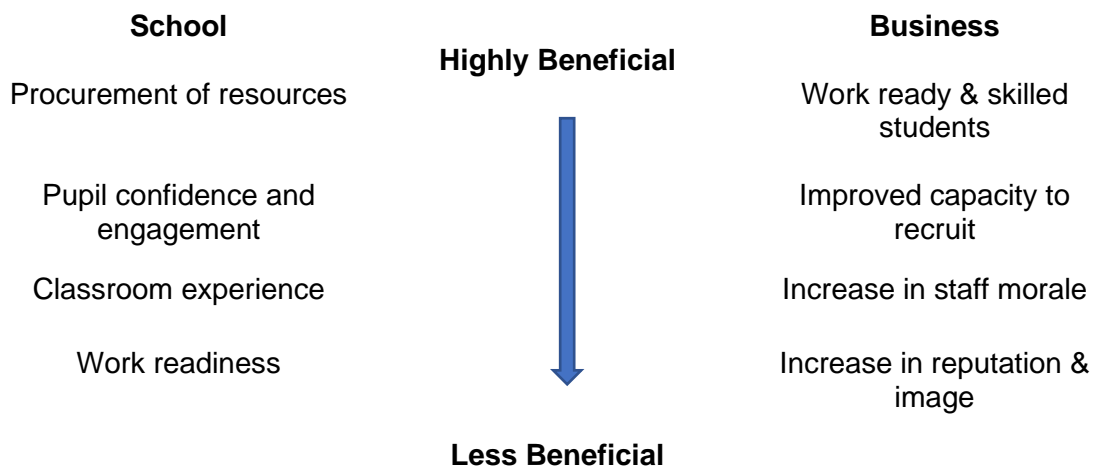


Figure 9 – Perceived benefits of engagement as seen by schools and businesses

For schools it was evident from the interviews that the procurement of resources was considered to be highly beneficial, with many schools explaining how they looked at engaging with businesses in the hope of buying new equipment e.g. sports kits. If educational benefits are understood as being the softer skills, or superficial benefits as referred to by Hoff (2002), such as increased confidence, then the responses given by the school pupils and some teachers suggest that there are some benefits to engagement. However, if educational benefits are viewed in terms of attainment and exam results, as Figure 9 suggests from its lack of reference, many of the schools in the research did not associate attainment or exam results in relation to employer engagement, therefore suggesting that schools do not perceive engagement with businesses to bring this type of benefit. Businesses, however, saw the benefit of their engagement with schools in terms of the careers and employability skills that the pupils can learn during the interventions provided, a benefit not seen in the same light as schools.

The interviews with school pupils who have closely engaged with businesses stated that they believed that their soft skills had improved as a direct result of engagement. Whilst this supports literature, primarily by Business in the Community and the Education and Employers Taskforce, again there has been no attempt made by the schools or businesses to measure the impact of this kind of benefit, and so it is difficult to ascertain whether these claims are valid.

Despite these suggestions by pupils, teachers, and existing literature, measuring the impact of employer engagement in education is a task that businesses and schools in this research have struggled to do. Whilst most business gather feedback from both employees and the schools this is generally in terms of asking questions relating to enjoyment and what was gained from the intervention, it rarely tackles the question of long-term impact. This was an issue that was acknowledged by the Cardiff local authority broker who stated that measuring impact was hard and that 'how do you design a performance framework that actually measures the impact of employer engagement in schools?'. Both the Cardiff local authority broker and the telecoms company argued that being able to see the true impact of business engagement in schools cannot happen until students leave school and enter the workforce, with the telecoms company explaining that success cannot be measured until 'you've got primary school kids of today saying when they're 22 'I'm really glad I did coding''.

Furthermore, a concern can be raised regarding the amount of time pupils are away from their standardised learning environment to engage with businesses. Many of the examples of engagement that have emerged in this research have

related to the acquisition of work skills rather than subject knowledge enhancement, as such pupils are being taken away from their timetabled lessons to undertake workshops in areas such as CV writing and interview skills. Although it is important to acknowledge that learning takes place in a variety of contexts as Huddleston *et al.* (2014) suggest, it is still necessary to emphasise that there still needs to be a relevance to the school and the pupil for the pupil leaving the classroom environment. As has been seen in the examples earlier in this research, some workshops have taken place over several days away from the school environment, a significant amount of time for pupils at an important time in their school life. Whilst a 2010 survey by KPMG found that headteachers agreed that employer engagement has a positive impact on attainment, Mann and Glover (2011) acknowledge that this does not demonstrate a causal link between employer engagement and exam results. Additionally, whilst Mann and Glover (2011) argue that government reports have demonstrated that engagement by pupils does not have a detrimental impact on their attainment this does not necessarily imply that there had been an increase either.

There is also a concern over the relevance of the forms of engagement that are taking place amongst pupils in schools, with Hoff (2002) questioning whether businesses are actively tackling educational attainment as there is little to suggest that what businesses are doing is addressing this. This is particularly prevalent when, as seen in the case of Redlands High School and St Winifred's Primary School with designing playgrounds and artwork, the forms of engagement are in no way beneficial to the pupil and could be described as being more akin to a PR opportunity. If employer engagement in education is going to become a significant

part of the education system, which new the new Curriculum for Wales suggests that it is, then interventions need to be created that are academically beneficial and relevant to the school, its staff and the pupils.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how there are a number of different issues which have arisen from this research into employer engagement in schools in Wales. The issues that have emerged from the research can be linked to the schools, businesses and brokers involved and there is no singular area which needs attention, rather a range of important aspects that need consideration. The problems associated with employer engagement in education that have emerged from this research are highlighted in Figure 10 and they demonstrate that the concept of employer engagement in education is not simple and something which needs to be planned with an understanding by all parties on what they want from the experience.

Problems

- A lack of communication (between businesses, schools, brokers, pupils, and parents)
- Conflicts of interest (between businesses and individuals)
- Incongruent aims (what engagement is being used for and how it can benefit schools/businesses)
- Incongruent conceptions of the purpose of education (attainment or work ready skills?)
- Incongruent perceptions of benefits of engagement (who benefits and how?)

Figure 10 - Summary of problems associated with employer engagement in education

The research has found that there appears to be confusion as to the purpose of education and whether it is a place where children gain academic rigour, where they are taught skills appropriate to enter the workforce or whether it is, in fact, a mix of both. In reality, as seen throughout Chapter 6, the findings from this research can suggest that the ways in which businesses and schools are engaging in their current format are not necessarily beneficial for the schools or their pupils and there needs to be a level of consistency as to what teachers are supposed to be teaching and what pupils are supposed to be learning. As Mertkan (2011) argues, there needs to be an understanding by businesses of schools and the education system before they begin to understand school engagement programmes.

The inconsistencies amongst businesses and schools and what is offered in the form of employer engagement and educational programmes also need to be addressed. This is most prevalent in relation to businesses providing different amounts of services to schools, and the seeming lack of engagement towards offered and available to rural schools. A concern over the extent of educational benefits for school pupils has also been raised. The findings from the research have suggested that in many cases it appears that the businesses are benefitting from their engagements more so than the pupils and schools. Whilst it is understandable and possibly important that employer engagement is a win-win scenario, something needs to be done to ensure that the schools are 'winning' more often.

Chapter Seven - Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis has investigated and analysed the ways in which businesses are undertaking their corporate social responsibilities in a school environment in Wales and the attitudes and experiences of the schools and businesses involved. The research consisted of twenty-six interviews which included ten business interviews, five employee volunteer interviews, eight school interviews and three interviews with brokerage firms. In addition to this, there was also a student focus group with five school pupils. The businesses in this study all actively participated in engagement with schools in Wales in various ways, however, the level of participation amongst schools in the research varied significantly. Although there have been a number of studies which have explored the role of employer engagement in schools, this study fills the gap in current research by exploring the business explanations behind their CSR actions whilst also discovering the attitudes and experiences of schools in Wales who have engaged with businesses in a single piece of research.

This piece of research set out to address the following research questions:

RQ1 – What do businesses actually *do* with schools to discharge their CSR and what benefits does it bring them?

RQ2 – Why do businesses engage with schools and what benefits does it bring them?

RQ3 – What are the schools' experiences of this engagement?

RQ4 – What issues does this raise for schools and the education system?

This chapter will demonstrate how this piece of research has answered each of these research questions. The chapter will also discuss the implications of this study and recommendations for future research.

7.1 Summary of key findings

RQ1 & 2: What do business actually *do* with schools to discharge their CSR? And Why do businesses engage with schools and what benefits does it bring them?

The way in which businesses are discharging their corporate social responsibilities has become increasingly directed towards the provision of educational programmes and engagement with schools. The aim of this research was to develop a deeper understanding surrounding the decisions made by businesses to engage with schools as part of their corporate social responsibility initiatives, and what they perceived as the business case for the phenomenon of employer engagement in education.

This study has demonstrated how employer engagement in schools has developed according to the aims of the business and clarified what the businesses want to achieve through their corporate social responsibilities. For many of the businesses in the study, it was acknowledged that their CSR initiatives began as a means to create a socially responsible image of the business to its current and future stakeholders. The literature review in chapter two found that today's understanding of CSR emerged following the development of businesses moving from being primarily profit-driven to being value-laden. For some, the undertaking of CSR programmes was a way for businesses to acknowledge their past controversial activities and attempt to improve their public

image. This was supported in this research by the British banking group who explained that their corporate social responsibilities were a way to help cleanse the company's image following the financial crisis in 2008. This has now developed, and as the interview data identified, corporate social responsibilities are not only developing alongside the businesses, but also in line with think tank and government research.

By establishing new education-based CSR policies, businesses began engaging in more employer engagement and employee volunteering types of activities. The findings from this research demonstrate how there had been a conscious decision made by businesses to move away from the ad-hoc informal varieties of engagement and instead focus on creating a more structured and purposeful form of engagement resulting in a "win-win" scenario. Consequently, businesses in this research coordinated their engagement and participation in line with their own expertise, with banks generally focusing on teaching financial awareness. However, with the increasing view that young people are not possessing the skills needed to adequately enter employment, many of the engagement activities that took place amongst businesses in this research related to work and life skills acquisition.

The changing attitudes from businesses towards their CSR activities has contributed to the increasing number of businesses wanting to work with schools in a structured formal way, and this has resulted in the development of school business brokers whose focus is to build and develop school-business partnerships. This piece of research has found that the use of brokers as a

platform to develop relationships with schools is increasing their ability to develop educational programmes, which they had previously been unable to do due to a lack of educational and curriculum knowledge. However, this has not been the case for all the businesses in this research. Some have developed their own programmes and made links with schools, avoiding the use of the brokerage firms. For businesses who did engage with schools through brokers their aim was to create long term partnerships, with some businesses and schools entering into three-year 'deals' with each other.

Despite the aim of brokerage firms and businesses to create strategic partnerships, the analysis of the interview data found inconsistencies regarding how businesses undertake their corporate activities in schools. One of these issues arose in terms of the criteria that businesses used for engaging and partnering with schools. For the most part, businesses prioritised working with schools that had X percentage of students eligible for free school meals or schools in deprived areas, with some businesses stating they would only work with these types of schools. What emerged from the findings however was a discrepancy as to what businesses and brokers classed as an 'area of deprivation' and what proportion of students had to be eligible for free school meals in order to qualify for business engagement. This stipulation in many cases was not followed, with some businesses disseminating their educational programmes to all schools in the UK, and other businesses working with private schools on an ad hoc basis due to employee requests.

As this study has illustrated, employer engagement varies from school to school and from business to business. Businesses expressed an awareness that undertaking socially responsible activities in schools was becoming the favoured way to engage employees because of the multifaceted ways that the company and its staff could benefit. The drive amongst these businesses to adopt educational CSR initiatives through the provision of work and life skills such as CV writing, and interview and communication skills was based on a strategic need from the businesses for more employable recruits. This form of CSR engagement was a strategic move by businesses to enable a future sustainable workforce, with employability skills, to be ready to work when the time came. Further to this, the type of engagement allowed for what businesses referred to as sustainability, meaning that their social actions were bringing in perceived benefits (skilled future workforce, an increase in current staff morale and increased company reputation) allowing the businesses to remain successful for years to come. This form of engagement also allowed for engagement through methods like vocational educational training, for example by teaching programmes such as coding it would reduce future staff training costs.

RQ3: What are the schools' experiences of this engagement?

The study identified that the schools' experiences of business engagement differed considerably, not only from the businesses', but also from each other. This study found that amongst those schools who had significant engagement with businesses there was a split between schools who had been proactive in their search for opportunities to engage, and other schools which were reactive in their engagement and stated their preference to be approached by businesses

rather than search for engagement opportunities. This was often determined by whether schools wanted something specific from their engagement such as curriculum or financial support, compared to other schools who only took up the opportunity when it was offered to them. The scale and level of engagement varied significantly between schools, however this was not necessarily a choice of the schools as the schools often relied upon what opportunities were offered by the businesses. As such, the frequency of engagement in schools ranged from those taking place weekly compared to other schools who struggled to engage once a year with a business.

It emerged from the interviews with schools that engagement with businesses took place in four areas; careers advice and skills acquisition, curriculum support, financial and resource donations and community engagement. Careers and skills acquisition sessions often related to the educational programmes that had been developed by the businesses, curriculum engagement was nearly always linked to the Welsh Baccalaureate, financial and resource donations came through prize giving donations and the procurement of classroom resources and community engagement was organised by the businesses. An interesting finding from the study was that despite many businesses priding themselves on their educational work and life skills programmes, this was not the type of engagement in which the schools were most vocal. Indeed, schools expressed ambivalence towards the skills aspect of their engagement, instead, there was a greater sense of appreciation towards businesses who made financial and resource donations. The schools did acknowledge the role of the skills programmes in providing pupils with an understanding of work ready skills, however, what the schools found most

useful was the provision of sports kits, equipment and prize-giving donations alleviating the strain on the school budget. Not only does this finding demonstrate an incongruence between businesses and schools as to the extent of the needs of engagement, but it also highlights fiscal constraints that schools face and their reliance on businesses for resources.

The extent of engagement in schools relied greatly on the willingness of staff to engage with the businesses. Some schools stated the need to ensure that their engagement with businesses was relevant to learning aims and objectives as there was an awareness of the pressures experienced by teachers to complete the syllabus and ensure pupils achieve exam success. Other schools, however, were more flexible with this, particularly if it meant that the school would benefit as well as the pupils. Despite the conflicting views and experiences from the schools, there was an agreed understanding that there were clear benefits to engaging with businesses. The schools saw engagement with businesses as an exciting and informative classroom experience which they believed to increase pupil confidence, something which the pupils in the focus group all supported. In addition to this, whilst there was no outright praise for the skills programmes the schools acknowledged that engagement did make students think of life choices and career opportunities post-16, however without impact measurement it is impossible to say whether the engagement directly improved career opportunities.

RQ4: What issues does this raise for schools and the education system?

Amongst the many positive remarks made by school representatives with regards to business engagement there have emerged several issues which have been important to address. These issues raise questions regarding the ongoing prominent role of businesses in schools as well as the changing educational policy encouraging school business collaboration.

The most significant issue that emerged from the study has been the diversity and inequality in how different schools experience engagement from businesses. The research found inequalities arose in a number of ways, one of which was the lack of engagement due to inaccessibility to businesses with sufficient resources, generally experienced by schools situated in a rural locality (Spielhofer *et al.* 2011). Several schools understood their struggles to engage successfully with businesses was a consequence of the school's rural location. This was not however always due to the lack of businesses in the locality, but the nature of the businesses, with Ysgol Mynydd Mawr and Ysgol Castell stating how the independent businesses near the schools lacked the resources and financial capability to be able to provide such assistance. These distinctions made by the school highlight one of several issues which demonstrate the inequalities and diversity regarding business engagement in schools.

It was suggested in Chapter Six that the lack of engagement in rural schools can also be related to a lack of knowledge of how to engage on the part of the school, something that often came from an absence of any visible brokerage system in the schools' vicinity. With this awareness, concerns were raised regarding the

implications this had on the aspirations of the school pupils. Without any visible links to businesses and a lack of 'big' businesses in the local area, literature suggested that aspirations amongst young people can be constrained as it inhibits the ability to develop capital and improve social mobility (Kintrea *et al.*, 2011).

Further inequalities arose when businesses appeared to engage more frequently with schools within a closer proximity to their offices, and where there was a close relationship between the school and business. For some businesses it was acknowledged that more opportunities were provided to schools who were of easy access to the business than those schools situated outside of South Wales. This attitude affected those schools that were situated in a rural locality, away from large businesses, who struggled to engage with businesses due to the generally independent nature of businesses in a rural setting who do not have the resources to support engagement with schools (Spielhofer *et al.*, 2011).

Inequalities were further raised in relation to private schools. The independent school in this research noted how they struggled to engage with larger businesses because the school did not fit the requirements as set out in the educational programme policies, such as free school meal quotas. As such, the school relied on alumni, a local business network and parents to provide the students with business engagement. This was an interesting finding following interviews with businesses as it became apparent that although many businesses stated that they would not engage with schools who did not meet their criteria,

the businesses were found to frequently work on an ad hoc basis with local independent schools.

The analysis of the data found very little to suggest that there was any involvement from either parents or pupils as to the forms of engagement that take place between the businesses and the schools. Pupils were expected to take part in the additional activities provided by businesses as it was perceived that the educational programmes and activities provided by the businesses were beneficial. Furthermore, the finding that businesses are increasingly being brought into schools for various 'educational' reasons without the permission or acknowledgement of the parents is a cause for concern (Olmedo, 2016). The argument from one school who suggested that parents 'don't understand' was criticised as literature supports the argument that good pupil and parent involvement makes for a more effective school (Teese and Polesel, 2003). Not only this, but by educating parents on their child's learning and the post-16 choices available it aims to improve aspirational thinking (Kintrea *et al.*, 2011).

The concern over the extent of the educational benefits was raised in the concluding analysis chapter. The research demonstrated a wide range of implications concerning the extent to which schools, staff and pupils were benefitting from the increasing amounts of business engagement within schools. The focus around businesses wanting to engage with schools and young people from a young age is to create an awareness of the skills the pupils will need to enter the job market, and what they should expect from working. Whilst schools acknowledged that businesses did provide pupils with work-ready skills the

school themselves were interested in the engagement that businesses provided in supporting the academic content of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification which is an awarding body requirement (WJEC, 2016).

A further issue that was raised in relation to employer engagement is regarding the conflicting requirements between businesses and further and higher education institutions. This research has highlighted that the focus of businesses is in the development of business skills (and has been recognised by government policies) rather than educational attainment, something which contrasts with FE and HE requirements. Data by Careers Wales (2018) and the Department for Education (2018b) show how the number of students continuing into further and higher education far outweighs those going straight into employment.

This research has highlighted that there is an inability by schools, brokers, and businesses to successfully measure the impact of any engagement that took place. Feedback was gathered by all participants; however, this was generally in the form of enjoyment and perceived benefits of the engagement interventions. The impact and who benefits can be argued to depend on what the aims and objectives of the engagement activities are and what they are trying to achieve (UKCES, 2012). Without a form of measuring impact, it is difficult to establish whether there are any educational or longer-term benefits to young people.

7.2 Repositioning of the literature

In addition to highlighting the varied ways that business engagement takes place in schools in Wales, this research has discovered that the forging of relationships

between businesses and schools is not as straightforward as is suggested in previous literature. Literature that was explored at the beginning of this research found numerous arguments for the presence of businesses in schools, stating that not only can engagement improve students' academic achievement, provide careers advice and teach life skills, but it is also in the interest of businesses to engage (UKCES, 2012; Stanley *et al.*, 2014; Scales *et al.*, 2005).

Since the pre-existing literature on employer engagement in education strongly advocates and encourages the presence of businesses in education it is of no surprise that much of the literature focuses on the perceived positive aspects of private sector involvement in education. Whilst there are, to a limited extent, positive aspects to CSR being disseminated within schools, as has been previously discussed, where the concerns arise are in relation to the schools' experiences of business engagement and this is something that has not been investigated in a qualitative format.

Through the side by side interviews undertaken as part of this research it has allowed for the direct comparison of experiences of CSR activities in primary and secondary schools, in private and state schools and in businesses and, as a result, what has emerged is the conflicting experiences and attitudes expressed by both business and school representatives. Despite the development by many of the businesses in this research of formal CSR educational programmes with the best intentions, these are based on what the businesses want and what they perceive schools and pupils need and at no point are schools or educational

experts consulted. Consequently, this has led to a disparity in opinions as to the aims and objectives of public-sector involvement in schools.

Whilst findings in this research do go some way to supporting pre-existing literature (Mann and Glover, 2011; UKCES, 2012) in that there is the suggestion that there are some benefits for pupils engaging, albeit not as many as previously stated, there are undoubtedly longer-term benefits for the businesses involved in these CSR practices than the schools and pupils receiving them. Furthermore, there is concern over the educational extent of CSR activities in schools as well as the commercialisation of education, particularly with regards to businesses that have particularly strong links with schools (Atherton and Wells, 1998). Alongside this, there is the major issue of the lack of impact measurement by school, brokers and businesses where engagement is concerned resulting in the inability of schools, brokers or businesses to provide any real evidence of the cause and effects of business engagement in education. Further to this, despite the business case for CSR engagement in this form being borne from the argument that they are preparing for the future sustainability of the company there is no way of knowing what industry will look like in the future (Huddleston and Ashton, 2019). Indeed, as Sir Ken Robinson remarks 'how do we educate our children to take their place in the economies of the 21st century given that we can't anticipate what the economy will look like at the end of next week?' (Robinson, 2010).

The findings from the research suggest that many of the schools preferred to engage with businesses for the financial support as opposed to

educational/curriculum which is perhaps a sign of the current economic situation faced by many schools (Lewis, 2019). Whilst the findings from this research raises important issues associated with business engagement in schools this does not mean to suggest that the role of businesses in schools should be made redundant after all there is no denying that, as Murphy *et al* (1998) suggest, engagement by young people with businesses enhances and enriches their educational experience.

7.3 Implications, recommendations and limitations

This thesis provides an account of the undertaking of corporate social responsibilities by businesses in schools in Wales. Whilst there has been extensive research on corporate social responsibility as a whole, little attention has been paid to the increasing phenomenon of CSR and employer engagement in schools, particularly in an empirical qualitative format, it is this which makes the thesis distinctive. This research has offered insight into the increasingly prevalent role of businesses in primary and secondary schools in Wales, paying particular attention to what is understood as employer engagement. Like with any research, however, there are limitations to what has been carried out and this will be covered below with a discussion as to how this would be rectified with any future research.

7.3.1 Implications

The implications from the research can be linked back to Chapter Six which presented the issues which emerged from the interviews with the research participants. The research has shown that there is a significant lack in the

measurement of impact, suggesting that whilst there is plenty of verbatim feedback and the forms of engagement with businesses are perceived to be worthwhile for all involved, there is no evidence to suggest that teaching life and work skills to school pupils helps them secure a job in the future. At the same time, there are questions over what schools and businesses consider to be the purpose of education and how this is prioritised in relation to types of engagement activities (Figures 7 and 8). The research has suggested a desire by businesses for young people to be equipped with specific skills to enter the workforce and that there should be more focus on this in schools rather than on educational attainment (UKCES, 2012; British Chamber of Commerce, n.d). The issue here arises in that the requirements from further education and higher education institutions is focused on educational attainment. The incongruence and clear lack of communication between the public and the private demonstrate the future implications that could occur as a result of increasing business involvement in schools. A move to improve communication between brokers, businesses and schools would help address the issue of the incongruence in the aims of engagement and education, however this does not necessarily mean that it would address the conflicts of interest that are also present. This issue however is something that is inherent in the nature of the topic, as with many topics concerning a mix of private and public sectors, and as such some issues are not resolvable.

Particularly in relation to the Welsh Baccalaureate, the use of businesses was indicative of a sense of having to engage rather than wanting to. The use of businesses to aid the completion of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification was

acknowledged by schools but never developed. It was only mentioned in detail with All Saints High School where the Head of the Welsh Bacallaureate was interviewed, and even here they admitted that, had it not had been for the qualification requiring business engagement, they doubted there would be any business engagement within the school.

7.3.2 Recommendations

Recommendations for schools

- Knowledge of how to engage with businesses, particularly for schools not reached by brokers.
- Schools need a plan of how they want to be helped by businesses.

Research indicates that lack of engagement is a consequence of lack of knowledge, and to a certain extent, this is true for some schools in this research. This added to what schools described as 'locality issues' and has meant that many schools have been left out of any forms of engagement from businesses. Despite those schools lacking engagement stating how they were willing and eager to find businesses to bring into their schools there was a lack of evident proactive behaviour amongst any of those interviewed. Here the schools would benefit from the confidence to approach businesses and enquire about engagement opportunities and also to form contacts. Alongside this, there is the need for schools to assess how they work with businesses to ensure that the engagement that takes place is impactful, beneficial and worthwhile to the school and its staff and the pupils.

Recommendations for businesses and brokers

- Better understanding of what schools want from businesses.
- Better communication between all parties.
- Understanding of priorities of the schools.
- Impact measurement tool.

The recommendations for businesses can also be attributed to brokers. The findings from this research further emphasise Cramer and Landsmann's (1992, p.132) notion that business engagement with schools can be given an 'A+ for image and a C+ for effectiveness'. An emerging finding from the research with schools was that there was a need for businesses to be aware of the needs and requirements of the schools both academically and non-academically. There was a sense amongst schools that businesses must forge better communication with the schools prior to and during engagement. This was particularly prevalent with All Saints High School who had experienced being let down at the last minute which not only caused issues with teachers but also the pupils. Not only this, but there needs to be an improvement in the communication between the different brokers, this is particularly pertinent in the case of Cardiff based engagements. The Cardiff local authority broker explained how there had been tensions between themselves and national broker's partnerships division, often caused by both brokers working with the same schools. If both of these brokers are going to work side-by-side in the same locality then there is a need for a mutual understanding as to what each broker is offering and trying to achieve with each school.

Furthermore, there is a need for impact measurement which is more than just feedback from both parties. Whilst it is always helpful to have feedback for the engagements between businesses and schools, they do not provide proof of the impact that sessions and workshops have in the long term. Feedback which states that engagement with businesses has been fun or enjoyable does not necessarily mean that it has been worthwhile, particularly in relation to educational development. Businesses and brokers acknowledged the need for a longitudinal impact measurement tool but at the time of interview no one had mentioned that this was something they were prepared to undertake.

There appears to be a theme amongst brokerage firms and businesses that focusses engagement primarily, albeit not exclusively, on primary and secondary schools. Whilst this is understandable in that it targets the audience from a young age, it is worthwhile considering the extent to which further and higher educational institutions would benefit from increased engagement from businesses. Data in Chapter Six has shown how the number of students continuing into further education far outweighs those entering employment straight from school (Careers Wales, 2018), as such increased engagement with further and higher education establishments may prove to be more beneficial to businesses.

Additionally, there appears to be a conflict over what students are required to achieve through their education. This research has shown how businesses, through their CSR strategies, are implementing a push for the teaching of skills and the emphasis on gaining work ready and life skills over the importance of

educational attainment. However, for those pupils who wish to enter further or higher education following their GCSEs there is still a need to focus on academic grades. As such, there is a need for an understanding amongst these businesses and brokers, as well as schools, as to what pupils need when they leave school. These conflicting ideas can lead to issues within schools as to the importance of what they are teaching and the prioritisation of skills learning over the curriculum.

A further recommendation for brokerage firms in particular is to ensure that the partnerships are used to their full potential. The provision of services and partnerships to schools generally appeared to be narrow, and as seen in the case of All Saints High School, GE Aviation only worked with one department in the school for the benefit of the Welsh Baccalaureate despite other departments wishing to also benefit from the engagement. There is a need for better communication between schools and brokers as to how engagement can be carried out across the school and not just with a specific department, which often arises as a result of a department being the main source of contact rather than a headteacher. If there was communication made between the brokers and the whole school this may encourage a cross-school partnership.

Something which is perhaps caused by a lack of communication or marketing is that rural schools in this research have lacked significant, if any, engagement from businesses. Despite the Welsh careers service explaining that they had an educational business exchange database where schools and businesses could search for businesses to engage with, and the Cardiff local authority broker explaining that they have worked alongside a start-up to develop an online

platform to match schools and businesses, there was a lack of awareness of the opportunities available. This is something where more awareness needs to be created, however this can also link back to the motivation amongst teachers. If teachers are not motivated to engage with businesses and lack the proactive behaviour to search for opportunities then these online platforms will only best serve those who actively pursue engagement from businesses. This is something that would be beneficial as a means to move away from the inequalities and diversity that have been created as a result of business engagement in education.

Recommendations for educational policy

- Ensure that employer engagement in schools is cohesive across the country and purposeful to all involved.

In addition to recommendations for those involved in this research, it is important to consider the role of the Welsh Government in light of the impending Curriculum for Wales 2022. In addition to the importance of brokers such as the national brokerage firm and their partnerships division and the Cardiff local authority broker in ensuring fair and accessible engagement to businesses, it is also the responsibility of the Welsh Government as the funders of both brokers. Additionally, with the imminent roll-out of the new Curriculum for Wales considerations must be taken as to what business involvement looks like in schools, and how their current engagement can be adapted to provide a more cohesive approach that is more considerate of school needs whilst also remaining beneficial to the businesses.

7.3.3 Limitations and future research

As with any piece of research, there is a need to draw some limit to the scope of the project, as such there are a number of limitations to this thesis as well as recommendations for future research. A significant limitation to the research was a limitation of time and resources. Additional time and resources would have allowed for follow up interviews to take place, particularly with businesses who were interviewed at the beginning of the research when the topic was still relatively new and with pupils who had experienced different levels of engagement with businesses.

A further limitation of this research is in terms of the sample of participants who took part in the interviews. Given the nature of the sample size and sampling technique, it is difficult to understand whether the views and opinions of those businesses and schools in the research are generalisable to all businesses and schools who engage with each other. As such it would have been beneficial to undertake interviews with a bigger variety of businesses, such as more SMEs and independents. This would have enabled a greater comparison and understanding of how businesses of differing sizes and resources each engage with schools. Additionally, a sample with participant schools from a wider geographical area in Wales, such as North and Central Wales would have provided richer more generalisable data. It would have also been interesting to undertake more interviews with employees who have participated in volunteering activities with schools as it appeared from the few employee interviews that did take place that they were more knowledgeable about the issues regarding the engagement that their managers. Following the student focus group, it would also

have been worthy to interview students who had not engaged as significantly with businesses and their attitudes towards this.

Furthermore, a longitudinal study that followed students throughout their engagement with businesses, particularly in instances where formal partnerships had been forged between a business and a school, could have proven to be beneficial. This would have allowed for a greater understanding as to the potential impact that business engagement in schools has on the schools, the teachers, and the pupils in the long term.

Additionally, there may have also been scope to undertake additional methodological techniques for the research. Non-participant observation, for example, would have enabled a deeper understanding of the types of engagement that takes place within schools and it would have also enabled an understanding of how students react and engage with third parties. Whilst one session of mock interviews was observed in the early stages of the research this was not included in the research as it did not provide sufficient data in itself to be worthwhile.

Concluding remarks

Notwithstanding the limitations of the research as noted above, this thesis makes a significant contribution of knowledge in my field by identifying the differing perspectives and experiences of businesses and schools who engage with one another. The research with businesses shows how businesses operate their corporate social responsibility programmes and both formal and informal ways in

which they engage with schools. Conversely, the research has also demonstrated the often-overlooked experiences of schools, developing an understanding of the reasons schools have for engaging but also the struggles that they face, something which has lacked from pre-existing research. The research reveals the benefits of business school engagement but also the tensions, often experienced by the schools regarding the communication and organisation of the engagement opportunities.

The findings also highlight the issues relating to business engagement with schools that have not been revealed in previous research. The revelation that, whilst some businesses are attempting to increase social mobility and educational attainment, there is a concern that engagement from businesses is actually causing inequalities both within and between schools. This is evident in the schools who receive differing amounts of engagement and especially with those rural schools who lack considerable formal engagement and do not understand how to engage with businesses. In addition, there is the concern over the extent of the educational benefits of businesses and schools working together, whilst it was found that the skills aspects of the interventions were found to be useful, what schools were particularly interested in was the financial benefits that could be gained through business engagement. This in itself has implications for the learning of the pupils, who are being taken out of timetabled lessons to undertake these engagement opportunities. This project therefore builds upon the existing literature on corporate social responsibility, employer engagement and school-business partnerships to provide a more in-depth understanding of both sides of the argument for business engagement in education.

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Interview Schedule

Businesses

CSR representative

Can you tell me first about how long you've been doing your current job role and your experience of CSR within [company]

How long has [company] had a CSR 'policy' and why was it introduced?

Can you tell me about the types of CSR that takes place within the company?

How is the decision made as to who you help?

Does the company have a set quota for CSR? Do they have targets they need to meet?

Do you measure impact? And if so how?

Do you feel like there is an expectation for companies to participate in 'socially responsible' activities?

How do employees get involved in CSR activities?

What is the justification behind working with schools?

How do you form a relationship with schools? Who contacts who?

What type of a relationship does [company] have with schools?

Do you publicise your engagement with schools?

How do you see the company benefitting from your engagement with schools?

Employees

How did you become involved in your volunteering role within [company]?

Why do you do these additional roles in your job?

How do you work it around your main job?

Do you feel that you gain personally from your volunteering role?

Do you enjoy your volunteering role?

Do you volunteer outside of work?

Schools

Teacher

Can you tell me about the partnerships the school has with businesses?

How were these formed?

Do you invite businesses into the school or do they contact you?

Why was the decision made to form these partnerships? (general and specific)

Do you track the impact of the business involvement on the school and the pupils? Why/Why not? If so what has come out of it?

Do you get feedback from the pupils after a business intervention?

Do you think that businesses now play a significant role in education and in schools?

Is the relationship the school has with businesses approved by everyone?

Has the school's teaching styles been influenced by the interventions from businesses?

Have there been any issues as a result of engaging with businesses?

Does the engagement with businesses link to the curriculum?

Do businesses always engage with the pupils?

Pupils

How have you all engaged with a businesses during your time at school?

How did you get involved in this?

What do you think the outcome of the engagement has been?

Do you think there are any benefits to businesses in schools? And why?

Why do you think businesses want to work with schools and young people?

Is business engagement something you would recommend to other schools and pupils?

Information Sheets



School of
Social Sciences
Ysgol y Gwyddorau
Cymdeithasol



My name is Hannah Blake and I am a PhD student in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University. I would like to invite you to participate in a piece of research exploring the ways in which businesses undertake their corporate social responsibilities in schools in Wales. This information sheet will provide you with an understanding of what this research will consist of and what it means for you should you agree to participate. If you have any questions regarding the research or require any clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me on blakehr@cardiff.ac.uk.

What is the purpose of the research?

The research explores the ways in which businesses and schools experience the undertaking of corporate social responsibilities within an educational environment. It includes participants from small and medium-sized enterprises to multi-national corporations as well as schools throughout South Wales and school business brokerage organisations. I am particularly interested in exploring whether the experiences of the businesses are shared by the schools in this research.

What is being researched and how?

I am hoping to speak to school business brokers, businesses with CSR educational policies (or similar) and schools in the area of South Wales. The research will consist of a number of interviews which are expected to last around an hour in length. The interviews will be recorded, and the recordings will be transcribed.

What does participation involve?

Should you choose to take part in this research your participation would involve an interview with myself about your role within the company you are employed and what is involved in the company's CSR policies around engagement with schools. I am keen to hear about how the engagement is undertaken, how it began and its process.

What will happen to the recorded data?

All the interview data will be transcribed and used as part of the research. The data will be kept on a password encrypted laptop and all hard copies will be kept under lock and key. Should you wish to read the submitted thesis I would be happy to share this with you. I will be using the findings from the research to create a synopsis of the findings which will be disseminated amongst all participants.

What happens if I change my mind?

If you change your mind at any point you can withdraw from the study without having to provide a reason. All data that you have provided will be destroyed.

If you decide to participate in this research, please send me an email confirming this and your dates of availability for interview.

Kind Regards,

Hannah Blake



School of
Social Sciences
Ysgol y Gwyddorau
Cymdeithasol



My name is Hannah Blake and I am a PhD student in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University. I would like to invite you to participate in a piece of research exploring the ways in which businesses undertake their corporate social responsibilities in schools in Wales. This information sheet will provide you with an understanding of what this research will consist of and what it means for you should you agree to participate. If you have any questions regarding the research or require any clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me on blakehr@cardiff.ac.uk.

What is the purpose of the research?

The research explores the ways in which businesses and schools experience the undertaking of corporate social responsibilities within an educational environment. It includes participants from small-medium enterprises to multi-national corporations as well as schools throughout South Wales and school business brokerage organisations. I am particularly interested in exploring whether the experiences of the businesses are shared by the schools in this research.

What is being researched and how?

I am hoping to speak to school business brokers, businesses with CSR educational policies (or similar) and schools in the area of South Wales. The research will consist of a number of interviews which are expected to last around an hour in length. The interviews will be recorded, and the recordings will be transcribed.

What does participation involve?

Should you choose to take part in this research your participation would involve an interview with myself about your role within your school and your/your school's experience of business engagement. I am interested in all school experiences, whether there has been extensive engagement or little.

What will happen to the recorded data?

All the interview data will be transcribed and used as part of the research. The data will be kept on a password encrypted laptop and all hard copies will be kept under lock and key. Should you wish to read the submitted thesis I would be

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Kind Regards,

Hannah Blake