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The Development of the Secondary Vocational Curriculum in a Northern Local Authority in England

Paper delivered at the European Conference of Education Research

University of Ghent, Belgium, 19 -22 September 2007

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Note:

This paper reports on the findings from the evaluation of two projects directed at improving the vocational provision in a Northern Local Authority in England during 2006. The two projects are:

Pathways to Success - partly funded by the European Social Fund
http://www.shu.ac.uk/cgi-bin/news_full.pl?id_num=PR575&db=04

Rotherham Ready - with the evaluation funded by the Regional Development Agency, Yorkshire Forward http://www.rotherhamready.org.uk/key_facts.html

Background: Vocational Education and Enterprise Education in England.

Vocational Education

Vocational education in England has a long history of evolution and was comprehensively reviewed in the publication *Vocational Education and Training in England - CEDEFOP - European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training* , 1993 . Although policy in this area been developing for many years, it was the 2002 Green Paper (DfES, 2002) that set the agenda for the current reforms: greater coherence for the 14-19 phase; greater flexibility and ability to transfer between courses and pathways; partnerships between schools, FE and business; raising the status of vocational pathways; and improving standards in the keys skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. The resulting 2003 White Paper (DfES, 2003) developed these themes, including - importantly for the purposes of this study - partnerships across institutions, and launched Tomlinson's review of 14-19 Education. Whilst Tomlinson's 14-19 Working Group's final report (Tomlinson, 2004) recommended wholesale restructuring of 14-19 education around diplomas, the subsequent White Paper (DfES, 2005) restricted the major reforms to the development of what are called 'specialised diplomas' in applied learning. The focus on partnership continued as diplomas were developed, leading to the current point where consortia of schools, colleges and providers will begin implementing delivery of the first 5 diploma lines in 2008.

The 14-19 reforms recognise the importance of maintaining or rekindling a sense of engagement with this age group and the success of the reforms will depend very much on the arrangements and structures set up in local authorities to enable young people to enjoy the entitlements planned. They also set new challenges in

relation to the requirement for collaborative arrangements that will be essential to enable local authorities to be able to offer the full range of diploma lines by the target date (2013). The new emphasis on successful partnerships between schools, colleges, training providers, employers, HE and other stakeholders will enable young people to access a broader range of possibilities from the age of 14. In addition, English 14-19 year olds now have a statutory entitlement to that broader curriculum which includes practical and experiential elements. These reforms are currently subject to much heated debate. Beresford (2007) identifies three problematic issues

- the appeal of the diplomas to teachers and lecturers (justification for the diplomas has centred around the needs of learners and employers)
- Universities have been slow to recognise the diplomas
- the comparability of diplomas with GCSEs and A levels

The arguments for the 14-19 policy are centred around increasing the number of young people in education and training, raising motivation of those students who see little relevance in the existing curriculum and ensuring that all young people have access to vocational education opportunities from age 14. Research by the NFER (2004) on the impact of pre-16 vocational education in England suggests that "vocational education " has increasingly come to encompass both vocational qualifications and work -based training and that they are inter linked.

The literature review supporting the above NFER study (2004 p16 -18) suggests that the following issues are associated with the extension of choice and flexibility offered by the introduction of 14-16 vocational provision are:

- improved motivation
- some evidence of improved behaviour and motivation
- increased confidence and self esteem
- greater preparedness for post -16 studies

These benefits to young learners have been confirmed by in the report The Key Stage 4 Curriculum (Ofsted, 2007, p5) which was a survey of provision in 155 secondary schools across England and were also addressed in the evaluation of Pathways to Success in Rotherham schools. However Ofsted also found that work - related learning and vocational subjects were seen by too many schools and parents as relevant only for those who underachieve. A further key finding in this report was that "collaboration between key organisations to provide a better curriculum was improving but not all of them were sufficiently committed to developing 14 -19 provision at a strategic, area wide level". Both of the two parallel projects reported on in this paper were dependent on the establishment of good partnership provision.

Running parallel to the provision of 14-16 vocational courses and work experience has been a project to develop an enterprise culture in schools. Economic and Industrial Understanding was a whole school theme in the National Curriculum in England (1988) and was meant to permeate the curriculum for all ages. This is now embraced within the term *Enterprise Education*.

Enterprise Education

Enterprise Education in the UK is perhaps more important now than at any point since the late 1980s. In England, it has received a high priority since the Treasury-sponsored Davies review into Enterprise and the Economy in Education (Davies, 2002). This has led to specific Standards funding in Key Stage 4 being directed towards Enterprise Education in schools, and to the establishment of Enterprise Pathfinders. More recently, Ofsted has published two reviews of Enterprise Education in Key Stage 4 (Ofsted, 2004; Ofsted, 2005). There is also a recent move towards funding initiatives at Key Stage 3. In Scotland, too, there has been a review of Enterprise Education (Stephen et al, 2002) with related policy changes.

However, the nature of Enterprise Education is contested, essentially with regard to the purpose of such education. What might be termed (drawing on the work referring to New Zealand of Lewis and Massey, 2003:198-199) the *narrow view* envisages Enterprise Education to be concerned with developing skills, knowledge and attitudes associated with becoming an entrepreneur, whereas the *broader view* includes skills, knowledge and attitudes associated with becoming 'enterprising'. One can read Hytti and O'Gorman (2004:13), drawing on Gibb (1999) as adding a third dimension to this typology: learning about enterprise (or entrepreneurship). Hytti and O'Gorman reviewed Enterprise Education in four European countries (Austria, Finland, Ireland and the UK) and found that the strongest learning occurred where a broad view of Enterprise is taken. In recent times, much of the focus from European Union bodies has been on the 'narrow' approach. Publications emanating from the European Commission Enterprise and Industry group, such as the 2004 report on promoting entrepreneurial attitudes and skills through education (EC, 2004a) illustrate this view. However, the broader view appears to be more apparent in the education communities examined by Hytti and O'Gorman, in common with Scotland and England (see below), and influenced by the established developments in Enterprise Education in Australia (see, for example, Conning, 2002).

A number of research studies highlight the potential for Enterprise, broadly conceived, to link with other parts of the curriculum. Learning and Teaching Scotland (2002) has suggested that Enterprise Education may contribute towards key learning in effective citizenship. Looking at the potential for Enterprise Education to contribute towards the citizenship agenda in Scottish schools, Deuchar (2004) investigated the extent to which Enterprise Education can lead to important gains in educational attainment, growth and development for future citizens. Deuchar notes that citizenship education is important to develop students' knowledge of political, cultural and social aspects of life, re-iterating the view that Enterprise Education is more than simply 'how to start your own business'. It also entails pupils' understanding of contemporary issues to help them become modern citizens who value diversity and others' opinions and people who can also critically evaluate these views. Pupils now associate enterprise, argues Deuchar, with working in the community, team work, charity, and creativity, making pupils more socially aware and therefore - potentially - more active citizens. There is however a perceived issue - uncovered by research in Hungary and the UK - with merging

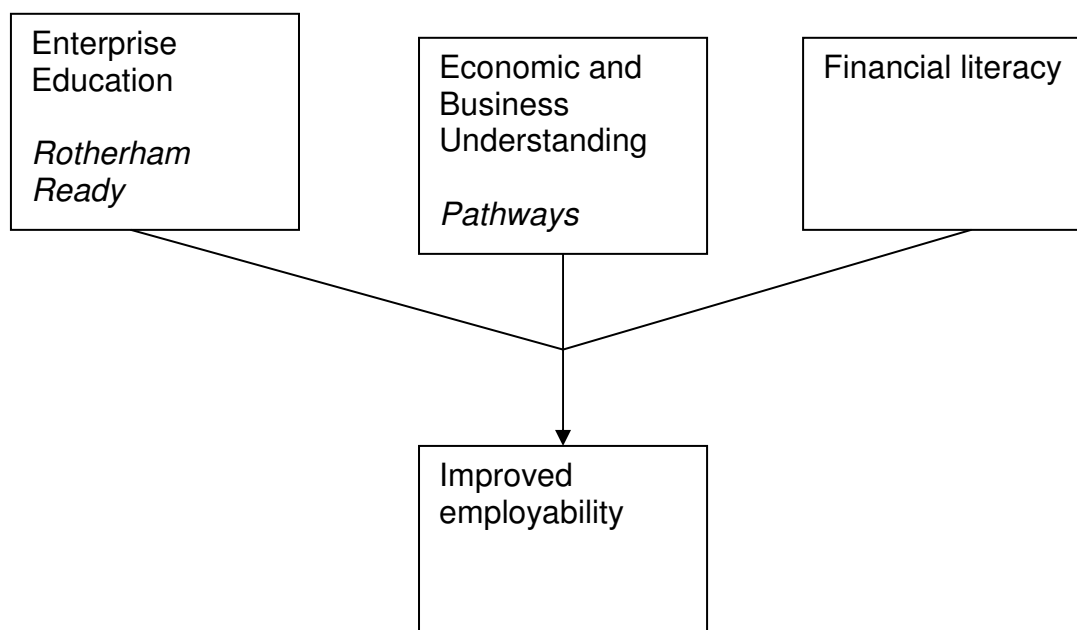
enterprise and citizenship education, as to whether teachers will find it conflicting to teach pupils to become competitive but also civic minded (Fulop et al, 2001).

The Davies review (2002: 17-18) took possibly the broadest view of Enterprise Education, describing it as being education towards developing Enterprise *knowledge and understanding* of concepts such as innovation and risk; *skills* such as decision-making and leadership; *attitudes* such as self-reliance and open-mindedness and *qualities* such as adaptability, self-confidence and creativeness. Ofsted (2004) added that such education is best undertaken in an enterprising learning environment in which students are encouraged to take the initiative; and an enterprise process which is akin to project working. This very broad conception is perhaps becoming generally accepted in the English education community, for example, it is used in guidance to teachers produced by Teachernet (2006), Ofsted (2004; 2005) and QCA, (2007) partly because it allows great flexibility and opportunity for diversity in provision of such education. There is a clear move forward in schools' understanding and acceptance of Enterprise Education in this broad sense, compared with, for example, the findings of Ireland (1993) who studied the views of head teachers and reported that those who had not participated in an enterprise initiative held the idea that enterprise was concerned 'largely with profit making' in contrast to those who had a much broader and more nuanced view. This broad view is one also articulated, in general, by the Rotherham Ready Partnership.

Local authorities in England are charged with implementing these two agendas, and attempting to create a coherent focus to drive forward their strategies. One way of viewing the relationship between these strategies is to use the Davies review's link to employability.

Davies argues that Enterprise Education, when combined with financial literacy and economic and business understanding leads to improved employability. If we can treat vocational education as an aspect of economic and business understanding, we can create a simple, instrumentalist picture of one way that the two programmes are related, as can be seen in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: linking Pathways and Rotherham Ready: Davies' employability argument



We will return to this model following a review of methodology and some key findings from the two programmes.

Pathways to Success - background and evaluation methodology

Pathways to Success (usually shortened to 'Pathways') is part of a large regional regeneration project funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) from 2001-2007. South Yorkshire receives this funding (known as Objective 1 funding <http://www.gos.gov.uk/goyh/eurofund/o1/>) as the gross domestic product for the sub-region was less than 75% of the European average. The total investment has been £2.4 billion with £770 million of this coming from the ESF. The aim is to create new jobs, start new businesses, train young people in the skills needed for new industries, develop and renew deprived communities and, ultimately, to boost the economy in the region.

The Pathways to Success programme in South Yorkshire is concerned with developing innovative curricula for the 14-19 age range in four Local Authorities (LAs) and is taking place in 76 secondary schools and several special schools. Since 2004 the Pathways Project has been organised separately within each of the 4 Local Authorities but there has been considerable cooperation between delivery partners, managers and schools. In Rotherham the focus of the various phases has changed in order to address local priorities.

In Phase 1, the focus in Rotherham schools was the integration of Key Skills into the curriculum, the development of strategies to re-engage students into learning and enhancement of the Key stage 4 curriculum (age 14-16) through the development and inclusion of vocationally related qualifications. This strategy resulted in a massive shift of activity for many schools in the borough, from the

traditional 'academic' curriculum to a more appropriate curriculum catering for all abilities. Funding during this phase encouraged schools to embed the new courses and strategies into the curriculum and produce a distinct exit strategy.

Subsequent phases of the Pathways project have endeavoured: to build on Phase 1 to:

- link the local labour market information and developments locally and nationally 14-19;
- encourage schools, to further develop their vocational curriculum through a vocational entitlement, where students are able to choose from a choice of at least 4 VRQs (Vocational related Qualifications)
- move to a stage where Individual Learning Plans are central to teaching and learning at Key Stage 4(this is the 14-16 age range) for all students
- further develop the Vocational Cluster Network and Business-Education links
- develop innovative and cutting edge projects which are sustainable
- contribute to the raising motivation and achievement and sit firmly in developments for the 14-19 age range, such as the new Diplomas and Secondary Strategy.

Central government policy initiatives were running parallel with and influencing the development of Pathways to Success by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in the consultation documents and Green Papers *14-19: Extending Opportunities and Raising Standards* (2002) and *14-19: Opportunity and Excellence* (2003) The Government's aim was to combine breadth of study with more flexibility for schools and colleges and tailor programmes of study to individual pupil's needs and aptitudes.

The Increased Flexibility Programme was created in order to enhance vocational and work- related learning opportunities for 14-16 year olds who would benefit most. Funding for this project was generally combined with Pathways to Success funding by schools as the intentions, and target pupils were similar, and often the same. The evaluation of this programme by Golden et al (2005) included a national survey of over 5000 students, 250 schools and 78 colleges and training providers. It found that partnerships between schools, colleges and training providers had matured and that the project had had a mainly positive impact on students: in particular the development of social skills, employability skills, attitudes towards learning and future progression. Similar findings are reported in the NFER report *Research into the Impact of Pre-16 Vocational Education* (Mc Crone and Morris (2004).

The evaluative research reported in this paper is focussed on one year of the (2006) of a six-year project "Pathways to Success" (PW) in Rotherham South Yorkshire, England funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) from 2001-2007. The project is concerned with developing innovative *work- related* programmes for the 14-19 age range in four Local Authorities (LAs - equivalent to school districts) and is taking place in 80 schools. For the purposes of this paper we consider the developments in one Local Authority, Rotherham. There are several other parallel projects funded by the ESF and all these are aimed at regeneration as the region has in the last 20 years suffered a major decline in the industrial base (coal and

steel industries). A feature of the ESF funded projects is that they are commissioned and implemented by partnerships. The Pathways to Success project is run by a partnership of Local Authorities, the Learning and Skills Council (a Government body that funds 16-19 education in England), the Department for Education and Skills (the government department responsible for educational policy), a government-funded careers organisation called Connexions and also wide representation from employers and community representatives.

The term *work-related* is defined by Huddleston and Oh (2004) as those aspects of the curriculum which are concerned with the development of vocationally relevant knowledge, understanding, skills and personal qualities. *Work-related* can be used to describe a large number of initiatives over the past 30 years to "cure some of the failings of the educational system - to produce young people able and willing to fit the demands of the labour market" (ibid: 85). The Government body that is responsible for post-16 provision in England, (The Learning and Skills Council considers that work-related learning is about raising achievement, improving pupil motivational and attendance, supporting governance, management and leadership in schools, preparing young people for the world of work including employability, enhancing the delivery of the national curriculum, and the delivery of key skills, including wider key skills such as creativity and enterprise.

During the earlier years of the evaluation we concentrated on the implementation phase of the project, considering management issues and teachers' perspectives (Coldwell et al, 2003a; Holland et al, 2003a). We have extended our research to include the impact of the project on pupils (Coldwell et al, 2003b; Holland et al, 2003b) and the impact of the project on the professional development of teachers. Teachers are currently adapting to the use of new ways of delivering learning, particularly for the new specialist GCSE courses - all of which have a vocational emphasis. For some pupils learning is taking place off- site in colleges or in training providers' venues - which present challenges to those whose experience has not been with the 14+ age range. Pupils' learning is increasingly being supported by non-qualified teaching staff, teaching assistants or learning mentors, who also have a role in supporting those learners who need more intensive monitoring and guidance. The first 3 years of the project was organised into three strands *Enhanced Curriculum, Re-engagement and Key Skills*. The Key Skills strand impacted on nearly all pupils in some way, Enhanced Curriculum was mainly concerned with supporting new applied GCSE courses or GNVQ vocational courses and the Re-engagement strand typically involved typically a group of 20 - 30 young people in each school.

The Pathways (PW) programme also provides a range of training opportunities for staff which are directed towards providing the knowledge and skills required for the delivery of a flexible curriculum for the 14+ age range. The funding of pre-16 projects by the ESF is rare, so PW has many unique features.

The evaluation team from the Centre for Education and Inclusion Research (CEIR) www.shu.ac.uk/research/ceir at Sheffield Hallam University were asked in the Spring of 2006 to address a brief which had 6 main elements:

1. Identification of a sample of students to be used as a baseline for evaluation purposes. The sample should cover the ability range across the whole spectrum, from disaffected to gifted and talented
2. Tracking and measurement of the impact on students and the degree to which entitlement is delivered
3. Tracking of what the intervention has been in the second phase of the programme
4. Establish teacher and pupil perceptions about the enhanced provision via one to one interviews and consultation sessions
5. Evaluation of the softer outputs and distance travelled in the life of the programme (qualitative and quantitative assessment)
6. Dissemination of findings as determined by the 14-19 School Improvement Team

Within this brief there were 3 main questions:

1. What interventions have taken place and what is their impact on students in Phase 2 of the programme?
2. What are the teachers' and students' perceptions about the enhanced provision?
3. What are the outcomes of the provision and the distance travelled during the lifetime of the programme?

In response to Element 1 (see earlier section) we felt that a sample of students (about 90) should be chosen from a sample of schools, nominated by the LA to reflect the diversity of provision and engagement with the Pathways Phase 2 programme (P2S) and that sample should be different from the 3 case study schools in Rotherham chosen for the previous evaluation. In the event, a total of 82 students from Y10 and Y11 turned up for the focus groups.

To tackle Elements 2 and 3 we consulted student tracking data held in each school, but found different mechanisms operating. Some kept accurate records of performance, attendance and reports including predicted grades, but one school had no electronic records and hence no reports, once they had been given out to students. We found it helpful to consult staff in the schools - vocational coordinators, course leaders and other senior staff - and looked at the school self evaluation form (SEF) where possible to ascertain interventions. The impact on students was also identified from a questionnaire given out to the sample of students and from focus group discussions.

The use of the student focus groups and discussions with senior staff also helped us to gain evidence for Element 4 on teacher and student perceptions.

To gain evidence for Element 5 we analysed performance data for each student from LA records and course data and performance for each school, comparing these data with percentages, where possible, with Rotherham and national average data. To evaluate the distance travelled during the programme we asked for comments from the school coordinators and senior coordinators in the 14-19 School Improvement Team in the Local Authority.

To summarise, the evaluation of the Pathways to Success was based on evidence gained from:

- a student questionnaire administered to 55 Y10 and 27 Y11 students
- visits to 3 sample schools on at least 2 occasions - June and October 2006
- interviews with coordinators, course leaders, other senior staff and key 14-19 School Improvement Team staff in the LA - a total of 13 interviews
- focus group sessions with a sample of 82 Y10 and Y11 students in 3 schools
- documentary evidence - analysis of LA performance data for each of the students in the sample, and course and school performance data for 2004, 2005 and 2006.

Rotherham Ready - background and evaluation methodology

Rotherham Ready is a four year programme which went into full operation in April 2006. This evaluation was conducted between January and December 2006 with the evaluation team attending some of the planning meetings that involved partner organisations. The Centre for Enterprise and Industry at Warwick University had been engaged to provide support for preparing schools to achieve the Excellence in Enterprise Education Award. A small scale independent study including a literature review had also been commissioned to inform the planning stage of the project. Of note was the large number of organisations and delivery partners that had a stake in the project.

Therefore, there was a necessity to take a different approach and focus from a traditional impact evaluation model. For the evaluation to be useful to both Yorkshire Forward (who funded the evaluation) and the Rotherham Ready partnership, the Sheffield Hallam University team decided on two key focuses. First, and most importantly, we aimed to provide **formative** evaluation to enable the project partnership and Yorkshire Forward to learn from early implementation of activity and structures. Second, we needed to suggest **frameworks** for answering some of the key longer-term evaluation questions. We can relate these two elements to the evaluation questions as follows:

The evaluation aimed to provide formative evidence to help determine:

- whether the project is achieving its stated aims, outputs, outcomes and impacts
- whether the project is effectively meeting the needs of the client group
- whether the delivery mechanism developed for the project is operating effectively
- the extent to which the project is achieving Strategic Added Value
- an assessment of the sustainability of activities and impacts
- the effectiveness of the partnership arrangements developed to deliver the project.

The evaluation aimed to provide frameworks for future evaluation to help determine:

- initial indications of the value for money achieved by the project
- areas for improvement and development in the future
- whether the project is bringing about a sustainable increase in entrepreneurship among young people in Rotherham that will have tangible economic benefits in future.

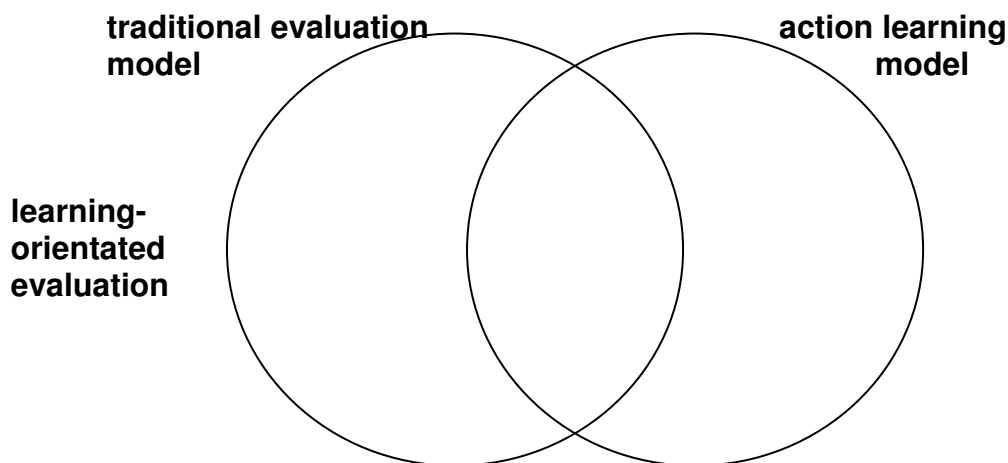
To enable the evaluation to inform the development of the partnership and the project, in-depth qualitative work was required, focussed on gaining an understanding of the mechanisms for change that are taking place, rather than gaining wide coverage at a more shallow level using methods such as questionnaire surveys. However, some kind of review or audit of enterprise activity at key points was also required to contextualise these in-depth methods.

To enable us to meet both the formative and framing purposes of the evaluation, the evaluation team developed what we term a ***learning-orientated evaluation*** methodology. In this methodology, we combine an action learning approach, with elements taken from more traditional evaluation models. This is an approach we have developed over a number of years of working on educational evaluation and research projects with a regeneration agenda (e.g. Holland et al, 2003; Coldwell et al, 2004; Coldwell et al 2005). This approach involves two elements:

- Attempting to describe and understand *processes and outcomes* of the policy initiative (in this case, Rotherham Ready) and
- Facilitating *learning* by participants in the initiative

The approach can be illustrated by a simple diagram (see Figure 2.1 below):

Figure 2.1: Learning-orientated evaluation



This type of evaluation thus aims to combine an approach which focuses on *outcomes and process* of the initiative alongside a focus on developing *learning* through the actual evaluation process. Neither of these two elements is new, of course. Action learning is a well-established technique involving 'real people

resolving and taking action on real problems in real time and learning while doing so' (Marquardt, 2004: 28). The key underlying features are learning "by doing"; dealing with problems occurring within participants' own working environment (to ensure personal relevance); sharing feedback, collaboration and reflection. In our model (see Section 2.2) Strands 1, 2, 3 and 4 all fit this model to some extent. Many traditional evaluation models also have an emphasis on learning, particularly participatory models of evaluation, and those that focus on the third of Easterby-Smith's (1986) objectives of evaluation: proving; improving and learning.

At the outset, Sheffield Hallam University, Yorkshire Forward and the Rotherham Ready partnership proposed five elements or strands in the evaluation. These are outlined below.

The 5-strand Rotherham Ready Evaluation Model

Strand	Title	Description
1	School evaluation development clusters	Working with teachers - to design evaluation strategies in three clusters of schools and colleges, to develop schools' own evaluation tools and techniques to: investigate employer links; young people's attitudes to enterprise and enterprise behaviour and skills; and enterprising teachers.
2	Engaging trainee teachers	Working with trainee teachers to gather data on the provision and impact of entrepreneurial and enterprise activities in the schools they work in, with a comparison of Rotherham schools' development with other schools.
3	Partnership Effectiveness Evaluation	A two phase strand, involving first a series of individual interviews with partners and second, a focus group of partners to formulate core objectives and Action Plan
4	Re-analysis of enterprise data: auditing enterprise activity	Working with the partnership team to gather a range of data at 2 points in time to help understand the extent of enterprise activity across the Borough, and identify gaps in data gathering; and to categorise schools according to their level of engagement
5	Telephone study of delivery models	A two-stage telephone interview survey of schools (a scoping interview, and a follow up) conducted with school representatives focussing on their experience of the quality of delivery of enterprise activity

Key Findings from the Pathways to Success evaluation

Interventions and impact on students

In the sample of 3 schools studied all students were given a choice which includes a vocational option; a vocational option was usually part of a block of options on offer (*data from student focus groups and interviews with coordinators*). The number of vocational courses was increasing, e.g. applied GCSE and Vocational Related Qualifications (VRQs) and BTEC diplomas (*interviews with coordinators and documentary data*). Recruitment to vocational courses increased markedly in September 2006. In one school over 50% of students engage in vocational provision, in the other 2 schools this level of recruitment should be reached soon (*documentary data*). As vocational provision has been added to the options the number of subjects taken by students to GCSE level increased (*interviews with coordinators and documentary data*). Some students want to progress to similar vocational courses in further and higher education, but for others their career plans did not correspond with the subject of their vocational studies (*student focus groups*.)

Teachers and students' perceptions on the enhanced provision

Teachers - coordinators, course leaders and senior staff unanimously welcomed the support for vocational provision from Objective 1. Some claimed that the changes would have been made anyway as this was the way for schools to move forward, but stated that the funding accelerated the process of change (*interviews with coordinators*). There were variations in the quality of courses on offer as found from comments and harder evidence from recruitment and results (*student focus groups, interviews with coordinators, documentary data*). Most students were satisfied with the vocational provision and welcomed the visits to work places and preferred coursework to exams (*student focus groups*). There are variations in the perception and labelling of vocational options. In one school to avoid differentiation, the term 'vocational' is never or rarely used when applied to vocational provision (*interviews with coordinators*)

Outcomes of the provision and distance travelled

It was apparent that schools had developed sustainable models of growth and development in vocational provision and were no longer reliant on coordination from the LA for extending their provision (*interviews with coordinators and 14-19 Team*). The staffing structure in schools had been consolidated in Phase 2 and reflected the growth of vocational provision (*interviews with coordinators and 14-19 Team*). Experience gained from Phase 1 had helped in the implementation of the young apprenticeship scheme in the Dearne Valley (a former mining region) (*interviews with 14-19 Team*). There was also greater awareness in schools of the benefits of enhanced vocational provision in terms of student satisfaction, better attendance, improved performance (*interviews with coordinators*).

As recruitment to vocational options increased, recruitment to other non-core subjects was declining which would in the long term have an impact on staffing

and the school profile (*documentary data*) . Some, but not all schools, had extended their links with training providers and colleges and one school has developed a successful Vocational Centre with a manager supported by craftsmen as trainers to provide vocational courses and work placements (*interviews with coordinators*). The network of 10 cluster groups (in vocational subjects) had become established in Phase 2 and was particularly successful in construction, engineering and health and social care. These groups have contributed to the planning for the new specialist diplomas (*interviews with 14-19 Team*). The contribution of college staff to 14-19 initiatives had increased, and college staff are active members of some 14-19 committees (*interviews with 14-19 Team*). Some teachers had adapted their subject orientation to meet the new challenges, but not all engage in the subject network in Rotherham to support teachers (*interviews with coordinators*).The quality of leadership in vocational areas was mixed. A successful model seemed to be one where there is was a dedicated vocational coordinator, excellent support from senior management and recognition of vocational enhancement in the SEF (school self evaluation form) (*interviews with coordinators*) . Although there are variations in subject areas, performance in vocational courses equates approximately to performance in the core subjects of English, maths and science within that school (*documentary data*). As more students gained vocational awards the proportion gaining 5+GCSE A*-C in all 3 schools increased 2004-06. One school has almost doubled that proportion in that period (*documentary data*).

Some students performed better in vocational options than predicted grades - the vocational awards had proved valuable in 'turning round' underperforming students but on the other hand, some students performed worse than their predicted grade (*documentary data*). Other curriculum initiatives such as the ICT project (e-sy.info) have also contributed to success in vocational provision, eg in ICT awards and enhancement of the proportion gaining 5+ GCSE A*-C (*documentary data*). At the time of the evaluation some schools had started planning for the new specialised diplomas, the first 5 due to be on offer from September 2008 (*interviews with 14-19 Team*).

Key findings: Rotherham Ready

Before the start of the project the breadth and quality of Enterprise provision was quite polarised between schools. At one end of the continuum there were some schools doing what seemed to be negligible amounts of Enterprise related work, with activities limited to stand alone, one-off Enterprise days. In contrast, other schools had well developed and innovative Enterprise related programmes. For example, one non-Rotherham school had some 19 Enterprise related activities/schemes already in place throughout the school year. However, by January 2007 81 schools had received support from the Centre for Enterprise and Industry (Warwick University) and 18 had achieved the Enterprise Award.

Summary of key findings:

- Rotherham Ready was on target to meet its aims, there was ongoing training for Enterprise Champions in schools, a "Young Chamber" had been established and there was a working group developing an entitlement to enterprise policy.
- team building skills and confidence development from enterprise activities were seen by schools as positive outcomes
- Rotherham Ready as a project was well received by schools and was meeting their needs
- there was support for the development of a shared evaluation processes
- some strategic added value was evident during the early phase of Rotherham Ready - with many new initiatives starting
- the design of Rotherham ready had the potential to sustain impact - a major influence being the work of Warwick University, who were helping schools to integrate enterprise work into core planning, and the curriculum as a whole
- the Entitlement to Enterprise Education working group was becoming a unifying element for the project
- schools with lower levels of engagement in enterprise were beginning to be being targeted by the partnership
- the partnership arrangements and project structure were complex and may need to be reviewed

In secondary schools we found that Business studies departments were often, understandably, the drivers of Enterprise, however this was not always the case. One Rotherham school had a dedicated Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) as Head of Art who championed and co-ordinated Enterprise. A number of schools also involved Young Enterprise in their provision.

It cannot be underestimated just how crucial the involvement of the whole school is for Enterprise to be a success. This was a significant observation noted by a trainee teacher from a Rotherham school whose Enterprise provision was very successful, but was very reliant on a considerable amount of teacher's time and 'support' from the 'whole school'. There were a number of examples given by the trainee teachers which brought this into sharp focus. One non-Rotherham school which had Enterprise ingrained into the school culture and well motivated staff, had a number of examples of staff willing to become involved; for instance, a teacher who helped nurture and run a car washing scheme that students thought up, where they cleaned staff cars for £2.

In contrast, a non-Rotherham school where Enterprise was poorly embraced had - according to the trainee business studies teacher undertaking a placement at the school - only a 'narrow and restrictive programme', staff unwilling to get involved and assist students (even though they often displayed 'eagerness to be involved with enterprising ideas'). For example, the trainee teacher noted that a group of Y11 boys wanted to organise a charity disco for 'Children in Need', which was granted initial permission, but a 'lack of support and encouragement' from staff meant the 'initiative eventually fizzled out'.

The evaluation team found that enterprise is not always conceptualised solely in terms of enhancing students' enterprise skills, but also, for example, as a way of

giving students the opportunity to be exposed to and interact with other members of the local community. Many schools linked Enterprise to making money for local good causes and charities. For example, one of the Rotherham schools concentrated their Business Enterprise provision on raising money for local charities, taking the opportunity to enhance their community relations. Enterprise was not usually seen as a 'stand alone' topic, and the term was sometimes used interchangeably with careers and citizenship. The boundaries seemed relatively flexible and there often appeared to be overlap with other subjects. Sometimes this was explicitly acknowledged and sometimes not. This relationship can be seen elsewhere in our analysis, and is an emerging theme throughout the evaluation.

Despite being a popular choice with schools, one-off Enterprise days tended to be quite varied in their quality according to our trainees. There were a number of instances where there did not seem to be sufficient interaction for students, which sometimes led to de-motivation. A number of trainee teachers echoed the comments made from a trainee at a Rotherham school who described their Enterprise day for Y12 (age 17) as not being 'the success it could have been' because students were not engaged sufficiently; instead the day tended to be dominated by the students being talked-at'.

It appeared that the more successful Enterprise schemes managed to encompass a substantial amount of 'hands on' activity. Other innovative schemes offered incentives for participation outside the curriculum such as prizes donated by local companies, trophies and the car washing scheme described earlier or, at a non-Rotherham school where students were able to keep half of any monies received from a stall they were responsible for at an Enterprise event. Students having some form of ownership seemed to be a key predictor of success.

Enterprise activities that enabled students to become so consumed in their highly engaging activity that they did not associate it with being 'taught' were also widely successful. This was very evident in the comments from one trainee teacher from a non-Rotherham school who suggested that their Enterprise group had become successful because the students had a real sense of 'ownership' which was reflected in their motivation and enthusiasm. Students were problem solving, communicating, risk assessing and team working and therefore becoming more 'enterprising' without even 'realising they were doing so'.

To some extent, the successful embedding of Enterprise Education appeared to be strongly related to the enthusiasm, drive and commitment of the Enterprise coordinator. For example, at one college (based in Yorkshire, but outside Rotherham) where their BTEC National is running 'extremely efficiently,' it was suggested that the success of the course was mainly attributable to 'excellent Young Enterprise staff who exceeded expectations'.

Involvement with business and providers such as Young Enterprise was seen to be related to successful Enterprise Learning. For example, one of the Rotherham schools seemed to have made good use of the opportunities provided by Rotherham Ready, building links with local businesses, and putting in place Enterprise programmes for all year groups. Standards of achievement appeared

to have risen with the introduction of enterprise learning, and it was felt that knowledge, skills and understanding were being extended. However, trainees were critical of this activity when it was not seen to link clearly to learning and be well planned, as noted above, and where visitors to schools did not relate well to pupils.

Discussion

In this concluding section we address the impact of the evaluations from the two projects on future planning, learning from the methodologies used and international perspectives.

The evaluation of the two projects that are described in this paper had different but overlapping intentions that reflect each project's contribution to the development of the vocational curriculum 14-16 in the LA. Rotherham Ready has been characterised as a Learning-oriented evaluation whereas Pathways to Success has followed a more traditional evaluation model with more attention given to outputs and the achievements of pupils. However ultimately both investigate the change in culture within schools as they promote a more vocational curriculum for 14-16 year old students. As such, we feel that this information is helping to provide a sound foundation for the successful introduction of the new 14-19 vocational diplomas (to be phased in nationally starting in September 2008). This is enabling action to be based on evidence to take place and the outcomes from the evaluations to influence future planning, for example through the Rotherham Learning Plan <http://www.rotherhamnow.co.uk/tap-learning.now> and the Rotherham Learning Partnership http://learninginrotherham.org.uk/text/text_about.htm .

In their review of Vocational Education in the United Kingdom CEDEFOP (1993 para 4.1.7) suggests that the impact of European and Community education and training programmes is likely to be small as up until now funding available has been small in relation to national budgets . This has not been the case in South Yorkshire where support from the European Social Fund Objective 1 fund <http://www.gos.gov.uk/goyh/eurofund/o1/> has been central to the redevelopment of the region following a rapid decline of employment in the traditional coal mining and steel industries.

The two projects reported on in this paper have in our view been "leading edge" in the way in which they are delivered through partnerships. Examples are:

The **Raise Project** aims to show that by combining the latest technology with teaching and learning, it is possible to raise levels of student attainment. The project complements current strategies such as Assessment for Learning and develops and promotes personalisation and inclusion. Three pilot schools, six teachers and approximately 120 students have been chosen to take part in the project, taking place over the 2007/2008 academic year. Through the development and production of teaching and learning materials, such as revision notes, presentations which can be downloaded onto an IPOD or deposited onto the local learning portal, the project aims to provide evidence of added value of this

‘intervention strategy’, through the use of baseline assessment data. The project offers the opportunity for Continuing Professional Development and has attracted interest from a major software company.

The **Rotherham Student Journalist** project aims to provide a ‘student voice’ across the borough and provide opportunities for students to develop ICT, Literacy, Music, Media and entrepreneurial skills, to access appropriate vocational qualifications, to receive careers education and guidance with a focus on progression to FE, HE and employment. The project also supports inclusion and the delivery of vocational and GCSE courses at secondary schools and colleges in Rotherham. A major part of the project is the further development of partnership working between schools, colleges, employers and HE focusing on young people 14-19 in Rotherham schools and colleges.

The **High Level Pathways Project** aims to turn a local novel entitled ‘Meet me by the Steelmen’, into a teaching and learning resource pack which will be targeted at all 14-19 students in local schools and colleges. The project seeks to further develop business – education links through the engagement of local employers. Some of the key objectives include: working with a local scriptwriter to produce a script of the novel to develop into a drama production; developing and producing an audio version of the novel in French, German, Spanish and Urdu; working with the Specialist Arts Schools to identify teams of students who will enact the novel and be involved in set design; co-ordination of the production of a Podcast or Blog of the project ; involve local students; identify and engage a musician who can create a minimum of 3 songs of the novel; ensuring that any students involved in the project are registered for a suitable accredited qualification; and ensuring that the project links to current initiatives, including the development of the Diploma.

Despite their clear differences, there are some commonalities in the findings from each evaluation that indicate likely success at a school level for implementation of such strategies. In particular, support from senior leadership in schools was noted as important in both, as well as a clear need for a coordinator or champion. This raises the question of how these two coordinators/champions need to work together. It was beyond the scope of these evaluations to investigate this issue, but the relationship between such coordinators would be a fruitful avenue for further research.

We found that in Rotherham great efforts were taken to ensure the full student body was involved in both Enterprise Education and Work-Related Education, but the links between the two – and therefore, following the Davies model, the likely impact on employability were not clearly defined. Enterprise Education and Financial Literacy – two key planks of the Davies reviews’ ‘employability model’ (see Figure above) are experienced by pupils across the ability range nationally and Financial Literacy Education has recently been announced as a government priority (HM Treasury, 2007). However, in most areas of the UK, vocational education is still the province of those seen to be less able (see many of the papers produced for the independent 14-19 Nuffield Review, <http://www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk/> for example). This means that, according to the Davies employability model, only the less able experience all three areas

currently, providing further evidence – assuming one accepts this model – that vocational education needs to be experienced across the full ability range.

Finally, we feel it is important to note that whilst the differing vocational and enterprise agendas are being linked in some places in Rotherham and beyond, there is a clear need for central government to provide a more coherent link between the two at national policy level to prevent the obvious synergies being wasted by competing priorities set by differing government departments. This, of course, is a trap the current administration - which has recently separated Schools from Skills in the creation of the new government departments - the Department for Children and Schools and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills - need to work hard to avoid.

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Rotherham is a borough in Northern England, located in the South Yorkshire sub-region. With a population of 250 000, it suffered from the decline of its steel and coal industries, losing around 50 000 jobs in the 70s and 80s, and has more recently developed a focus on enterprise and entrepreneurship - for example, it was the Yorkshire regional winner of the Enterprising Britain 2006 competition, being "recognised for its success in creating an all-inclusive strategy for enterprise. Rotherham has successfully encouraged and supported people to develop their business ideas and stimulated an entrepreneurial culture in the Borough" (SBS, 2006). Yorkshire Forward is the Regional Development Agency (RDA) for the Yorkshire and Humber region in the North of England. RDAs in England are charged with promoting sustainable economic development in the English regions.

The core partnership consists of representatives of the LA, Yorkshire Forward and partners who are also providers of Enterprise learning opportunities from Rotherham Chamber of Commerce, Rotherham Youth Enterprise, Young Enterprise Yorkshire and Humber, the Music Factory and the Centre for Enterprise and Industry at Warwick University.

Enterprise Pathfinders were small-scale, government funded pilot projects which aimed "to test strategies for embedding an enterprising approach to teaching and learning within the school culture." (CEI, 2006). They ran until September 2005.

The Treasury is the UK government Finance Ministry.

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