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CAREERS EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: SOWING SEEDS OF CONFIDENCE, ASPIRATION AND CHOICE



LIZ REECE LOOKS AT THE IMPORTANCE OF CAREERS EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND SUGGESTS SOME USEFUL RESOURCES

Ignoring the process of career development occurring in childhood is similar to a gardener disregarding the quality of the soil in which a garden will be planted.' Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey (2013) *Career Development Interventions in the 21st Century*

Aspire young

Children's aspirations are shaped by family and educators in their early years. This can mean the difference between aiming high – or not. By including career learning in primary education, children's opportunities are improved, disparities evened out and later choices enhanced.

The report by charity Education and Employers in January 2018, *Drawing the Future*, concluded that career aspirations from age 7 to 17 remain similar, often based on gender stereotypes, socio-economic backgrounds and influenced by TV, film and radio. Their international research included 13,000 pupils from UK primary schools, highlighting the need for greater access to career role models from a young age. It is a timely report considering the 2018 government's careers strategy which acknowledges the benefits of early careers work and announced a £2 million primary research programme.

Only recently have I fully understood the importance of careers work with the very young. My understanding grew as I developed primary careers materials and also heard about the impressive impact of a primary careers quality award. This article summarises research I subsequently undertook, and suggests resources for primary careers work.

Career learning in primary schools makes a positive difference

Research evidences the benefits of careers-related activities. Primary children studied are receptive to learning about employment opportunities and skills, especially when linked to subjects. Whilst broadening horizons about the world of work, careers events can strengthen competencies in decision-making, presentation, transition, sociability, listening and planning and can bridge gaps by raising aspiration in deprived areas.

Extending DOTS, Bill Law and Barbara McGowan (1999) researched and developed their framework 'New

DOTS' to illustrate that children 'sense', 'sift', 'focus' and 'understand' in career learning, starting in primary school. Such learning was borne out in the KS2 Career-Related Learning Pathfinder pilot programme (2009-10) in seven urban local authorities across England. It included workplace visits, career insight talks, trips to universities, and events such as career-themed events. Evaluation showed that the objectives were achieved. These were to:

- Increase pupils' awareness of career/work opportunities;
- Increase their understanding of the link between education, qualifications and work opportunities;
- Reduce gender-specific career/role stereotypes; and
- Engage parents/carers in the process and so change their attitudes, perceptions and aspirations relating to their children's education and career choices. This was the weakest outcome.

Pupils involved in the Pathfinder pilot also showed:

- Improved skills, including team-work and independence;
- Increased understanding of different sources of help/advice about making choices;
- Increased self-confidence, especially around transition to secondary school;
- Improved attendance and attainment including improved SATs results.

This suggests that career-related learning in primary school is at an optimum time as it is when pupils are still open and responsive to new ideas, and before they begin to narrow down their options.

Primary Futures: Connecting Life and Learning in UK Education reports on the value of the Primary Futures initiative (2014) which has provided 26,000 volunteers who spoke in schools about their work across 4,400 UK primary through the Inspiring the Future platform. The Primary schools Futures paper explains that this initiative:

- Supports literacy, numeracy and the development of 'enterprise' and 'employability' skills.
- Influences aspirations of young people through addressing the assumptions which shape attitudes and expectations.

In Australia, *The Case for Career Related Learning in Primary Schools* (2014) found a very positive impact

of careers activities on primary pupil aspiration, engagement and achievement. The Canadian study *The Early Years: Career Development for Young Children* (2017) evidences children's developing concepts of self and work and suggests ways forwards.

Not much in the careers world is new: in 1988 Her Majesty's Inspectorate provided *Careers Education and Guidance 5 to 16*, the tenth in a series of curriculum resources. Its excellent guidance on careers education within the curriculum includes specific information on the value of and ideas for primary school work, and refers to involving employers and linking careers to subject skills. The resource explains that careers work in primary schools builds resilience and improves transition skills. 30 years ago this was mainstream guidance from government and it seems that the wheel is turning that way again.

Resources to support primary careers education

These include:

1. World of Work primary resources mapped to careers learning outcomes for KS2. Nine lessons that can be used over a day or singly at John Lewis <https://bringingskillstolife.co.uk/>
2. The Career Development Institute's learning outcomes for Careers, Employability and Enterprise Education <http://www.theecd.net/Careers-Framework-2018> show progression and ideas for delivery from KS2 to 5. Wales <http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/130425-personal-and-social-education-framework-en.pdf> and Scotland https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/34749/career_management_skills_framework_scotland.pdf frameworks include early years careers-related learning outcomes and progression
3. Primary Futures links volunteers to primary schools e.g. www.inspiringthefuture.org/schools-and-colleges/primary-futures/primary-futures-case-studies/
4. Game Plan is a free games-based website provided by King's College London for 10-14 year olds and their parents/carers to explore university www.gameplan.ac.uk
5. Stepping Stones free resources aid transition from primary to secondary school www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/education-and-youth/initiatives-schools-pupils/stepping-stones-2018
6. NAHT's *A Guide for Primary School Leaders on Working with Employers and Volunteers* suggests activities www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Primary-Guide-FINAL.pdf
7. Primary Schools – Enabling Enterprise provides lesson materials, staff training and skills assessment tools <http://enablingenterprise.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/EE-Primary-School-Brochure-2015-vFinal.pdf>
8. Future Morph has science and maths curriculum activities which can easily be adapted www.futuremorph.org/
9. The Bonkers Book of Jobs for 9-13 year olds to learn about careers in a fun and engaging way, similar to the style of *Horrible Histories* £7.99 www.complete-careers.com

careers.com

10. I want to be.... The Big Book of Jobs has over 100 job profiles in 23 families, worksheets and lesson plans £59.95 www.prospecteducationresources.co.uk/products/9781910135143.html
11. Make it Real is a tried and tested class game that meets 16 out of the 17 CDI learning outcomes for careers, enterprise and employability. CD £95 +VAT, map £50-£70 <http://www.realgame.co.uk>
12. Paws in Jobland is a fun interactive IT resource that introduces children to the world around them and the jobs that people in their community do. £110 for a school licence www.cascaid.co.uk/products/paws-in-jobland/
13. First JED (Job Explorer Database) is a multimedia IT resource that introduces workplaces and careers in a way that catches the imagination and supports work-related learning. £165 for a school licence www.careerssoft.co.uk/Products/First_Jed_for_Primary_Schools/
14. Career Mark primary quality award: membership and assessment framework provides guidance for careers work in primary schools. Charging relates to school size www.complete-careers.com

Research already shows us the fundamental importance of primary age careers education in helping children to explore roles, careers, and build positive self-image. We have resources and knowledge – we now need to take action.

Drawing the Future www.educationandemployers.org/drawing-the-future-report-published/

Careers Strategy www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-strategy-making-the-most-of-everyones-skills-and-talents

New DOTs www.hihohiho.com/memory/cafnewdots.pdf

Key Stage 2 career-related learning pathfinder evaluation

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182663/DFE-RR116.pdf

Primary Futures: connecting life and learning in UK primary education

<https://primaryfutures.org/www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Primary-Futures-research-essay-2017-Mann-Kashefpadkel-Iredale.pdf>

The Case for Career-Related Learning in Primary Schools www.det.nsw.edu.au/vetinschools/documents/schooltowork/Career-Related_Learning_in_Primary_Schools_2014%20.pdf

The Early Years: Career Development for Young Children – A Guide for Parents/Guardians

<http://ceric.ca/resource/early-years-career-development-young-children-guide-parentsguardians/>

Careers education and guidance from 5 to 16 HMI Series: Curriculum Matters No. 10

www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/hmi-curriculum/careers.html

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