

Enterprise and Lifelong Learning

Enterprise in Education SME Survey

TNS System Three

TNS System Three was commissioned by the Scottish Executive to conduct research on the subject of Enterprise in Education (EinE). As such, 498 telephone interviews were undertaken with (SME) businesses participating and not participating in EinE and similar activities during the period 16 – 30 September 2004. In addition, 15 depth interviews were conducted with participating and non-participating businesses over the period 3 September – 4 October, with the aim of providing additional insight into businesses' perceptions of EinE and understand what their attitudes are towards engagement in EinE.

Main Findings

- There is a high degree of confusion surrounding EinE. Respondents were not familiar with the term, and were unsure what activities were included in it. Consequently respondents in the main survey did not know if they were involved in the scheme or not.
- Qualitative research also showed that there are problems with the term's meaningfulness.
- Most businesses defined as participants have however been involved with schools for a number of years and the vast majority claimed they will remain involved; most also claimed pupils are easy to deal with.
- Currently businesses are involved mainly in work experience, with other types of activity such as Young Enterprise and giving Career Talks being much less widespread.
- There appears to be an absence of any formal arrangement or relationship between a school and a business, with most businesses approached by the schools directly on an ad hoc basis.
- A main reason for participation is the businesses' support of their community generally: involvement with a local school is an expression of this.
- All organisations were more likely to associate EinE with benefits to pupils than benefits to businesses.
- Lack of time available for EinE is a barrier for some, especially amongst smaller companies.
- The research findings highlight that there is considerable potential for EinE to expand and develop. Encouragingly too, there is evidence of a willingness to take part amongst some businesses that have not been involved yet.

The Context

The SE strategy Determined to Succeed (DtS) recommends that there should be a major expansion in the involvement of businesses in Scotland's schools. This piece of research were therefore undertaken in order to understand what specifically SMEs across Scotland understand by and know of EinE and DtS and what their attitudes are towards engagement in EinE.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the research was to measure the level of engagement businesses already have with schools, to assess perceived benefits and difficulties in participating in EinE and to identify barriers to participation amongst those not currently involved.

Methodology

The research comprised of quantitative telephone interviews with managers or HR staff at SMEs identified as participants of EinE and with SMEs identified as non-participants. A total of 498 telephone interviews (out of sample size set at 500) were carried out from TNS telephone unit in Wembley, London. In addition 15 qualitative interviews were carried out with both participants and non-participants in EinE.

Enterprise in Education

The research showed that there is a high degree of confusion surrounding EinE. Respondents were not familiar with the term and were therefore unsure if they were at all participating in EinE or what activities they were included in. Most businesses defined as participants have however been involved with schools for a number of years and the vast majority of them claimed that they will remain involved. Most of the businesses also claimed that pupils are easy to deal with.

Slightly less than half of the businesses (44%) defined as participants claimed to have been involved at least several times each year, most of the remainder of the businesses claimed they were in contact with schools one or twice yearly (44%). Over 90% of them stated that they are likely to continue to be involved compared to less than 10% who indicated the opposite. Two thirds stated that they are very likely to continue. The majority of participating firms indicated that pupils are easy to deal with (81%) and only 5% gave a negative response, although a further (15%) indicated that they had had both good and bad experiences.

Most firms had typically been involved with older secondary pupils S4-S6 with only a minority having worked with other age groups or with special schools.

Current Activity

Currently businesses are involved mainly in work experience, with other types of activities such as Young Enterprise and giving Career Talks are much less widespread. Almost 9 in 10 (88%) of participating businesses had ever been involved in work experience and 7 in 10 were currently involved (70%).

There appears to be no formal arrangement or relationships between schools and businesses, with businesses being approached by the schools directly on an ad hoc basis. The most common single reason given by businesses for becoming involved was; "the school asked and we wanted to help". The second most common reason given by businesses for being involved was "awareness of the benefits to pupils". A main reason for participation appears to be the businesses' support of their communities generally.

Benefits of EinE

The research shows that all organisations were more likely to associate EinE with benefits to pupils than benefits to businesses. Specific benefits to pupils mentioned by participants included better awareness of jobs/industries (27%), gaining an understanding/experience of work (23%) and opening their minds/their lives generally (17%). Most businesses believe that pupils will benefit to some degree. Businesses defined as participating in EinE were surer of the benefits involved. Almost a quarter of them (23%) stated there would be a very big benefit, and a further 38% said there would be a big benefit. None of the businesses already involved thought that there would be no benefit to pupils at all from involvement.

Businesses without any experience of EinE also expressed largely positive opinions. 76% indicating that they believed that there would be at least some benefit to pupils. Not surprisingly perhaps, those with experience of the scheme were much more likely to believe that their organisation would benefit as a result of taking part.

Over half of the participating businesses (57%) indicated that their organisation derived at least "some benefit" from their involvement with local schools. A further third (33%) thought that there was "a slight benefit". Just 11% thought that there was "no benefit at all".

Businesses defined as non-participants on the other hand recorded less positive views. Only a quarter (25%) thought their organisation would derive at least “some benefit”, with a further third (33%) opting for “a slight benefit” and 41% opting for “no benefit at all”.

Participating companies were unable to readily identify specific commercial benefits. Those mentioned however included:

- employment opportunities (14%)
- strengthening community relationships (11%)
- profile raising/PR (4%)
- staff development (3%)

Barriers to participation in EinE

Lack of time available for EinE is a barrier for some, especially amongst smaller companies.

Non-participating businesses that indicated they would not become involved were asked to select from four possible reasons why not and over a third (35%) indicated that was because; “we are/I am too busy”. The *opportunity cost* involved in taking one day ‘out of the office’ can also be significant to SMEs.

Health and Safety issues and the need for insurance for pupils act as both real and perceived barriers for participating and non-participating businesses. Several non-participating businesses expressed concerns that up to a day of staff time will have to be spent taking every new visitor through H&S regulations when they arrive. Some organisations also mentioned that they will have to seek dispensation from their insurance company.

There was, however, also a wide misconception that businesses might be unsuitable to be involved in a work experience placement as part of EinE. Some businesses wrongly assumed, for example, that children would have to be involved “on the shop-floor” for work experience, as opposed to becoming involved with e.g. business administration. Thus if an organisation is involved in a hazardous environment they presumed they are not a suitable host.

Another concern raised by non-participating businesses was that pupils may not always be interested or motivated. This however appears to be a perception and not a reality borne out by those who do participate.

The Future

The research findings highlight that there is considerable potential for EinE to expand and develop. Encouragingly too, there is evidence of a willingness to take part amongst some businesses that have not been involved yet. 47% of non-participants said they would be likely to agree to become involved if they were contacted by a local school or Careers Scotland, with 10% showing a strong commitment to doing so.

There is however, according to the research team, a need for EinE to become more formalised as currently it is ad hoc in nature. More information and better communication is required to develop and improve the experience of participating in EinE, as there is currently a lack of clarity surrounding the scheme.

Around half of participating organisations indicated an interest in general information, information on pupils and requested more regular contact with schools. The level of interest in work experience is arguably a result of its much greater familiarity. This suggests that strengthening awareness of other aspects of EinE to current non-participants is vital. It will help combat the perception that EinE is mainly concerned with the pupil coming to the business rather than vice versa.

Recommendations

- **Produce supporting literature for EinE to act as an intervention to the ‘knowledge-vacuum’ surrounding the scheme.** *The literature should describe the scheme, the different activities included and its strategy: it should identify benefits and address real and perceived barriers to taking part.*
- **Bring a degree of formality to the participation process.** *Give schools guidelines of best practice for each activity in EinE; for example, work experience could be broken down into 5 stages - invitation, preparation, participation, follow-up and re-contact.*
- **Get more businesses involved.** *Schools, Local Authorities, and Careers Scotland, should be proactive; supply non-participants with supporting literature and invite more businesses to take part.*
- **Focus on the business benefits.** *Businesses can easily appreciate the benefits for pupils; business benefits need to be more forcefully promoted.*
- **Ask participating businesses to become more involved.** *Invite them to take part in other EinE activities*

or ask them if they would be prepared to give more of their time. Also, use them as 'ambassadors' and highlight their positive experiences in marketing material.

- **Encourage involvement in activities other than work experience.** Communicate the range of activities included in the scheme via supporting literature; invite businesses to take part in a range of activities.
- **Prepare pupils entering the workplace.** Ensure pupils know about the business they are entering and have a list of goals to achieve. Ensure Health & Safety certificates are in place if they are necessary.

- **Don't allow necessary paperwork to become bureaucratic.** Ensure paperwork businesses must complete is user-friendly and attempt to keep it brief.
- **Strengthen the branding of all activities under the EinE banner.** Increase awareness of and familiarity with EinE by branding all material. This should also apply to materials produced by schools / Careers Scotland and Local Authorities.

If you wish further copies of this Research Findings or have any enquiries about the work of Social Research, please contact us at:

Scottish Executive Social Research
Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning
Department
3rd Floor
Meridian Court
3 Cadogan Street
GLASGOW G2 6AT
Tel: 0141 242-0264
Fax: 0141 242-5455

Email: socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch

If you wish a copy of "Enterprise in Education: SME Survey" the research report which is summarised in this research findings, please send a cheque for £5.00 made payable to:

Blackwell's Bookshop
53 South Bridge
Edinburgh EH1 1YS

Telephone orders and enquiries
0131 622 8283 or
0131 622 8258

Fax orders
0131 557 8149

Email orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

This document (and other Research Findings and Reports) and information about social research in the Scottish Executive may be viewed on the Internet at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>

The site carries up-to-date information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Executive. Subjects covered include transport, housing, social inclusion, rural affairs, children and young people, education, social work, community care, local government, civil justice, crime and criminal justice, regeneration, planning and womens issues. The site also allows access to information about the Scottish Household Survey.

ISBN 0-7559-3885-2

