

Careers guidance and participation in education Findings from the YELLIS dataset

This report looks at questions about the careers guidance and future participation in education that Y10/11 pupils have responded to over the last 12 years

Introduction

The Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) at Durham University has been providing schools with educational monitoring and assessment systems for the last 25 years. Currently about 6500 schools in the UK use one or more of the systems with children aged 4 to 18 years. Besides assessing educational performance there are options to measure softer attitudinal and behavioural factors. The data used in this report are from YELLIS (Year 11 Information System, see www.yellisproject.org) Students' Perceptions questionnaire taken by children in Y10/11.

This analysis looks at the responses across the datasets as a whole and does not look in detail at any regional, school or student level differences or influences. It is therefore reasonable to draw national level conclusions, although there may be important differences at a lower level which could be explored and further considered.

Table 1 shows the number of schools and the number of students overall who completed the questionnaires each year.

Table 1: Response rates

| Year | Number of Schools | Number of Students |
|-------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1997 | 131 | 21,004 |
| 1998 | 185 | 29,905 |
| 1999 | 277 | 42,356 |
| 2000 | 326 | 45,599 |
| 2001 | 298 | 42,886 |
| 2002 | 276 | 39,755 |
| 2003 | 267 | 39,829 |
| 2004 | 262 | 38,928 |
| 2005 | 195 | 28,250 |
| 2006 | 179 | 27,352 |
| 2007 | 161 | 23,934 |
| 2008 | 136 | 18,858 |

We have not conducted specific tests of the representativeness of this sample, so it is possible there could be some degree of bias in the responses. However, when we have analysed the representativeness of the YELLIS sample in the past¹ we have found its characteristics to be extremely close to the national picture for England on a wide range of variables. Moreover, given the large number of schools and pupils in the sample, their spread across regions and local authorities and the extent of continuity of schools'

¹ See for example, Telhaj, S., Hutton, D., Davies, P., Adnett, N., and Coe, R. (2004) 'Competition Within Schools: Representativeness of Yellis Sample Schools in a Study of Subject Enrolment of 14-16 Year Olds'. Institute for Education Policy Research, Staffordshire University, Working paper 2004/11 <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/schools/business/iepr/docs/Working-paper11.doc>

participation over several years, it seems likely that the percentages quoted in this report will be reasonably close to what would be found in the country as a whole, and therefore representative of the national trends.

Table 2 shows the detailed questions and wider context within which they were asked. They are taken from the YELLIS extension assessment booklet which contains other questions not reported here.

Table 2: Detailed questions

| | Question | Response options | Reported Response |
|----|--|---|--------------------------|
| 1 | Have you had a Career Action Plan meeting with a Careers officer / Connexions Advisor in this school year | Yes / No | Yes |
| 2 | Approximately how many days of work experience have you had? | None, 1, 2-5, 6-10, More than 10 | More than 5 |
| 3 | Approximately how many careers visits have you had? | None, 1, 2-5, 6-10, More than 10 | More than 1 |
| 4 | Approximately how many visits to Universities have you had | None, 1, 2-5, 6-10, More than 10 | More than 1 |
| | How much have you learned about careers from....(Q5-13) | Not applicable, Nothing, Not sure, A little, Some, A lot | Some, A lot |
| 5 |Careers advisor / teacher personal interview | " | " |
| 6 |Careers advisor / teacher giving talks | " | " |
| 7 |Other People giving talks | " | " |
| 8 |Careers Leaflets | " | " |
| 9 |Visit(s) to Careers Library | " | " |
| 10 |Older friends | " | " |
| 11 |Parents/Guardians | " | " |
| 12 |Other family members | " | " |
| 13 |Work experience | " | " |
| | Which of the following would make it more likely that you would continue in education after Y11....(Q14-20) | Not at all helpful, Not very Helpful, Not sure, Helpful, Very Helpful | Helpful, very helpful |
| 14 |Good exams | " | " |
| 15 |Better teaching | " | " |
| 16 |More encouragement from parents | | |
| 17 |Knowing college/university students | | |
| 18 |More personal interviews with careers Advisor | " | " |
| 19 |Visiting Universities | " | " |
| 20 |Having a university student tutor | " | " |

For this analysis we looked at the questions in three main groupings which reflect the spirit and context of the detailed questions:

- Help and support for careers and future learning
- Sources and value of advice and support
- Factors that encourage progress and participation in education

Help and support for careers and future learning

The findings, Table 3 and Figure 1, do not present a very good picture. Whilst the number of university visits has increased with only 11% saying they had visited a university in 1997, rising to 23% in 2008 – this would still seem to be a rather small number. And looking at the three other areas of formal support considered here, these have substantially declined over the 12 year period.

Table 3: Support received

| <i>Support received for careers / future advice</i> | <i>1997</i> | <i>1998</i> | <i>1999</i> | <i>2000</i> | <i>2001</i> | <i>2002</i> | <i>2003</i> | <i>2004</i> | <i>2005</i> | <i>2006</i> | <i>2007</i> | <i>2008</i> |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Career Action Plan meeting this school year | 85 | 82 | 81 | 61 | 60 | 58 | 56 | 55 | 51 | 54 | 55 | 55 |
| More than five days of work experience | 69 | 73 | 71 | 71 | 65 | 64 | 65 | 65 | 61 | 55 | 59 | 51 |
| At least one careers visit | 54 | 55 | 58 | 55 | 51 | 50 | 47 | 48 | 47 | 47 | 49 | 47 |
| At least one University visit | 11 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 15 | 16 | 18 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 23 |

In 1997 85% of the students said they had had a formal Career Action Plan meeting with a careers advisor or teacher, however by 2008 this had steadily declined, with only 55% reporting such a meeting. Assuming this is an across the board reduction, this would particularly affect students from more disadvantaged backgrounds who will not have some of the family connections available to their more privileged counterparts.

In a similar way, the reduction in career visits and work experience lasting more than 5 days must reduce the source of ideas and inspiration about what they could do, and importantly beginning to build an understanding of what is involved in particular careers and fields of work.

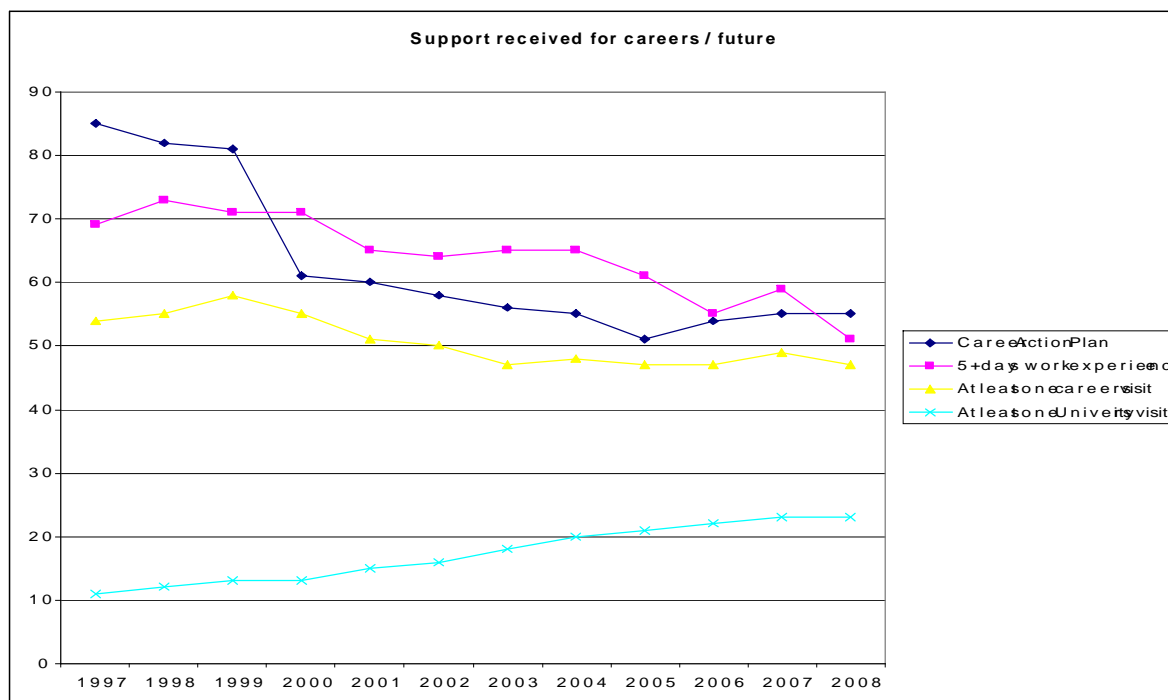


Figure 1: Support received

Sources and value of advice and support

The overwhelming message in this section, Table 4 and Figure 2, is a reduction in the impact of the formal sources of information – eg. careers advisors / teachers and the move towards informal sources, such as, family and friends. Again disadvantaged students must be further disadvantaged by this. For instance they are less likely to have parents who have been to university and can help and advise on what can be a daunting and complicated process.

Table 4: Sources of support

| Sources and value of careers / future advice | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Careers advisor / teacher personal interview | 49 | 46 | 46 | 37 | 36 | 35 | 32 | 27 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 25 |
| Careers advisor / teacher giving talks | 45 | 42 | 42 | 39 | 37 | 37 | 34 | 27 | 26 | 25 | 24 | 22 |
| Other People giving talks | 39 | 38 | 38 | 38 | 37 | 36 | 35 | 33 | 32 | 33 | 32 | 32 |
| Careers Leaflets | 44 | 42 | 41 | 40 | 38 | 37 | 34 | 33 | 31 | 29 | 27 | 25 |
| Visit(s) to Careers Library | 28 | 26 | 25 | 22 | 21 | 19 | 17 | 14 | 12 | 11 | 9 | 8 |
| Older friends | 48 | 48 | 49 | 48 | 48 | 49 | 46 | 46 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 46 |
| Parents/Guardians | 60 | 61 | 63 | 63 | 63 | 64 | 64 | 62 | 63 | 64 | 64 | 65 |
| Other family members | 52 | 52 | 54 | 54 | 55 | 56 | 56 | 55 | 55 | 57 | 57 | 59 |
| Work experience | 64 | 64 | 64 | 61 | 59 | 58 | 56 | 53 | 52 | 51 | 51 | 49 |

More specifically, the number of students saying they learned 'some' or 'a lot' from career advisors / teachers reduced from 49% in 1997 to 25% in 2008. Likewise the number of career talks, both from the professional advisors / teachers and other people substantially reduced (45% to 22%, and 39% to 32% respectively). The value of careers leaflets and careers libraries also reduced, with a reduction from 44% and 28% in 1997 to 25% and 8% in 2008. Work experience too was considered less important a source of advice in 2008 rather than 1997 (64% to 49%).

Whilst parents have always been an important source of advice this increased from 60% to 65% in 2008. Other family members too became more important sources of advice during this period, up from 52% in 1997 to 59% in 2008. And whilst it may well be the case that electronic sources have supplemented some of the advice, this last point (advice from parents and families) would suggest that the students still do want personal one to one advice. Moreover, for the reasons already alluded to, this will probably be particularly relevant for disadvantaged students.

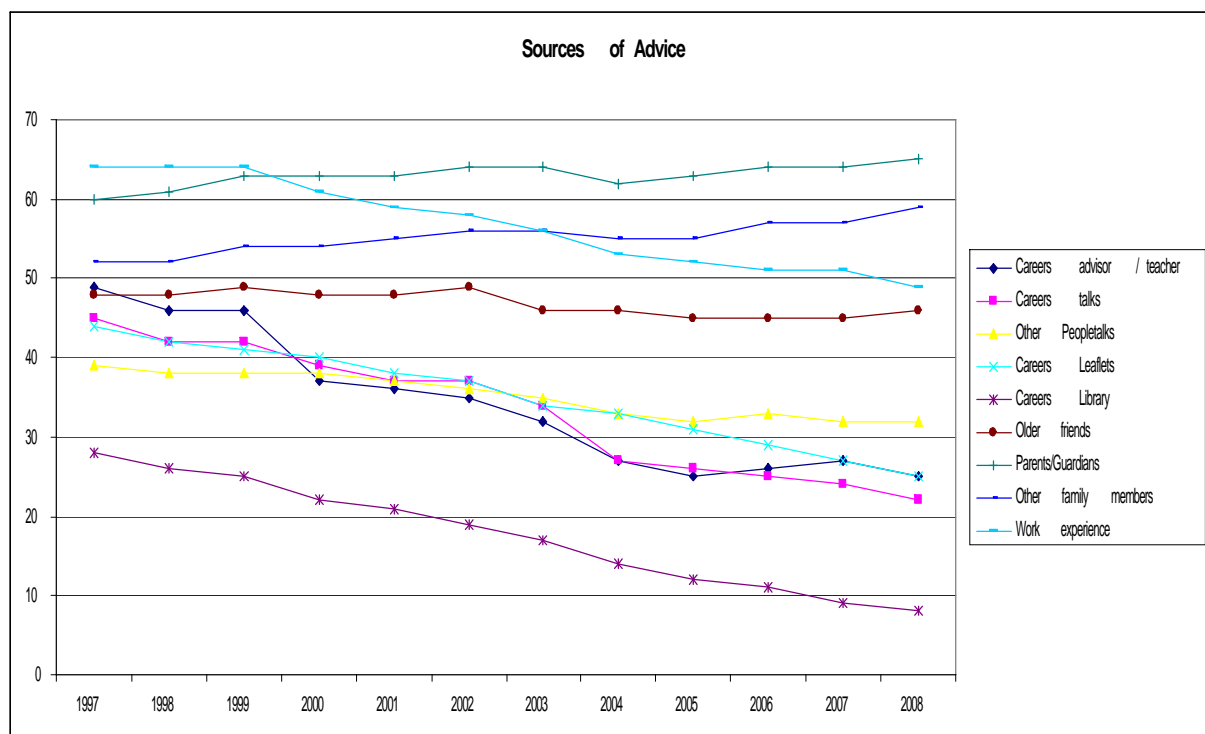


Figure 2: Sources of support

Factors that encourage progress and participation

The clear conclusion from this section, Table 5 and Figure 3, is that students are aware of what is needed to progress in education, with good teaching and exam results being the most highly rated factors. This view strengthened over the 12 year period, with 68% rating better teaching as being an important factor in 1997, increasing to 74% in 2008. In a similar way getting good exam results was seen as important by 85% in 1997, and this increased to 87% in 2008.

Table 5: Encouraging participation in education

| <i>Factors that encourage participation in education</i> | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Good exams | 85 | 85 | 86 | 86 | 87 | 87 | 87 | 86 | 85 | 86 | 86 | 87 |
| Better teaching | 68 | 68 | 70 | 70 | 72 | 71 | 73 | 72 | 72 | 73 | 74 | 74 |
| More encouragement from parents | 52 | 50 | 51 | 49 | 49 | 48 | 48 | 48 | 48 | 48 | 48 | 48 |
| Knowing college/university students | 60 | 60 | 62 | 63 | 62 | 63 | 63 | 62 | 62 | 62 | 64 | 65 |
| More personal interviews with careers Advisor | 65 | 63 | 65 | 67 | 67 | 66 | 64 | 58 | 57 | 56 | 54 | 52 |
| Visiting Universities | 44 | 45 | 47 | 50 | 49 | 50 | 50 | 49 | 51 | 50 | 52 | 55 |
| Having a university student tutor | 34 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 37 | 37 | 37 | 36 | 36 | 36 | 37 | 39 |

However, there is an interesting finding with regard to parental encouragement, with this reducing from 52% in 1997 to 48% in 2008. A possible explanation is that the students see a greater need for good teaching and to achieve better exam results, and parents may not play such an important part in this aspect of their education.

Encouragingly from the point of view of widening participation initiatives, visiting universities, and having a university student as a tutor were highly rated and became more important over the 12 years. These increased from 44% and 34% in 1999 to 55% and 39% in 2008. Personally knowing university students also became more important, increasing from 60% to 65% over the 12 years. However, it would be reasonable to assume that the more disadvantaged students will not have such good contacts or access to someone who has been to university. Finally the perceived importance of careers advisors / teacher decreased from 65% in 1997 to 52% in 2008 – this may of course simply be a reflection of the fact that the input of careers advisors / teachers reduced over the 12 years.

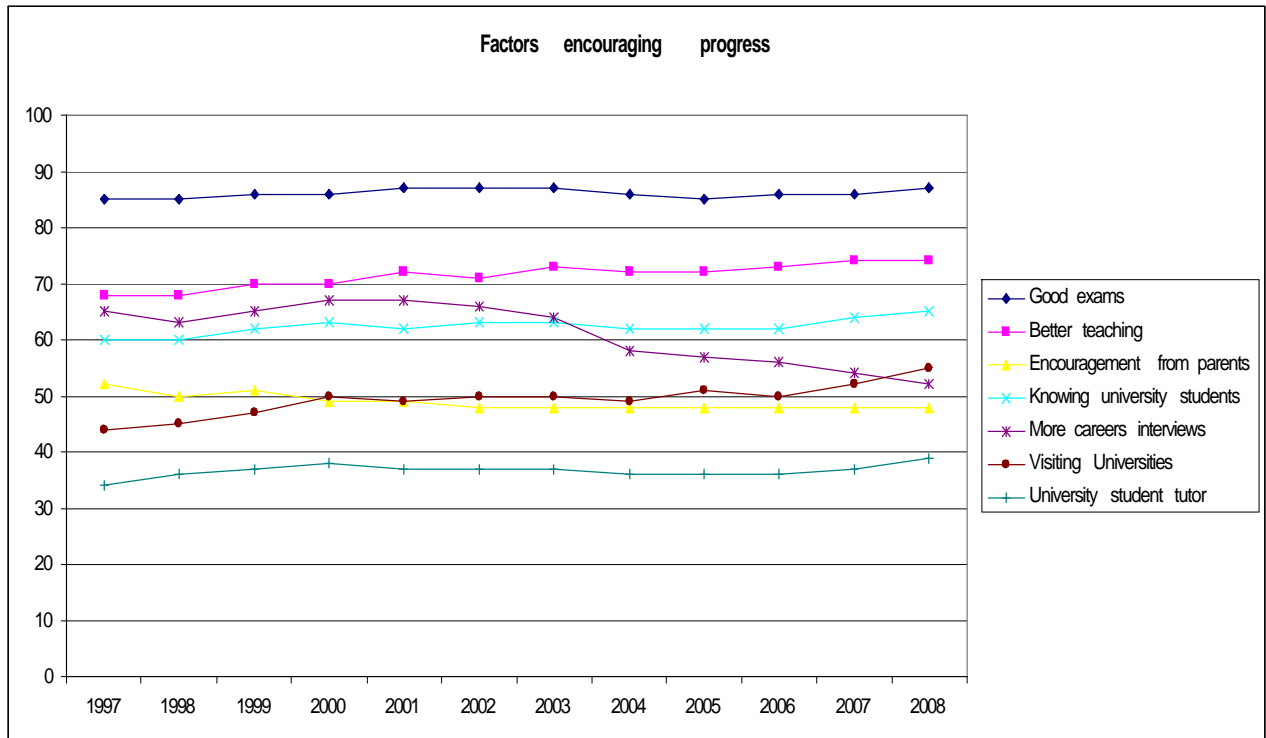


Figure 3: Encouraging participation in education

Key messages - over the 12 year period for Y10/11 students

In terms of careers advice there has been.....

- a substantial reduction in the number of formal career action planning meetings
- fewer longer term (5+ days) work experience opportunities
- fewer specific careers visits
- quite a substantial increase in university visits, but still only 23% in 2008 having had one or more visits.

In terms of sources and value of support there has been.....

- a substantial reduction in the impact / availability of specialist advice
- the value of parents and other family members has increased
- far fewer talks from specialist advisers
- a reduction in other outside people giving talks
- less value in careers leaflets and careers libraries²
- older friends have proved to be an important source of information throughout the 12 years
- a reduction in work experience as a source of help and advice

² It can quite reasonably be argued that IT and computers will have replaced and improved some of these functions

In terms of encouraging participation.....

- good exam results have continued to be seen as the most important factor
- better teaching has become more important to the students
- parental encouragement has become less important
- personal meeting with careers advisors too is considered less important (although these are now less common in any case)
- visiting universities, having a university student as a tutor and knowing someone at university, all increased in importance.