

Research Briefing N° 3

Improving opportunities for 14-19 year olds: building strongly collaborative local learning systems

This research reports on three area-wide research and development projects designed to improve 14-19 participation, progression and transition in education, training and employment through partnership working.

Key words: 14-19; partnership working; progression; transition; young people; localities; schools and colleges; employers; curriculum and qualifications reform; careers education; information, advice and guidance



Key findings

- New forms of collaboration across institutions and providers are needed in light of the economic recession and changes in education policy; in particular, Raising the Participation Age (RPA) to 18 by 2015, and curriculum and qualification changes.
- Institutional competition does not serve the needs of 14-19 year olds.
- New forms of institutional and provider collaboration involving a wider range of social partners (e.g. 14+ progression and transition boards) have been set in train by the focus of the research.
- New forms of collaboration are a way of involving employers more actively in supporting the 14+ participation, progression and transition of young people.

What we did

The educational landscape in England – the institutions and providers – has become increasingly complex and competitive. This is not working well for young people. For example, they find it difficult to understand the pathways open to them, and to access impartial and efficient information, advice, guidance and careers education. This often leads to inappropriate education and training choices post-16.

National education and training policy has traditionally focused on attainment, post-16 participation and retention rather than on 14-19 progression, and transition into the labour market. It has also focused on the higher and lower attainers in the age cohort. By focusing on 14-19 progression and transition, and 'middle attainers' – the challenges they face in both A Levels and the vocational routes – this research addresses this gap.

The research comprises a number of local studies in different parts of the country. Here we report on three with a common focus on improving 14+ participation, progression and transition in education and training for young people through partnership working. The project, started in 2008 and set to complete in 2013, is funded by the 14-19 consortia, local authorities and London Councils.

How we did it

The three studies:

1. The Kingswood Area Progression Project (2008-11) focused on middle attaining 14-19 year olds and involved research across a flagship school/college consortium.
2. The North East Lincolnshire 14-19 Progression Project (2011-12) was a local authority wide study involving all secondary schools, colleges and work-based learning providers which led to the establishment of the first '14+ Progression and Transition Board'.
3. 14+ Participation, Progression and Transition: rebuilding and extending partnership working in London (2012-13) involved all 33 boroughs and has led to a renewed focus on 14-19 collaboration in the Capital in the era of RPA.

All three studies drew on a mix of quantitative and qualitative research:

Study 1 involved the tracking, over a period of three years, of 2,400 Year 9 and Year 11 students, together with annual in-depth interviews with a 10 per cent sample of the study's participants. Interviews were also conducted with relevant practitioners.

Study 2 comprised desk research; data on educational performance in the area; interviews with the local authority; visits to education providers and local employers, and focus groups with young people (a total of 50 16 year olds and 42 17 and 18 year olds).

Study 3 used a questionnaire for all borough 14-19 co-ordinators in London and visits to 20 boroughs to collect information on partnership organisation and key areas of activity. This led to the development of a self-assessment tool that partnerships in all parts of the country can use to evaluate the depth and scope of their work.

Further information

Hodgson, A. and Spours, K. (2013 forthcoming). An ecological analysis of the dynamics of localities: a 14+ low opportunity progression equilibrium in action. *Journal of Education and Work*

Hodgson, A. and Spours, K. (2013 forthcoming). Tackling the crisis facing young people: building 'high opportunity progression eco-systems' *Oxford Review of Education*

See IOE website for [The Kingswood Area Progression Project](#), the [North East Lincolnshire 14-19 Progression Project](#) and the [14+ participation, progression and transition: rebuilding and extending partnership working in London](#)

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