

# Benchmarking Research of Young People's Perceptions of Enterprise

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This is the quantitative phase of research commissioned by the Scottish Executive Office of Chief Researcher to gauge the level to which young people and children are 'enterprising'. Results from this piece of work provide a baseline against which future improvements can be periodically assessed. The research will also support the 'Determined to Succeed' Communications Strategy.

The research involved surveying both primary 7 (P7) and senior 4 (S4) pupils across Scotland about their attitudes to life, education and themselves.

## Main Findings

- In general S4 and P7 pupils in Scotland are very positive and confident about themselves and their future
- The pupils are quite positive about further education
- They believe they can succeed and understand that hard work is necessary to achieve success
- Job enjoyment is the key factor for them when considering a job
- Analysis identifies four attitudinal segments in each age group
- Each of the segments identified shows different attitudes to life and their future, with two segments in each age group showing less confidence in the future than the sample in general
- Each segment will require different communication strategies and messages to meet their needs

## Introduction

'Determined to Succeed' is one of a number of initiatives overseen by the Scottish Executive that aims to promote inclusion, address skills shortages, prepare people for the world of work, provide for flexibility within the school curriculum and encourage an 'enterprising' spirit.

The Scottish Executive is committing £42 million over three years to affect a step change in Enterprise in Education activity, delivered across years P1 to S6 and will provide a range of opportunities to young people.

## Objectives of the study

Specific research objectives were to benchmark young people and children's perceptions and opinions about 'enterprise', including:

- Confidence
- Self expression
- Notions of success
- Career success

## Methodology

Self-completion questionnaires were designed by Synovate and agreed with the Scottish Executive. These were then distributed to, and completed by, pupils in years P7 (11-12 year olds) and S4 (15-16 year olds) in a number of pre-selected schools. These schools were selected from all of the primary and secondary schools in Scotland to ensure a good mix of different types of school according to:

- Geography
- Wealth (based on Free Meal Entitlement)
- Academic ability (based on Scottish Qualifications Authority results)
- School size
- Level of enterprise

Briefing letters and questionnaires were sent out and completed by the 21st May 2004.

## Findings

The following results are shown firstly for S4 pupils, and secondly P7 pupils. Both sections address pupils' thoughts about their future, their attitudes to education and jobs, how they think of themselves, as well as how they evaluate success and their belief in themselves to succeed.

### S4 pupils

Almost all S4 pupils have thought about what they might do when they leave school; 64% are 'pretty clear' about what they are going to do and a further 30% have 'given it some thought but not decided yet'. Those studying the three key subjects at foundation level are less likely (55%) to be 'pretty clear' on what they are going to do.

A majority of S4 pupils (84%) have decided to stay on at school for another couple of years, with girls (88%) significantly more likely than boys (79%) to do so. In addition, most pupils believe the decision on what to do when they finish fourth year is purely up to them.

In general, S4 pupils are relatively positive about their education experience and want to do well in school:

- 76% agree strongly that their parents/guardians are always encouraging them to do well at school
- 72% agree strongly that they like to do well in tests at school
- 61% agree strongly that it is very important to do well at school if you want to get on in life

Encouragingly, very few agree with the negative statements:

- 3% agree strongly school is just a waste of time
- 2% agree strongly that their parents/guardians think they should leave school as soon as they can.

S4 pupils see a variety of different types of people as "successful". The top two mentions were their parents/guardians (76%), and famous business people (74%). Boys were more likely to say sports stars than girls, and girls were more likely to say film stars and famous artists or designers than boys.

Interestingly, 74% of S4 pupils believe they can achieve similar levels of success to those people that they consider to be successful. However, this proportion is much lower amongst those studying key subjects at foundation level (55%).

S4 pupils have taken part in a variety of extra-curricular activities; 85% have taken part in a work experience placement organised by school, 64% in fund-raising activities and 54% have a part-time job. Just 3% said that they have done none of the listed activities. Girls are much more likely than boys to have participated in work experience or fund-raising activities, whereas boys are slightly more likely than girls to have a part-time job.

## P7 pupils

A majority of P7 pupils have at least thought about life after secondary school but only two-fifths already know what they are going to do. Girls (43%) are more likely than boys (38%) to know what they are going to do.

In general, P7 pupils are very positive about doing well in school (even more so than S4 pupils, in fact):

- 82% agree strongly that they like to do well in tests at school
- 79% agree strongly that it is very important to do well at school if you want to get on in life
- 73% agree strongly that their parents/guardians are always encouraging me to do well at school
- 64% agree strongly that they would like to go to university or college when they finish school

As with S4 pupils, very few agree strongly with the negative statements:

- 5% agree strongly school is a waste of time
- 6% agree strongly that even if you do well at school, there are no good jobs around here

In terms of important factors for finding a job, as for S4 pupils, the most important factor, by some distance, was 'doing a job you enjoy'. 'Working as part of a team' was the second most important factor, just ahead of 'earning lots of money' and then another large gap to 'being your own boss'.

As with S4 pupils, the top category of successful people amongst P7 pupils was their parents/guardians. However, famous business people, the second most popular category among older pupils, were ranked much lower by younger pupils, who were more likely to consider sports, film and pop stars as successful. Amongst P7 pupils, sports stars were seen as relatively more important by boys, whereas girls were more likely than boys to classify film stars, pop stars and famous artists/designers as successful.

An even higher proportion of P7 pupils (82%) than S4 pupils (74%) believe they can achieve similar levels of success to those that they described as being successful.

This research found that, within each age group, there are four distinct attitudinal 'segments' that require different support from 'Determined to Succeed'. Although the four segments are not like-for-like across the two age groups, there are clear similarities. This suggests that attitudes are formed early on in pupils' lives and, without intervention, can be carried through the entire secondary school timeline. It also suggests a tailor made communications strategy is necessary to reach some of the segments.

The P7 segment 'Confidently Optimistic' is likely to progress to the S4 segment 'Quietly Confident'. We suggest this likely transition is a "desirable" outcome as the Quietly Optimistic segment is very positive about education and has high self-belief. The objective for the Confidently Optimistic segment should be to maintain their self-belief and interest in education.

The P7 'Potential Entrepreneurs' are likely to become 'Determined Individuals' in S4, which is also a "desirable" outcome as the Determined Individuals segment has a strong drive to succeed and an entrepreneurial spirit. The objective for the Potential Entrepreneurs segment should be to maintain their sense of competition and interest in 'entrepreneurial' activities (probably outside of the 'must do well at school to succeed' sphere).

Two P7 segments are more at risk of moving into a less 'desirable' S4 segment. Pupils in the P7 segment 'Shy and Intelligent' are likely to move into the 'Unconfident Aspirers' segment in S4. This is one of the less 'desirable' S4 segments in that the pupils lack confidence and are not competitive (but they do want to go on into further education). The lack of confidence and self-sufficiency in the Shy and Intelligent segment could potentially mean that these P7 pupils may move into the Unconfident Aspirers segment by S4, meaning that they have not made the most of the opportunities available to them through their intelligence. To avoid this transition, the suggested intervention is to raise the levels of confidence in the P7 segment. If this can be achieved, there is a higher likelihood that the Shy and Intelligent pupils can move into the more "desirable" Quietly Optimistic segment by the time they reach S4.

The final two segments are the P7 segment 'Drifters' who, without intervention are likely to be in the 'Just Want a Job' segment in S4. Clear intervention is required to prevent the P7 Drifter segment "drifting" into the S4 Just Want A Job

segment. The intervention required is to engage Drifters more in non-academic activities that will allow them to have more of an optimistic outlook on their future. The objective should be to promote the transition of P7 Drifters into Determined Individuals by S4.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, while overall P7 and S4 pupils are confident and positive about the future, attitudinal segmentation shows

that there are some groups of pupils who need to be encouraged whether academically, or outside of the traditional school system.

These differences mean that different communications strategies need to be considered in order to reach the different groups, as well as address the concerns and views they have of their future.

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The report, "Benchmarking Research of Young People's Perceptions of Enterprise", which is summarised in this research findings is available on the Social Research website at [www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch).

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