

Committee on Education for 11 to 16 Year-Olds

Corrected oral evidence: Education for 11 to 16 year-olds

Thursday 18 May 2023

11 am

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Members present: Lord Johnson of Marylebone (The Chair); Lord Baker of Dorking; Baroness Evans of Bowes Park; Baroness Garden of Frognal; Lord Knight of Weymouth; Lord Lexden; Lord Mair; Lord Storey; Lord Watson of Invergowrie.

Evidence Session No. 6

Heard in Public

Questions 50 – 60

Witnesses

I: Oli de Botton, CEO, Careers and Enterprise Company; Nick Brook, CEO, Speakers for Schools; Nick Chambers, CEO, Education and Employers; Dr Claire Thorne, Co-CEO, Tech She Can.

Examination of witnesses

Oli de Botton, Nick Brook, Nick Chambers and Dr Claire Thorne.

Q50 **The Chair:** Good morning and welcome to this evidence session of the Education for 11 to 16 Year-Olds Committee. I welcome our witnesses and thank them for joining us today. As usual, there will be a transcript of the proceedings and opportunities to correct it at the end, should you need to do so. Could I ask each of you in turn to quickly introduce yourself with a couple of lines saying who you are, what you do in your organisation, and what your organisation does?

Nick Brook: I am chief executive at the social mobility charity, Speakers for Schools, which was formed over a decade ago by Robert Peston to help to level the playing field between state and independent schools. We provide opportunities to young people in state schools to help to inspire the next generation with career opportunities. Many of you around this table today at one point or another have been a speaker on some of our programmes, and more recently we have started to expand and facilitate work experience in state schools.

We have a team in every part of the country and across every nation, and we use their expertise to build links between schools and employers in developing high-quality work experience programmes. We are now the largest social mobility charity in the UK. We do all this at no cost to schools or government as we are funded primarily by the Law Family Charitable Foundation.

Oli de Botton: Thank you for having me. I am the chief executive of the Careers & Enterprise Company. We are the national body for careers education, with a mission to help every young person to find their best next step. We do two things, primarily. First, we bring schools, colleges, employers and apprenticeship providers together at the local level through the careers hubs, which are showing good evidence of impact. Secondly, we train careers leaders, those really important positions in school and college life, who can lead inspiring, holistic careers programmes. In my past life, I have been a head teacher and I co-founded the charity Voice 21, which seeks to put speaking at the heart of the curriculum.

Nick Chambers: I am the CEO of Education and Employers, a charity we formed 14 years ago, which connects young people with people from the world of work on inspiration. We have done a considerable amount of research in the UK and internationally on the impact on young people of the people they meet from the world of work. We also run two delivery programmes, one called Inspiring the Future, and another called Primary Futures that gives teachers instant access to a variety of role models. They are run here but also increasingly internationally.

Dr Claire Thorne: I am co-CEO of the tech careers inspiration charity, Tech She Can. I am also venture partner at Deep Science Ventures, which builds science companies in-house from scratch. What combines both of those is science and tech talent. My background is in innovation strategy at Imperial and other universities. I am a former physicist, and Tech She Can is an industry-backed charity. We create and deliver free educational resources for schools that are inspiring for boys and girls at primary and secondary. Our mission is to increase the number of women and girls pursuing tech careers and, ultimately, to create a world that looks and thinks and feels like all of us but is not just designed by one half of us.

We have 250 partners across 40 sectors—this is not a tech sector issue and or a tech sector community—including Google, PWC, Centrica, NatWest, Tesco, Unilever, et cetera. We also work really closely with fellow panellists, STEM Learning and the British Science Association. We are a young, small charity, and to date we have directly reached 50,000 boys and girls across the UK, inspiring them to consider careers in tech.

The demand that we are seeing from schools is absolutely huge. We do not teach coding or practical skills; we focus on careers inspiration—relatable role models at a really early stage of the career pipeline, connecting children's passions to roles in tech and making pathways and roles really accessible and visible.

Q51 Lord Baker of Dorking: First, could I say how much we admire all the work you do? We are very grateful that you do it, because you are trying to link the world of business with the world of education, and they are wildly apart; there is a complete mismatch between the two. So we have a great respect for you.

I have one really simple first question, on work experience, which can be answered with a yes or a no. The Gatsby benchmark for 11 to 16 year-olds and for 11 to 18 year-olds is to have one experience of work experience. Do you think that is adequate? Yes or no?

Nick Brook: No.

Oli de Botton: The Gatsby benchmarks have more than that. They have engagement inspiration in year 7, they have curriculum linked to the world of work, they have information about apprenticeships. My view is that all those things need to work together to have a holistic careers programme beginning early.

Lord Baker of Dorking: Thank you.

Nick Chambers: No, to your question. Yes, to Oli's answer.

Dr Claire Thorne: Careers inspiration and an inspiring curriculum are required, supported by the Gatsby benchmarks.

Lord Baker of Dorking: How much work experience do you think there should be? I take your point that there is a variety of work experience. The Youth Unemployment Committee supported London Councils' proposal for 16 year-olds to have 100 hours of experience. Is that about right, or not?

Nick Brook: I do not think we know the answer to that. It needs to be led by evidence of what actually makes a difference. A lot of activity goes on in and around schools that is well-meaning but, ultimately, does not change young people's lives or lead to a fundamental difference in their ability to access opportunities. We need to take an evidence-led approach to this and understand what is making a difference. Part of the answer is understanding the combination of activities that are needed in order to get the most out of work experience.

Oli de Botton: I agree. It needs to be in the mainstream of school and college life, not at the margins. We need the relationships between employers and educators to be mutually beneficial. Instead of those two worlds talking past each other, which they sometimes do, we have to bring them together in creative and new ways.

Nick Chambers: I was involved in that report, so I will agree with it. A lot of it is about varied activities over a period of time, starting young, maybe from inspiration at a young age, through to more engaged interventions like work experience as children grow older.

Dr Claire Thorne: Absolutely. The notion of traditional work, or a quota on the number of hours of work experience, is less important. What is

important is programmes that start really early on. We start from age five. We do not talk about careers at age five, but we show them that there are people behind the tech that they use and experience every day.

Really early education and inspirational careers are needed. Those work experiences do not have to be formal placements; they can be immersive experiences with employers. Our community of 250 member organisations works really closely with us inside and outside classroom, so they shape the content and resources and feature relatable role models, but we also place them in the classroom.

Lord Baker of Dorking: Thank you. We have had evidence from Sutton Trust that 30% of 16 year-olds had no practice of work experience at all. They also said that 46% of 17 year-olds said that they had plenty of advice on universities but only 10% said they had advice on apprenticeships. I am not belittling what you do at all, but you are really the accident and emergency element of the national curriculum. You are trying to implement what the national curriculum does not allow schools to implement, quite frankly; they do not do it.

Have any of you made representations to the department, to the Secretaries of State or to other Ministers, over the last 10 years saying that the national curriculum is not fit for purpose as far as industry is concerned?

Dr Claire Thorne: We held an APPG with one of our strategic partners, PWC, earlier this year. We had three Ministers around the table in one of the rooms down from here: George Freeman, Minister for Science; Maria Caulfield, Minister for Women; and Paul Scully, Minister for Tech. We made that exact case, and there were promises of interdepartmental working and action, which we have not seen yet. In the 18 months since we have been an independent charity, we have tried endlessly to engage with the Department for Education through Minister Halfon and other offices and have still not got anywhere, in contrast to Education Scotland.

Nick Chambers: We have had numerous meetings with various Secretaries of State over the years. We have been particularly pushing the need for early intervention. Indeed, I spoke here in 2016 about the need to start young. It was relegated to page 75 of the report, but I still keep going on about the need to start young.

On the whole idea of employer engagement, our “four or more” report for Ministers, which is now the heart of Gatsby, argued that if children had no encounters with the world of work, they were 26.1% more likely to be NEET, but that dropped to 4.3% if they had had four or more. There has been a big push on that, but we should be doing a lot more nationally on careers and the link with employment. It is interesting how many things from the Newsom report of 1963 are still current today.

Oli de Botton: I have tried to make the argument with my practice. I am a practical person. I set up a school that sought to put speaking and work readiness at the heart of the curriculum—eight GCSEs, not nine. In the

slot of the ninth, we sent young people across London. I try to bring that ethic into my work, so what am I trying to do? I am trying to infuse skills-based curriculums with the world of work. Take maths, a skills-based subject. You can really enliven that by getting employers in, and that is what we are seeking to do. We can always make arguments with practice, and then policymakers can see and reflect on that.

Lord Baker of Dorking: I understand. Thank you.

Nick Brook: You are right. There is considerable evidence that the current system does not prepare young people well enough for future careers, and our own research complements the Sutton Trust's, which shows that half of all secondary school pupils do not have access to work experience in their time. Contrast that with the experience in private schools where young people have multiple opportunities to have high-quality, meaningful work experience. There is a major deficit here, and we have made that point. The campaign on work experience for all that we launched last year and which you may have been aware of is doing precisely that. We have had conversations with Ministers and with shadow teams about our call to make sure that all young people in state schools are entitled to have access to high-quality work experience.

Lord Baker of Dorking: As you are aware, apprenticeships have fallen among 16 year-olds and 18 year-olds in the last two years. I would have thought that if you had been more successful in getting the connection with industry, they would have increased, quite frankly. Are you aware that there was a young apprenticeship scheme under Labour from 2008 to 2012 that was very extensive and gave young people up to 50 days in work experience or working with companies?

Would you like to see that sort of scheme come back? It was very much welcomed. We were given information on this by EDSK, a very respected think tank, which said that it was immensely successful. It highlighted that, as a result of the programme, 95% of participants progressed into further education or training, with 19% moving on to apprenticeships. Would you like to see the return of the young apprenticeship scheme?

Oli de Botton: It is a really interesting discussion, and I know we will talk later about accreditation of work experience. It is an interesting link. We have to reimagine work experience. We have to think about it as a skills-building moment, which I saw at one of your UTCs in Leigh. If you think about the skills that you might get out of experiences with employers, perhaps you assess and eventually accredit them, which we know some employers are doing—NHS England, BAE Systems and schools are doing that. That is a really neat way of reimagining work experience, which is great, and promoting technical pathways like apprenticeships.

The Chair Thank you.

Q52 **Lord Watson of Invergowrie:** You have talked about the engagement that you have in various forms with schools. I wonder about the extent to

which you have experienced kickback against involvement in schools. Everyone knows about the Baker clause, which was introduced in the 2017 legislation but not operated and had to be firmed up through the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 that came into play last year. That allows for visits to schools, but it does not cover work experience. One of the blockages rumoured to be an issue with T-levels is the 42 days of workplace experience required for them.

My general question, to any or all of you who want to pick it up, is about the extent to which you try to take your wares, as it were, into schools and push the case for work experience, and then meet resistance, from head teachers or maybe from multi-academy trusts.

Nick Brook: The reason we at Speakers for Schools exist is to provide additional capacity and support to schools and employers to create the opportunities for this, because we are acutely aware of the time pressures that schools, and for that matter employers, face. Our experience is that there are a number of barriers that prevent schools from engaging, including time in the curriculum; finding time in the curriculum can be extremely challenging, because with every minute of the day programmed to the nth degree, there are simply not enough hours in the school day to do everything that schools want to do. There is that sense that something has to give if you want to create a space for this to take place.

There is a lack of dedicated resource. It is great that, with the work of the CEC, we now have career leads in most schools, but these are not dedicated resources. Career leads wear many hats in schools. You may be an assistant head teacher, a student well-being coach, the equality diversity lead, the STEM co-ordinator, the Duke of Edinburgh manager. There is a whole range of skills and roles within that. That means that there is very little capacity to do what is actually needed, both in the quality of the experience, the personalised support that young people need to make the most of any experience that they have in school, and in building those connections with employers.

Speakers for Schools will help schools and employers to come together and build those links between them, and to support stretched career leads and others in schools to put together good programmes that we know have an impact and can make a difference on young people's lives. However, there are much bigger questions around the amount of resource that we have dedicated to this in schools. I do not believe that, in and of itself, a high-quality work experience is enough to change a young person's life. We need to make sure that schools are in a position to help that young person to draw the value from the experience they have had, to identify the learning from it and to capitalise on it by taking the step through the door that we have just opened for them. That is an area in which we are currently lacking in school, with very little time in the day, an accountability regime that is focused very much on academic progress, and where volunteering activities or work experience are often overlooked and undervalued.

Dr Claire Thorne: We do not see kickback from schools. We see huge demand for activities and resources that are not even part of the curriculum. For Safer Internet Day, we delivered, in conjunction with one of our industry partners, Morgan Stanley, a cyber live assembly. We reached 15,000 children across the UK who all wanted to dial in and join in with that.

We see huge demand and we see urgency. We see that teachers are aware that they need to provide more of these experiences. They do not all have to be traditional work experience placements, like I said, and we see urgency from industry. We see a disconnect between the science and technology framework from the Government and the move towards a science and tech superpower and innovation nation, while at the same time 22% of schools in England do not offer computer science at GCSE.

We see all these things and our solutions are early intervention and sustained intervention. It cannot be a one-off interaction where they dial in once for that virtual assembly. We need to start those conversations really young, which is what we do with our animated lessons, all the way through to actually training up cohorts of employees from across our member organisations and putting them into classrooms as real-life, relatable tech role models. We do lots of those things.

One of our team members, a head of education, went into a school—it is a free schools programme—and delivered a Tech We Can lesson to a group of eight year-olds. At the start, they said, “Can you draw somebody who you think looks like a worker in tech?” It could be anybody. A girl drew a white, middle-aged man, in her words “overweight, unsociable, in a basement, multiple screens, hacking into the Pentagon”. Where does this come from? She is eight. Almost by osmosis, those stereotypes have set in.

The team delivered a series of two lessons with them. At the end of it, they repeated the exercise and she drew herself with her natural hair and a cape. We are changing perceptions. She was working for Facebook. She had connected the fact that you did not have to be good at or interested in STEM subjects to pursue a technology or a STEM career, and she drew herself, connecting her language abilities with a role in STEM.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie: Not hacking into the Pentagon?

Dr Claire Thorne: Absolutely. Tech for good.

Q53 **Lord Storey:** Nick used the expression “high-quality” work experience. Some of you have already answered this question, but what, in bullet points, would be the hallmarks of “high-quality” work experience?

Dr Claire Thorne: It would be a variety of mediums, not just placement into industry; early intervention; sustained interaction; careers advisers and teachers who have undergone quality, meaningful CPD, so they understand what the workplace of today and tomorrow might look like.

Nick Chambers: I would say start early with inspirational events, and a range of activities, some of which are personalised, that vary over time. More is more: the more interactions you have, the more likely you are to know what you want to do. It is a range of things. Information, advising and guidance are very important, and we are missing that. It is more about the experience of work than about work experience.

Oli de Botton: I agree. For me, it is the equivalent of two weeks that some people are talking about. We have to reimagine that. That is almost 60 hours of learning. If you said to your head of maths, "What are you going to do for 60 hours?" they would treat it very seriously. There would be objectives set in advance, assessment throughout, and reflection after, and it would be done in bite-size chunks, not in a deep dive, so that the young person can engage with the world of work, come back to school, reflect on it and engage again. There is real merit in thinking about accrediting that so that it has value to employers and to young people, and we are seeing some of that across the country.

Nick Brook: I have five points. At Speakers for Schools, our principles of what great work experience looks like include being part of a coherent package of support so that there is a before, during and after to ensure that those experiences translate into tangible benefits. It would be a minimum of five days at once, or split, in person or hybrid. It would be supported and structured—we do not leave these things to chance—with each day detailed with a project, a buddy and a timetable. It would have recognition of success and a connection back to learning, and it would, of course, be compliant, safe and accessible to all.

Lord Storey: None of you has mentioned schools themselves. Invariably, there is a cost in time and expertise. In my experience, it is the member of staff who has the free time to do it but is not necessarily qualified to do it. They run around desperately trying to find employers to put the students into that place of work.

Q54 **Baroness Evans of Bowes Park:** I have a couple of questions. First, from your experiences, what are the biggest obstacles that schools face when trying to engage with employers? What do they continually butt up against? I would be interested to know if you all have similar experiences and say the same sorts of things. On the positive side, what kind of best practice, good engagement, can happen? Can you give us some examples? So there is the negative: what are the issues? And, on the plus side: what good practice could schools learn from those that do it very well and effectively?

Nick Brook: The main barriers to employer engagement are often bandwidths on the employer side as well, in that many companies and employers, particularly SMEs, can find it difficult to get started on work experience and are lacking either the time or the staff to devote to this. Also, the challenging economic climate that we are facing at present has probably made that somewhat more difficult and impacted on employers' capacity to engage with schools when that is needed.

Location is another issue. It is simply easier to arrange work experience if you are in a large urban area or a capital city. We know that it is very difficult in rural and coastal areas of the country to access the same level of work experience that we do in London or Manchester, for example. Expertise on both sides is an issue; just because you have been designated a career lead does not necessarily mean that you will have the skills or the confidence needed to reach out to employers and have the conversations that you need to be having about getting them to open their doors for you. That is where we come in at Speakers for Schools.

It is a habit that employers have fallen out of. I looked back at the stats from before the Wolf review when work experience was mandatory in all schools. Something like 400,000 employers took part in work experience at that time for over 525,000 young people. In the last decade, we have fallen out of that habit. There is a confidence issue here for employers too. It is not just habit; it is also, "What does this look like, and how would we go about doing it?" There is a learning need in that space.

Sometimes the barriers are the administrative burdens around this. We can make it simpler for schools and employers to engage in work experience. A lot of the administrative burdens are to do with safeguarding. It is, of course, incredibly important that we ensure that young people are kept safe in whatever they do, but sometimes the hoops that employers and schools are jumping through are, frankly, putting them off when time is such a constraint.

Oli de Botton: The barriers are well established. On a philosophical level, thinking about employer engagement, these two worlds sometimes talk past each other. You have employers saying, "Schools should teach skills. You've got to teach skills. We need them", and teachers saying, "Hang on a second. I've got to teach the curriculum". The engagement has to be mutually beneficial, respecting each other's place in the world and differences. That is an important responsibility. It cannot be one person telling the other.

I have three examples of best practice. One is making the existing curriculum come to life. Can we make it more relevant? A good example is Thomas Dudley, a manufacturing company in the West Midlands that works with its local academy trusts. It reinvents art and design in year 7 and other curriculum areas in year 8, infusing it with what it has in its manufacturing industry. It also takes staff out on Dream Big Day so that they can understand the industry.

A second example that, again, respects this mutual benefit is teachers as part of the careers conversation. When I started teaching, I had industry placements. I know that is something in the past, like the young apprenticeships. For our part, we have 1,000 teachers going out into industry this year. I had an amazing experience. I took five biology teachers with me to Oxford Biomedica, an amazing life sciences factory. We were shown round by the chief scientist but also by an apprentice, and the biology teachers were saying, "How can I think about this gene vectoring in my curriculum?" which is a solid part of the curriculum, as

well as, "I didn't realise apprentices were part of this". Those sorts of interactions can be very powerful.

The third example is when employers see this work not just as CSR but as HR—that they are outreaching for intake and for opportunities. We work with people like Morgan Sindall, a big construction company in East Anglia. Helen Clements, its social value manager, said to me, "I do the outreach. I've got a very clear pipeline. I speak to schools. Then I offer work experience, sometimes in partnership with others. Then I offer an internship and then I get an apprenticeship". That is a grown-up way of thinking about it: they are doing it for a business reason. She said, "I've already met 60% of my apprentices. I already know who they are". When you get that mutual benefit, where everyone is respecting everyone's role, it is more honest and it makes more impact.

Nick Chambers: Picking up on Nick's comment about the money, if we reflect back 10 years ago, we were spending £300 million on Connexions, which admittedly may not have been as effective as it could have been, but we have now reduced our spend to £95 million. We did a 15-month study, which Elnaz behind me helped with, which looked at the work experience that was going on in 2010. The Government and charities together were spending £121 million, and employers were spending £108 million. Some 10.5 million hours were provided by employers, and 1.45 million young people were benefiting.

A lot of that money has now gone. We have asked schools to take on the responsibility for careers but without any money. Some schools do it brilliantly. Your former school, St Paul's, where I worked, has an amazing suite of careers. If you go to St Paul's, you have amazing career guidance and information advice. Some state schools do it brilliantly, but it is a bit of a lottery. You have the responsibility, but no money.

Lord Baker of Dorking: When you were at St Paul's, did many of your students take design and technology?

Nick Chambers: I have talked about this. I was a design and technology teacher but not at St Paul's. Sorry, I am digressing.

Dr Claire Thorne: On obstacles in schools, we see fairly fixable, practical, logistical, obstacles. With regard to timetabling, for instance, it is much easier for us to reach more children directly in primary rather than secondary, because they are all in the same classroom, they do not move around in the day and they have the same teacher. There are little things like that.

There is also variation regionally. Some of the panellists have spoken about that. It is really piecemeal, really patchy. Employers absolutely get this for the future tech pipeline, for the recruitment reasons, but also for CSR and for doing good. They understand that they are facing a critical tech skills gap—we obviously work in tech—and that they need to invest over 10 or 20 years in order to inspire those children and work with them.

Social mobility and geography also come into this because, like I said, it is patchy. The opportunities and the school systems are not the same everywhere you go. We work with children who perhaps have never even been a few miles into their city centre. How on earth are they going to access and navigate work experience? There are those barriers as well—the societal, cultural and logistical.

- Q55 **The Chair:** Following on from the points you are making about the Wolf review and, Nick Chambers, your review of the decline in funding available for work experience, it was 10 years ago that the Wolf review came out with its recommendation that work experience should no longer be a statutory requirement for key stage 4. What has the impact of that decision been on work experience at this level?

Nick Brook: It has devastated the amount of work experience that takes place in schools. The decision was taken on the basis of a whole range of conflicting priorities at that point in a limited amount of resource and where it could best be spent. It was acknowledged that work experience had a value but tough decisions needed to be taken. There was a hope, I believe, that work experience would continue at a greater level than it actually has. Across the country now, 50% of young people have no access to work experience. The work experience in schools at the moment is largely co-ordinated through parental networks.

We cannot have a system that is reliant on who mum and dad know or where they might happen to work. As a consequence, a disproportionately high number of the 50% of young people who do not have access to work experience come from more disadvantaged backgrounds. There is an enormous social mobility issue here. That was probably not recognised 10 years ago when that decision was taken.

The Chair: So a devastating impact.

Dr Claire Thorne: One example of best practice is the career insight days that we run. We work with those in social mobility cold-spot areas, as Nick mentioned, who do not have a STEM role model in their immediate family; nobody in their immediate family has been to university. Their teachers and careers advisers work with us before that day to let us know that the children who have been selected are disengaged from STEM in school.

We bring them into our employer networks. We literally open the doors, and they spend an immersive day there. They get to see that maybe there is a prayer room, that there is a sense of belonging for them. They get to see and hear from a female CIO or CTO. They hear from HR and they understand the pathways. At the end of it, they all consider apprenticeship as a way forward. This is something we talk about on the day. Before the day, they cannot name one kind of role, one job title, in the tech world. At the end of it, they can see a path for themselves.

This is not rocket science. In the late 1980s/early 1990s, I participated in a take your daughter to work day because I happened to have a role

model in the domestic setting, and we are still talking about it. These experiences, whether in the workplace setting or in the school setting virtually, set you on your path and leave an impact.

Nick Chambers: The school leaving age was 15 when work experience started in 1963. That is when it was introduced. Wolf suggested that, actually, with the increase in the school leaving age, work experience was focused on the older children. All the academic evidence about the benefits of the experience of work, particularly some of the work experience, shows that the kids were more motivated and their attainment was raised, and it helped when it came to HE admissions, getting a job, clarifying career choices, and attitude and confidence. The attributes that we want from young people are as important as they were when Wolf did the review.

Oli de Botton: One of the challenges that the Wolf review put to the system was, "Can you make this valuable? Is this high impact for young people?" What we have now is careers education in its fullest sense: engaging early with a careers leader, with extended work experience, with information about apprenticeships. We have evidence about the impact that has on young people: the better young people do in work experience, the less likely they are to be NEET and the more likely they are to do an apprenticeship. We can prove that over three years now, and that it has double the impact in schools facing the most disadvantaged communities.

The evidence base is strong and solidifying about holistic careers education, so now we have to make the case for quality as well as coverage. When we think about work experience, we persuade people to get on board by saying, "This is high-quality learning, and young people will become more career-ready. We've got the basis. Now we've got to push further".

Lord Baker of Dorking: Following the question on the Wolf review, the Wolf review virtually destroyed technical education in our schools, and it was followed by a legislative Act saying that schools should not actually provide youth experience between 14 and 16. That is what that Act did. Have any of you asked for that Act to be repealed, because it virtually forbids 14 and 16 year-olds to have work experience?

Baroness Garden of Frognal: Which Act was it? Are we allowed to ask?

The Chair: The Education Act 1996.

Lord Baker of Dorking: I do not suppose any of you argued for that Act to be repealed. I assume the answer is no.

Nick Brook: No. We see pockets of really great practice taking place in schools today. I would not have made the connection between that Act and it forbidding work experience everywhere, because I can see that it is still happening, just not on the scale that we want.

Lord Baker of Dorking: Thank you.

Q56 Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I have a question from a remote participant, Lord Knight of Weymouth, which just shows how technologically advanced we are on this committee. Do employers have the capacity to offer work experience as well as T-level placements and apprenticeship placements? Is the burden of checks—I think one of you has talked about safeguarding—sustainable for them all? If not, is it more important that the curriculum contains applied work-related learning?

Oli de Botton: You can do both. More means more when it comes to careers-related learning. You can build the curriculum out. Take a skills-rich subject like maths: you can think about data handling and how that is used in industry. Ratio and proportion are incredibly important ideas in industry. We were lucky enough to work with Pinewood Studios when they were recreating Alice in Wonderland. We brought them into the academy's enterprise trust. Of course, ratio and proportion are crucial to the creation of that. You can bring the curriculum to life, and that is what we are focused on doing.

On employers' capacity, there is a chance that accrediting work experience—seeing it as almost a pre T-level, pre-apprenticeship—brings a coherence to the system. If an employer thinks, "I'm getting them involved early, at 14, because that's part of my talent pipeline", they know why they are engaging in it, and it is coherent with the system as is.

Dr Claire Thorne: The employers, the sectors and the companies we work with know why they are engaging. They totally get it. There is a sense of urgency. In the tech world, 10% of leaders are women, and 3% of women say they would choose to go into those roles, and yet we have this critical skills gap. We do not need to do the hard sell to employers. They are falling over themselves for girls and women in particular to pursue those careers.

Nick Chambers: We built Inspiring the Future as a matchmaking site using technology, and we have something like 11,500 schools signed up. We have had 3.5 million interactions between employers and we have made it really easy for employers to sign up for an hour a year and for schools to go on it. It is like online matchmaking or online jobbing. In fact, we have sold that technology to a number of Governments around the world, and that money is being used to support disadvantaged schools in the UK. We work a lot with the NAHT, where Nick was the deputy secretary and very supportive. If you work with the teaching profession and make it really easy for them and for employers, you can do some fantastic stuff.

Dr Claire Thorne: The tricky bit is in the middle, which is where we sit. It is that bridge between the employers and the schools. It is not necessarily extra work for the schools or the employers, but we need the investment, the support and the leadership.

Q57 Lord Watson of Invergowrie: Oli, you have just anticipated my question to some extent, because in answer to the previous question you

mentioned bringing the curriculum to life, which is essential across the board but particularly in this sense. The Gatsby benchmarks have a lot of the points that are highlighted. This question is specifically for the Careers & Enterprise Company, but looking at point number four, linking curriculum learning to careers, you would think it would be obvious. It is there. We have just been talking about encounters with employers and employees, which is number five.

What changes might reasonably be made to the current curriculum and the accountability system to support the delivery of effective careers education? What could be done to further embed these into the curriculum to make sure that what the Gatsby benchmarks intend is actually delivered and that schools can be held accountable for what they are imparting to their young people?

Oli de Botton: The Gatsby benchmarks present a vision of a holistic careers programme, which in my experience of schools is when it works best. Literacy, safeguarding and a cross-school agenda work when they are bought in, when teachers are part of it and their head teachers are on board. That is definitely what the Gatsby benchmarks say.

I would say two things about boosting them. One is when schools and colleges work together at local level through these careers hubs and working with partners like Nick, Nick and Claire, we are improving the benchmarks and for a very simple reason: employers on the ground are connected to their local communities for the long term and with engagement. I would encourage those local hubs, and others have said that they are effective.

On your wider question about the curriculum, I heard a previous debate in this committee on knowledge versus skills. The heads and trust CEOs I speak to get that the education system, the national curriculum, needs to be broad and balanced. It is the head, the heart, and the hands, as I used to call it. It is the academic, social, emotional, and technical hands-on skills.

There is an interesting question about civic leadership. Schools and employees can do this. When we come to careers education, skills are important. Young people need to understand the skills for their future. How do you do that in a rigorous way? One, exactly as you said, is bringing the curriculum to life—skills in subjects. Maths is a skills-rich subject. I noticed that even the Prime Minister started his speech on the Maths to 18 plan by saying, “You need to apply maths in the real world”. I could not agree more. It is vital.

Then there are the skills across subjects, such as speaking, which are relevant both academically and in the technical world. Employers say they want young people to speak and be articulate. Science teachers, when they are doing practical experiments, realise that young people need to negotiate with each other to get that right. In history, you need to discuss. In America, some of the top private schools—Phillips Exeter

Academy, for example, the Eton of America—spend their whole lesson speaking and with oracy. We have to do that.

Third is the skills-based pathway. The young people at Leigh UTC, which I visited, were fantastic. They were advocates for their learning, and they had a high-quality skills-based route, and we need to boost it.

It is about skills in the curriculum and across the curriculum and skills-based pathways. We are now trying to boost all those in the system.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie: If the system is not already producing that, does the curriculum have to be made a bit more flexible to allow more of that? Claire, you are nodding.

Dr Claire Thorne: Absolutely. We need to start thinking of careers education as education. This is education. This is preparing them for the future. The inspiration piece is missing from the curriculum, so what leads from the inspiration piece is where they see their place in the world: “what can they do?”, rather than “what can they be?”

We definitely need some curriculum reform. We need to ensure that the computer science curriculum, for instance, and others are fit for the future, perhaps working with industry to design what that might look like. We need it to be reviewed and updated in an agile way so that it does not take decades to introduce new content when the pace of technology and the pace of change in the workplace do not align with the pace of development of the curriculum. We need computer science to be offered in all UK schools up to GCSE and perhaps made mandatory. We need engagement and leadership from the DfE.

We see with the children we work with that the curriculum is broken and failing them. The cohorts of girls we bring into industry work day experiences are so disengaged from anything in STEM at 13 or 14 years old that they do not feel able to contribute, they have no confidence, they cannot participate and they do not see that STEM is important for their future in any sense. We have totally lost them, but we have also lost them much earlier on. I have a daughter and a son. My daughter is seven. She comes home from school and says, “Oh, maths is boring”. She can recite the first 40 elements of the periodic table. Maths is not boring. It is the way it is taught, and it is not taught by STEM-qualified teachers.

The inspiration needs to go back into the curriculum, and careers education needs to be part of the curriculum. For teachers, there need to be tech-focused, industry-relevant CPD experiences and resources. We cannot expect teachers to understand what it looks like to work in Deutsche Bank or Google when, more often than not, they are vocationally led and they have gone into that for life.

We could make better use of existing funds like the apprenticeship levy. We ran a pilot across our membership base last year. We said to some of our larger corporate members, “If you’ve got surplus levy”—we called it a

waste levy—"can you repurpose it please, and we'll redistribute it across our membership". In three weeks, over £1 million was repurposed, and it went to SMEs, charities and organisations like the British Science Association and Teach First to fully fund tech apprentices in those organisations. It does not have to be that way; we could ring-fence some of that levy and use it for teacher CPD.

There are lots of things we could do for careers education, such as early and sustained investment, and we need support to scale. There are questions for players like us who sit in the bridging part of the ecosystem. Who is responsible for funding, for leading on this, for mandating it? We need to scale what we are doing so that we can reach everybody. Our resources are free. We could be in every school. We have 400 champions from industry that are relatable and we could place them in every classroom. It is a question of scale.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie: The apprenticeship levy was a very interesting point.

Nick Brook: I am a bit more optimistic about the curriculum. I do not think the curriculum is broken, but it has a rigidity to it that is deeply unhelpful. When I talk to schools, it is the lack of space and ability to offer a curriculum that meets the needs of young people that is at the forefront of their minds. The EBacc has not been helpful to us at all in that. We have seen the take-up of creative, technical subjects drop as a consequence of all that.

The big challenge that we need to confront is how we create space in the school day to do more of the things that young people need to prepare them for the world of work. Oli, in his previous life as head teacher of his school, had some interesting solutions, such as dropping a GCSE to create space for a broader range of skills. Maybe he will say a bit about that later.

You asked specifically about the accountability framework. I worry somewhat that we pull the accountability lever too readily when we see something not happening in schools. I have come to the conclusion that if Ofsted is the answer, we are probably asking the wrong question. There is something here about pulling back on what is attempted to be measured through Ofsted—the notion that what gets measured, gets done. Rather than just load more into an already bloated inspection framework, we need to give schools the space to do the right thing. Change is needed in the accountability regime, but it is not about doing more of the same; it is about doing things differently.

Q58 **Lord Lexden:** Should a young person's work experience or engagement with employers be credited—for example, through a qualification or certificate? If so, how should this be done?

Oli de Botton: It is a really interesting idea, because you are trying to get currency for this work, make it rigorous and make it meaningful for

employers and young people in the system as we have it. I try to use the HPQ, which is half a GCSE at year 11 or year 10, and the EPQ in year 12.

There are challenges and strengths to that, but if we are going to think about accreditation and assessment, there are three things that we need to think about. One is the skills that we want young people to get out of experiences with employers. We have to be more demanding than saying to a head teacher, "There's 60 hours of learning, and the only thing we want to get out of it is young people thinking about the thing they don't want to do with their career", which is what some young people say.

The equivalent of two weeks is a lot of curriculum time, particularly as skills are quite hard to learn out of context. Why do we learn skills in context? Why do we have technical education? Because we learn them in context. Work experience can be a fantastic opportunity to learn those skills, so we need to focus on those and assess them. We already have some great frameworks; we already have apprenticeship standards higher up and T-level standards. It is a really interesting question. If you transpose some of those down, what might you think about for year 10 experiences of the workplace?

Secondly, we should learn from people who think that knowledge is very important and from what we have learned from them over the last 13 years. Think about what they call "spaced practice"—a little but often is potentially a better way of learning something than doing it all in one block. That is certainly true for maths and for languages. It is also true when we are thinking about experience with employers. It is why we did half a day a week. You go back into school thinking, "I didn't quite get that right. I wasn't on time", and you get that feedback. That helps, and it is in line with how we might assess other qualifications.

Finally, assessment is important because it is learning. You would assess English, maths and science, so we should assess this. Accreditation is interesting. We know that the NHS is already doing it, BAE Systems is doing it with the Engineering Development Trust, Ladybridge High School near Bolton is already doing it with the HPQ, and the Aspirations Academies Trust is already doing it. It is an interesting way of changing the dynamics and going towards real quality, real assessment, and eventually accreditation.

Nick Chambers: I come at it in a different way. In terms of the problem we are trying to solve in your investigation into ICT and green skills, the one thing we have not really talked about is economic needs and the projected labour market data. Where is BEIS in this debate? It is not involved. Where is the Government's overall career strategy? How does England compare with other countries in its overall approach to looking at where the jobs are and where the young people are, and that disconnect? What information is available for young people?

Before I came here, I did what most people do and said, "Let me find out what jobs are available in the green sector". I would challenge you to google and find out what information is available as a young person.

There is some information on the National Careers Service website. It comes up with five jobs, one of which is a Royal Marines Commando. That is true. Ten years ago, as Lord Baker will testify as he was at the launch, Ministers asked us to review what we should be doing with careers, and we recommended that the National Careers Service significantly improve the online information available for young people. That was in June 2013, so next month is 10 years since that recommendation was made, and I am not sure we have made much progress on it. Sorry to be controversial.

Dr Claire Thorne: On the points about the economic context, £60 billion is the projected lost annual income to the UK economy from the digital skills gap. This is absolutely huge.

On the issue of where you find green jobs, we have free, cross-curricular, Gatsby-benchmarked resources on tech for the planet, showcasing real-life, relatable, predominantly female role models. For us, accreditation is not the be all and end all. It might be a step in the right direction, and workplace experiences do not need to mean work experience. What is more important is scale and inclusivity and making sure that all the good stuff that is happening gets into every classroom; that we reach all children, all teachers.

From a social mobility perspective, we have concerns about what accreditation might mean, and that it could further disadvantage pupils from social mobility cold spots, as they have less access to opportunities. We see children who are disenfranchised and switched off from the STEM curriculum, but who have a passion for it because they are lucky enough to have a role model in their class setting or perhaps at home. More often, those who are at independent schools go away and create their own STEM clubs. They start peer-to-peer learning and teaching the other children around them. They take it into their own hands, basically. They create platforms for learning, such as Mission Encodeable, which was created by an 11 year-old girl teaching her peers how to code because the computer science curriculum was failing and not inspiring. There are these cases, but they are pockets; it is piecemeal, it is patchy. The big question is about how we scale and include everybody, and less about accreditation.

- Q59 **Lord Baker of Dorking:** You have such collective experience, which is very helpful to us. When you have a really good relationship between local companies and a school, are there many cases when local businesspeople join the school governing body? We recommended in the Youth Unemployment Committee that there should be one local businessperson on every primary and secondary school board, a proposal completely rejected by the Government. If there had been one businessperson in secondary schools over the last few years, they would not have allowed the decline of design technology and the virtual disappearance of cultural subjects. Are there many cases where they get as involved as that, or not?

Nick Brook: Yes, absolutely. Where schools have great, deep relationships with their local employers, invariably you see a link with the governing boards or trusts. We see that more often in more affluent areas, and I worry that that can further the gap between the experience of young people in more deprived areas where they do not seem to have been quite as able to draw in employers on to their boards or work with them in whatever capacity. The ones with certain advantage continue to pull away because of the range of opportunities available to them.

It is not all about accreditation or assessment, but there is something that we can do to help young people to tell the story of their experiences—whether that is work experience or volunteering, whatever the enrichment is—through what we called records of achievement in the past, passports to take them from school to their interviews for university, apprenticeships or employment. How can we recognise the experience and show young people the value they have gained from that, even if it does not come with a recognised or accredited qualification attached to it?

Nick Chambers: We run the Inspiring Governance programme that gets governors into schools, and we have so far matched 7,500 people as governors. I support the idea of getting more people from the world of business to be governors, but I do not think it would be reasonable to expect them to influence the curriculum necessarily, because that is driven by government policy.

Lord Storey: I have heard employers say, “Look, you want us to provide people to govern bodies of schools. You want us to provide work experience. Do you know what? We’re trying to make a success of this business”. Is that a fair comment?

Nick Brook: There needs to be a clarity in the message. A question earlier was whether it should be work experience, T-levels or apprenticeships. What exactly do you want an employer to do? There needs to be, and there can be, clarity in recognising that it is not one or the other, it can be all of them, and there can be a journey that an employer goes on here. Just as schools can be overwhelmed with good intent, so can employers. If all we do is line up with slightly different asks, there could be a tendency to say, “We’ll go away and come back when you’ve worked out the answer”. I hear your concern.

Nick Chambers: If you are going to do work experience, you have to take it seriously and do it well, and the Government have to put some proper money into it; otherwise, you end up with the advantaged getting more advantage. Our bit is just trying to get people from an area to volunteer. We can now do it virtually, so you need as long as we have been in front of this committee. That would be the demand on people for a whole year, saying, “Would you be available to talk to children?”

We have around 10,000 employers supporting us. We tried to make it very easy for employers and teachers to sign up online, but then you need the more intensive things, which need more time and more

resource. It is that variety of things, from the one hour a year through to the more intensive, more engaged things, which is where the money is needed.

Q60 The Chair: I have a question about the MBacc, which Andy Burnham, mayor of the Greater Manchester region, has come up with. I will ask for your initial reactions to his ideas for a framework alternative to the EBacc which he thinks would be helpful in getting people into good jobs in their local area. Have you had a chance to give any thought to what Andy Burnham has proposed today?

Nick Brook: I have not, but local solutions need to be within a national framework, and we have to avoid something that works for one locality, limiting the opportunities for young people to that area. It needs to be recognised more broadly, but the intent behind it is absolutely sound.

Oli de Botton: I have not seen the details but, in principle, parity of esteem, which we have tried for since 1888, or before, is critical, because young people are animated by different things and we need brilliant pathways for all of them. What is interesting in Manchester is that, hopefully, they will be able to encourage employers, and he is working with us to offer more apprenticeships and degree apprentices, et cetera, to make those tech routes.

Nick Chambers: I only read the headline, so I will not comment.

Dr Claire Thorne: It shows that we are talking about it. There is leadership there. It might be regional, but there is leadership on what is needed and a potential solution, so I welcome that.

I come back to the question about the role of governors. I am a former governor myself. We would probably lean less towards that and more towards dedicated tech leads in all schools. This could be somebody like me. It could be one of our champions who we train and place in schools for free. It could be matching them with the industry that is in their local area. You come across a lot of schools that have sports partnerships. I was looking at a state school for my daughter the other day, and Chelsea Football Club was there delivering PE lessons. Why do we not have industry helping to deliver some of the content for formal partnerships? We also see primary schools hosting their own career fairs. This stuff is happening, but it is just not happening everywhere.

We do not necessarily need more funding for some of those things. Across the tech world, for instance, there are tech awards almost every week. There are tech conferences such as CogX, WIRED, and London Tech Week in a few weeks, where everybody in industry will be in one place. Why is that not open to children and teachers for CPD? We should be making those spaces available. That would be career inspiration done. They are there.

That is the first step. It does not necessarily need more money from DfE either. We work really closely with Education Scotland, which promotes our stuff—obviously it is all free; we are an independent charity—helps us

to connect with others and helps us to get into schools. The DfE does not have an equivalent digital outreach team.

The Chair: Thank you all very much for your time. We are very grateful for your contributions.