

CHAPTER 4: WORK EXPERIENCE OFF SCHOOL PREMISES: CASE STUDIES

In this chapter, case studies will be presented of work experience which involves students in community or voluntary services or on-the-job experience in industry or business enterprises. Examples will be drawn from the Caribbean, Australia and England.

In presenting these case studies, the context will be briefly highlighted, followed by an elucidation of the objectives of the particular programme. The structure and organisation of the programme will be then described. Evaluations of the programmes are also given, in some cases drawing on several sources.

The last part of the chapter takes the form of an overview based on the case studies and data from the questionnaire on work experience. It gives a general picture of practices in Commonwealth countries in relation to the approach to work experience; the patterns of organisation; what say students have in their work experience placements; whether or not they are paid for work done; and the sort of problems they encounter.

Jamaica's Work Experience Programme

Context

Although in the colonial era there was an awareness of the need to link education more closely with production, in the 1970s politicians and educators were still insisting that the Jamaican education system did not reflect a realistic balance between the needs of economic development and the actual training provided. The Prime Minister at the time, for example, spoke of the need to 'train a population that can find employment and economic satisfaction' - a task which necessitated 'a radical restructuring of the training content of the system.'⁽¹⁾

This restructuring was brought about in some measure in 1974 when the government extended junior secondary education by two years with the introduction of the grade 10-11 programme. This is practical and vocational in orientation and geared to equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary for coping with the realities of everyday living. An integral part of this further training is the Work Experience Programme (WEP).

Objectives of the WEP

The WEP releases grade 11 students between 16-17 years of age from school for approximately 21 days to get experience in the world of work. These

students are placed in work stations or agencies in the public and private sectors to sample a realistic employment situation linked as closely as possible to their vocational areas of study.

The objectives of the WEP are identified as follows:

- (a) To create in the student a positive self-concept, and a positive attitude toward others, school and work by providing a meaningful and relevant learning experience.
- (b) To foster in the student an understanding of the importance of developing acceptable work habits, good grooming and the need for self discipline.
- (c) To provide practical experience in a work setting that enables the student to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes for employment.
- (d) To facilitate the transition between school and employment by enabling the student to continue school and at the same time receive supervised training in a real work situation.
- (e) To enhance greater student awareness of the complexities and importance of inter-personal relationships on the job.
- (f) To enable the student to enter the world of work with an increased measure of competence.
- (g) To provide the student with increased opportunities to enter an occupation related to his/her vocational areas of study.
- (h) To bridge the gaps between the school and the working community.(2)

Structure and organisation of the WEP

Each school participating in the WEP has at least one work experience teacher appointed to administer the programme in terms of locating work stations, liaising with employers, placing students for work experience and supervising them while they are at their work stations. Larger schools may have two work experience teachers.

While students are on work experience, they come under the supervision of the employer or the work station supervisor. The work experience teacher is expected to monitor the students' activities, performance and progress at the work stations by making at least one visit a week to the work stations and writing up a final report. In selecting a work station, the work experience teacher has to consider:

- (a) Whether it is located near the school or is at least accessible by available transportation at a reasonable cost.
- (b) Whether the students' work experience may lead to permanent employment.
- (c) Whether the work station offers opportunities for meaningful and relevant work experience and for developing the students' abilities.

Students are given pre-work experience orientation by guidance counsellors who are responsible for the dissemination of career information and for the development of career awareness on the part of the students. Counsellors are expected to help ensure that students' choices of vocational areas are sound. Proper guidance on their part should help alleviate or perhaps eliminate the problems caused by students being placed in vocational areas in which they have no interest.

Evaluation

Studies of Jamaica's work experience programme (3) have revealed that it helps students to develop good work habits, gives them experience of the working world, and succeeds in training many students in useful skills. However, it falls short in terms of enabling students to find out if they have made the correct vocational choices because there are insufficient workplaces to enable students to sample a variety of jobs.

There are a number of constraints on the achievements of objectives set for the WEP. Many students complained of having to do menial tasks like cleaning and sweeping up offices or factories instead of getting on with the job in which they were supposed to be getting experience. Furthermore, the work stations to which some of them were attached did not enable them to work in areas related to their vocational training. Inadequate supervision at the work station did not facilitate students in getting full benefit from their work experience. In rural Jamaica, the greatest difficulty that students on work experience had was financial embarrassment. Since they were not paid while doing work experience, they had difficulty in finding money to buy lunch or pay the cost of transportation to work. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that their work stations were located several miles from their homes.

One of the WEP objectives is that of facilitating entry to an occupation related to the students' area of vocational choice. But to what extent do students select careers related to their area of vocational training? One study(4) has shown that the majority of students in all vocational areas except agriculture opted for careers in their vocational areas (see Table 3). Agriculture is viewed by secondary level students and their teachers as a course for low achievers, and most agriculture students seek white collar jobs in agriculture or choose careers unrelated to agriculture.(5)

Obtaining employment in rural areas is also problematic. Of a random sample of 48 grade 11 school leavers in the 1979-80 academic year, for example, only 14 had obtained employment in their vocational areas (Mattis 1981). Drawing on the same study, Table 4 shows the extent to which employers believed that the schools had prepared students in their vocational areas and in desirable work habits. Their views on the students' leadership qualities and the extent to which they were qualified for ready employment are also shown.

The majority of employers felt that the students were lacking in the skill competence necessary for ready employment - a view supported by 86% of their vocational teachers. Both employers and vocational teachers, however, felt that the students had developed the sorts of behaviours (punctuality, co-operation, willingness to take orders etc), which were necessary at the workplace. Employers in the garment industry, large electrical firms and some other areas of business, considered that

TABLE 3: Percentage distribution of Grade 11 Students' Job Aspirations in relation to their area of vocational training (New Secondary Schools in Jamaica)

NO. OF STUDENTS	VOCATIONAL AREAS	RELATED JOB ASPIRATIONS		UNRELATED JOB ASPIRATIONS	
		FREQUENCY	%	FREQUENCY	%
10	Agriculture	4	40	6	60
6	Business Education	5	83	1	17
9	Carpentry	8	89	1	11
9	Child Care	6	67	3	33
9	Cookery & Nutrition	7	78	2	22
7	Electrical Installation	7	100	-	0
10	Textiles & Clothing	8	80	2	20
60	TOTAL	45	75%	15	25%

TABLE 4: Frequency and Percentage of Positive and Negative Responses of Jamaican Employers in relation to Grade 11 Students' Preparedness for Employment

CHARACTERISTICS FOR EMPLOYMENT	YES		NO	
	F	(N = 14) %	F	%
Skill Competence	4	29	10	71
Favourable work behaviour	9	64	5	36
Qualification for a job	7	43	8	57
Leadership qualities	7	50	7	50

students were inadequately prepared because most of them were unable to operate modern industrial equipment. Interestingly too, most employers revealed that they only considered students to be qualified for a job if they possessed passes at GCE 'O' level - a qualification for which they were not being prepared. Reasons given by vocational subject teachers why students could not be adequately prepared for ready employment included lack of finance, insufficient supply of materials and equipment, their own inadequacies in preparing students in the vocational areas, lack of time in the WEP and the outdatedness of the machines and other equipment in the schools.

Guyana's Work-Study Programme

Context

The inadequacy of labour statistics makes it difficult to quantify the level of unemployment amongst Guyanese youth between the ages of 14-19, but Table 5 can be used as a crude indication. The number of young people leaving schools with skills for employment are very few (less than 5% in 1982-3). At the same time, there is a high level of unemployment - as much as 29% in 1982-3. 'The extent of youth unemployment in Guyana would be negligible if attitudes of many young people were attuned to accepting the employment opportunities available.'⁽⁶⁾ It appears that instead of accepting the opportunities available, many young people seek ways of emigrating.

TABLE 5: Classification of School Leavers in Guyana, 1982-83

CATEGORIES	1982-83
<u>For Employment:</u>	
a. Skilled	976
b. Unskilled	3,488
Emigrated	1,401
Unemployed	5,802
Died	40
Cannot be accounted for	8,689
TOTAL SCHOOL LEAVERS	20,272

SOURCE: Planning & Research Unit, Ministry of Education, 1985

The Guyanese government, however, has made concerted efforts to tackle the problem of employment by creating stronger links between the world of work and the school. The establishment of the community high school programme, for example, was directed towards this end. This programme aims at providing academic and pre-vocational training for a range of occupational skills necessary for gainful employment. The work-study programme initiated in two pilot community high schools underscores this objective. This programme seeks to 'link the world of study with the world of work with a circular approach which interacts with school activities and on-the-job experience. This interaction should help the student to acquire skills, knowledge and desirable attitudes while performing tasks in real life situations, thus ensuring an easier transition to the world of work.'(7)

Objectives of Work-Study

Work-study is a co-operative undertaking by which students in their ultimate or penultimate year in community high schools and multilateral schools are attached for specific periods to an industry or business enterprise. There is also a special programme for students who have graduated from school a year and under.

The objectives of work-study are:

- (a) To provide a smooth transition from school to the work environment for the student.
- (b) To enable students to relate their classroom activity to those conducted in the work environment, thereby narrowing the gap between the theoretical and practical aspects of work.
- (c) To provide students with the opportunity to test their interest in and suitability for the occupation(s) they experience.
- (d) To inculcate in students the behaviours desirable in a work setting (e.g. respect for authority, working well with fellow workers, being punctual).
- (e) To give the school and industry/commerce an opportunity to understand how each other functions, thereby facilitating a closer co-ordination of the programmes of these two agencies.(8)

Structure and Organisation of Work-Study

Before students go out on work-study attachments, representatives of the Work-Study Unit in the Ministry of Education meet with representatives of the business enterprise or industry. They identify areas of involvement, time for attendance and duration of attachment, and discuss general work conditions. A programme of work is drawn up which becomes a kind of syllabus to be followed by trainers, students and teachers. With the assistance of specialist and guidance teachers, the principal of the school identifies students for the various placements. An application form for work-study (Appendix C) and a National Insurance form has to be completed by each student. An orientation session is then held to outline the objectives of the programme and individual responsibilities. This

Work-study attachments are for varying periods. Some are arranged for 4-8 weeks on a full time or block period basis. Others are organised for between 6-12 weeks on a day release basis with a maximum of two days a week. Still others are for between 3-6 months (one day a week). They take place at various times throughout the school year. Day release attachments, for example, take place during term time, while 8-12 week block period attachments usually occur during August. Other block periods are arranged during the Christmas and Easter vacations.

While on a work-study attachment, regular checks are made by the work-study officer and teachers who evaluate the students' work activities using prescribed forms. A review is made at the mid-way point of the attachment. At the end of the attachment, the work-study officer organises a de-briefing session attended by students, parents/guardians, representatives of management, and representatives of the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture. Its primary purpose is to identify attitudes acquired, other outcomes, and the strengths and weaknesses of the particular attachment.

Head teachers and pre-vocational education teachers play an important role in the work-study programme. They are looked on as 'the source of motivation, leadership by example and the agent to ensure that the practical work is really a complement of the students' academic work.'⁽⁹⁾ They also assist in preparing students for the work environment by giving them an understanding of what a particular career entails, of the qualifications needed to secure a particular job, the wages or salary appropriate for a particular job, and the scope for promotional opportunities. In addition, they have to ensure that parents understand and accept the importance of the programme, and they are required to maintain records of the students' practical performance and keep them informed of their levels of achievement.

Evaluation

A follow-up study of the first set of graduates of the Beterverwagting Community High School who had done work-study attachments revealed the following:

- (a) Almost as many graduates were in full-time employment as were unemployed.
- (b) Some employers did not consider the community high school diploma as adequate certification for a job.
- (c) Over 93% of the graduates had high job satisfaction.
- (d) Over 80% of the employers considered that the graduates were competent, willing and displayed enthusiasm on the job.
- (e) Students in certain vocational areas (e.g. industrial arts) found jobs related to skills learnt in vocational training, but others in such areas as home economics and agriculture had jobs unrelated to their area of vocational training.⁽¹⁰⁾

Through its own on-going assessment, the Ministry of Education, Social Development and Culture has identified the following ways in which problems encountered in the work-study programme can be solved.

- (a) The development of an adequate mechanism to maintain the effectiveness of both work-study education and industrial arts programmes.
- (b) The need to involve more local craftsmen and technicians in the teaching of skills within the school system in order to minimise the lack of teachers with the technical competence for vocational skills training.
- (c) The need to win greater levels of acceptance of graduates by institutions and employers.
- (d) Proper placement of graduates and the development of ways to channel their inventiveness toward the creation of employment for themselves.(11)

Work Experience in Australian Secondary Schools

Context

High unemployment among Australian youth since 1974 has triggered a concern about the transition from school to work and stimulated state governments to introduce measures to deal with the situation. There has been an upsurge in careers education, careers guidance and other activities directly or indirectly related to improving young people's chances to enter the world of work and equip them better for it. To this end, work experience programmes are widely used in Australia.

Most work experience programmes in Australian secondary schools involve the placement of students in work stations for periods of between five to 15 days. Normally, students are involved in clerical work, technical, trades, sales or unskilled work in offices, workshops, stores and small factories. In some schools the programme is largely a separate entity; in others it is integrated with the curriculum. Thus, a work experience can provide an opportunity for study of topics of importance in the regular maths, science or social studies curricula. In Western Australia, for example, science teachers are given guidance on how work experience can be used to study various aspects of science.(12) In other parts of Australia, work experience may be one aspect of a more broadly based curriculum within the area of transition education. Cole(13) gives an example of this in a South Australian high school which has a 'transition class' consisting of a six-week 'crash course' for year 10 students leaving school during the year. Many of these students are designated 'low achievers'. They are withdrawn from their normal classes and admitted to the transition class on a full-time basis. The course content includes career guidance, work experience, communication skills, basic maths, home management/maintenance, financial management, motor maintenance, and typing. Generally speaking, 'the number of schools that have work experience programmes which are well integrated with the regular core curriculum or even with some specialised curriculum separate from transition education programs remains quite small.'(14)

Objectives of Work Experience Programmes

Cole(15) identifies the following as the objectives most commonly described by work experience co-ordinators when reporting on their programmes:

- (a) To break down the barriers between school and work.
- (b) To give students knowledge of a variety of employment fields.
- (c) To help students gain a greater knowledge of themselves, thereby enabling them to make a more realistic assessment of their abilities.
- (d) To provide new aspirations for the less motivated.
- (e) To heighten awareness of the role education plays in future vocational pursuits.
- (f) To involve both parents and employers in the school to work transition.

Structure and Organisation of Work Experience

In Tasmania and Western Australia, support for local school work experience programmes is provided at the state level. The Tasmanian schools work through a central co-ordinating body, the Work Experience Advisory Committee, and a State Co-ordinator. A calendar of work experience, prepared on information submitted by state and independent schools, enables the timing of programmes to be co-ordinated. An advantage of this arrangement is that centrally collated computer based information becomes available to the schools. They can get all pertinent data on work experience programmes and the types of jobs available.

The work experience programmes in government senior high schools in Western Australia are conducted by a youth education officer. This officer has at his/her disposal the facilities and resources of the Youth Education Branch of the Education Department of Western Australia as well as assistance from three state-level work experience co-ordinators. Curriculum development and materials production, the conduct of a state-wide advisory service, and the organisation of an in-service teacher development programme are the main activities of these co-ordinators. They also edit a newsletter on work experience and maintain a directory of work experience placements. The youth education officer is usually a full-time teacher attached to a school to work in both the school and the community. The conduct of personal development courses, outdoor education activities, recreational programmes, community youth work, counselling for recent school leavers, and employment-oriented transition education including work experience, career education and factory visits, constitute the major tasks of the youth education officer.

In the Tasmanian state high schools the work experience co-ordinator is typically a member of the regular teaching staff. The position is held for a period of two to three years, and is rotated among staff members as it is not a promotional post.

Individual schools provide a variety of resources which contribute to the operation of their work experience programmes. These include part of the time of a typist, office space, stationery, postage and telephone facilities.

Schools differ in their distribution of the days on placement and the number of students sent on work experience at any one time. Some operate a 'block release' whereby a complete class of students is away at the same time and normal lessons are suspended. Others operate a 'rolling' programme with only a few students being away at one time and normal lessons continue.

Straton and Murray(16) present case studies of the work experience programmes of four Australian high schools which show the different ways in which these programmes are organised. One school operated a 'rolling' WEP which involved the job placement of a small number of year 10 students each week, usually for a two-week period, while the remaining students continued their normal school work. The other three schools operated their WEP on a 'block release' basis. At one, all the students in Year 10 were away from school during the same one-week period. At another, the classes were split into two separate blocks with each block doing work experience at different times during the second term. In the fourth, the WEP was organised in two separate blocks with the students participating for one week in either the first or second term.

The type and amount of preparation for work experience differed between the four case study schools. At one school, the youth education officer was allotted four periods of English class time in which to prepare students for work experience. At another, ten periods of social studies class time were made available to the programme co-ordinator to conduct a career education course as preparation for work experience. At the third school, the WEP formed part of a wider course which examined the social science aspects of work and career planning. Students were encouraged to explore relationships between their interests, abilities and possible career choices, and to examine practical aspects of the transition from school to work including such things as writing letters of application for work and the expectations of employers in selection interviews. At the fourth school, the students were briefed on their work experience about a week before it began. The work experience co-ordinator spoke about the behaviour expected of them and their obligations to the school. They were also shown films on industrial safety and were given written information on dress, work times and safety precautions at the workplace.

During their work experience, students are asked to keep a diary in which they record details of their placement, their employer and an interview held prior to work experience, and answer questions about the organisation of work, safety and workers' compensation, payment, unions, and their own opinions about work in that field. After completing their work experience, the students are expected to record information about the school subjects and the skills required for that type of work. In this 'work experience diary' produced by the Education Department of Western Australia, employers are also requested to complete an evaluation of the students' performance.

Evaluation

An assessment of work experience in terms of their outcomes for students revealed the following:

- (a) Work experience programmes have some influence on students in areas which are judged to be related to their employability. For example, after going on work experience, students indicated an awareness of several aspects of work which had been little in evidence beforehand (e.g. the notion of personal responsibility at work, the importance of employer-employee relationships). Straton and Murray conclude that the students 'have a more mature view of work and appropriate work related behaviour after work experience.' (17)
- (b) Work experience assists students to gain a better understanding of the process of making a career choice and helps them in making a decision about what particular career to pursue.
- (c) Some students think that work experience contributes to their social development by building up their self-confidence and self-esteem.

With respect to the educational aspects of work experience, Straton and Murray's study revealed the following:

- (a) Teachers in the four case study schools were generally supportive of their school's WEP. Some questioned the value of the WEP for more able students given the time lost from their academic studies.
- (b) Most teachers felt that one or two weeks was an appropriate length for work experience. Many saw the need for two periods, the first coming early enough to enable students to make subject changes as a result of the experience.
- (c) In the schools that operated the 'block release' WEP, a substantial proportion of the teachers visited the students at their work stations. Improved teacher-student relationships, a fuller appreciation of students' abilities and personality, and a better understanding of the world of work by the teachers leading to increased relevance in their teaching, were among the benefits which resulted from such visits.
- (d) In the school that operated a 'rolling' WEP, all the students were visited by the work experience co-ordinator only. Since the teachers were not given release from their normal duties, the benefits from involvement as noted in (c) were lost. The work experience co-ordinator, however, was able to build up good relationships with employers over the years.
- (e) A number of teachers indicated that certain units in their syllabus were relevant to work experience, but a closer co-operation between teachers and the work experience co-ordinator was essential if integration of work experience with the regular school curriculum was to take place.
- (f) Although an adequate amount of time was devoted to the preparation of the students in most schools, 'little was done in terms

of co-ordinated, systematic and personally and educationally significant follow-up to their work experience.'(18)

(g) Where a comprehensive transition education programme is operating in a school, students are more likely to receive a substantial amount of useful information about jobs and careers. This could help in overcoming job stereotyping in the occupational preferences of students both by gender and by family occupational status.

In terms of employers and work experience placements, the following emerged from the study by Straton and Murray:

(a) Procedures for informing employers of the purposes of the schools' work experience programmes, what was expected of them, including their evaluation of students at the workplace often proved ineffective.

(b) Employers generally took a narrow view of work experience seeing it largely as job sampling. Thus they tended to see their role as that of helping students to learn about a particular job.

(c) A small percentage of employers said they used the student as an extra staff member or voluntary worker at busy times or as cheap labour.

(d) In general, students were able to gain direct experience of the type of work undertaken at their workplace, but some students were reduced to doing the more menial tasks (e.g. cleaning up and running errands).

(e) Students reported that they had learnt a great deal about the job itself, the working conditions and the kinds of skills and abilities needed for the particular job. However, they felt that they had learnt little about the industrial or social aspects of work including how unions operate, the effects of modern technology, unemployment and the relative positions of men and women in a particular occupation.

School-based Work Experience Programmes in Britain

Context

Thousands of jobs have disappeared in the whirlpool of economic changes that have beset European countries, setting adrift large numbers of school leavers who languish in the unemployment queues. Thus 'for the first time, the young generation of Europe find the doors of a working career closed, because of a mismatch of their education and training with the skill needs of the new and emerging technologies.'(19) Jobs in the manufacturing sector have declined, and the expanding service sector has not generated sufficient employment to absorb the newcomers on the labour market. Whereas the importance of investments designed to create more jobs is acknowledged, together with the fact that steady economic growth is the only way to reduce the levels of unemployment, it is also recognised that policies focused on job creation should be supported by co-ordinated labour market, education and training policies:

It is essential to strengthen the existing weak links between school and work and industry, through accurate vocational guidance and counselling services at all states of education....(20)

The use of work experience programmes is one way in which European countries have sought to strengthen the weak links between school and work.

Any student in England and Wales who is in the last year of compulsory schooling is eligible to go on work experience. In effect this age group is from 15 to 19. Over a third of secondary schools in England and Wales(21) run work-experience schemes for their students. Thus some 15% of young people leaving school at age 16 have done work experience. With the growth of vocational courses which require a period of industrial experience, increasing numbers of 16-19 year olds are participating in work experience programmes. All the courses in the Technical Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), involving some 14 Local Education Authorities, place a strong emphasis on work experience.

Walton,(22) from a sample of 4,284 British secondary schools, found that 33% of the pupils participated in work experience programmes. Seventy three of the areas sampled organise these programmes on a block release basis; 53 utilised a day release scheme (i.e. half-day to three days a week); while 100 utilised both block and day release.

Objectives of WEP

The Trade Union Council's guidelines on work experience for school pupils(23) stress the importance of seeing work experience as one of the most effective ways of giving young people an understanding of industrial life. A case study written by a teacher who co-ordinated the work experience programme in her school emphasised that 'the main objective is not to place the pupils in situations which could be regarded as vocational training, but to ensure that they see a variety of activities in order to gain an understanding of the way of life involved in several occupations.'(24)

Watts(25) categorises the objectives of WEP in British schools as follows:

- (a) Motivational (e.g. 'to enable aspects of the school's curriculum to become more meaningful and significant to the young person').
- (b) Social-educational (e.g. 'to develop skills in applying for a job').
- (c) Vocational (e.g. 'to orientate young people to the differences between school and work'; to broaden their knowledge of the range of occupations that could be chosen').
- (d) Anticipatory (e.g. 'to enable the young to experience some of the stress and strains of work so they know what to expect').

(e) Placing (e.g. 'to enable the young to get permanent jobs').

(f) Custodial (e.g. 'to provide an alternative for truants').

Most studies on work experience in British schools stress that the school-based WEP is not geared to vocational training. Vocational training, however, is the emphasis of the Manpower Services Commission's Youth Training Scheme (YTS) which offers every 16-year-old school leaver a one-year traineeship part of which involves work experience on employers' premises. School-based work experience is primarily an educational activity and may stress the need to make the experience an integral part of the broader curriculum. For example, it has been advocated that teachers should use work experience 'to help develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes that form part of their subject.'(26)

Structure and Organisation of WEP

There is considerable variation in the way in which individual schools structure and organise their work experience programmes. Typically, in schools that have their own schemes,(27) the WEP is conducted by one or two teachers who have the task of canvassing new employers, and informing all employers of the objectives of work experience, students' eligibility, hours of work, safety and insurance needs. They also have to seek parental consent and interview students for placements as well as give them guidance on acceptable behaviour at the workplace. They also have to visit every student while on work experience, check on students' and employers' report forms on completion of placements and follow up on any queries from the students, their parents or the employers.

Length of placements also vary. Some schools operate a block system for one week in which all participating students do work experience in the same week. Others operate a half-day placement over a period of about nine months. Project Trident, however, insists on placements for a continuous period of three weeks:

We believe that a block period of three weeks is the minimum needed for a young person of this age to settle into a strange environment, make proper working relationships with fellow workers and supervisors, learn to do a worthwhile job adequately, accept the routines and disciplines of the workplace, and enjoy a full sense of achievement in being a productive and responsible member of a working group.(28)

With the increasing numbers of young people participating in work experience programmes, competition for placements poses a problem. One way of alleviating this is through a system of all-year allocation of places which enables one-week experience placement to be used by different schools throughout the year. Usually this involves some central organisation to co-ordinate planning by individual schools. Industrial liaison officers fill this role, making arrangements with industrial, commercial and service employers for programmed schemes. Through discussion, they reach agreement with the providers on the content, administrative arrangements, timing, number of pupils, working conditions etc. Once a full programme of schemes has been arrived at for the term or year, the industrial liaison officers distribute the work experience

opportunities as equitably as possible between the schools within their Local Education Authority. In this they are assisted by careers officers who have the responsibility to make the necessary contacts with the schools. Every effort is made to ensure that the wishes of each school are reflected as fully as possible in the sharing of places. Each school has the task of selecting suitable students for each scheme, and for giving them adequate preparation for work experience.

While on work experience, 'a visit by an interested teacher is encouraged'(29) and each student reports the experience in a pupil report. A debriefing session on return to school usually involves a sharing of experience with others in the class, drawing on information in pupil reports. The pupil reports are eventually returned to the industrial liaison officer who uses the information in reviewing the particular area of work experience. Employers reports are used likewise. These are passed, via the appropriate careers officers, to the schools for subsequent discussion with the students.

Evaluation

In assessing how young people view work experience, Watts drew on student essays and taped interviews made available by Project Trident. That work experience had some motivational effect on the youngsters was evident. The necessity to work hard to obtain qualifications that employers looked for in applicants for a job was evident in the following comment made by one student:

When we went back to school I was more conscious of the fact that if I didn't do well in my exams I just wouldn't get anywhere when I went into the working field. Even to have any kind of job some qualifications are always needed....(30)

Students also observed how work experience developed their self-confidence, improved their communication with people of different ages, and made them conscious of how hard people have to work to make a living. Some reported 'feeling more adult' as a result of the experience, and learning to rely more on themselves.

Walton's study(31) revealed that 80% of the students reported having enjoyed work experience with 61% underscoring that the purpose of work experience was predominantly educational and not geared for recruitment for employment. Some 40% of these youngsters felt that work experience had a definite effect on their career choice. Neglect of safety instructions in the school and at the workplace, insufficient visits by teachers while on work experience were weaknesses identified by these students. In the study by Hitchcock,(32) loss of good employers due to poor attendance at work by students, the cost of travel if the school does not reimburse fares, the difficulty of providing realistic work experience for the brighter students, and the heavy workload of the teacher responsible for the work experience programme, were among the weaknesses of the WEP.

What constitutes an adequate length of work experience placement remains a debatable issue, despite Project Trident's insistence on three weeks. Following an evaluation of its WEP, Redborne Upper School recommended an extension from one to two weeks placement (Fitzgerald et al 1984). There

is a danger, it is argued, that if students are required to participate in multiple work experience placements in a short space of time, they would be pressed in the direction of work observation rather than direct work experience (Watts 1980).

How successful are centrally organised work experience schemes? Very successful, according to Cope, himself an industrial liaison officer in Cleveland. All secondary schools in that county, he reports, participate in the work experience schemes, although a few reject the usefulness of work experience 'mainly on the grounds that any activity that distracts the pupil even temporarily from total concentration on preparation for examinations is irrelevant, if not harmful, to the pupils' interest.'(33) The response of the overwhelming majority of the students is favourable. They see work experience largely as an opportunity to test their interest in an area for possible future employment. Their main complaints are that they receive no pay, that they have to meet cost of public transport, and that the work experience does not last long enough. Cope's study also revealed satisfaction on the part of employers with work experience. Although providers acknowledge the educational basis of work experience, there is a strong tendency for them to view the students as future employees. Lack of pupil preparedness, late notification of students for placements, late changes of placements, and unfilled places were amongst the commonest complaints of providers.

Overview

Approach to Work Experience

The British Education (Work Experience) Act of 1973, states:

The enactments relating to the prohibition or regulation of the employment of children shall not apply to the employment of a child in his last year of compulsory schooling where the employment is in pursuance of arrangements made or approved by the local education authority with a view to providing him with work experience as part of his education.(34)

Table 6 underscores the fact that Commonwealth countries generally see work experience primarily as an educational activity. Approaches to work experience vary not only from country to country but within individual countries. In Britain, work experience as an educational activity is sanctioned at national level, but approaches vary from one Local Education Authority (LEA) to another and practices differ between schools within an LEA. Under the Democratic Socialist Government of Jamaica, work experience was determined by national policy as being of value to the nation but a specific programme was planned by government only for secondary schools where intake was from the lower social classes and considered 'low achievers'. The prestigious high schools were left free to decide whether they wanted to implement work experience programmes or not. In New Zealand, work experience units in state secondary schools cater for the needs of students of very limited academic ability during their first two years of secondary schooling. Their programmes of study are specially devised for non-achievers, and the work experience they have is normally in places of work where the levels of skills are not high. These units receive special funding in terms of teaching entitlement, of

TABLE 6: Approaches to Work in Commonwealth Secondary Schools

APPROACH	COUNTRIES
Work experience determined by national policy as of value to the nation	Australia, India, Guyana, Tanzania, Seychelles, Papua New Guinea
Work experience chosen by pupils on a voluntary basis	Australia, Guyana, Western Samoa, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea
Work experience chosen by school for educational ends	Australia, India, Kenya, Guyana, Botswana, New Zealand, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea
Work experience chosen by school for economic ends	Guyana, Botswana, Western Samoa, Papua New Guinea

teaching spaces, and of financial assistance for visits to the workplace. Work exploration schemes in New Zealand are designed to cater for the needs of all students, whatever their ability. These schemes operate principally as a result of individual school initiatives, and no special resources are provided. Their basic purpose is to provide as many students as possible with some form of work experience so that their eventual vocational choice will be more soundly based.

In contrast to the foregoing examples, the approach to work experience in Western Samoa is more sporadic and is largely geared to raising funds for specific projects that schools wish to undertake. The curriculum organiser in Western Samoa, while insisting that work experience should become a more integral part of schooling - 'a kind of practical follow-up to theoretical studies in the formal curriculum' - at the same time advocates that 'Work preparations and products must be part of the lessons in the classroom. The products, be they materials or cultural items (dance, song, etc), must be organised into an economic activity.' It is hardly surprising, given their economic difficulties, that developing countries approach work experience for its economic ends (e.g. through productive work in high schools in Papua New Guinea).

Papua New Guinea

Patterns of Work Experience off School Premises

Table 7 shows that work experience in community and voluntary services is used almost as widely in commercial enterprises. The former usually takes the form of one or more students assisting in children's homes, hospitals or homes for the aged etc. in such activities as cleaning, preparation of meals, entertainment. The motivation behind this is usually that the students should give something back to society in return for the expenditure on their education. This study, however, did not unearth any accounts of work experience in community and voluntary services. All the case studies in this chapter, for example, are of the type where students participate in work experience in an industry/business enterprise.

TABLE 7: Patterns of Work Experience Conducted off School Premises in a Sample of Commonwealth Countries

PATTERN OF WORK EXPERIENCE	COUNTRIES
In community and voluntary services	India, Guyana, Western Samoa, New Zealand, Sri Lanka Mauritius, Kenya
In commercial enterprises	Australia, Kenya, Guyana, Botswana New Zealand, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, Tanzania

Phasings of Work Experience

The practices vary so greatly that it is difficult to say which phasing is most frequently used. There appears, however, to be a preference for a block release of between two to three weeks. Jamaica's WEP is of three weeks' duration - the period recommended by Project Trident in Britain. Yet there are a number of schools in Britain which operate a block release of one week, and some schools in New Zealand, Britain and Tanzania operate a day-release scheme. Block release can extend as long as one month (e.g. in Kenya and Guyana) usually during vacations. Mauritius, Tanzania and Sri Lanka also use vacations for work experience, while work experience is all-year-round in some schools in Papua New Guinea.(35)

Clearly, the optimum length of work experience in any context will depend on such factors as the needs and interests of the young people participating, the learning objectives of the school's programme of work, the extent to which the school timetable can accommodate work experience, and the needs and interests of the employers. Ideally, the length of work experience placement should depend on the objectives of the programme

itself, but in reality the employers' considerations often carry most weight. It is worth noting, however, that various studies of student and employer satisfaction with work experience all suggest that the minimum period for a 'satisfactory experience' is one week.(36)

Advantages of Different Phasings

Block releases were perceived overall as having the greatest advantages. When these are held during vacations, work experience does not affect academic work (Kenya). Not only do longer block releases allow for 'a better assessment of the students' abilities in the particular skill area,' but also 'good performers are retained on a permanent basis by the agencies' (Guyana). 'There is more to recommend a two-week span than an isolated week as there is a greater opportunity to gain a realistic impression of the pattern of working life' wrote Hitchcock.(37) Teachers in Australian schools thought that one or two weeks was an appropriate length for work experience. Furthermore, Australian teachers who participated in a block release programme saw such benefits in improved relationships with their students, a better understanding of the world of work, and increased efforts to make their teaching relevant to the working world.(38) As for the advantages of the one-day-a-week phasing, it is easier to fit into the timetable, it facilitates planning, it is less disruptive of the students' school work, it provides some continuity and it gives students the opportunity to experience work throughout the whole year.

The Effect of the Examination System on Work Experience

In some Commonwealth countries (e.g. New Zealand, Jamaica), work experience programmes are reserved for the less academically able. Because these students do not take national examinations, their work experience is unaffected by the examination system. In Jamaica, for example, different types of certification segregate New Secondary school students (for whom the Work Experience Programme is designed) from the high school students. The latter study for regional or external examinations at 'O' and 'A' levels which are generally preferred by employers, and tend to give more favourable consideration to educational activities subject to formal examinations than to work experience. This concern underlies the following response from India: 'If the work experience is an internal examination subject, the students and teachers take it seriously, if it is an external examination they take it more seriously, but if it is a non-examination subject, it is not taken seriously at all.'

Organisation of Work Experience Programmes

As Table 8 indicates, the use of a work experience officer or teacher is the most frequently used way of organising work experience programmes in Commonwealth secondary schools.

TABLE 8: Organisation of Work Experience Programmes in a Sample of Commonwealth Countries

MODE OF ORGANISATION	COUNTRIES
Each specialist teacher makes arrangements for students for whom he/she is responsible	Western Samoa, Botswana, Papua New Guinea
A work experience officer/teacher is responsible for making contacts with employers etc.	Australia, Kenya, Guyana, Botswana, New Zealand, Mauritius, Tanzania, Papua New Guinea

Guyana has a work-study supervisor based at the Ministry of Education who functions rather in the same way as the school-industry liaison officers in the LEAs in Britain. There is, however, a heavy reliance on principals and teachers in Guyana just as the school-industry liaison officers rely on the administrative and professional staff of the area careers officers for back-up administration and contact with individual schools.

All accounts of work experience programmes underscore the considerable load involved in the effective administration of work experience programmes. Leaving it to one or two teachers in the schools to take on this responsibility, as is the case in Jamaica and India, often leads to an excessive demand on the time and efforts of teachers who are already hard-pressed with normal work duties. Moreover, where large numbers of schools are involved, lack of co-ordination can lead to competition over available placements. Work experience teachers in Jamaica have reduced this problem by forming associations at the parish level through which activities related to the work experience programme can be co-ordinated. There is much to be said, however, for the form of central organisation as exemplified in Cleveland in Britain. Worthy of note is the 'management style; employed. The emphasis on minimal imposition from the centre... and the retention of responsibility and discretion by the individual schools for their own philosophy for work experience and for its internal handling, are fundamental... and may be regarded as having been instrumental in its success. Without it, there could well be an unfavourable reaction from some schools to what might be interpreted as yet another uninvited demand on their time and resources from an outside source.'(39) At the same time, as Cope says, the central authority cannot be too laissez-faire as schools may be inclined to adopt an uncritical approach to their attitude towards work experience and their administration of the programme.

Where work experience programmes remain more sporadic, as in the case of Western Samoa, it is appropriate for specialist teachers to make the necessary arrangements. However, some thought needs to be given to the status of these teachers. They should be persons who are held in high esteem in the school to avoid creating the impression that work experience is unimportant. The support of the principal cannot be stressed too

highly. The principal sets the tone for the programme and his/her views on the value of work experience will inevitably influence the extent of its acceptance.

Payments to Students on Work Experience

In most of the Commonwealth countries sampled in this study, payments are not given to students on work experience. This is the case for Australia, India, Kenya, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and Papua New Guinea. In Tanzania any payments given are not made to the students but are deposited in the school accounts. In Jamaica it is left to the discretion of employers to give students something towards lunch or bus fares. The TUC guidelines on work experience in British schools stress that work experience is not paid employment and the students do not replace the workers, hence no payment can be expected. For the most part, students on work experience in Australia are not paid: Queensland, in fact, has legislation which debar payment. However, in Victoria payment is a legislated requirement. The students there are viewed as employees and are covered by workers' compensations. They are not, however, paid at the going rate.(40) The same applies to Guyana, Western Samoa and Mauritius where payments made to students are at minimal rates. In Guyana and Mauritius students are allowed to keep their payments, but in Western Samoa the money is given to staff responsible for the fund-raising activity for the particular project for which the students worked to raise funds.

How much say do Students have in their Work Experience Placements?

Again, practice on this varies. In the SSCEP schools in Papua New Guinea, students have no choice, but in schools where work experience is chosen on a voluntary basis, students are given some choice. In some schools in Kenya where work experience is done during the vacations, students have the final say on whether they wish to participate or not. In India, students have 'limited say,' while in Guyana students select their areas of attachment according to their interests and options done at school. In Sri Lanka students have little say; in Botswana they have none; and in Western Samoa their say is 'not much - for cultural reasons: adults make decisions, young ones obey and implement.'(41) In general, schools in Australia arrange placements with employers, but there are instances where students make the initial approach. In New Zealand, all decisions about work experience programmes are made by the school authorities, and practice varies from school to school. In Britain, in LEAs which have school-industry liaison officers, it is they who make the arrangements with employers but at the school level some choice is given to students within the range of available placements.

Problems Encountered with Work Experience Programmes

Because work experience programmes are rarely evaluated in any systematic way, reliable data on problems are hard to come by. Nevertheless, Table 9 gives some idea of what they are. Lack of incentive (on account of there being no pay) and poor supervision at the workplace are commonly experienced. Having to do the more menial tasks at the workplace, unrealistic expectations of students by employers, and transportation problems (incurred particularly by students in rural areas) are other

TABLE 9: Problems encountered in Work Experience Programmes in a Sample of Commonwealth Countries

NATURE OF PROBLEM	COUNTRIES
Students were unable to work in areas related to their vocational training	Guyana
Employers had unrealistic expectations of students	Guyana, Sri Lanka, Seychelles, Papua New Guinea
Students encountered financial difficulties	Mauritius
Other workers expected students to do the more menial tasks	Botswana, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Seychelles
Students had no incentive	India, Guyana, Botswana, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sri Lanka
Poor supervision of students at the workplace	India, Guyana, Botswana, Mauritius, Seychelles, Papua New Guinea
Insufficient employers willing to place students	India, Botswana
Inefficient transport system for rural students	India, Guyana, Botswana, Tanzania
Competition from other training programmes	Mauritius

common problems. These problems are similar to those of Jamaica's work experience programme, though the study by Jennings-Wray and Teape(42), showed that students being unable to work in areas related to their vocational training was perceived as a more grave problem than is implied in Table 9 where only Guyana reports this problem. Competition from other training programmes appears to be a problem only in Mauritius. It is, however, a serious problem in Jamaica. Since 1982, when the Jamaican government introduced the Human Employment and Resource Training Programme (HEART),(43) school-leavers (largely from the prestigious high schools) involved in the on-the-job training which the HEART programme offers, have competed for places in private and public sector enterprises with the grade 10-11 students who participate in the work experience programme in New Secondary schools. Incentives in the form of tax benefits accrue to employers who participate in the HEART programme, and this motivates them

to offer placements to HEART trainees rather than to the New Secondary school students. Tertiary institutions, such as the College of Arts, Science and Technology in Jamaica which has work experience as an integral part of most of its programme, are another source of competition.

Interestingly, only developing countries are identified in Table 9 as experiencing problems with their work experience programmes. This is not to say that developed countries in the Commonwealth are exempt. In the British case study, for example, it was pointed out that students perceive 'no pay, early starts, the difficulties and cost of public transportation, etc.'(44) as being problems of work experience. However, because practices in developed countries vary so much from one place to another, information on problems would have had to be ascertained at the state or county level, and this study was not designed to procure such data.

Summary of Main Points

1. Work experience chosen by the school for educational ends is the approach adopted by most of the Commonwealth countries sampled in this study.
2. In this study, the only instances where work experience is chosen by the school for economic ends are in developing countries.
3. Work experience in an industry/business enterprise is the pattern most widely used by both developed and developing countries in the Commonwealth.
4. A block release of two or three weeks is the way in which work experience programmes in developed and developing countries are most commonly phased.
5. Block releases allow for a better understanding of the world of work and facilitate a better assessment of the students.
6. A work experience teacher/officer is frequently made responsible for organising work experience programmes in Commonwealth secondary schools.
7. In most countries, students on work experience are not paid. In the few cases where they are, they are paid reduced rates.
8. There is a wide variation in the extent of the say that students have in their work experience placements. In some countries the final decision is theirs, while in others they have no say at all. Cultural practices dictate in some instances.
9. Lack of incentives for students and poor supervision at the workplace are problems that most developing countries in the Commonwealth appear to experience in relation to their work experience programmes.