Analytical associate pool

Summary of recent small-scale research projects

July 2019

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Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) uses high quality evidence and analysis to inform policy development and delivery to achieve our vision[1] - to achieve a highly educated society in which opportunity is equal for young person no matter what their background or family circumstances.

Within the DfE there is an analytical community which comprises statisticians, economists, social and operational researchers. These specialists feed in analysis and research to strategy, policy development and delivery.

While much analysis is undertaken in-house and substantial projects are commissioned to external organisations, there is often a need to quickly commission small-scale projects.

We have therefore created a pool of Analytical Associates who can bring specific specialist expertise, knowledge and skills into the department to supplement and develop our internal analytical capability.

In June 2014 we invited applications from individuals to join the pool. We received an overwhelming response and, after evaluating the expertise of everyone who applied, we established the Analytical Associate Pool.

Over 200 independent academics and researchers are in the pool, and they can be commissioned to carry out small-scale data analysis, rapid literature reviews and peer review. They also provide training, quality assurance and expert advice on an ad-hoc basis. Most projects cost less than £15,000, and more than 180 projects have been commissioned since the pool opened in September 2014.

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[1] DfE departmental plan: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-education-single-departmental-plan

Summary of projects

At DfE we aim to make analysis publicly available and we follow the Government Social Research (GSR) [protocol][2] for publishing research. Much of the analysis undertaken through the Associate Pool is only small in nature and we are publishing a summary of findings here to ensure that they are shared. More substantial work is published in stand-alone reports throughout the year. See page 12 for details and links to projects already published.

Governance Development Programmes: a review of reported data and self-evaluations

Associate: Professor David Greatbatch and Sue Tate

The research

The Department for Education's (DfE) vision is to see robust and effective governance in every school and trust in England. The Governance Development Programmes are designed to support this vision, by embedding the principles of effective governance in school and trust governors and clerks. The DfE currently contracts with 7 organisations[3] to deliver 5 governance leadership development, and 5 clerking development programmes, from January 2018 to March 2020, through the Governance Development Programme. Under these contracts, each provider is required to review their own progress and gather feedback from participants and make this information available to the DfE. To improve the DfE's understanding of the Governance Development Programmes, the department commissioned a review of reported data and self-evaluations to inform future best practice.

The Governance Development Programmes are aligned with the DfE's governance competency frameworks,[4] and aim to support effective governance through:

(a) training to build capacity of governance leaders (e.g. chairs, vice chairs, committee chairs) and support them to improve the effectiveness of their board; and

(b) training to professionalise the quality of clerking, so that school and trust governing boards receive the administrative and procedural information, advice

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and support they need to operate effectively.

These programmes are set out to develop skills and knowledge in a number of specific areas, including, but not limited to finance for governors; accountability for governors; using data for school improvement; finance for clerks; and writing effective minutes.

The review of the Governance Development Programme data and self-evaluations summarises data collected by programme providers between January 2018 and April 2019. To aid the DfE's understanding of the Governance Development Programme and inform future best practice, the review examined:

- How the programmes mapped to the competency frameworks[5].

- The number and nature of development sessions run.

- Feedback on participant satisfaction.

- Feedback submitted by programme providers on funding.

- Challenges faced by providers and participants.

- Lessons to be learnt for procurement of future governance development programmes.

Key findings

Whether programmes map to the Governance Competency Framework

Governance Development Programme providers' original business cases linked the content of their programmes to the governance and/or clerking competency frameworks. Two programme providers demonstrated that their courses aligned with the frameworks, by submitted training materials to the Department. However, programme alignment to the competency frameworks was not evident in all cases, as providing course materials was not mandatory for the purposes of this review.

Attendance at development sessions and participant feedback

Cohort sizes varied between programme providers, and within providers. It is speculated that the differences between the delivery methods of different courses may cause some of this variation. However, as some providers did not report their achieved cohort sizes, the full variability of cohort sizes is unclear. For many providers, achieving sufficient numbers per cohort for financial viability was an issue. However, there is some evidence to suggest that providers are developing their marketing strategies to address these issues. Attendance levels were high across the development programmes when reported. However, the extent to which high attendance applies to all cohorts and programmes is unclear, as data was not available in all cases.

Participant feedback made available to the DfE was overwhelmingly positive for all

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[5]Competency Framework for Governance and Clerking Competency Framework

programme providers. However, as the DfE did not request feedback to be submitted in a standardised format, participant feedback cannot be compared across programme providers. In some governance development programmes, participants found certain elements more useful than others; such as the flexibility of on-line learning, and the opportunity for discussion in face-to-face elements. There is also evidence that some course providers improved their courses by responding to participant feedback. For example, one provider addressed feedback about the course being pitched at too low a level by increasing the level of challenge. After they made this change, the average quality scores of their programme improved for subsequent cohorts.

Feedback submitted by programme providers on funding

Programme providers reported being largely content with the DfE's funding processes. However, some providers explained that not all participants understood the DfE's funding was restricted to one member per board.

Challenges faced by providers and participants

The main challenges highlighted by programme providers were primarily issues around marketing, recruitment of participants, and a perceived lack of recognition of the importance of professional development amongst governors, rather than the structure of the Governance Development Programme.

Lessons to be learnt for future procurement

Lessons for procurement of future Governance Development Programmes include:

- Ensuring that providers clearly map the competencies to each element of their training programmes;

- If using self-evaluation, providers should be required to collect and submit data in a common template to allow for comparability across programmes; and

- Requiring providers to follow up with participants after completing the programme to establish what, if any, impact the programme has had on participants.

Summary

This review has provided valuable insights to support the DfE's understanding of the Governance Development Programme. It has also outlined valuable lessons learnt to inform best practice in any future procurement of governance development programmes.

Survey on Apprenticeship Funding Policy

Associates: Warwick Institute for Employment Research

The research

The purpose of the research is to give the apprenticeship market (employers, apprenticeship training providers and representative organisations) an opportunity to comment on apprenticeship funding policy. It forms part of the work that the Chancellor

committed to in Autumn 2018: that HM Treasury and DfE will work with a range of employers and apprenticeship training providers to consider how they are responding to the Apprenticeship Levy (a UK-wide levy on employers with an annual pay bill of more than £3 million) across different sectors and regions in England, as well as the role of apprenticeships in the post-2020 skills landscape.

The research method used was an online survey, open to all UK employers, apprenticeship training providers and representative organisations.

The survey was open from 23rd February 2019 to 3rd March 2019 and received 888 responses from levy and non-levy paying employers (60%), apprenticeship training providers (19%) and representative organisations (14%). The survey was distributed through the Education and Skills Funding Agency's core communication channels, as well as through intermediaries such as representative organisations and government departments. The views expressed in this survey cannot assumed to be representative of all employers, training providers and representative organisations. This means the survey may capture overly positive or negative views on certain topics and may miss out the views of certain groups.

Key findings

The survey collected descriptive data on the respondent, including the type, region, sector and size.

- 52% of employer and 54% of provider respondents agree or strongly agree that employers who do not pay the Apprenticeship Levy (approximately 98% of employers whose pay bill is less than £3 million) should contribute to the cost of an apprenticeship.

- Excluding those who did not provide a response or did not know[6], 78% of employer respondents plan to increase recruitment of apprentices, citing greater recognition of apprenticeships and a greater availability of standards. Provider respondents were also positive about their future recruitment plans – over two thirds (68%) of provider respondents expected recruitment levels to 'mostly increase' over the next two years.

- Employer respondents who employ apprentices[7] most commonly said that the primary reason for engaging with apprenticeships was to ensure a future pipeline of skilled labour (32%), followed by addressing their business's skills needs by upskilling existing staff (27%) and recouping levy funds (17%).

- Nearly half (49%) of employer respondents who employ apprentices never or rarely negotiate on the price of an apprenticeship, stating that providers expect to be paid the maximum of the funding band, or that there is no need to negotiate as they have large unspent levy pots. For those employers that do negotiate, the

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[6] Sample size of 768
[7] Sample size of 623

main reason is to achieve greater value for money.

- Employer respondents who employ under 18's most commonly said that the £1000 additional payment that they receive from the government for 16- to 18-year-old apprentices is spent on employability skills (33%) and for training of line managers (27%). For those respondents who did not employ 16- to 18-year-old apprentices[8], the most common responses were that there were no 16 to 18-year-old applicants (20%), the age group are not suitable for the type of organisation or sector (20%), or that the recruitment was based solely on merit and this did not result in 16- to 18-year-old recruitment (18%).

- Six percent of employer respondents intend to make use of receiving transfers (levy paying employers are able to transfer a percentage of their apprenticeship funds to other employers, including non-levy employers), and 78% of respondents think that increasing the transfers allowance to 25% from 10% of their available apprenticeship funds will have minimal impact on its uptake. Over half (58%) of employer respondents said that expiry of levy funds (unused funds will expire 24 months after they enter an account) is unlikely to affect their apprenticeships programme.

The survey results will be used to inform the development of future apprenticeship funding policy. Differing from DfE's regular employer surveys, this online survey specifically covered topics relating to apprenticeship funding and was launched alongside a series of roundtables exploring similar topics.

International approaches to teaching the home language to non-native speakers

Associate: Prof David Greatbatch and Sue Tate

The research

This research was commissioned in order to investigate and summarise how other countries support adult language learning for adults (19+) who do not speak the native language of that country. This review was undertaken to help ensure lessons are learnt from other countries and the government is following best practice from international examples.

The primary aims of the project were to:

- Bring together the evidence concerning government-led approaches to English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL and its equivalents) in Australia, Canada,

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[8] Sample size of 153

France, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway and the United States of America (USA), as they have a range of different approaches to teaching their home language to non-native speakers.

- Gain insights into the issues and identify recent information not yet in the public domain by undertaking telephone interviews with representative bodies and key stakeholders in each of the countries.

- Identify relevant insights in the literature on target groups, delivery, funding and outcomes.

This piece of research gathered data from both a literature review and semi structured interviews. This literature review and interviews were conducted between August and November of 2018, and covers ESOL (or equivalent) in the following countries: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, and USA.

Key Findings

The findings from the literature and interviews are split into three themes; target groups for provision, delivery and outcomes for learners.

Target groups

The target groups for language support are primarily migrants and humanitarian entrants (both new arrivals and longer-term residents) who are assessed as being below a functional level of the native language of the country concerned (Thorud, 2018; Khan 2016; Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2018a; Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2018b; Lochmann et al., 2018) . Overall, there was a perception in the interviews that the proportions of immigrants and humanitarian entrants accessing language support is increasing across the countries. However, it was reported that some groups in particular were under-represented in language training programmes such as women with young children or large families and the elderly. It was reported in some countries this issue is being addressed by tailoring recruitment processes and language support to cater for the requirements of these groups.

Delivery

Most countries in the study have evolved their policy towards language learning for non-native speakers in response to changes in patterns of migration, including increasing numbers of refugees. While a strong focus on language skills as a means of economic participation has long governed policy in most countries, there has been a shift in focus on integration which has led in many cases to new or enhanced language requirements for visas and/or citizenship, along with requirements for civics training and/or the passing of tests. The content, length of training and how courses are delivered is variable across the countries studied, as is the extent to which central governments control these. In some countries for example Australia, Germany and Norway, have courses in which both

the curriculum and the length of training is heavily prescribed. Whereas, in many other countries, providers are given considerable latitude over the content of provision, albeit sometimes tied to expected outcomes (France) or with reporting requirements that are expected to demonstrate progress (USA). In many of the countries we considered, providers offer some provision through distance learning, although face-to-face remains the predominant delivery method.

Outcomes for learners

While government-led language training programmes in Norway and Canada appear to be broadly meeting their government's policy aims (language fluency, particularly as a tool for integration and economic participation (Jackson, 2013). Those in Australia, Germany, France, Ireland and the USA have not been fully satisfactory in terms of the numbers of participants achieving the desired language levels. (The review did not identify any evidence on the impact of programmes in New Zealand). Recent attempts to increase the effectiveness of programmes include expanding the number of hours of language training (Australia and France), developing programmes designed to cater for the diverse needs of learners (Australia, France and Germany) and introducing standard certification for teachers of integration courses (Germany). Due to their comparative newness, these developments have not yet been systematically evaluated.

This international evidence review has presented best practice examples from other countries and their approaches to teaching the home language to non-native speakers. This work has been used to directly inform the policy in this country going forwards, especially our approaches and delivery of English language learning. Including building the evidence base for new ESOL strategy which is being developed throughout 2019.

References

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Published full project reports

In addition to these summaries, some Associate Pool projects have been published as a full report on the [DfE Internet site](#) or on Associate's own websites. See below for more information and links to these publications.

Table 1 Associate Pool Published Reports since June 2019

Date	Title	Description
27 June 2019	English for speakers of other languages: access and progression	Research about access to English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision in England.
27 June 2019	The deployment of teaching assistants in schools	Research about the use and effects of teaching assistants in primary and secondary mainstream schools in England.

Further information

If you would like any further information about the Associate Pool or the projects included in this summary please email us on: associate.pool@education.gov.uk