

Labour market expectations, relative performance and subject choice

Since the quality of educational outcomes is crucial for future prosperity and well-being the subject choices made by students are 'high stakes' for others as well as themselves. This project, funded by the **Nuffield Foundation** (<http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/>), evaluates the effects of providing 15-16 year-old students with information about the differences between earnings of graduates from different subjects.

Early specialisation remains a distinctive attribute of the English education system, but concern is frequently expressed that specialisation within formal schooling produces too few graduates in certain subjects: notably in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects and modern foreign languages. A recent report for the Nuffield Foundation (Hodgen et al. 2010) has highlighted comparatively low rates of post-16 participation in mathematics education in the UK.

Information and guidance currently available to students encourages them to choose the subjects they enjoy and the subjects they think they are good at. This advice is uncontroversial and students do choose subjects in which they have a relative advantage. However, a system which requires early specialisation needs students to have accurate expectations about the labour market implications of their choices.

This research focused on 15/16 year old students choosing subjects to study in the sixth form (Year 12). It used an intervention through which students were provided with information about graduate earnings. The effect of this intervention was then evaluated using a randomised controlled trial and the effect of the intervention measured through students' preferences towards subjects before they start Year 12 and the actual courses they are studying in Year 12.

Baseline Questionnaire [StudentQuestionnaire1 \(/Documents/college-social-sciences/education/projects/student-questionnaire-1.pdf\)](#)

Intervention Resources and Guidance for Teachers [Lesson K Teacher's notes \(/Documents/college-social-sciences/education/projects/lesson-k-teachers-notes.pdf\)](#)

Control Group Resources and Guidance for Teachers [Lesson J Teacher's Version \(/Documents/college-social-sciences/education/projects/lesson-j-teachers-version.pdf\)](#)

Papers

Davies, P., Qiu, T. and Davies, N. (2014). Cultural and Human Capital, Information and Higher Education Choices, *Journal of Education Policy* ifirst. DOI:10.1080/02680939.2014.891762 (<http://www.tandfonline.com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1080/02680939.2014.891762>)

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