



NFER Teacher Voice Omnibus February 2010 Survey

Preparing young people for the future

**National Endowment for Science, Technology
and the Arts**

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Introduction

One question was submitted by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) to the NFER's Teacher Voice Omnibus survey in February 2010. The question examined teachers' perceptions of the current assessment regime. This report provides an analysis of the responses to this question alongside supporting information about the survey. Where appropriate, the results are presented by school phase (primary and secondary) and seniority (classroom teachers and senior leaders). This report forms one part of the output from the Omnibus survey. The analysis is also presented and given in more detail in a set of interactive web-based tables produced separately (in Pulsar Web).

Context

It is vital to ensure that every child is equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and qualifications in order to succeed in adult life. However, the world in which we live is changing fast, which in turn creates a range of new challenges. The White Paper produced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) entitled *'Building a 21st century schools system'* highlights that there is now much greater demand for *'high level skills'* which includes for example key skills in mathematics. Moreover, in recent years, there have been some changes in the types of jobs on offer to graduates. Such changes mean that *'...today's young people will need to be able to learn and re-train, think and work in teams and to be flexible, adaptable and creative'*¹.

NESTA is concerned with helping the UK to explore how to build its capacity for innovation in order to rise to the challenges of the future². NESTA are interested in seeking information about teachers' perceptions of the current assessment regime because they believe that the assessment and examination system in its current form, does not provide young people with the skills, knowledge and aptitudes that they need in a world which is fast changing. Therefore, in this context, it was useful by means of the Teacher Voice survey, to seek an overview of teachers' perceptions of the current assessment regime.

¹ DCSF (2009). *Building a 21st Century Schools System*. London: DCSF. [online] Available: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/21stcenturyschoolssystem/> [4 March 2010]

² See: <http://www.nesta.org.uk/> [4 March 2010].

Analysis of findings

The sample

The survey was completed by a sample of over 1,700 teachers and was weighted to ensure representativeness. The sample included teachers from a wide range of school governance types and subject areas. Sample numbers were sufficient to allow for comparisons between the primary and secondary sectors. Detailed information about the sample is given in the supplementary section of this report.

The current assessment regime

As Table 1 shows, just over half all respondents (52 per cent) felt that the current assessment regime *does not* encourage schools to equip young people with the skills, knowledge and aptitudes that they will need if they are to thrive in the changing world of work (either ‘not well’ or ‘not at all well’). Over two-fifths of respondents (43 per cent), however, said that the current assessment regime encourages schools to equip young people with the skills, knowledge and aptitudes either ‘quite well’ or ‘very well’.

Table 1. Thinking about the jobs and working patterns that might exist in thirty years time, how well do you think the current assessment regime encourages schools to equip young people with the skills, knowledge, and aptitudes that they will need if they are to thrive in the changing world of work?

	All	Primary	Secondary
Very well	2%	2%	3%
Quite well	41%	38%	45%
Not well	33%	34%	32%
Not at all well	19%	21%	16%
Not sure	5%	6%	4%
Local base (N)	1711	912	799

*Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
 Due to the primary, secondary and all teacher categories being weighted separately, the number of primary and secondary respondents may not sum to the number of teachers in total
 Source: NFER Omnibus Survey February 2010*

There were some differences between primary and secondary sectors. For example, proportionally more secondary teachers (48 per cent) than their primary counterparts (40 per cent) felt that the current assessment regime encourages schools to equip young people with the skills, knowledge and aptitudes that they will need well (either ‘quite well’ or ‘very well’). Conversely, a greater proportion of primary teachers (21 per cent) than their secondary counterparts (16 per cent) responded that schools do not equip young

people ‘at all well’ in order to thrive in the changing world of work. Responses by seniority of respondents were largely similar.

Conclusions and implications for the client

The findings from the Teacher Voice survey have shown that teachers are divided in their views about the extent to which the current assessment regime encourages schools to equip young people with the skills, knowledge and aptitudes that they will need if they are to thrive in the changing world of work. As we have seen, overall, 43 per cent took a positive view on this statement. This suggests that there is still much discussion to be had about the appropriateness of the current assessment regime for equipping young people for the changing world of work. It is also interesting to note, however, that teachers with a negative opinion on the current assessment regime were in the majority, with 52 per cent (commenting that the regime equips young people either ‘not well’ or ‘not at all’ well). This might suggest that there is some justification for the claim that there is a need to further develop the current assessment regime to ensure that learners develop the skills, knowledge and aptitudes that they require for the rapidly-changing world of work.

The responses showed that a greater proportion of secondary teachers than their primary counterparts felt that the current assessment regime *does* encourage schools to suitably equip young people for the future world of work: and, conversely, that a greater proportion of primary teachers (21 per cent) than their secondary counterparts (16 per cent) felt that schools do *not* equip young people ‘at all well’ in this respect. These findings might reflect how secondary teachers are thinking about the skills that learners need, given that they are closer to completing their education and perhaps moving into the world of work. Alternatively, it might simply be that primary teachers feel that they are not sure about this issue (although only six per cent selected the ‘not sure’ option) given that their pupils are further away, age wise, from the world of work. This is perhaps also an indication that there is a greater need to develop the assessment regime at the primary stage to ensure that learners develop the necessary skills, knowledge and aptitudes at the earliest opportunity, though this is another area of curriculum reform that can stimulate considerable debate.

Supporting information

How was the survey conducted?

This report is based on data from the February survey. The survey was completed in January – February 2010 by a panel of 1,758 practising teachers from 1,201 schools in the maintained sector in England. The survey was conducted online and teachers were asked to complete the questionnaire between 29 January and 10 February 2010. During the survey period all ‘open’ questions (those without a pre-identified set of responses) were coded by a team of experienced coders within the Foundation.

What was the composition of the panel?

The panel included teachers from the full range of roles in primary and secondary schools, from headteachers to newly qualified class teachers. Fifty two per cent (916) of the respondents were teaching in primary schools and 48 per cent (842) were teaching in secondary schools.

How representative of schools nationally were the schools corresponding to the teachers panel?

There was an under-representation of schools in the highest quintile in terms of eligibility for free school meals in both the sample of primary schools and the sample of secondary schools. The sample of secondary schools also had an over-representation of schools with low eligibility for free school meals. To address this, weights were calculated using free schools meals factors to create a more balanced sample. Due to the differences between the populations of primary schools and secondary schools, different weights were created for primary schools, secondary schools and then for the whole sample overall. The weightings have been applied to all of the analyses referred to in this commentary and contained within the tables supplied in electronic format (via Pulsar Web)³.

Tables S.1, S.2 and S.3 show the representation of the weighted achieved sample against the population. Table S.4 shows the representation of the weighted teacher sample by role in school.

³ *The sample was not weighted for missing free school meal data*

Table S.1 Representation of (weighted) primary schools compared to primary schools nationally

		National Population	NFER Sample
		%	%
Achievement Band (Overall performance by KS2 2008 data)	Lowest band	16	18
	2nd lowest band	17	18
	Middle band	18	17
	2nd highest band	20	22
	Highest band	22	24
	Missing	7	1
% eligible FSM (5 pt scale)	Lowest 20%	20	20
	2nd lowest 20%	20	20
	Middle 20%	20	20
	2nd highest 20%	20	20
	Highest 20%	20	20
	Missing	1	0
Primary school type	Infant/First	15	12
	Primary/Combined	77	73
	Junior	8	15
	Middle/other type	<1	1
Region	North	31	25
	Midlands	32	31
	South	37	44
Local Authority type	London Borough	11	10
	Metropolitan Authorities	21	17
	English Unitary Authorities	18	20
	Counties	51	53
Number of schools		17019	784

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Some information is not available for all schools and some schools included more than one respondent

Source: NFER Omnibus Survey February 2010

Table S.2 Representation of (weighted) secondary schools compared to secondary schools nationally

		National Population	NFER Sample
		%	%
Achievement Band (Overall performance by GCSE 2008 data)	Lowest band	17	13
	2nd lowest band	18	20
	Middle band	18	21
	2nd highest band	18	23
	Highest band	20	20
	Missing	10	2
% eligible FSM (5 pt scale)	Lowest 20%	19	20
	2nd lowest 20%	19	19
	Middle 20%	19	20
	2nd highest 20%	19	20
	Highest 20%	19	20
	Missing	4	2
Secondary school type	Middle	7	<1
	Comprehensive to 16	33	22
	Comprehensive to 18	44	66
	Secondary Moderns	5	4
	Grammar	5	5
	Academies	6	2
Region	North	29	25
	Midlands	34	27
	South	37	48
Local Authority type	London Borough	13	13
	Metropolitan Authorities	21	21
	English Unitary Authorities	19	20
	Counties	47	46
Number of schools		3336	417

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100. Some information is not available for all schools and some schools included more than one respondent. Source: NFER Omnibus Survey February 2010

Table S.3 Representation of all schools (weighted) compared to all schools nationally

		National Population %	NFER Sample %
Achievement Band (By KS2 2008 and GCSE 2008 data)	Lowest band	17	16
	2nd lowest band	18	19
	Middle band	18	18
	2nd highest band	20	22
	Highest band	21	23
	Missing	6	1
% eligible FSM (5 pt scale)	Lowest 20%	20	20
	2nd lowest 20%	20	20
	Middle 20%	20	20
	2nd highest 20%	20	20
	Highest 20%	20	20
	Missing	1	1
Region	North	30	25
	Midlands	32	30
	South	37	45
Local Authority type	London Borough	11	11
	Metropolitan Authorities	21	18
	English Unitary Authorities	18	20
	Counties	50	51
Number of schools		20355	1201

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Some information is not available for all schools and some schools included more than one respondent

Source: NFER Omnibus Survey February 2010

Table S.4 Comparison of the achieved (weighted) sample with the national population by grade of teacher

Role	Primary schools				Secondary schools			
	population		weighted sample		population		weighted sample	
	N*	%	N*	%	N*	%	N*	%
Headteachers	17.1	10	81	9	3.3	2	7	1
Deputy Headteachers	11.8	7	87	10	5.5	3	34	4
Assistant Headteachers	6.4	4	57	6	11.5	6	73	9
Class teachers and others	129.8	78	687	75	161.8	89	684	86

**N is expressed in thousands*

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Sources: NFER Omnibus Survey February 2010, DCSF: School Workforce in England (including Local Authority level figures), January 2009 (Revised)

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000874/index.shtml> [2 March 2010]

How accurately do the findings represent the national position?

Precision is a measure of the extent to which the results of different samples agree with each other. If we surveyed a different sample of teachers would we get the same results? The more data that is available the more precise the findings. For all schools and a 50 per cent response, the precision of that response is between 47.7 per cent and 52.3 per cent. For secondary schools the same precision is + and – 3.38 percentage points and for primary schools it is + and – 3.24 percentage points.

With the weightings applied to the data, we are confident that the omnibus sample is broadly representative of teachers nationally and provides a robust analysis of teachers' views.