

<p>Institution: Edinburgh Napier University</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 19 Business and Management Studies</p>
<p>Title of case study: Improving employment outcomes for disadvantaged groups by informing policy</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p>
<p>This case study describes the impact of research on improving employment outcomes for disadvantaged groups by influencing Government policy on employability. The case study focuses on the contribution to national employment policy from research conducted by the Employment Research Institute (ERI) at Edinburgh Napier University. Impacts outlined in this case study describe research that has been applied in the public policy field to address the issue of improving employment outcomes for those with complex barriers to employment.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p>
<p>Successive UK governments have been faced with the problem of large numbers of working-age people not participating in the labour market. Several groups face significant barriers to employment including lone parents and those with few qualifications. 35% of households where no one has ever worked are lone parent households (ONS, 2011). Furthermore, between 1995 and 2009, the employment rate for people with low level or no qualifications fell from 60.1% to 55.8% (ONS, 2011).</p>
<p>The publications and sources cited in this case study describe the development of a method for evaluating barriers to work and training. Developed through publications in leading journals (see section 3) and Government reports, the concept of employability was developed as an analytical tool in the period 2000-2003 to improve understanding of the ‘multidimensional barriers to work or progression faced by many unemployed and employed people’ (see 3.3). From 2004-09, the ERI research team was contracted by the Scottish Government to evaluate a national programme called Working for Families (WFF) to improve access to employment and training for lone parents. The concept of employability provided a framework within which barriers to employment for the 25,000 clients who registered with the WFF programme could be identified and evaluated. The research identified client groups who were least likely to make a transition to employment including: those aged under 20 years; ethnic minority clients; clients with no qualifications; clients with disabilities; clients with no work history. The evaluation highlighted the importance of ensuring that parents had access to childcare to enable a return to work. By identifying clients less likely to enter work, the programme was able to ensure that local authorities could target support for these groups more effectively. In 2007 and 2013, the ERI produced reports for the Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland (DELNI). The 2007 report (see 5.2) contributed to the evolution of governmental approaches to partnership working in the delivery of employment strategies and led to publications in leading journals (see 3.4 and 3.5). The 2013 report (see 5.3) identified how cross-cutting issues prevent the economically inactive in Northern Ireland from seeking work. The review identified actions to be taken to address low levels of employment among lone parents and carers.</p>
<p>In 2009-2010, the ERI published a report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that used the concept of employability to explore why disadvantaged parents move into poverty and identified barriers to them escaping the cycle of low pay/no pay or recurrent poverty (see 5.4). The study used data from the WFF programme, and added in-depth qualitative case studies, to further refine and develop the employability framework and enabled the identification of barriers to employment for single parents. The report found that parents remain in low-pay and unemployment due to: a lack of affordable childcare; the operation and monetary levels of benefits and tax credits; the characteristics of low-paid jobs.</p>
<p>Key researchers and positions held at the institution at the time of the research:</p>
<p>Professor Ron McQuaid – Director the Employment Research Institute. 1999 – August 2013; Dr Matthew Dutton - Research Fellow, 2006 – present (2013); Vanesa Fuertes – Research Assistant, 2004 – present (2013); Dr Colin Lindsay – Research Fellow, 1999 – 2010; Sue Bond – Research Fellow. 1999 – 2012; Dr Valerie Egdell – Research Fellow, 2010- present.</p>

3. References to the research

- 3.1 McQuaid, R.W. and C. Lindsay (2002) ‘The Employability Gap’: Long-term Unemployment and Barriers to Work in Buoyant Labour Markets’, *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 20, 4, 613-628. (Google Scholar citation count: 45) (Web of Science times cited: 21)
- 3.2 Lindsay, C., McCracken M. and McQuaid, R.W (2003) ‘Unemployment Duration and Employability in Remote Rural Labour Markets’, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 19, 2, 187-200. (Google scholar citation count: 50) (Web of Science times cited: 15)
- 3.3 McQuaid, R. W. and Lindsay, C., (2005) The concept of employability. *Urban Studies*, 42 (2). pp. 197-219. (Google scholar citation count: 243) (Web of Science times cited: 66)
- 3.4 Lindsay, Colin, McQuaid, Ronald W and Dutton, Matthew (2007) New approaches to employability in the UK: combining ‘human capital development’ and ‘work first’ strategies? *Journal of Social Policy*, 36 (4). 539–560 (Google scholar citation count: 57) (Web of Science times cited: 25).
- 3.5 Lindsay, C, McQuaid., RW., Dutton, M., (2008) ‘Inter-agency co-operation and new approaches to employability’. *Social Policy and Administration*, 42 (7). pp. 715-732 (Google scholar citation count: 20) (Web of Science times cited: 8)
- 3.6 McQuaid R.W., Bond, S. and V. Fuertes (2009) *Working for Families Fund Evaluation (2004-08)*, Scottish Government, Edinburgh (ISBN 978 0 7559 7298 2)
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/04/20092521/0>
 Grant award: Evaluation of the Working for Families Fund 2004 – 2008. Scottish Government. Total Award £229,725
 Grant award: How can parents escape recurrent poverty? Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Total award £38,404.00
 Grant award: Best Practice in Inter-agency Co-operation – Department for Enterprise and Learning, Northern Ireland. Total award £44,597

4. Details of the impact

The impact of the research is evident in changes to public policy in Scotland and Northern Ireland on improving employment outcomes for disadvantage groups specifically lone parents, carers and those with low levels of qualifications. For people seeking a return to the labour market, there has also been a positive impact on quality of life by improving access to employment

The ERI designed and implemented a Management Information System for WFF that was used to analyse data on clients registered on the programme. This enabled the ERI to provide real-time feedback to local authorities responsible for delivering the WFF programme. The continuous evaluation and collation of data by the ERI enabled monitoring of client progress and the identification of relevant forms of support required by WFF clients. The ERI conducted training events for local authority key workers with responsibility for WFF implementation that enabled workers to maximise the impact and reach of the programme. The ERI's role contributed to 53% of all WFF clients (13,594) achieving a hard outcome (e.g. a move into work or training) and a further 13% (3,283) achieving other significant outcomes (e.g. improvements in employability or increased confidence). Downstream of the policy process, the ERI evaluation was able to cite evidence from lone parents whose engagement with the WFF programme had made a significant positive impact on their quality of life: “It’s made me feel that there is more to life than just being in the house and stick on benefits, there is a lot more to life, and I just want to give the children a better life.” (WFF client, East Ayrshire); “It’s been a great help. It wouldn’t have been possible for me to get back to work without help with childcare costs.” (WFF client, Highlands).

These findings have subsequently impacted the current Scottish Government Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland (2011) that highlights the findings of the ERI WFF evaluation: ‘A number of these local (employability) pipelines have embedded the Working for Families model which identifies difficulties in accessing affordable and quality childcare as a significant barrier to employment and provides a range of support and referrals to address this’ (see 5.7).

Findings from the ERIs WFF evaluation have also informed the Scottish Government’s Employability Framework (see 5.10). The Framework emphasises the role of childcare ‘in supporting the development and wellbeing of children, in allowing parents to work in order to provide economic security for their families, and, in cases of workless families, in offering routes out of welfare and poverty’.

ERI research for the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland (DELNI) also applied the employability framework to produce effective employment policies. The report, although

published in 2007, impacted on employment policy in 2010. Through interviews with Public Employment Services across the EU, the ERI produced a series of recommendations for improving co-operation across agencies involved in the delivery of employment policy. Recommendations included: the co-location of services for the unemployed; improving partnership working across government departments and agencies; pooling resources across departments to maximise their impact. The office of the Northern Ireland Advisor on Employment and Skills adopted these recommendations in their report (see 5.6) on tackling unemployment and promoting economic growth: 'Improving linkages between government departments, agencies and local authorities has been identified as an important mechanism in which to help improve the service offered to unemployed and inactive clients. Research from the Employment Research Institute at Napier University compared forms of inter-agency co-operation, and identified strengths and weaknesses in different partnership models'.

In 2012 the ERI was commissioned by DELNI to provide an analysis of how multiple cross-cutting issues prevent the economically inactive from seeking work and provided a baseline against which DELNI could measure progress. The report (see 5.3) identified policy lessons on effective forms of employment support for disabled people and those with care responsibilities. Professor McQuaid presented results of the report at a research seminar held by Analytical Services within DELNI on the 22nd May 2013 and attended by senior civil servants. The report was also discussed in the Northern Ireland Assembly on the Committee for Employment and Learning on the 8th May 2013 where it was stated that the ERI had enabled DELNI to target support to specific client groups: 'Two groups emerged from the baseline study as requiring additional help through being inactive because of particularly difficult circumstances: those out of work because of ill health or disability; and those who have caring responsibilities for children, particularly lone parents... So the baseline study suggests that, if we are to have a new strategy and do new things, we should concentrate our efforts on those two groups'. (Official Report Hansard. 8th May 2013, Committee for Employment and Learning)

In addition to policy impacts in Scotland and Northern Ireland, the ERI has contributed to the development of employability policy in England through the publication of a report in 2010 commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (see 5.4). The JRF report identified why disadvantaged parents move into poverty and what barriers prevent them escaping the low-pay/no-pay cycle. This report was cited by HM Treasury, The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Work and Pensions on policy to reduce child poverty: 'Recent research indicates that parents' employment decisions are influenced by the type of employment available, the financial benefits of moving into work, including concerns about financial insecurity or loss of benefits, the costs and nature of childcare available, and perceptions about all these considerations' (see 5.4).

In addition to impacts on public policy, the ERI has also sought to raise awareness and understanding among the general public on issues raised by their research. ERI Director Professor McQuaid, was interviewed by BBC Radio Scotland and featured on the BBC News website to discuss the issues of childcare as a barrier to employment (see 5.8). Professor McQuaid was also interviewed on the 18th March 2012 edition of the influential BBC One Scotland news programme 'Sunday Politics' (see 5.9).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 *Evaluation of the Working for Families Fund* (2004 - 2008). The Scottish Government. 2009. Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/04/20092521/0>

5.2 Committee for Employment and Learning. Official Report (Hansard). Economic Inactivity: DEL Briefing. 8 May 2013 available at: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Official-Reports/Employment/2012-2013/130508_EconomicInactivity.pdf citing McQuaid, R., Lindsay, C., Dutton, M., (2007) *Best Practice in Inter-agency Co-operation*. Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland. Available at: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/bestpracticereportemployability.pdf>
 Personal contact provided.

5.3 McQuaid, R., Graham, H., Shapira, M., (2013) *Economic Inactivity Strategy: Literature Review Project*. Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland. Available at: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/economic-inactivity-literature-review.pdf>

Impact case study (REF3b)

- 5.4 *Ending Child Poverty. Mapping the route to 2020*. March 2010. HM Treasury. Department for Children, Schools and Families. Department for Work and Pensions. Available at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/budget2010_childpoverty.pdf citing McQuaid, R., Fuentès, V., Richard, A., (2010) *How can parents escape from recurrent poverty?* Joseph Rowntree Foundation. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/how-parents-escape-recurrent-poverty>
- 5.5 McQuaid, R., Fuentès, V. Egdell, Bergmann, A. with A.E. Green (University of Warwick) (2011) *Promoting Jobs Growth to Benefit Disadvantaged People and Communities – An International Review of Best Practice*, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Northern Ireland http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-stats-index/deti-stats-index-3/job_creation_for_economically_inactive.htm
- 5.6 Office of the Northern Ireland Advisor on Employment and Skills 2010. *Recovering the Unemployed and Economically Inactive into the Economy*. 2010. Available at: <http://goo.gl/YNcfqI>
- 5.7 *Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland*. The Scottish Government. March 15, 2011. Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/14094421/0>
- 5.8 Professor Ronald McQuaid on BBC News (19/8/09) discussing the importance of ensuring that parents can access the labour market. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/8313194.stm>.
- 5.9 Professor McQuaid on BBC One Sunday Politics Scotland (18/3/12) discussing the importance of the Working for Families Programme in helping parents get back to work. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01dczz8>
- 5.10 *Working for Growth. A refresh of the Employability Framework for Scotland*. Published by the Scottish Government, September 2012. Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0040/00402275.pdf>