

Institution: University of the West of Scotland
Unit of Assessment: UoA22
Title of case study: Child employment and child employment policy
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Sandy Hobbs and Jim McKechnie have been researching the issue of young people's (i.e. under 16 years of age) involvement in employment: this is usually termed child labour or child employment. The goal of this research was to establish an evidence base regarding the nature and extent of child employment in the UK, and to consider the benefits and costs of this experience for young people. The impact of this research has been to raise the level of awareness of this issue within the UK, providing an evidence base that has been used by NGOs, and evaluating policy and practice for local and national government departments in the UK and the Isle of Man.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) Since 1991 McKechnie and Hobbs have been conducting research into child employment and since 1993 have published >50 articles, books and book chapters and provided 20 reports for local authorities, government departments and international bodies. The research has had three principal strands;</p> <p>(i) <u>establishing the nature and extent of child employment</u> – their research has shown that the majority of young people will have experience of paid employment before reaching the end of compulsory schooling. The finding established in their 1990s research was challenged by some but was supported in the first nationally representative in-depth study in the UK of this type of employment (Howieson, McKechnie & Semple, 2006). McKechnie was joint principal investigator on this project with colleagues from Edinburgh and Strathclyde University. Hobbs was a consultant on the project.</p> <p>McKechnie & Hobbs also established that child employees work in a wide range of jobs, many equated with adult part time work. In doing so they challenged the stereotype that young people work predominantly in 'children's jobs' such as paper rounds.</p> <p>(ii) <u>the costs and benefits of child employment</u> – McKechnie & Hobbs challenged the dominant view that employment for this age group is necessarily a negative experience, a view embedded within international debates on 'child labour'. They developed an alternative model, the Balance Model, which argued that employment for this group has potentially positive and negative outcomes (Hobbs & McKechnie, 1997; 2007). They set out the key variables which have an impact on the outcome of children's experience of employment. This model has been adopted at the international level.</p> <p>(iii) <u>evaluation of policy and practice in regulating child employment</u> - the regulation of child employees is controlled by legislation in Britain. This legislation establishes the parameters and circumstances under which children can be employed. Local Authorities are then charged with ensuring that these regulations are complied with. In a series of studies McKechnie & Hobbs have shown that the regulatory framework fails to protect young employees and that the majority work illegally. These findings were first reported in a series of reports for local authorities including Cumbria County Council, Blackburn and North Tyneside. (Hobbs & McKechnie, 1997). Further research on the failings of the regulatory system have recently been published in peer reviewed journals (McKechnie et al, 2007; McKechnie et al 2009; McKechnie et al, 2013).</p> <p>This research has identified a number of failings in the current regulatory framework. Their recent work for the Department of Education (2011) showed that the key legislation in this area does not reflect children's experiences in contemporary society. At the local authority level the problem of non-compliance by employers/child employees stems from lack of awareness of the legislation; poor enforcement strategies; under-resourcing due to lack of awareness of levels of employment; low prioritisation of the issue at local and central government.</p> <p>McKechnie & Hobbs have also carried out intervention studies which reduced the levels of illegal employment (McKechnie et al, 2007) and evaluated alternative regulatory approaches (McKechnie et al, 2011).</p> <p>This body of work was carried out by Hobbs & McKechnie whilst based at the University of the</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

West of Scotland (previously University of Paisley) with the support of PhD students and research assistants. In two recent funded projects, one for the Scottish Government in 2004-06 and one for the Department of Education 2010-11, they have collaborated with colleagues Dr Cathy Howieson (Edinburgh University) and Sheila Semple (University of Strathclyde).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Hobbs, S. & McKechnie, J. (1997) *Child Employment in Britain: A social and psychological analysis*, The Stationery Office Limited, Edinburgh.

Howieson, C., McKechnie, J. and Semple, S. (2006) *The nature and implications of the part-time employment of secondary school pupils*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/11/10143236>

McKechnie, J., Anderson, S. and Hobbs, S. (2007) *Cumbria's working youngsters: making the legislation work*. London: NSPCC.

McKechnie, J., Hobbs, S. & Anderson, S. (2009) Can child employment legislation work? *Youth & Policy*, 101, 43-54.

McKechnie, J., Hobbs, S., Simpson, A., Howieson, C. and Semple, S. (2011) *The regulation of child employment and options for reform*. London: Department for Education.
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/Communitycohesion/Page1/DFE-RR124>

McKechnie, J., Hobbs, S., Simpson, A., Howieson, C. and Semple, S. (2013) Protecting child employees: why the system doesn't work. *Youth & Policy*, 110, 66-87.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Throughout the 1990s Hobbs & McKechnie's research raised awareness of child employment in Britain in that it challenged existing stereotypes of 'children's' jobs' and questioned policy makers views on the nature and extent of this type of employment experience. However, the primary impact emerged from a series of studies in 2005-07. These studies focused on policy issues relating to the regulation of child employment.

Two collaborative projects were carried out with Cumbria County Council and the NSPCC from 2004-2007. The first project focused on children's understanding of their exposure to risk in the workplace while the second project consisted of an intervention study targeted at improving the effectiveness of the regulatory framework (McKechnie et al, 2007; 2009). This work raised awareness for the County Council and resulted in the NSPCC placing child employment on its agenda. The publication of the findings (McKechnie et al, 2007) resulted in the NSPCC organising a conference on child employment (18th July 2008), involving policy makers and practitioners to discuss the findings from these studies. This was followed by an NSPCC conference/event for young people on the issue of child employment (5.2 ; 5.5).

Hobbs & McKechnie's work in Cumbria (Hobbs and McKechnie, 1997) has influenced the approach to the regulation of child employment. The 2005 and 2007 reports affected the way the authority saw the child employment officer's role in regulating child employment in the region. This was at a time when the children's services were being reorganised, and the findings identified the contribution of this service within the local authority (5.3).

The intervention study (McKechnie et al, 2007; 2009) and the national study of young people's employment (Howieson et al, 2006) were used by non-governmental organisations in their programme of awareness raising and lobbying (5.2). The National Network of Child Employment and Entertainment Officers (NNCEE) drew on this work and other research outputs from Hobbs and McKechnie to lobby government on the need to review policy and regulation in this area. This

Impact case study (REF3b)

lobbying was a contributory factor to the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) establishing an evaluation study of the regulatory framework in England (5.2). This project initially set up by the DCSF, was continued after the last election by the Department of Education (DfE).

Hobbs and McKechnie's work has also contributed to training days for the NNCEE and presentations at their national conferences (5.2).

Hobbs and McKechnie's work has also raised awareness of child employment for government bodies. The presentation of the 2007 intervention study findings led representatives from the Isle of Man's Department of Education and Children (DfEC) to investigate the nature and extent of child employment and the effectiveness of its regulatory system, which differs from that used in Britain. This resulted in the DfEC supporting a study of child employment and its regulation on the island, 2010-13 (5.1). This study carried out by McKechnie and Hobbs's PhD student, Emma Littler, reported in July 2013. The findings provided the DfEC with the first data on the nature and extent of child employment, and identified weaknesses in the island's regulatory system.

McKechnie, Hobbs and Littler were invited to present the findings to the Minister for Education, the DfEC's Chief Executive Officer and senior DfEC staff in July 2013. As a result of this, the Department is currently reviewing its policy and practice (5.1).

The review of policy is at the heart of the most recent research output. In 2009-10 the DCSF initiated a project to evaluate the current regulatory system in England and to consider alternative approaches to regulation (5.2 ; 5.4). McKechnie and Hobbs, along with colleagues from Edinburgh University (Cathy Howieson and Sheila Semple), were awarded the contract. McKechnie was the principal investigator. Post-2010 election the DfE (the re-named DCSF) continued with this review. The report (McKechnie et al, 2011; 2013) drew attention to the major issues concerning current practice in this area and contributed to the Department's review of child employment (5.4). The review process ended in 2012 with the decision not to proceed with changes in the current regulations.

In the period under review Hobbs and McKechnie's research output has raised awareness of a common, yet neglected, experience for young people in Britain. In doing so they have provided an evidence base which has underpinned the debate of policy and practice in this area.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1 testimonial statement from Department of Education and Children, Isle of Man.

5.2 testimonial statement from the current chair and former chair and secretary of the National Network of Child Employment and Entertainment (NNCEE)

5.3 testimonial statement from Child Employment Officer, Cumbria County Council.

5.4 final report to the Department of Education:

McKechnie, J., Hobbs, S., Simpson, A., Howieson, C. and Semple, S. (2011) *The regulation of child employment and options for reform*. London: Department for Education.

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/Communitycohesion/Page1/DFE-RR124>

5.5 NSPCC webpage citing the 2007 collaborative study between NSPCC, Cumbria County Council and the Child Employment Research Group as source information:

http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/research/questions/employment_of_children_wda70447.html