



## Getting a job: how schools can help students in the competition for employment

While young people are leaving education more qualified than ever before, in many countries they are struggling to compete for jobs in the labour market. Compared to older workers, young people tend to have less work experience, fewer useful contacts and less know-how about how to get a job. Young people face additional challenges in preparing for online recruitment processes. There are however, things that secondary schools can do to help students get a job and ongoing analysis of national longitudinal surveys in four countries reveal associations with better employment outcomes. This paper looks at how school can:

- Demystify the recruitment process
- Teach students how to apply for jobs
- Help them prepare to succeed in job interviews.

### The competition for work

On average, today's students leave education more highly qualified than older workers, but they struggle in the competition for work (Zenner-Höffkes et al., 2021<sup>[1]</sup>). Schools can help give their students an advantage in the search for work by helping them gain relevant work-related experience which can help persuade potential employers see tangible benefits in hiring young people. Schools can help students gain work experience<sup>1</sup> and play a valuable role too in helping students to develop the specific skills required to succeed in job search and application processes. This includes demystifying the recruitment process and helping students learn how to present themselves well on paper (or online) and in person. New analysis of

<sup>1</sup> How schools can give students work experience, and take full advantage of their part-time working and volunteering in the community, is the subject of a further policy brief in this series due for publication in the autumn. It will draw in part on existing analysis of long-term employment benefits associated with teenage working described in Mann, Denis and Percy (2020), [Career Ready? How schools can better prepare young people for working life in the era of COVID-19](#), Paris, OECD Publications

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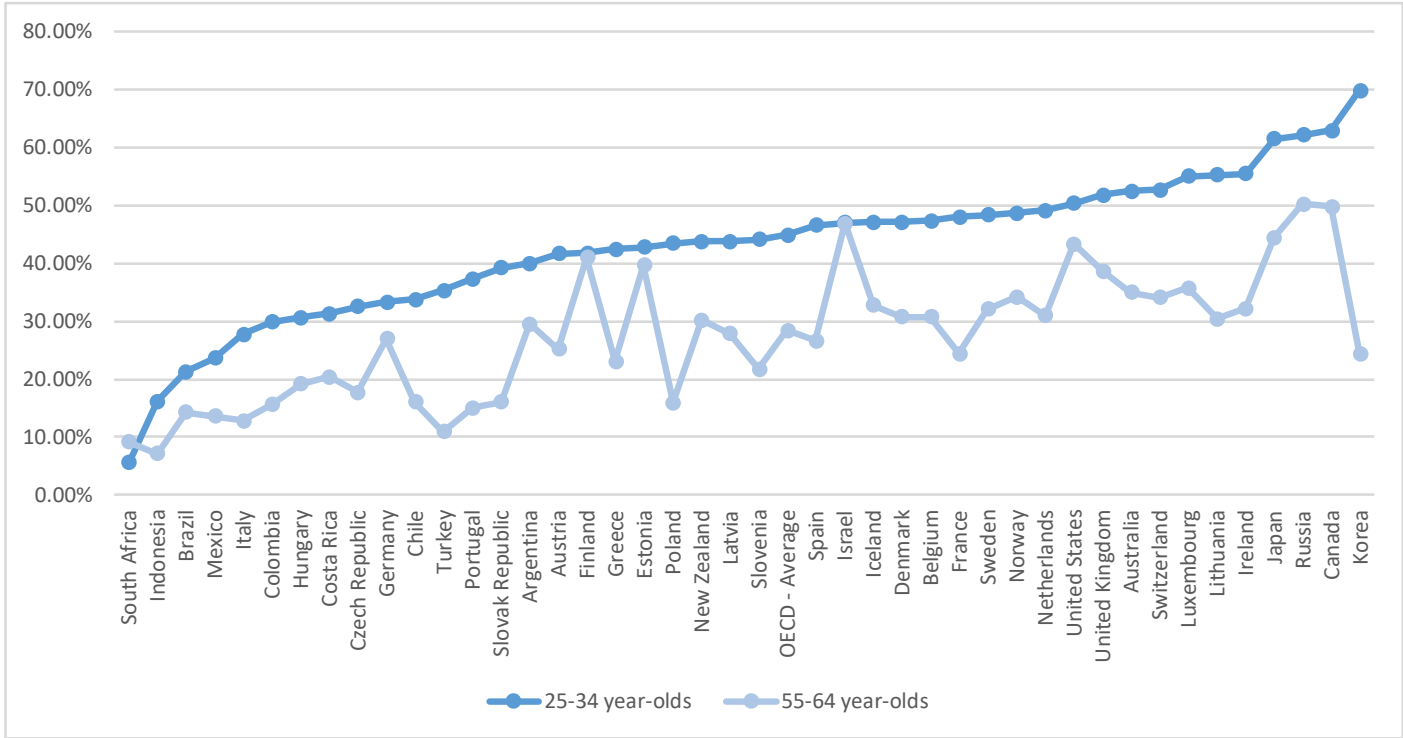
national longitudinal studies shows that young people can expect to benefit from such activities once they are searching for full-time work. The research literature on how to best develop such recruitment skills is very limited, particularly with regard to online recruitment processes. However, it does contain lessons of value - and around the world, examples of practice provide models for how schools can help students succeed in the competition to get a job when they leave education. This paper also draws on interviews with career guidance professionals and with young adults aged 18 to 24 who, over the last year, have tried to find a full-time job.

**Young people face extra barriers in the competition for work**

Young people are staying in education longer than ever. Across the OECD, young adults (aged 25-34) are for example, are 58% more likely than peers aged 55-64 to bring experience of tertiary education with them into the labour market.

Figure 1. Population with tertiary education

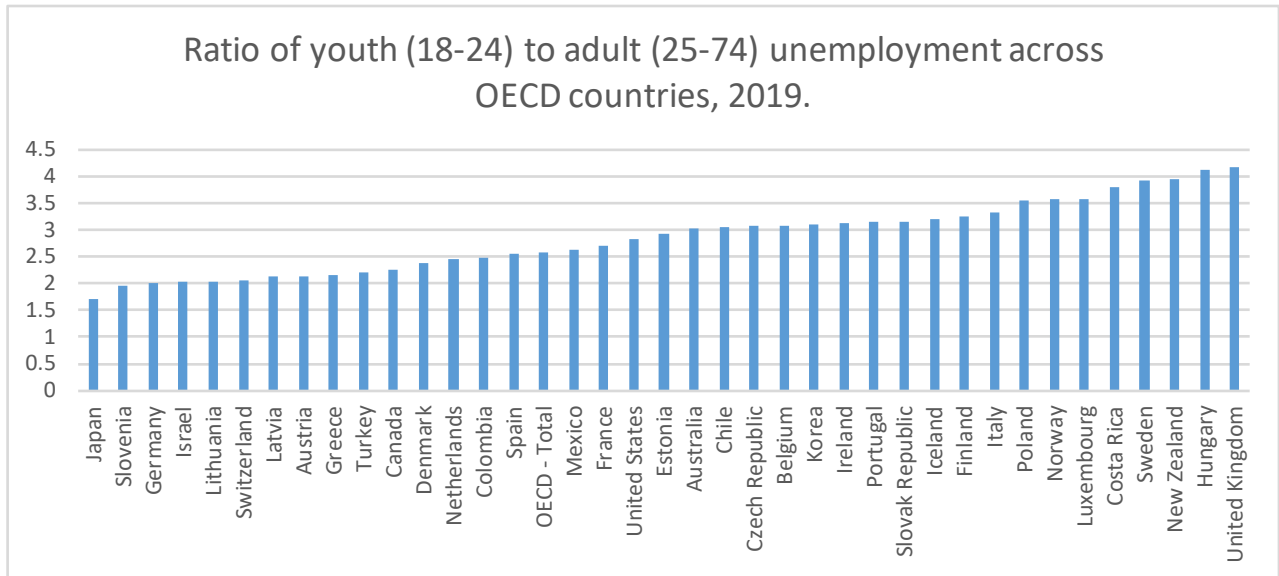
25-34 year-olds / 55-64 year-olds, % in same age group, 2019 or latest available



Source: OECD Database - <https://data.oecd.org/eduatt/population-with-tertiary-education.htm> (accessed on 1 July 2021).

And yet, in spite of often being more highly qualified than their older peers, young adults overwhelmingly can expect to experience higher levels of unemployment. In 2019, immediately prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, young adults under 25 across the OECD faced average unemployment rates two and half higher than their older peers, rising to four times greater in the Hungary, New Zealand, Sweden and the UK.

Figure 2. Ratio of youth (18-24) to adult (25-74) unemployment across OECD countries, 2019.



Source: OECD PISA 2018 Database - <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/2018database> (accessed on 1 July 2021).

There are a number of reasons why young people may be less attractive to employers than older workers. Labour market regulation for example, may make employers nervous about taking on untried recruits or an economy may simply have more demand for more experienced workers. Young people may also go into the jobs market with qualifications that are in areas of comparatively little demand from employers. However, some of the disadvantage relates less to patterns of demand and more to how well young people are equipped to compete for available employment. As the International Labor Organisation has stressed, in the competition for work young people:

*have less work experience; they have less knowledge about how and where to look for work; and, they have fewer contacts upon which to call (ILO, 2010[12])*

Put another way, the 2017 Expert Panel on Youth Employment commissioned by the Government of Canada has identified six common barriers faced by young people seeking to secure sustained and satisfying employment. Compared to older people, young people faced greater risks of being:

- Uninformed about labour market opportunities and how they relate to long term careers
- Uncertain about their career ambitions
- Underprepared in terms of the skills they need to secure employment
- Underrated by some employers in terms of what they can bring to the workplace
- Unaccepted by some employers, highlighting the consequences of [different forms of] discrimination
- Under-resourced in the competition for work, a factor of greatest challenge to the most socially disadvantaged

### ***The competition for work in the pandemic and post-pandemic era***

This policy brief is published at a time when concern over youth unemployment is rising in many countries. Unemployment typically rises more quickly for younger people than for older workers during an economic

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slump – and longitudinal studies show that early experiences of joblessness are associated with long term scars in terms of psychological well-being as well as employment outcomes. During the pandemic, sectors which disproportionately employ younger workers, such as hospitality and retail, were profoundly disrupted by the crisis. In response in June 2021, OECD Ministers endorsed an updated Youth Action Plan, highlighting the vulnerability of young people and the need for policy action to address their specific needs. This paper focuses on one aspect of the many barriers facing youth and asks what secondary schools can do to support young people to compete for those jobs that are available in the post-pandemic world.

##### ***Career readiness in the pandemic***

The paper is part of a wider OECD project that takes a new approach to addressing an old question: how can schools best prepare students for smooth transitions into employment. The project draws on an unprecedented analysis of national longitudinal surveys in ten countries to explore the relationships between better adult employment outcomes (higher earnings and career satisfaction, lower unemployment) and teenage career-related attitudes and experiences. In *Career Ready? How schools can better prepare young people for working life in the era of COVID-19* (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>), existing academic literature was reviewed. The paper illustrated the ways in which studies that follow the same cohort of young people from childhood to adulthood evidence better outcomes linked to how students explore their futures in work primarily through career development activities, what experience they have of real workplaces and how they think about their futures in work.

Subsequently, new analysis of data (ref Thinking about the Future) from Australia, Denmark and Switzerland presented new evidence of how teenage attitudes relate to adult outcomes. In September 2021, the project team will publish further new analysis from longitudinal studies in Australia, Canada, People's Republic of China, Germany, Korea, United Kingdom, United States and Uruguay. Collectively, these studies provide a compelling picture of the importance of career guidance in enhancing the employment prospects of young people.

##### ***Career guidance and the search for work***

This paper focuses on three aspects of career guidance that can be expected to enhance outcomes for students: i) demystification of the recruitment process; ii) the development of skills in applying for work and iii) effective interview skills. The paper highlights international studies and practice to show how schools can optimise the chances of students being well prepared in the competition for work. It also draws too on interviews conducted by the project team with young adults (aged 18-24) who were asked about how well they felt their schools had prepared them for working life, what they most valued about their preparation and (given what they know now) what they wished their schools had done for them.

##### **New analysis of the impact of recruitment skills activities on employment outcomes: Australia, Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom**

While many schools help students to develop recruitment skills, like the development of an effective CV/résumé or practicing interview skills, no research studies on the long term impact of such approaches have been identified. In new analysis however, the OECD Career Readiness team has looked at whether such student guidance activities can be linked with better employment outcomes. The analysis makes use of national longitudinal studies, assessments that follow large cohorts of students through school into adulthood. Through statistical analysis, it is possible to control for the factors that commonly determine how well individuals do in work such as gender, academic success and socio-economic status. Consequently, it becomes possible to understand if specific teenage experiences can be related with better (or worse) employment outcomes in young adulthood than would be anticipated. National longitudinal

surveys in Australia, Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom include questions on student participation (at age 15-16) in school-based activities linked to the development of skills in applying for a job and interviewing successfully. Preliminary analysis shows that in five countries, student participation in these activities is associated with positive employment outcomes at age 25-26, such as lower likelihood of being NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), higher earnings and more satisfaction with their job or career. Full analysis, including details of the size of the positive impacts, will be published by the OECD in the autumn of 2021.

### **Understanding the recruitment process**

*My school certainly instilled in us a good understanding of how the recruitment process works. They had us do various workshops on how to apply for jobs and what specific values to present to certain employers. They walked us through what to expect from the recruitment process, including the job applications, CVs, sit-down interviews, questionnaires and trials/auditions for different jobs. It was all very helpful and I credit a good portion of my success in job hunting to that.*

*Blair, 18, from Australia who became a full-time construction apprentice after leaving secondary education at age 17.*

*I really wish that my school taught me more about how to search for jobs: which websites are most useful, how to do a good cover letter, how to tell a good job from a bad one. The single most important thing that my school could have done is to demystify the process of how people get jobs. Getting a graduate job is very different to getting a holiday job or a part-time job at uni.*

*Michael, 23, a university graduate who has been looking for, and now found, full-time work in finance in the UK.*

The barriers facing many young people as they enter the labour market – lack of experience, lack of contacts, lack of know-how – are accentuated as the jobs market itself becomes more complex (with technology and the pandemic radically changing demand for skills) and more competitive (with growing competition in some countries from older workers for entry level employment) (Bowman and Azpitarte, 2017<sup>[3]</sup>) (Mann and Huddleston, 2016<sup>[4]</sup>). Whereas once, young people might typically have expected to find employment through specialist government employment agencies or through word of mouth, employers increasingly make use of specialist agencies, social media and recruitment using online systems, including now in some fields, virtual reality.<sup>2</sup> Some employers hire moreover, using group interviews and assessment centres. Challenges for young people can be particularly great in terms of online recruitment where opportunity for direct interaction with, or feedback from, a member of the recruitment team is limited, if not impossible. Candidates need to hope that they get it right first time or that they happen to know someone who can give them useful feedback for the future. Over the last generation, in many countries responsibility has grown on young people to develop and deploy their own knowledge and skills in the job hunting. Consequently, there is a need for schools to help students understand how employers recruit and how they can best position themselves to maximise their chances of gaining employment.

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<sup>2</sup> See for example: <https://vervoe.com/virtual-reality-recruitment/>.

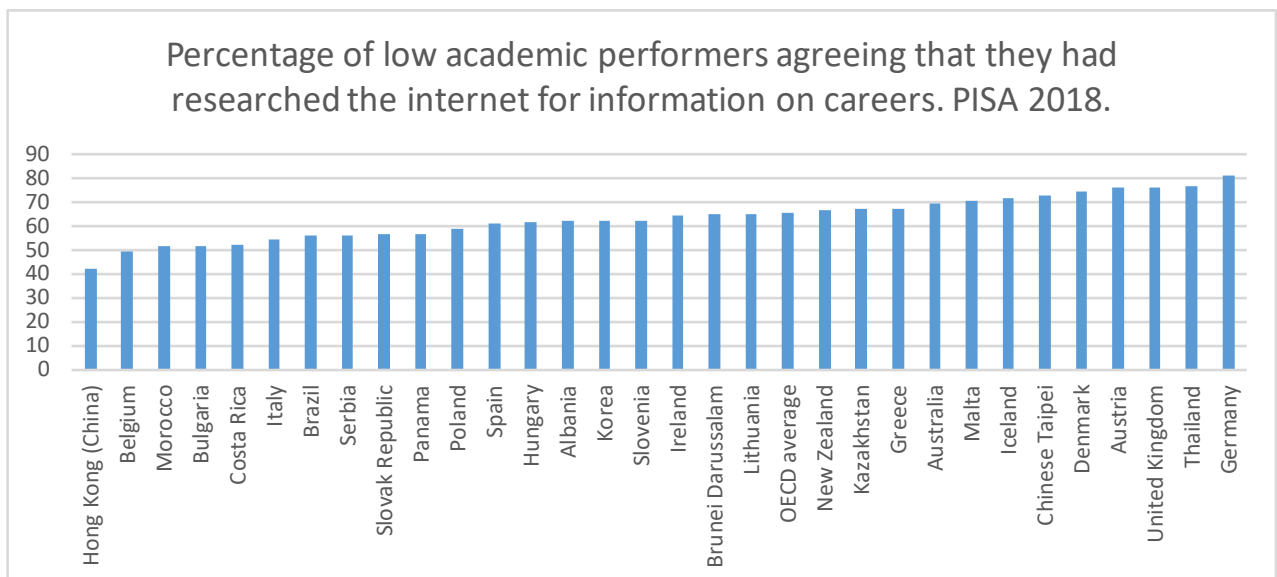
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One way to assess the needs of young people is to ask them as adults (who now have first hand experience of what it is like to search for full-time work) what they wished their schools had provided for them by way of preparation. One such survey was undertaken in the UK in 2017 by the polling firm, YouGov for the UK charity, Education and Employers. A representative sample of young adults aged 19 to 24 were asked: 'Given what you know now, would you have welcomed more help in any of the following areas while at secondary school?' (Mann et al., 2017<sup>[5]</sup>). The 1 744 respondents were then presented with a list of 14 different areas of knowledge and skills related to the search for work. Approximately half or more of respondents felt that they would have benefited from greater help in terms of:

- how to create a good CV, or write a good application;
- how to perform well at interview;
- how employer actually recruit;
- how the world of work is changing and which skills are likely to be demanded in the future, and
- how to find a job.

Such results stand in contrast to the confidence that young people exhibit as teenagers while still in school. In 2018, the OECD PISA study asked tens of thousands of 15 year-old students about their job searching skills. On average, across participating OECD countries, nine out of ten agreed that they knew how to find information about jobs and eight out of ten that they knew how to search for jobs. Far fewer students however, reported that they had actually begun the process of researching jobs while still in school. Only three-quarters of all students from participating OECD countries in the 2018 round of PISA agreed that they had researched the internet for information on careers. Among the lower performers on the PISA tests (students who might be expected to enter the jobs market early), the proportion falls to two-thirds and in some countries fewer than half agreeing.

**Figure 3. Percentage of low academic performers agreeing that they had researched the internet for information on careers. PISA 2018.**



Source: OECD PISA 2018 Database - <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/2018database> (accessed on 1 July 2021).

### Box 1. Understanding jobs linked to subjects of study in France

In France, some schools ask students aged 12-13 to research jobs linked to topics of study as a means of introducing students to using the internet to gather information about employment opportunities and to draw a strong link between classroom learning and the real world. Link: [https://www.oecd.org/education/career-readiness/France\\_jobs%20and%20careers%20in%20science%20class.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/career-readiness/France_jobs%20and%20careers%20in%20science%20class.pdf)

Of concern too is the relatively low proportion of students in many countries who reported first hand experiences of engaging with employers through their schools by the age of 15. In PISA 2018, on average fewer than four in ten students reporting taking part in guidance activities with employers such as work placements and job fairs (Mann, Denis and Percy, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>). Such activities serve a range of different objectives such as broadening career thinking and developing non-cognitive skills like team working that employers' demand. They might not be explicitly or exclusively designed to help students get a job after education, but studies show that young adults often report that they were useful to them, in some way, in doing just that. A study of a representative sample of one thousand young British adults (aged 19-24) for example, found that mentoring and career talks were seen as having been especially helpful to students in the competition for work after education (Mann and Kashefpakdel, 2014<sup>[6]</sup>). Six out of ten young adults who recalled being 'business mentored' at school (connected with a working professional to provide advice and support over a period of time), found the relationship helpful with nearly one-quarter in all saying that it had been very helpful in getting a job. In terms of career talks, young adults who recalled three or more such activities who were much more likely to say that they had proved helpful to them than peers who had just occasionally taken part in such activities. In all, 54% of young adults found them helpful in getting a job (16% very helpful) in contrast to 33% who received just one to two career talks, finding them helpful (4% very helpful). The two activities represent intensive and extensive models of intervention. In mentoring, particularly where the mentor works in an industry of interest to the mentee, opportunities emerge for detailed discussion and support about recruitment practices. In career talks, young people have easy access to a wide range of information about recruitment practices.

### Demystifying the hiring process

A key function of such employer engagement is that it provides the opportunity for young people to understand how the hiring works, hearing directly from people well placed to provide reliable insights into the recruitment process. For schools, scope exists to focus explicitly on a demystification of the recruitment process.

In some Finnish vocational schools, a twenty-hour programme is undertaken by final year students to prepare them for going into the labour market. It is co-taught over one week by a staff member from the school and a representative of the Public Employment Service. As part of the activity, students meet with employers to discuss their approaches to recruitment. Students are taught how to make use of social networks to secure information about employment, how to approach employers directly, how to complete job applications and résumés, present themselves at interview, identify marketable skills and to understand and respond to expectations of workplace social behaviour. They are taught to 'think like an employer' and to reflect on the challenges and barriers which they can expect to encounter in their search for attractive work. Overall, the programme seeks to develop job search self-efficacy in young people: their degree of



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confidence in their ability to perform essential job-search activities well, such as securing job leads and successful interviewing. Longitudinal studies show that students taking part in the programme could expect both better employment outcomes than peers and signs of greater psychological well-being as young adults. The programme is designed to help them approach employment with a more realistic understanding of the challenges ahead of them and how they might be overcome.

*My school prepared us for thinking towards universities and careers to pursue. However, nothing really prepared me for unemployment. Having experienced a long period of unemployment, I wish my school had explained to us that unemployment is a very realistic possibility for young people, and had us understand how horrible that reality is.*

*Grace, 24, from the UK who completed undergraduate and post-graduate degrees after leaving secondary education at age 18.*

For secondary schools, opportunity exists to enrich student preparation for adult life by inviting a range of people who deal with recruitment in its different forms into school to speak to young people about how they can expect to secure desirable employment.



## United States: Workplace Visits and Demystifying the hiring process

Edgecomb County Public Schools is a small school district in North Carolina, serving a predominately working-class and ethnically diverse community. Among its 6 200 students, 65% come from an ethnic or racial minority, and 80% qualify for free or reduced-cost lunches. Ms. Arlane Gordon-Bray, as Community Engagement Partner, is responsible for engaging employers in two of the district's public schools. She uses community organising and 'design thinking empathy' techniques to involve employers in supporting career guidance and work-related learning activities.

One of the many activities that Ms. Gordon-Bray leads are workplace visits with secondary school students (ages 14-18). Here, she personally visits the employers beforehand to ensure that the workplace is appropriate for her students and to ensure the employer that there is someone they know at the school who they can turn to if there is a problem. It is also an opportunity for Ms. Gordon-Bray to be clear about her expectations and to address any misconceptions about her students who tend to be drawn from the most disadvantaged sections of the community.

### *Demystifying the recruitment process*

At the conclusion of a recent visit, an employer informed the class that he was looking to hire students for part-time work over the summer, and told them where they should go to apply, that as soon as they do apply that they should tell Ms. Gordon-Bray what they have applied for, and that the employer would then "pull" the students' applications out. Young people had never heard of or thought about the concept of "pulling applications", and through this they are able to see a direct result of "if I do a, then I can get to b... which can lead to a job".

Intrigued by the newly realized ease of obtaining part-time work, students then completed their applications alongside Ms. Gordon-Bray. Ms. Gordon-Bray walked the students through the application process including guidance on what makes a successful job application, résumé/CV guidance, and interview preparation. Throughout the whole process, she also made sure that the students were BCC'd on every email with the employer, so they could see how the process actually work behind the scenes. Ms. Gordon-Bray took advantage of this opportunity and now plans to integrate the demystification process into her ongoing guidance classes.

Another effective approach that takes account of young people's difficulty in engaging in recruitment processes is for schools to enable direct contact between final year students and with employers with the explicit aim of helping them to get a desirable job.

In response to an acute shortage of young people going into the skilled trades, New Zealand has recently introduced [SpeedMeet](#). Over one hour, students have opportunity to meet with ten different employers interested in hiring school leavers directly or onto an apprenticeship programme. At the end of the process, both students and employers identify with whom they would like to follow up. If there is a match, contact details are exchanged. It is a quick and simple way to connect students with potential employers, addressing their typically weak work-related social networks.

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In the United States, a small number of schools have created their own employment exchanges, inviting employers to submit jobs suitable for school leavers and then identified students who would be interested and well suited to the opportunities. School-assisted job placements are job placements that are a direct result of school-industry linkages. School-assisted job placements can come about through formal means, such as a school providing a placement office for students looking for employment, or informally, such as placements developed through an informal connection based on a teacher's personal network that is embedded in local industry. (Arum and Way, 2004<sup>[7]</sup>) in a rare study, followed a large number of students to explore evidence of long term labour market benefits. They find that women who received their first job after high school through school-assisted job placement had on average 21% higher wages three years after high school than women who did not. However, while the study shows that men who participated in school-assisted job placements earned 3% more than peers three years later, the results were not statistically significant.

Many schools in the United States, Canada and Australia provide students with the opportunity to take part of short occupationally-focused programmes of study that are embedded in general, rather than vocational, education curricula. In other countries, such as Sweden, teenagers have the opportunity to enter full-time, school-based vocational programmes. Where students have opportunity to engage with employers and take part in work-based learning as part of their studies, scope for connecting with potential future employers is strong. Indeed, the OECD has recommended that work-based learning is an essential part of all school-based vocational programmes in part because of the long term recruitment benefits that can be expected to follow through meeting potential employers and learning about recruitment processes as well as in gaining technical skills and work experience (Musset, 2019<sup>[8]</sup>). For schools in general education, where short occupationally-focused programmes are not available, it is possible to create a combination of activities that collectively enable a young person to gain experience, develop networks and build know-how relevant to recruitment into an occupational sector.

*I think creating networks and having acquaintances is important in finding a job. In my experience when you are surrounded by people who see potential in you, they will look for further opportunities for you. When you're a trainee or volunteer, then you will be noticed, you will probably get hired by the company. This provides you a direct contact with people that helps you find new opportunities.*

*Triin, 22 from Estonia who is now working in a full-time job after completing an undergraduate degree*

### Helping students to succeed in application processes

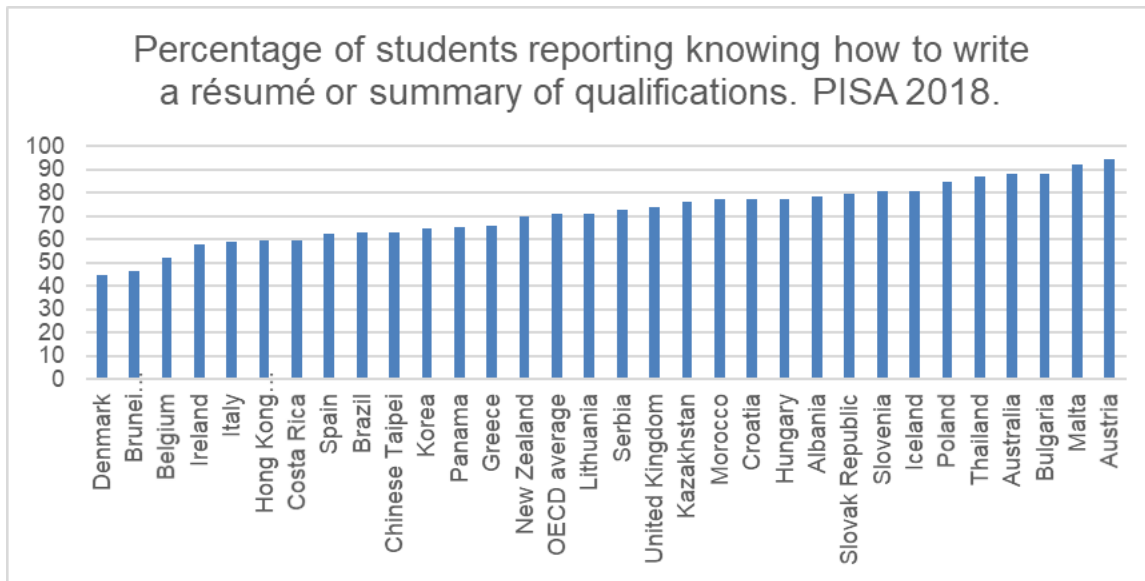
#### Box 2. Online advice for young people in Scotland on how to get a job

In Scotland, the government website My World of Work includes easy to follow advice to young people about the process of getting a job. The website includes details of how to search for jobs, how to complete CVs and applications and how to interview with confidence. It recommends that young people research the job and employer well in order to predict the sorts of questions that they may be asked in interviews and (like national guidance services in Canada and England) to prepare by using the STAR technique: thinking of a Situation where they have developed a relevant skill, the Task that they did to resolve a problem in that situation, the Actions they took and the Results that followed.

Link: <https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/getting-a-job>

The new OECD analysis highlighted in this paper stresses the importance of school leavers understanding how to present their qualifications and experience effectively in a Curriculum Vitae (CV)/résumé or through an application process. Given the value that employers place on such documents, many schools conduct activities designed to introduce students to this part of the application process and help them develop their own résumés. PISA 2018 shows that across participating OECD countries, an average of 71% of 15 year-olds say that they know how to write a résumé. It is not known what percentage learnt the skill in schools or whether the CV-writing skills claimed are fit for purpose.

Figure 4. Percentage of students reporting knowing how to write a résumé or summary of qualifications. PISA 2018.



Source: OECD PISA 2018 Database - <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/2018database> (accessed on 1 July 2021).

Effective CV/résumé preparation encourages young people, who will be new to full-time employment, to make full use of both their academic and non-academic experiences and achievements in presenting themselves. This might include details of part-time employment, school-mediated work placements, volunteering and extra-curricular activities. Good practice argues too that young people should be prepared to adjust their CVs/résumés to highlight different aspects of their achievements and experiences as are relevant to different vacancies – and that they should take care to ensure the information is accurate and free of embellishments. Students might be cautioned moreover to create an email address that is appropriate to the recruitment process, to review their profiles on social media to ensure that there is nothing off-putting to a potential employer and to consider creating online profiles in employment-focused media resources, such as Linked-In. It is also important to learn how to research an employer, to read a job description and to practice writing cover letters, responding to employer requirements and desires and, adjusting applications accordingly.

**Delivering effective CV/résumé Workshops**

Schools often help students to prepare summaries of their qualifications and experiences. There is significant added value to be had in inviting employee volunteers with recruitment experience into schools or representatives of Public Employment Services to help with such CV workshops. By providing an authentic description of how CVs and applications are read, they give students greater reason to engage

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seriously and through their feedback provide advice that is difficult to ignore. As recruitment practices vary, it is desirable to engage recruiters from a number of different occupational areas to take part in sessions. Through CV workshops, students are introduced to good and bad CVs, applications and cover letters. They are taught what a recruiter looks for in such documents. A CV workshop can be delivered as a talk or classroom presentation with break-out group sessions, as well as a one-to-one session where students bring their CVs for evaluation (Rehill, Kashefpakdel and Mann, 2017<sup>[9]</sup>).

### Croatia: Job Search Preparation with a Public Employment Service

CISOK (Career Information and Counselling Centres), an initiative of the Croatian Employment Service (CES), actively carries out career guidance and counselling activities for secondary school students in Croatia. An aspect of career preparation particularly stressed by CISOK is the importance of CV writing/editing. In Croatia in most cases, secondary school students participate in practical work experiences every year as part of their school curriculum. Therefore, CISOK recommends that young people construct a CV as early as their first year of secondary school (ages 13-14), to be better prepared for seeking out external practical work experiences with employers.

Promoting the importance of CV writing/editing is accomplished in a number of ways depending on circumstances. Commonly, representatives from CISOK visit schools, where they conduct presentations, lectures, and seminars on how to fill out job applications and create a CV or cover letter. Students are also encouraged to visit their local CISOK to receive more personalized guidance. Here, students are presented with examples of successful applications, receive feedback and guidance on their portfolio, and are assisted in the writing and editing process. Often, the most economically disadvantaged young people do not own a personal computer, so their local CISOK provides them with access to their computers so that they may work on their CVs.

In aiding young people build their first CVs and/or cover letters, CISOK often recommends and walks them through using [EuroPass](#). EuroPass is a free website funded and created by the European Union, where students can enter their basic information, skills, qualifications and experiences, and it will build them a CV and/or cover letter. After a EuroPass CV is created, it is saved online to be retrieved and possibly modified later. EuroPass CVs can be translated into any of 24 official languages of the European Union.

While students may not need to use their CVs to secure work until leaving education, many schools encourage, enable or require students to develop and update CVs through secondary education. Online portfolios are popular in many countries, allowing students to building portfolios that record achievements through their school careers for use once they enter the labour market. This is also a means of helping students to see the extrinsic value of their education to lives in adulthood and how educational experiences can be presented to illustrate different personal attributes valued by employers.

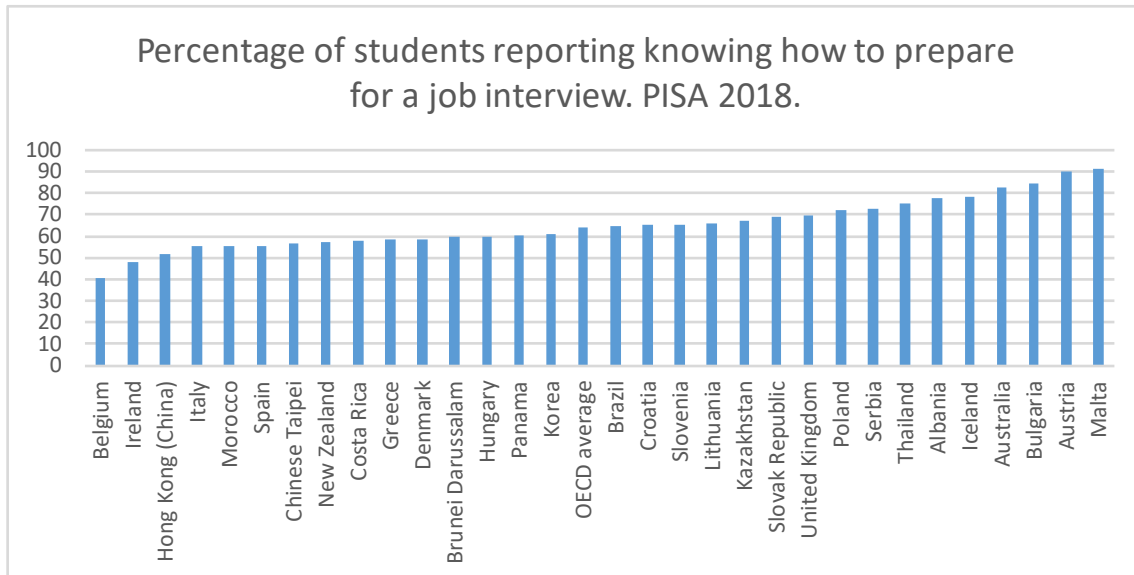
## Helping young people to develop interview skills

*We didn't have practice interviews at my school, but I wished we had. It is nerve wracking being interviewed. It's really easy to be thrown off. Having a go previously so you know what you are looking at would have definitely helped me.*

*Mark, 21 from the UK who left education at 16 and has worked in the construction and hospitality industries.*

A mock interview is an activity in which a teacher or other professional provides a participant with chance to practice their interview technique in a simulation structured to resemble a real-life job interview (Huss, Jhileek and Butler, 2017<sub>[10]</sub>). In PISA 2018, students in 31 countries were asked if they knew how to prepare for a job interview: on average across the OECD countries, 64% agreed that they did. It is unknown what proportion of students developed such confidence through their school.

Figure 5. Percentage of students reporting knowing how to prepare for a job interview. PISA 2018.



Source: OECD PISA 2018 Database - <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/2018database> (accessed on 1 July 2021).

As with CV workshops, the research literature on how the positive effects of interview skills sessions can be optimised is very limited. It can be expected however, that practice interviews which engage employee volunteers are likely to be more effective in providing students with learning opportunities. In one focused study, students, teachers and employee volunteers were invited to reflect on the benefits of different forms of practice interview sessions.

## Recommendations for effective practice in simulated recruitment activities

A study published by the UK government-funded Careers and Enterprise Company (the body currently tasked with enhancing school-delivered career guidance in England), provides insight into how positive benefits from simulated recruitment activities can be optimised. Drawing on questionnaire responses from 183 young people aged 14-18 who had completed a simulated recruitment activity at their school, perspectives from teachers and employee volunteers participating in the same events and from 56 guidance counsellors with first hand experience of such activities, the study highlights characteristics of events perceived to be more impactful by both student and adult participants. More successful recruitment activities were characterised by (Rehill, Kashefpakdel and Mann, 2017<sup>[9]</sup>), as follows:

1. **Preparation.** Schools and colleges should set aside time for students to prepare before an event begins. Students regularly found mock interview sessions more useful if they have had time to prepare questions and answers prior to the event taking place.
2. **Authenticity.** Simulated recruitment activities should be presented or facilitated by an employer or an employee volunteer, assisted by teaching staff and careers professionals who know the students taking part.
3. **Interaction.** Simulated recruitment activities should be delivered as one-to-one practice interviews rather than a presentation or lecture that simply describes the process.
4. **Feedback.** Employers should provide constructive feedback on the performance of a young person.
5. **Variation.** Students taking part in interviews should have the opportunity to be interviewed by a number of different employee volunteers, preferably from different occupational sectors.
6. **Volume.** Students should have the chance to take part in multiple recruitment skills events. In their survey of young people, it was the students who had undertaken the greatest numbers of interviews and CV workshops who found them to be most helpful.
7. **Age of participants.** While positive outcomes can be achieved at all ages, there is a strong indication that best outcomes can be achieved if both CV workshops and mock interviews are offered to students 15 years old or older.<sup>3</sup>

Preparation for online interviews, including recorded material for submission to a potential employer, can be expected to take a similar approach with added advice on the need for taking care of logistical arrangements.<sup>4</sup> As well as developing skills of long term value, practice interviews can be expected to bring additional benefits to young people. They require effective communication with an adult who is not a

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<sup>3</sup> In England, while compulsory education ends at 16, most students stay on in education or training until 18.

<sup>4</sup> For advice focused on young people in Australia see <https://myfuture.edu.au/career-articles/details/tips-to-prepare-for-your-digital-interview> and in England <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/how-to-do-well-in-video-interviews/>

parent or teacher and can prompt students as well to think about the relationships between what they study in school and their later lives as adults seeking work.

*Mock interviews and activities that engage pupils' communication skills are very important. Many of our pupils, including our top academic pupils, are confident behind a screen. They feel at ease sending an email or text message, but if you put them on a phone call or have them participate in an in-person conversation with someone they do not know, they can find it very stressful and difficult to articulate what they would like to say. Pupils today often don't get the chance to practise these essential skills in day-to-day life thanks to our society's reliance on digital communication - it can be overwhelming for them when they are required to use them. These skills get lost and we have to teach them in schools, otherwise our pupils will be at a disadvantage when they look for employment.*

*Laura Powell, Careers Leader, Malet Lambert School, Hull, United Kingdom*

*I find that many of my (14-15 years old) students have ambition, but it is often very narrow. Therefore, I organise activities for them to broaden their aspirations. Among them are simulated recruitment activities. These are particularly useful because along with the benefits of building confidence and improving communication skills, students also have the opportunity of engaging with and networking with someone from a career they haven't fully explored yet.*

*Lin Proctor, Careers Lead, Wallington County Grammar School, United Kingdom*



## The bottom line: Schools can make an important difference to students by helping them understand the process, and develop the skills, that will get them a job they want.

New analysis overseen by the OECD has asked for the first time whether positive relationships can be found between participation in school-managed recruitment skills activities and better employment outcomes. Four national longitudinal studies look for evidence of such associations and in preliminary analysis all find labour market benefits linked to such activities ten years later. To help young people compete for available jobs, schools can:

- Demystify the recruitment process, helping them to understand how employers think
- Enable students to develop and adapt their own CV or résumé
- Give students the opportunity to develop and practice interview techniques
- Engage employee volunteers with first hand experience of the recruitment process to ensure that learning experiences feel as authentic as possible and to provide relevant feedback to students
- Give students multiple opportunities to develop, test and reflect on their emerging skills
- Focus on older students, but ensure that all students through secondary education are given chance to understand and develop the recruitment skills that will help them get a job

It is the role of secondary schools to provide students with support that is based on actual labour market practice, especially during times when competition for employment is fierce and technology is changing the ways in which employers recruit. Through such means, it can be expected that when former students apply for employment as an adult, it will not be the first time that they test the skills needed to get the job.

## Useful websites

- **Australia** - <https://myfuture.edu.au/job-search-resources>
- **Canada** - <https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/apply-for-work>
- **England** - <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice#getting-a-job>
- **France** - <https://www.onisep.fr/Cap-vers-l-emploi/Recherche-d-emploi>
- **Ireland** - [https://careersportal.ie/work\\_employment/finding\\_jobs.php](https://careersportal.ie/work_employment/finding_jobs.php)
- **New Zealand** - <https://www.careers.govt.nz/job-hunting>
- **Scotland** - <https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/getting-a-job>
- **Wales** - <https://careerswales.gov.wales/getting-a-job>

## Career Readiness in the Pandemic

The OECD Career Readiness project is designed to provide policy makers and practitioners with evidenced guidance on how schools can best prepare young people for employment during a period of economic disruption. The project makes particular use of the results from the 2018 round of PISA and new analysis of national longitudinal datasets in ten countries.



### For more information

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See: [Career Readiness in the Pandemic](#)

Covacevich, C., et al. (2021), "Thinking about the future: Career readiness insights from national longitudinal surveys and from practice", *OECD Education Working Papers*

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**NEW SKILLS <sup>AT</sup> WORK**

J.P.Morgan