

# Tomorrow's Leaders

March 2011



**Patrick Woodman and Paul Hutchings**



# 1. Introduction

This paper presents the results of CMI's Tomorrow's Leaders survey in which we set out to examine managers' perceptions about young people and the education system.

Managers' concerns about young people's education are not new. Seventy-nine per cent of managers surveyed by CMI in 2000 agreed that failures in the education system are contributing to a skills crisis in the UK. A decade later, we wanted to revisit some of those issues.

The research was conducted in early 2011 in a period of rising youth unemployment. Nearly a million people aged between 16 to 24 years old are currently unemployed, equating to 20.5 per cent of the total.<sup>2</sup> Amid widespread concern about their futures, it was timely to ask managers how they feel education could better prepare young people to enter the world of work.

With the forthcoming launch of 'Campus CMI', our new programme giving young people the opportunity to take accredited team leading and management qualifications alongside their studies, this survey presented an opportunity to put a number of questions to our members. How do managers rate young people's education today? What do managers look for when recruiting young people? What are the drivers and barriers affecting employers' involvement in young people's education?

The findings suggest that managers in early 2011 still have major concerns. Sixty nine per cent believe that failures in the education system are damaging the UK's economic performance, with 73 per cent believing they are contributing to a skills crisis. Nine out of ten managers feel that young people often need training in basic skills when they enter the world of work, and while communications skills are seen as the most important skills for young people when they start work, current levels are viewed as poor or very poor by 51 per cent.

However, the report also identifies some areas where action could help improve young people's employability – whether, for example, through the expansion of Apprenticeships or through greater involvement of employers with schools. Initiatives which provide a platform for employers to support the local community, providing a straightforward platform for involvement and minimising bureaucracy, are likely to be well received.

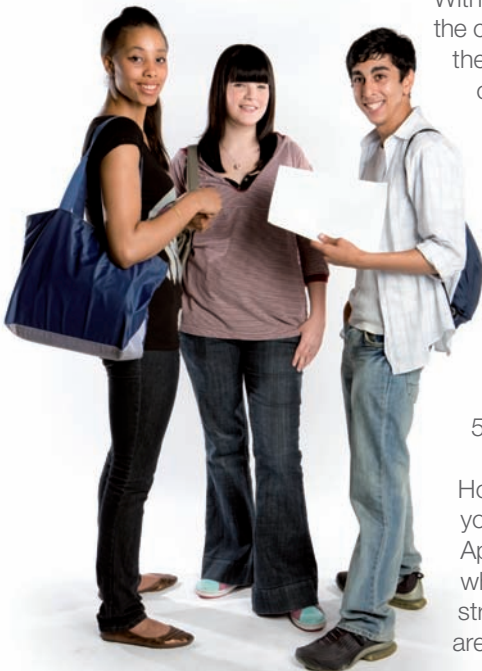
By helping young people gain qualifications, CMI will help improve employment prospects and close the gap between entry-level skills and employment needs; and, in the end, build a stronger, better performing base of UK managers.

## Methodology

Twenty thousand CMI members were invited to take the survey in late January and early February 2011. In total 585 responses were received coming from all over the UK and all levels of management, a relatively low response rate for CMI surveys. Throughout the survey and this report 'young people' are classified as those between 16 and 21 years old.

1. Known then as the Institute of Management

2. Office for National Statistics. February 2011. Labour market statistics – Statistical Bulletin. Available at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/lmsuk0211.pdf>



# 2. Managers' perspectives on the education system

## 2.1 Are failures in the education system harming the economy?

A majority of the managers surveyed appear to have concerns about the education system. Only one in five managers agree that the education system develops young people's skills to a satisfactory level, while 58 per cent disagree. Even more alarmingly, nearly three quarters agree that failures in the education system are contributing to a skills crisis in this country and 69 per cent that failures are harming the UK's economic performance.

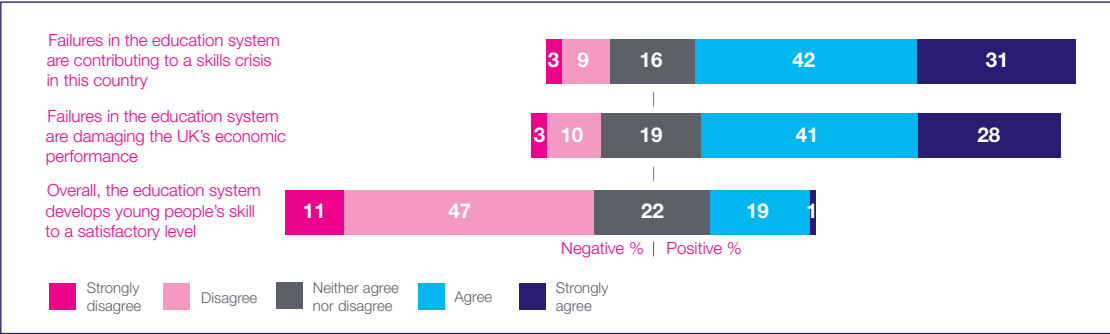


Figure 1 Managers' attitudes about the education system

## 2.2 How can employers' needs be better served?

Overall only 12 per cent of managers agree that the education system is responsive to employers' needs with 65 per cent disagreeing. In terms of priorities for the education system, managers firmly believe that giving young people the skills they need at work should be the top priority. Managers support offering opportunities to develop management and team leading skills as well as basic employment skills such as customer care to young people whilst at school, as shown in Figure 2 below.

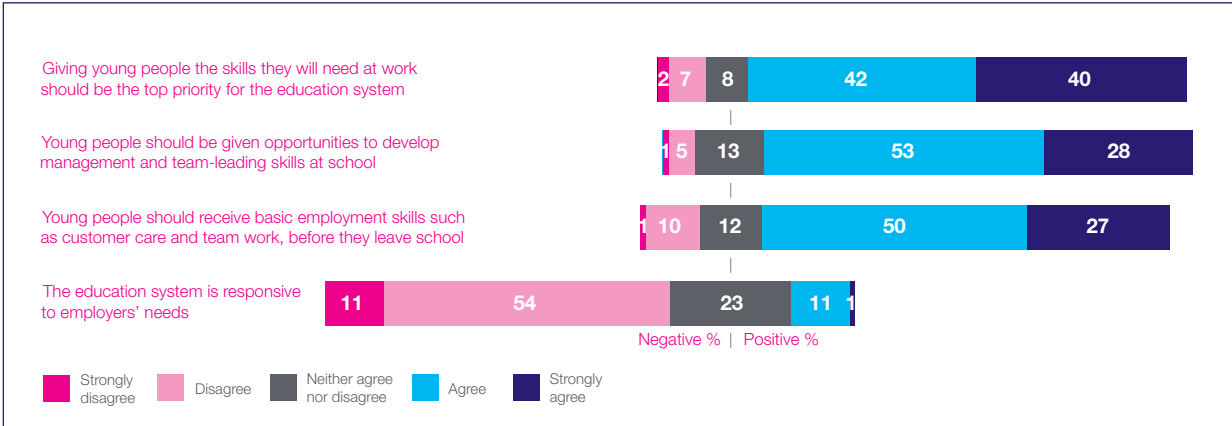
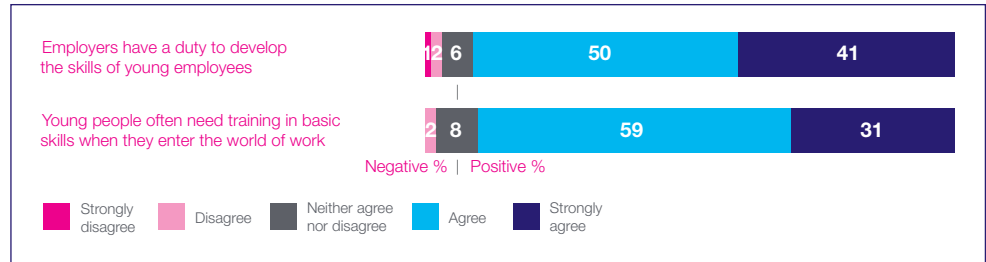


Figure 2 Responding to employers' needs



With 91 per cent of managers agreeing that employers have a duty to develop the skills of young people, it is clear that they do not have unrealistically high expectations of the education system and they recognise their responsibilities. Yet 81 per cent feel that young people often need training in basic skills when entering the world of work. Managers' views on the relative strengths and weaknesses of young people's skills are explored further in Section 4.



**Figure 3** Developing the skills of young people

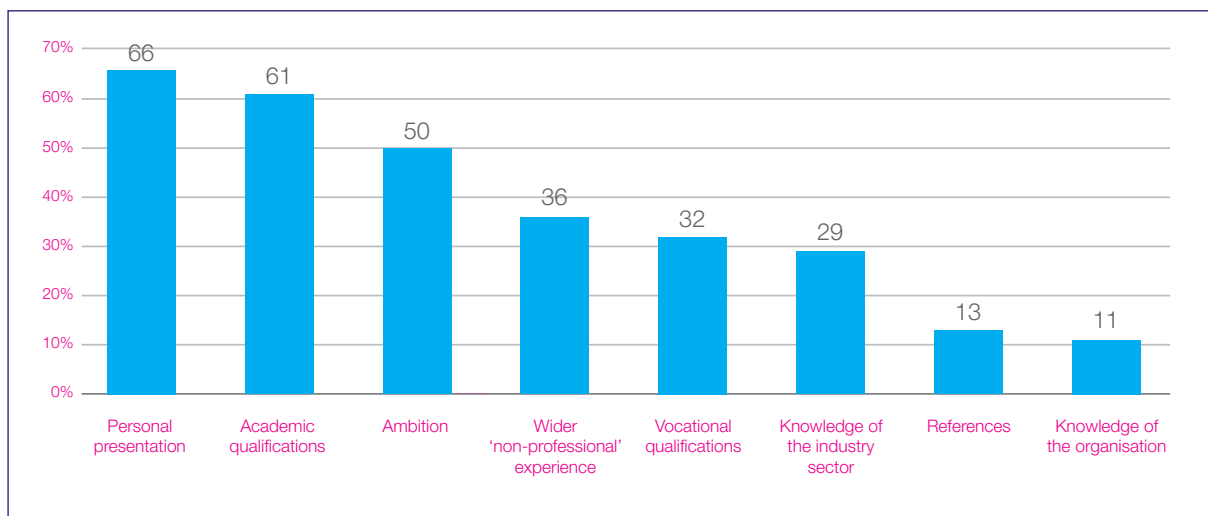
When asked to compare young people today to their counterparts ten years ago only 9 per cent of managers agree that people leaving education today are more employable – with 55 per cent disagreeing. Similarly, just 15 per cent feel that young people today have better knowledge of the world of work than their counterparts ten years ago. Employability and understanding may not have got worse – but it has not improved as much as might have been hoped.



## 3. Managers' perspectives on recruiting young people

### 3.1 What do managers look for when recruiting young people?

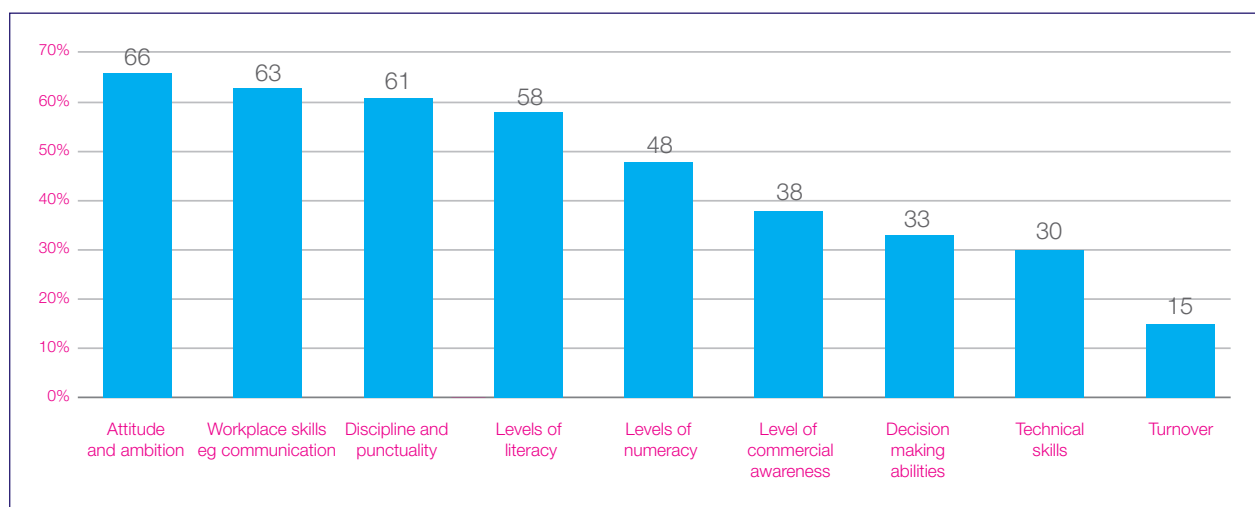
With rising youth unemployment figures highlighting the difficulties faced by young people in finding work, our survey asked managers to pick the three factors which have the biggest impact on their decision-making when recruiting young people. In two thirds of cases managers highlight a candidate's personal presentation, whilst three out of five point to academic qualifications and half focus on an individual's ambition. This suggests that managers are often looking at characteristics that demonstrate an individual's potential, rather than fully fledged skills themselves. Young people need careers advice that highlights the importance of factors such as personal presentation and displaying enthusiasm for work when applying for jobs.



**Figure 4** Factors with the biggest impact on recruitment decisions about young people

### 3.2 What problems do managers associate with young people?

As Figure 5 below shows, managers often have concerns when recruiting young people. Attitude and ambition were the top concerns, with discipline and punctuality also common concerns. Meanwhile, a lack of workplace skills such as communication is another major problem. Again, basic skills appear to be a potential problem area, with substantial concerns about levels of literacy and numeracy.



**Figure 5** Problems faced when recruiting young people

### 3.3 What initiatives will improve the employability of young people?

The survey asked managers to pick three initiatives which they felt could do most to improve the employability of young people. Respondents highlighted better access to Apprenticeships as the number one factor. This suggests that managers will be receptive to the Government's plans to improve take-up of Apprenticeships – although, of course, access to Apprenticeships will only be improved if employers themselves decide to offer more places.

Around half of managers feel that greater involvement from employers in the education process would help and 44 per cent would like to see an extension of work experience placements, suggesting that measures to build closer alignment between employers and educators could reap rewards.

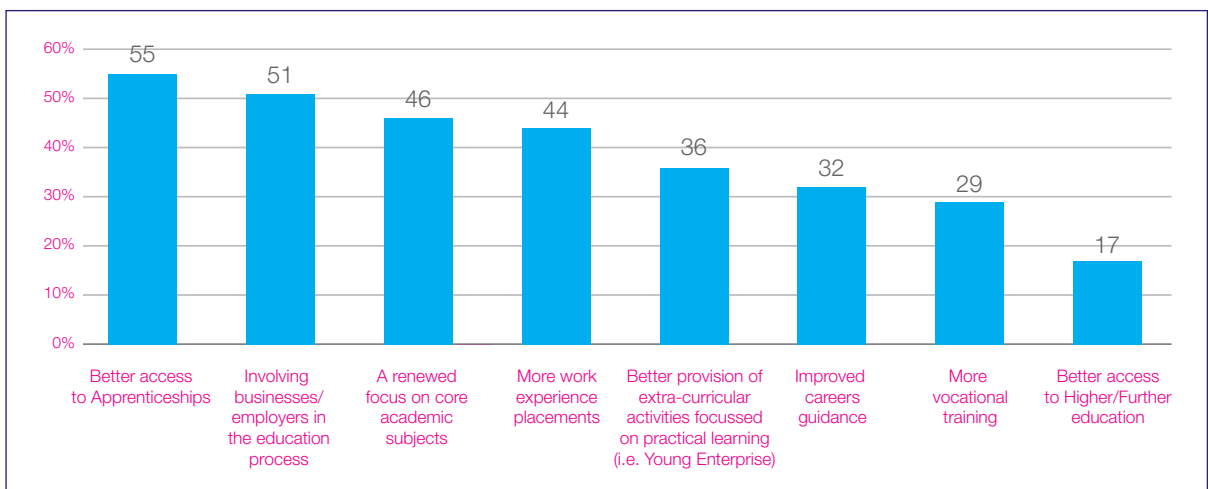


Figure 6 Initiatives to improve employability

### 3.4 What difference would a management qualification make?

Managers were also asked specifically how far they agree that a management qualification would benefit a young person. The most commonly agreed benefit was that the person would be more likely to get a job interview or offer. A similar, though slightly lower number, felt it would help as preparation for working life. While the question does not compare the benefits of a management qualification to other qualifications or alternatives, it certainly suggests that managers recognise the potential benefits of management qualifications which help improve young peoples' practical skills.

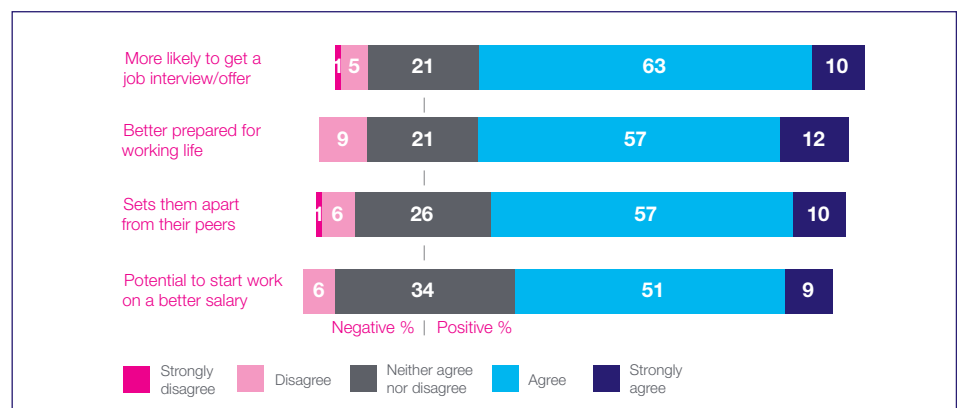


Figure 7 Benefits of a management qualification

## 4. Assessing young people's skills levels

### 4.1 How do managers rate young people's skills?

To help give an assessment of the level of different workplace skills amongst young people, the survey asked managers to assess young people's skill levels, in general, across a range of different areas. Perhaps unsurprisingly, computer/IT literacy came out top, rated as adequate, good or very good by 97 per cent of respondents. In over 50 per cent of cases managers also rate young people's creativity, basic skills (literacy/numeracy) and team working skills as either adequate, good or very good – notwithstanding the concerns about basic skills identified in previous questions.

Communication skills – which managers view as very important, as discussed in Section 4.2 below – are ranked as poor or very poor in 51 per cent of cases. Young people's commercial awareness and management skills are ranked as particularly poor.

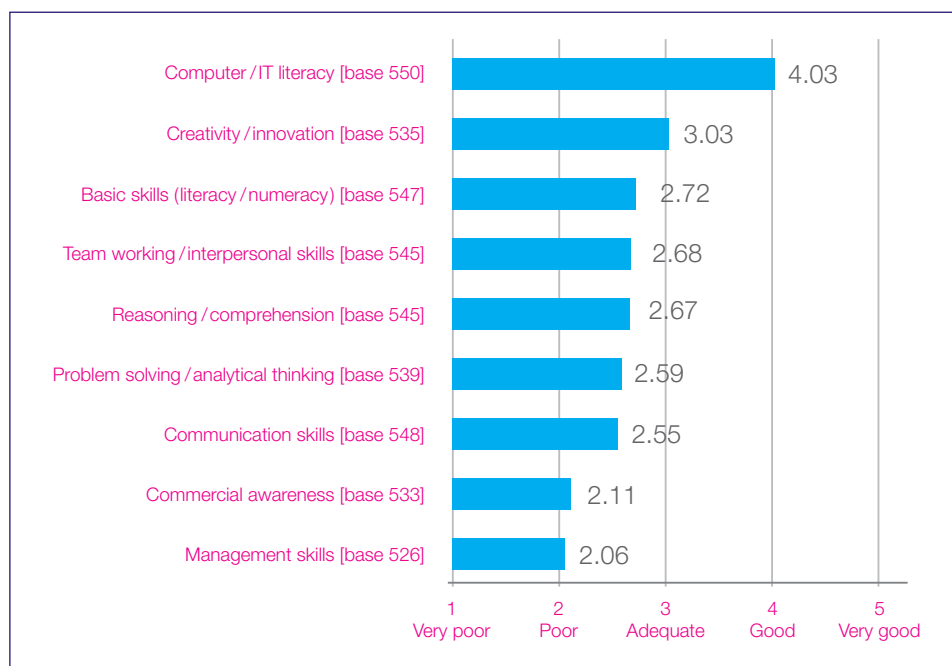


Figure 8 Assessment of young people's skills – mean score



#### 4.2 What skills should young people have when they start work?

As well as identifying areas of strength and weakness in young people's skills, we also wanted to better understand which skills managers would most like young people to have when they start work – with particular reference to management and leadership skills. The survey asked managers to pick the top three factors from a list related to the skills developed by entry level management qualifications.

The results suggest managers are emphatic about the importance of communication skills, with nine out of ten identifying them as the skills they most want young people to have when starting work. Planning and organisation skills and customer service skills – which are likely to relate to communications skills – also stand out as desirable.

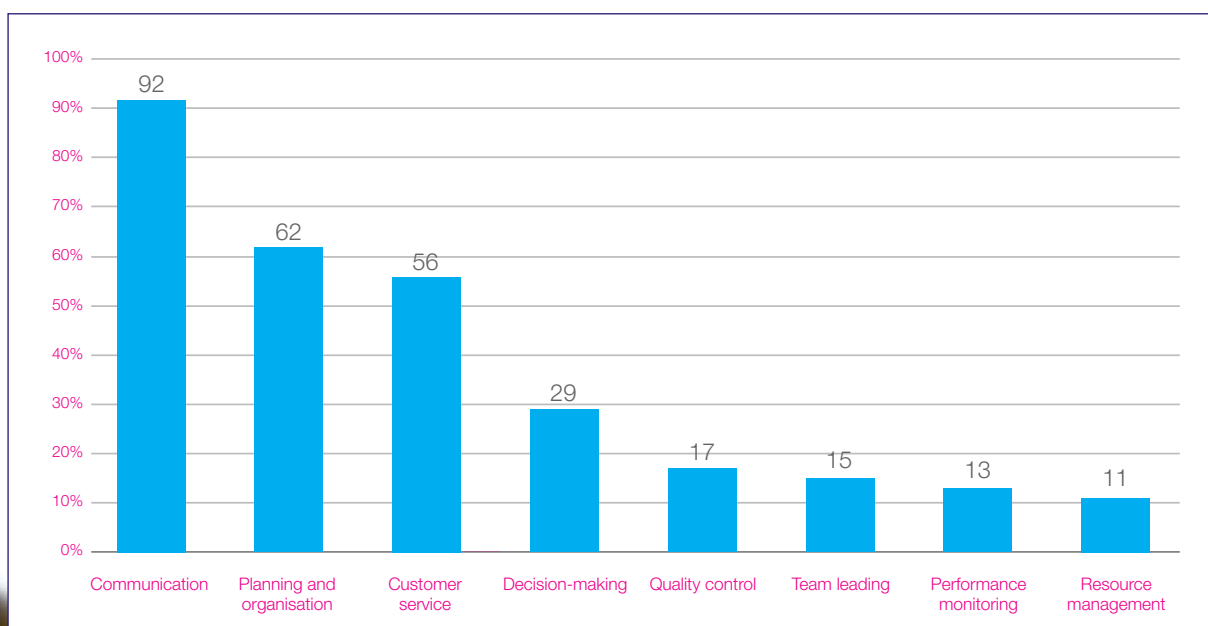


Figure 9 Skills that managers most want young people to have when they start work



# 5. Employer involvement in education

## 5.1 How are employers getting involved?

Respondents to the survey are already involved with education in a variety of ways, although there remains significant room for growth. Forty-five per cent report that they work with schools, 43 per cent with sixth forms or further education colleges, and 46 per cent work with higher education institutions. There were clear sector differences, with private sector organisations the least likely to be involved with education – only 36 per cent work with schools.

When those organisations that are involved with education were asked how, the top three responses given were Apprenticeship programmes, lecturing or contributing to lessons and providing careers advice.

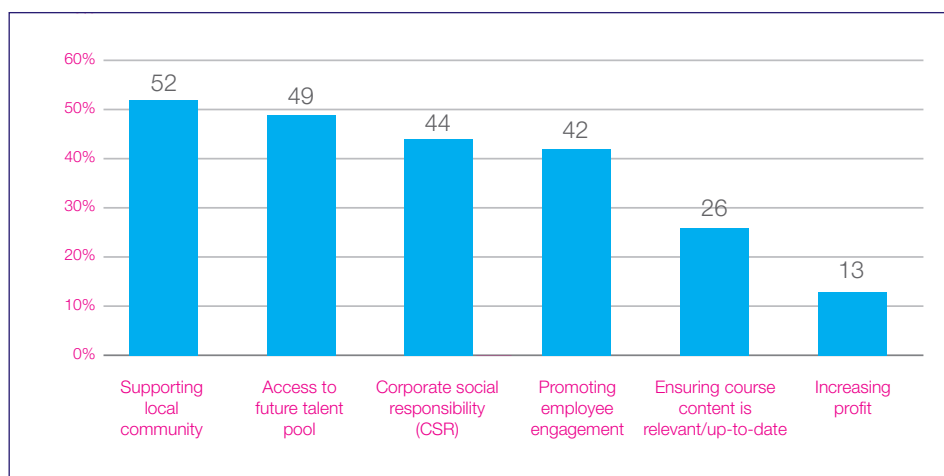
Area of involvement	%
Apprenticeship programmes	43
Lecturing or contributing to lessons	34
Provision of career advice and guidance	34
Mentoring scheme (between employees and pupils)	30
Hosting seminars/conferences	27
Developing curriculum/course content	23
Social initiatives (e.g. volunteer reading help)	18
Sponsorship arrangements	14
Mentoring scheme (between employees and teachers)	8
Sponsoring an Academy School	6

**Table 1** Areas of employer involvement in the education system

## 5.2 Drivers of employer involvement in education?

All respondents were asked what the main drivers would be for getting their organisation involved in the education sector. The top driver, selected by just over half, is to support the local community, with 44 per cent similarly describing it as part of their corporate social responsibility. This suggests that those employer/education initiatives that are locally embedded are likely to receive more buy-in from employers.

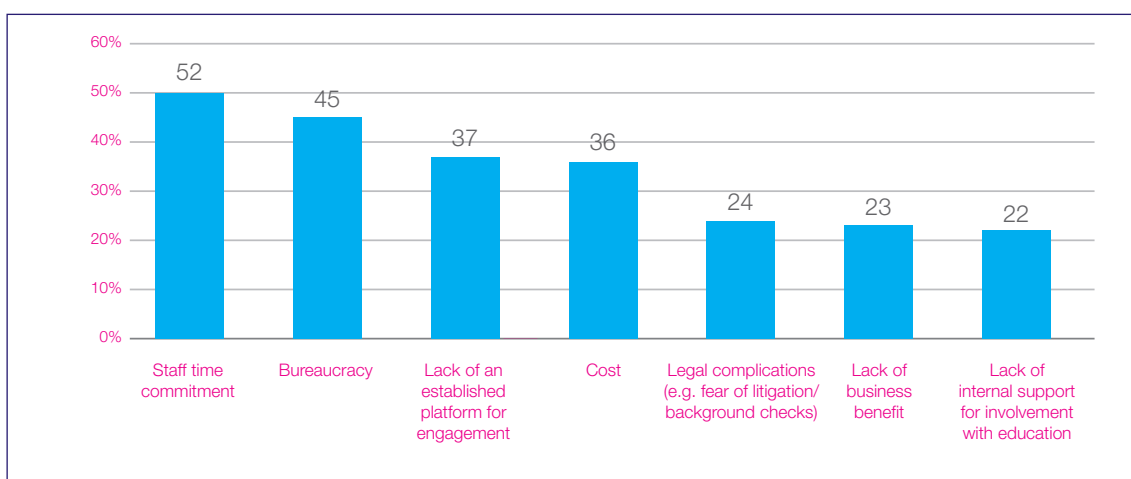
Access to a future talent pool is also an important driver – particularly in the private sector where it comes out as the top driver with 53 per cent. A substantial number, 42 per cent, highlight the benefits to them in terms of promoting employee engagement. Again this is higher in the private sector. Perhaps surprisingly, fewer managers across the sample are focused on ensuring that course content is relevant and up to date, which may reflect the importance of behaviour and attitudes as well as skills, indicated earlier in the report. Only a small number viewed education initiatives as a way of increasing profit – a number that remained low in the private sector.



**Figure 10** Drivers for organisations becoming involved in education

### 5.3 Barriers to better engagement with the education sector

With half of managers suggesting that employer involvement in education will help improve the employability of young people, it is also important to understand what barriers might be preventing more widespread engagement. From an employers' perspective, half of managers suggest that the staff time commitment is a problem. This factor is likely to be difficult to escape from; but it may be partially addressed if the second most common response can be tackled, that of the bureaucracy required to become involved. A substantial number, 37 per cent, also feel that there is a lack of established platforms for allowing employers to get involved, which may suggest a need for new platforms, whether led by Government or others, including professional bodies. Indeed, our new programme, Campus CMI, may help address this issue.



**Figure 11** Barriers to employer involvement in education

## 6. Developing tomorrow's leaders: CMI's role

Equipping the next generation with the right skills and attributes for the world of work is a challenge for all of society. It will lay the foundations of a successful and competitive economy – and the urgency of the task is only heightened by present levels of youth unemployment.

The findings of this survey offer a snapshot of some of the views held by managers about this challenge. Clearly, there are widespread and important concerns about the impact of shortcomings in the education system – whether upon individual young people's skills, or upon economic performance as a whole. Too many managers rate young people's skills as poor and too many have concerns about the attitudes or behaviours of younger people. But as the findings also suggest, managers recognise their responsibility for skills development and identify important drivers of closer employer involvement in young people's education.

**Campus CMI** As the UK's only chartered professional body for management and leadership, CMI has a duty to play a key role in tackling this issue. Driven by the need for change, our new programme – Campus CMI – was officially launched in March 2011. We are working with people aged 14-21, delivering qualifications in team leading and line management in schools and FE colleges across the UK. Campus CMI sets out three main visions for its training; to help young people achieve professional management qualities, to ensure that school leavers are ready for work and to build relationships between employers and schools.

The Campus CMI programme has delivered 1,500 CMI qualifications in 115 schools across England and Wales during a pilot phase. It focuses on the practical workplace skills that employers want to see from young people and to ensure that it answers employers' concerns, Campus CMI is led by a board of employers including Centrica, Waitrose and National Grid.

Already, it has had a real impact in helping young people's development. Forty students have participated at Archbishop Tenison's School in Croydon. Head of Sixth Form Jim Parrish says that Campus CMI "gives students an insight into the real world of work and the things that will be expected of them". Working with a local recruitment agency, students are given "a view of themselves from the perspective of a potential employee". As a result, students are not only gaining desirable skills but are learning about themselves and building new confidence.

At Bath's Writhlington School, 190 students have decided to undertake the programme. Teacher Marie Getheridge says that some students lack the "real world experience" needed to hit the ground running when they enter the working world. However, Campus CMI "prepares them in a way they wouldn't have ordinarily been taught. It gives them a thirst for work and the inspiration and knowledge to try and take their career as far as they can." She also views it as critical that students are taught "the necessity" of having management and leadership qualities. "It's important for students to grasp any opportunity they can to develop their skills and confidence and recognise the importance of leadership and how they can manage themselves and others."

We aim to increase uptake of the Campus CMI programme to approximately 3,000 in 300 schools by the end of 2011 – and to widen the programme to deliver 10,000 qualifications within five years. For more information on Campus CMI and on how your organisation can become involved, please visit [www.managers.org.uk/CampusCMI](http://www.managers.org.uk/CampusCMI)

## Chartered Management Institute

The Chartered Management Institute is the only chartered professional body in the UK dedicated to promoting the highest standards of management and leadership excellence. CMI sets the standard that others follow.

As a membership organisation, CMI has been providing forward-thinking advice and support to individuals and businesses for more than 50 years, and continues to give managers and leaders, and the organisations they work in, the tools they need to improve their performance and make an impact. As well as equipping individuals with the skills, knowledge and experience to be excellent managers and leaders, CMI's products and services support the development of management and leadership excellence across both public and private sector organisations.

Through in-depth research and policy surveys of its 90,000 individual and 450 corporate members, CMI maintains its position as the premier authority on key management and leadership issues.

For more information please contact the Policy and Research Department on:

Tel: **020 7421 2721**

Fax: **020 7497 0463**

Email: **research@managers.org.uk**

Website: **www.managers.org.uk**

or write to us at the address below.



## Chartered Management Institute

2 Savoy Court, Strand,  
London, WC2R 0EZ

Registered charity number 1091035

Incorporated by Royal Charter

Copyright Chartered Management Institute ©

First published 2011

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purposes of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher.

Published as an online report only.



Certificate No FS28404



4104 03/11