

Committee: Education Board	Date: 15 September 2016
Subject: Learning & Engagement Forum – Research of Trends in Take up of Arts GCSE	Public
Report of: Chair of Learning & Engagement Forum	For Decision

SUMMARY

Arts Council England and the City of London are looking to co-commission the Education Policy Institute (EPI) to analyse the impact of the EBacc on take-up of arts subjects at GCSE level including any trends by geography, indices of deprivation and pupil characteristics, including gender, ethnicity and disability.

The proposed research will provide important evidence to the work already being undertaken through the City of London’s Learning & Engagement Forum and Cultural Hub, as well as the joint Barbican, Guildhall and LSO Under-18 music offer. It represents an opportunity to seek definitive evidence of the impact of the Ebacc by working with a respected education think tank that isn’t closely associated with the arts sector and could therefore be seen as biased.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Members are asked to consider investment in the Learning & Engagement Forum in order to achieve this priority action

MAIN REPORT

BACKGROUND

1. The English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) is a school performance measure first introduced in 2010 that measures how many pupils get a grade C or above in what DFE describe as “the core academic subjects” at key stage 4 in any government-funded school. The set of subjects included in the Ebacc are English, mathematics, history or geography, the sciences and a language. Notably the arts are not considered a “core academic subject” and the arts sector has been expressing concern about the short and medium term impact on uptake of arts GCSEs and the longer term impact on the talent pipe line.
2. There is ongoing debate over the impact on GCSE uptake since the Ebacc was introduced with the arts sector producing evidence of a detrimental

effect. It has also been claimed that poorer children have been the most affected by the introduction of the EBacc:

- Ipsos MORI found that 15% of schools surveyed in 2012 had withdrawn one or more arts subjects as a result of the EBacc. 21% of schools with a high proportion of free school meals (FSM) reported withdrawing arts subjects.
 - The Cultural Learning Alliance reported that there had been a decline of 14% in the number of arts GCSE entries between 2010-2015
 - Ofqual has released data that showed that entries for arts GCSE's have fallen by 46,000 since 2015. This loss is more than five times that reported the previous year when numbers fell by 9,000.
 - The Creative Industries Federation released figures showing that schools with a high number of disadvantaged children are more than twice as likely to withdraw arts subjects with low numbers.
3. In contrast, DfE refer to data that shows that the proportion of young people taking up arts subject at GCSE level has risen by 1% over the previous five years.
 4. It has been difficult to fully ascertain the impact of the Ebacc without a definitive and unbiased analysis of all available data, and the DfE do not currently accept that the Ebacc has had any effect on arts subjects. In order to shift the debate there is a need for more robust data to help determine whether there has been a decline and to examine whether disadvantaged young people and those with protected characteristics are disproportionately impacted.
 5. Arts Council England and the City of London are seeking to co-commission the Education Policy Institute (EPI) to analyse trends in the take-up of key stage 4 qualifications (GCSEs and equivalent), with a particular focus on the uptake of arts subjects since the introduction of the EBacc.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

6. This research seeks to present:
 - An objective analysis on the impact of Ebacc on uptake of arts GCSEs
 - An analysis of trends or patterns relating to geography, school type, indices of deprivation and pupil characteristics
7. The report will examine trends in take-up of key stage 4 qualifications across both arts and other subjects, looking at how these vary across a

variety of school and pupil characteristics, as well as regionally within England.

8. The analysis will cover both GCSEs and equivalent qualifications; this is because a number of qualifications at this level, including in arts subjects, are available as non-GCSE, vocational qualifications. The report will examine entry patterns at key stage 4 but will not look beyond this to key stage 5.
9. Underlying exam data will be matched with pupil records from the National Pupil Database in order to allow for a full analysis of entry patterns, including vocational qualifications at key stage 4. This data will cover the years from 2007 to 2015 in order to allow comparison over a number of years before and after the introduction of the EBacc. It will not be possible to include analysis of data from 2016 as this will only be released in revised form in January 2017.
10. Qualifications will be split into categories according to wider subject area (such as the arts) and into more specific sub-categories (such as music, drama). This will allow the analysis to identify both overall shifts in entry patterns for subject types and also pinpoint at a more detailed level changes in specific subjects which may be driving these broader trends.
11. Comparisons will be made of entry patterns across different regions within England; across different school characteristics (school size, and state schools compared with private schools); and across different pupil characteristics (gender, ethnicity, eligibility for free school meals, special educational needs, prior attainment).
12. The research will also include small-scale qualitative work, consisting of roundtables with secondary school leaders and/or pupils; a short analytical paper summarising the results of the statistical analysis and outcomes of the roundtables, published online by EPI; a press release summarising the key findings of the report and comments from senior members of staff at EPI, circulated to a range of media outlets.

RESEARCH DELIVERY

13. The Education Policy Institute (EPI) has been approached and agreed to undertake this work. The EPI is an independent, impartial, and evidence-based research institute that aims to promote high quality education outcomes, regardless of social background. Their analysis covers all phases from the early years through to higher education and entry to the labour market. EPI's experienced and dedicated team works closely with academics, think tanks, and other research foundations and charities to shape the policy agenda. The team are experts on education data – including the National Pupil Database (NPD), School Census,

Performance Tables and Edubase – and have been at the forefront of developing these tools at the heart of government. The EPI have a track record of producing high quality reports that gain attention from government, in the media and amongst policy makers, stakeholders and other researchers.

14. The research timeline is yet to be confirmed, but it is expected that the report will be completed by the end of January 2017.

15. **BUDGET**

Costs are calculated according to the EPI's standard daily rates, plus the costs of any work the EPI commissions externally in order to complete the project. Once the final specification is agreed, the research will be delivered on a fixed price- costing basis.

Title and role	Days	Daily rate	Total
Research Officer	59	£200	£11,800
Director, Education Data and Statistics	12	£500	£6,000
Executive Director and Head of Research	3	£750	£2,250
Executive Assistant	3.5	£100	£350
Director of Communications and External Affairs	1	£500	£500
Roundtables (including venue hire)	N/A	N/A	£5000
Printing Costs	N/A	N/A	£2,000
Total:			27,900