

# Review of Apprenticeships Research

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Prepared for

The National Apprenticeship Service  
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By

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# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>REPORTS, JOURNAL ARTICLES, AND WORKING PAPERS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Individual Apprentices .....	3
Employers .....	8
Recruitment, Progression and Returns.....	14
Policy and Views on Education Systems and Quality .....	20
<b>OTHER CONTENT .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>26</b>

## INTRODUCTION

This document provides summaries of research related to Apprenticeships in England and the UK which have been published between March and May 2012. The publications summarised in this document include major reports from Government departments such as the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), papers published in academic journals, working papers and other series, and press/social media coverage and other online content of relevant issues.

The publications are grouped by theme; though allocating many of the documents to any one area of interest is difficult as most consider various issues. The heading for each document summary lists some of the key themes covered so that readers may quickly find publications of interest.

For each report/paper, a brief overview of the main methods of analysis and the key findings and implications are presented. The bibliography at the end of this document provides a list of all reports/papers considered for inclusion in this overview as well as hyperlinks to documents wherever these are available.

For further information on any of the documents summarised here please refer to the full text links or email Lynn Gambin at the University of Warwick ([lynn.gambin@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:lynn.gambin@warwick.ac.uk)).

## REPORTS, JOURNAL ARTICLES, AND WORKING PAPERS

This section includes summaries of major reports as well as academic publications (e.g. journal articles and working papers) which have been published between March and May 2012. A number of major reports have been published over this period including the results of the BIS-commissioned evaluation studies and the latest Apprenticeship Pay Survey.

These summaries are presented according to themes which correspond to those in the initial Review of Apprenticeship Research since 2010 (see previous report to NAS). A number of the publications are based upon substantial pieces of research and address various relevant issues which were considered in the earlier literature review. The key themes which each report/paper considers are listed near the top of each summary.

### INDIVIDUAL APPRENTICES

Vivian, D., M. Winterbotham, L. Godwin, S. Morris, T. Hogarth and L. Gambin (2012) *Evaluation of Apprenticeships: Learners*. BIS Research Paper Number 76. London: BIS/NAS. May 2012. 168 pages.

**KEY THEMES:** individual apprentices – attractiveness, returns, motivation, experience, fees

In November and December 2011, data on 5,000 Apprenticeship learners was collected and subsequently analysed by IFF Research and IER. The survey was administered through CATI and considered apprentices who were currently undertaking or had completed an Apprenticeship in the previous 12 months. The ILR was used as the sampling frame was and the number of interviews by broad framework was agreed by the research team and BIS in order to capture a representative sample of current and former apprentices (with data being weighted).

The report sets out the main findings of the survey of learners considering various aspects such as the age profile of apprentices, reasons for pursuing an Apprenticeship, satisfaction with the programme, opinions of the quality of training received and the perceived impact of the programme.

#### **Characteristics of apprentices**

- Based on the ILR, across all apprentices there was a relatively even split by age group. Relatively more of the current apprentices (39 per cent) were aged 25 years and older compared with 21 per cent of those who had completed. There was a fairly even split between male and female amongst recent completers but for current apprentices, there was a slight imbalance with 54 per cent being female. Apprentices were predominantly from White backgrounds with only nine per cent being non-White. Apprentices were also more likely to come from lower socio-economic backgrounds than found across the adult population as a whole.
- The balance between Level 2 and Level 3 provision varied by framework, e.g. retail has a higher proportion of Level 2 (84 per cent) than Level 3 whereas in construction provision was predominantly at Level 3 (55 per cent). The age profile of apprentices also varied across frameworks with under-19s comprising a relatively small share of those in Health, Public Services and Care (18 per cent), for example, compared to the majority of apprentices in Construction (59 per cent).
- About one-third of apprentices in the survey reported that they were recruited specifically as an apprentice – the rest already worked for their employer prior to starting an Apprenticeship. This too varies by framework, with apprentices most often being newly recruited for Apprenticeships in Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies, ICT and Construction, Planning and the Built Environment. This compares to around three quarters of those apprentices in Health, Public Services and Care, Retail and Commercial Enterprise and Business, Administration and Law being existing employees at the start of their Apprenticeship.

#### **Motivations and Information**

- The main motivation reported by apprentices for undertaking their Apprenticeship was in order to progress their career (reported by 48 per cent). A further 35 per cent were mainly interested in achieving a qualification whilst just 13 per cent were mainly motivated by the opportunity to be paid while learning.

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**Vivian et al., Evaluation of Apprenticeships: Learners (continued)**

- 40 per cent of apprentices who were existing employees were mainly motivated by a desire to obtain a qualification – this compares to fewer new recruits reporting that they were mainly interested in the qualification (27 per cent).

- For existing employees, most (around two-thirds) indicated that they made the decision to undertake an Apprenticeship however 11 per cent reported that it was a compulsory requirement from the employer and 20 per cent said that the employer had strongly recommended they undertake an Apprenticeship.

**Satisfaction**

- Apprentices reported high levels of satisfaction with the programme overall. 89 per cent of all apprentices were satisfied (scoring overall satisfaction as six or more out of ten). Amongst completers, 92 per cent were satisfied with their Apprenticeship.

- The highest satisfaction levels were found for apprentices in Construction (77 per cent very satisfied) whilst those in Health, Public Services and Care (67 per cent), Leisure, Travel and Tourism (65 per cent) and ICT (60 per cent) indicated relatively lower levels of satisfaction.

- Lower average satisfaction scores were found to be associated with cases where apprentices had been required by the employer to undertake the Apprenticeship and where the programme was of short duration (less than six months).

- Unsurprisingly, for completers, there was an association between employment outcomes and satisfaction with where wages increased on completion the average satisfaction level was higher than where wages did not increase, similarly for promotion.

- Most apprentices would recommend the programme to others or already had done so. Only five per cent indicated this not to be the case.

- Apprentices were generally positive about the quality of training and other particular aspects of the training they received. They were also satisfied with assessments and feedback from the provider.

- 91 per cent of apprentices reported that they had received formal or informal training during their Apprenticeship. 76 per cent received formal training and 15 per cent received informal on-the-job training (without any formal training). Nine per cent did not report receiving either of type of training.

- Most learners (80 per cent) were satisfied with the amount of training they had received and 83 per cent were satisfied with the balance between training and work. Apprentices in Construction and Engineering frameworks were most likely to be satisfied with these aspects.

- Just under half of learners reported that their programme was less than one year in duration and seven per cent reported it to be less than six months. A quarter reported that their Apprenticeship lasted between one and two years and 22 per cent reported Apprenticeships longer than two years. The majority of apprentices considered the duration of their Apprenticeship to be 'just about right' with only four per cent indicating that it was too short. Amongst those whose Apprenticeships lasted less than six months, 11 per cent indicated that they felt this was too short.

- There were higher levels of dissatisfaction found in relation to the role of the employer (82 per cent satisfied with employer support and 75 per cent satisfied with employer involvement in structure, delivery and content). Less support was typically provided to those apprentices who had already been working for their employer before starting the training and in these cases, employers were also often less involved in the structure, delivery and content of the training. The survey found a small group of learners which had been required by the employer to undertake the Apprenticeship yet the employer provided little support or input during the programme.

**Impact**

- On the whole, learners indicated that the Apprenticeship had a positive impact on their skills and abilities. Only four per cent indicated no improvement across any of the skills areas considered in the survey. Current apprentices were as likely as completers to report improvements. Younger apprentices were more likely to report improvements in skills and abilities than were older apprentices.

- Short Apprenticeships were considered to have a much smaller impact on the abilities and career prospects of apprentices – two-thirds of apprentices on courses lasting less than six months felt that they had (or would) acquire skills or knowledge of benefit in their sector compared to 90 per cent of those on courses longer than one year.

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**Vivian et al., Evaluation of Apprenticeships: Learners (continued)**

- Almost all apprentices in Construction (98 per cent) indicated that the Apprenticeship had improved their ability to carry out their job. Lower impact tended to be observed in frameworks with higher proportions of apprentices who were existing employees rather than new recruits.

- The majority of completers (85 per cent) were still in employment at the time of the survey and 64 per cent of all completers were still employed with the same employer as during their Apprenticeship. The unemployment rate was higher for newly recruited apprentices than for existing employees.

- Of those completers who were still working, three quarters were taking on more responsibility and 71 per cent had improved job satisfaction. More than half of those who had completed their Apprenticeship and were still employed felt that they had better prospects for pay and promotion in the future and that they had more job security. More than one-third had been promoted after their Apprenticeship.

- Across all frameworks, 83 per cent of those who had progressed in work felt that this was in part due to their Apprenticeship but only 15 per cent said it was a direct result of the programme. Positive work outcomes were more often reported by apprentices who had completed their course in Construction and Engineering; they were also more inclined to attribute these outcomes directly to the Apprenticeship.

- Just under half (44 per cent) of all completers had received a pay rise upon completion; this incidence was highest for construction and engineering (77 per cent and 71 per cent respectively) whilst it was least common in Retail, Business Administration and Law and ICT (26 per cent, 33 per cent, 31 per cent, respectively). Pay increases were more common where apprentices were new recruits, where they had completed a Level 3 Apprenticeship, and where the training was longer in duration. 84 per cent of apprentices thought that their Apprenticeship would increase future earnings potential.

- Of those who had completed a Level 3 Apprenticeship, five per cent had commenced a Level 4 Apprenticeship and 33 per cent were considering this in the future. The majority of current apprentices were interested in undertaking further learning.

**Further considerations**

Finally, the researchers identified a number of issues as being important to address in order to improve the learner's experience and to ensure the maximum return on investment in the programme. These issues are:

- 1) The authors observed that there are a minority of cases where employers appear to be using the programme to certify employees' existing skills and that the employer has little involvement or engagement with the apprentice.
- 2) Apprentices are less likely to learn new skills and progress in their careers where the programme is less than six months. The impact of Apprenticeship on the ability to do one's job is considered lower where there is no formal or informal on-the-job training.
- 3) Where apprentices had been employed on a fixed term contract for the length of their Apprenticeship only they were less likely to be employed after completion than those on longer or permanent contracts. Nearly one-fifth of these apprentices were unemployed at the time of the survey.

The authors note that there are already policies and actions being developed or in operation which are aimed at addressing these and other issues. The learner survey, they emphasise, indicates however that Apprenticeships are satisfying learners and even where aspects are not ideal (e.g. short duration) there is still a positive perception of the programme.

Fisher, R. and R. Simmons (March 2012) "**Liberal conservatism, vocationalism and further education in England**," *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 10(1): 31-51.

**KEY THEMES:** attractiveness of Apprenticeships

This paper provides an overview of English attitudes towards vocational education and training and how it is typically considered to maintain a subordinate status in relation to 'academic' education. The authors conclude that there is little prospect that cultural attitudes towards vocational education will change significantly over time, even given organisational and regulatory reform. They note that the problem of 'parity of esteem' between vocational and academic education is deep rooted and has yet to be effectively addressed. Fisher and Simmons outline historical and recent policies related to vocational and further education and caution that whilst plans to increase the number of Apprenticeship places on offer in England is a positive action, without stimulating employer demand for skills there will always be limitations on the opportunities for workplace Apprenticeships.

Swift, J. and R. Fisher (2012) "**Choosing vocational education: some views from young people in West Yorkshire**," *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 17(2): 207-221.

**KEY THEMES:** attractiveness of Apprenticeships to individuals

This paper considers a survey (questionnaire) of 197 students from two non-selective comprehensive schools and two Further Education Colleges in West Yorkshire with 47 of these students being interviewed in-depth. The authors found that earning capacity (i.e. the potential earnings in future) was an important issue in students' attitudes towards career choices. Schools were found to inadequately inform students about vocationally related qualifications and socially embedded values and attitudes were also found to have a negative effect on awareness and views of vocational education. Of the 197 students surveyed 34 per cent planned to undertake vocational qualifications. Many were uncertain regarding whether or not vocational qualifications had a high status or not (42 per cent) whilst more were certain that academic qualifications were highly regarded (71 per cent). The overall impression amongst the majority of students was that without A Levels, their career prospects were limited (e.g. they would not get the 'top' jobs).

This study is based on a small sample of students in a particular region in the UK and though it provides helpful insights regarding attitudes towards vocational qualifications and into the sources of particular attitudes to career/education pathways, it is limited in its applicability to more general situations.

TNS-BMRB (May 2012) "**Attitudes to Further Education Loans**," BIS Research Paper Number 73. London: BIS. 40 pages.

**KEY THEMES:** individual apprentices - fees

This BIS-commissioned report aims to inform impact and equality assessments and to provide insight into learner behaviour (and thus how to influence behaviour). The approach used by TNS-BMRB comprised two stages: 1) 18 focus groups of four people each and a quantitative survey of 405 learners; and 2) 18 focus groups of eight people each and two more in-depth group discussions of four people each. The study considered people who the researchers felt were likely to undertake study at Level 3 – these were defined as those aged 23-64 years old who had completed a full Level 2 course in the 2010/11 academic year.

The study assessed the responses of 'potential Advanced Apprentices' to 'cold' information regarding FE loans as well as more general attitudes to debt and their motivations for studying. Responses to 'cold' information on loans were generally negative (though there were some differences in reaction where people were more motivated to study for reasons related to career progression. When provided with additional information on FE loans, some perceptions amongst individuals changed. The study also found differences between willingness to take up FE loans according to age (younger more likely to do so), ethnicity (non-White respondents more likely to take up study and take out a loan), and employment status.

The report also explores the views of 'potential Advanced Apprentices'. Most of the people in these groups felt that individuals should contribute to the costs of their training and that any increase in costs would not likely be met by the employer. Some respondents felt that the introduction of FE loans would have reduce the proportion of people choosing to study and this would have a further negative effect on employers.

Gunderson, M. and H. Krashinsky (April 2012) "**Returns to Apprenticeship: Analysis based on the 2006 Census**," CLSRN Working Paper No. 99. Vancouver: Canadian Labour Market and Skills Researcher Network. 24 pages.

**KEY THEMES:** international evidence; returns to individuals

The authors use data from the 2006 Census of Canada to compare the returns to Apprenticeships with those attributed to other educational routes such as completion of high school, other trades and community college. The 2006 Census is the first large-scale, representative data set from Canada to include information on Apprenticeship certification. They found evidence of a pay premium associated with Apprenticeships for men but not for women. This premium is also estimated to be larger for men in lower quantiles of the pay distribution. Male apprentices are found to earn: 24 per cent more than those whose highest level of education is a high school diploma; 15 per cent more than men with other (non-Apprenticeship) trades; and two per cent more than (community) college graduates. They note that combining apprentices with others with non-Apprenticeship trades in previous work has hitherto underestimated the returns to Apprenticeships.

For women, Apprenticeship is found to result in lower wage returns than for those who have only completed high school and also compared to community college graduates. The authors suggest that this is likely due to female Apprenticeships being found most often in low-wage jobs in sectors such as food and service.



## EMPLOYERS

Winterbotham, M., D. Vivian, C. Huckle, A. Skone James, T. Hogarth, L. Gambin and C. Hasluck (2012) *Evaluation of Apprenticeships: Employers*. BIS Research Paper Number 77. London: BIS/NAS. May 2012. 107 pages.

**KEY THEMES:** employers – engagement; motivation; barriers; recruitment; experience; fees/costs

Data from 4,075 employers that had staff complete an Apprenticeship with them in the past 18 months was collected and subsequently analysed by IFF Research and IER. This study was part of a wider evaluation of Apprenticeships which included the learner survey and the net benefits of training study (both also carried out by IER and IFF Research). The survey was administered through Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) and the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) was used as the sampling frame. The sampling approach considered both the level and framework of the Apprenticeships employers had delivered. Data were weighted for representativeness.

The report sets out the main findings of the survey of employers including various aspects such as: the characteristics of employers, recruitment methods, employers' involvement in delivering the programme, the training decision, the impacts of Apprenticeships on the business and employers' satisfaction with the programme. The key findings are as follows:

### **Characteristics of apprentice employers**

- Three-fifths of employers in the survey operated in the following sectors: health, social work and childcare, retail and wholesale, construction and hair and beauty. Three-quarters were SMEs and half had less than 25 employees.
- Some sectors such as hair and beauty, manufacturing and construction emerged as having a long tradition of Apprenticeships with around half of employers being involved in this form of training for more than 10 years.
- Level 2 Apprenticeships were more common than Level 3 (85 per cent offered Level 2 whilst 59 per cent offered level 3) but half of the employers surveyed offered Apprenticeships at both levels. Employers were more inclined to provide this training to 16-18 year olds (76 per cent) compared with individuals aged 19 years and older (54 per cent). Larger employers (100 employees or more) were more likely to offer Apprenticeships to older people than were smaller organisations.

### **Recruitment**

- Amongst the employers surveyed, it was more common that they had taken on new recruits for Apprenticeships than was offering them to existing staff (76 per cent of employers v. 31 per cent) and it was uncommon for an employer to train both new recruits and existing employees through Apprenticeships. Larger employers (with 250 or more staff) were more likely to train existing employees through Apprenticeships than were SMEs (44 per cent v. 26 per cent).
- Just over half of employers that had recruited any apprentices did so on fixed term contracts; this approach was most observed in the public sector and fixed term contracts were most often used in ICT, health, public services and care and retail.
- Employers most commonly advertised for apprentices through the training provider (32 per cent). Whilst few (6 per cent) reported that they had used Apprenticeship Vacancies System themselves it is more likely that the system was utilised by the training provider on the employer's behalf.

### **Information, support and guidance**

- Whilst most employers felt there was sufficient information, support and guidance available regarding involvement in Apprenticeships, some did not feel that there had been enough support. Smaller employers were more likely to be critical of the information, support and guidance than were larger employers.
- Around a quarter of employers had used information, support and guidance from NAS in the last three years. Larger employers, employers in public sector bodies and charities and those in the voluntary sector and employers with apprentices in education and public administration were more likely to have used NAS. Where it was used, there was a generally positive view of the usefulness of the information and support provided by NAS.

### **Employer involvement in delivery and assessment**

- The majority of employers indicated that their apprentice received training delivered by an external training provider but three-quarters of employers reported that they also provided formal training themselves. Only 22 per cent indicated that only the training provider delivered training and four per cent indicated that they (the employer) were solely responsible for delivering training. **(Continued)**

**Winterbotham et al., Evaluation of Apprenticeships: Employers (continued)**

- Employers are more reliant on external providers for assessment than for training with only one per cent of employers indicating that they themselves were responsible for assessing apprentices.
- Around half of employers were involved in and able to influence decisions regarding the structure, content, delivery and duration of training prior to the start of Apprenticeships but 60 per cent had some influence on the delivery and content during the Apprenticeship. This however varied by framework. Employers offering Construction Apprenticeships were less likely to influence training decisions at any stage compared to those offering ICT and Business Administration and Law frameworks.

**Satisfaction**

- Employers were generally satisfied with their level of involvement in and their ability to select an Apprenticeship framework which was relevant to their needs (77 per cent were satisfied). The majority were also satisfied with the quality of applicants for Apprenticeship places though a significant proportion, eight per cent, was dissatisfied.
- Satisfaction with the quality of the training provider was high amongst respondents (66 per cent very satisfied) but smaller employers (less than 25 employees) were less satisfied than average. On nearly all measures of satisfaction, employers offering Construction Apprenticeships were less satisfied than average.
- Nearly half of the employers surveyed had already recommended Apprenticeships to other employers. Others indicated that they would strongly recommend the programme to other employers in their sector (22 per cent) or that they would recommend it but with some reservations (15 per cent). Just two per cent had either advised other employers to not offer Apprenticeships or would recommend against the programme if asked.

**Value of the programme**

- Employers were asked about the value of various components of the Apprenticeship programme. Most felt that each of the four elements (NVQ; knowledge element, such as technical certificate; transferable skills; employer rights and responsibilities) were of value ; the competency element was rated as the most valuable whilst transferable (or key or functional) skills were reported as the least valuable (though 60 per cent indicated that these were very valuable).
- When asked about the benefits to their business, employers were positive about Apprenticeships overall. Nearly all employers (96 per cent) reported at least one of the possible benefits presented to them by the interviewer. The most often reported benefit was improved productivity (72 per cent) followed by improved staff morale, improved products or services, a positive image in the sector, improved staff retention and the introduction of new ideas.
- Only 36 per cent of employers indicated that training apprentices had resulted in a lower overall wage bill – this is viewed as a positive finding as it indicates that Apprenticeships are not generally being used for a cheap form of labour (as employers can pay apprentices lower wages than other employees).

**Fees**

- 11 per cent of employers paid some fees to providers. This ranged from 21 per cent in engineering to six per cent in retail frameworks. Average payments were higher for 16 to 18 year old apprentices despite the principle that training for this younger age group is fully subsidised.
- The survey also considered the likely reaction of employers to changes in public funding for apprentices aged 19 years and older and thus changes to the fees to be paid by employers. They were asked for their reactions if state funding were removed completely and if it were reduced by 50 per cent. 17 per cent of employers who had apprentices age 19 years and over indicated that they would have taken on apprentices with full fees (i.e. if state funding were removed) or that they already paid the equivalent amount in fees. In the face of half fees (i.e. state funding reduced by 50 per cent), 29 per cent indicated that would continue training apprentices.
- The implications of training fewer apprentices (in response to increased fees) were also explored. 43 per cent of employers indicated that training fewer apprentices would not have an impact on their business. The most reported impact of training fewer apprentices was skill shortages in the future (reported by 20 per cent of employers).

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**Winterbotham et al., Evaluation of Apprenticeships: Employers (continued)**

- Other impacts included: reductions in the quality of products and services, staff shortages, increased recruitment costs and a resulting older workforce. Each of these impacts however, was cited by less than 10 per cent of employers. Employers offering engineering Apprenticeships were most likely to report that they would be affected by a reduction in the number of apprentices they trained.

**Future involvement**

- The majority of employers (80 per cent) were found to be committed to the programme and planned to continue to offer Apprenticeships. Employers were more likely to not be planning to continue their involvement where they were: smaller employers (with less than 25 employees), had been involved in Apprenticeships for less than three years, and offered construction Apprenticeships (probably indicative of uncertainties over future work in the current economic climate).

- Reasons cited for not planning to continue to engage included: all staff were fully skilled so there was no need to train existing or new employees; perceived high costs of such training; having had a negative experience or a feeling that their previous Apprenticeship training had not gone well.

Hogarth, T., L. Gambin, M. Winterbotham et al. (2012) **Employer Investment in Apprenticeships and Workplace Learning: The Fifth Net Benefits of Training to Employers Study**. BIS Research Paper Number 67. London: BIS. May 2012. 196 pages.

**KEY THEMES:** employer engagement – barriers, motivation; employers and training providers; business benefits; costs

This report is one of three published in May 2012 which report research conducted by IER and IFF Research. This report conveys the results gathered from 80 case studies of employers engaged in Apprenticeships and / or other workplace learning (WPL) leading to formal qualifications at Level 2 and / or Level 3. The employers were spread across eight sectors of industry: engineering; construction; retail; hospitality; transport and logistics; financial services; business administration (mainly with local government); and health and social care.

The aims of this study were to identify the costs and benefits employers derive from both types of training. The methodology applied was that used in previous Net Costs of Training Studies (IER) with the extension to WPL other than Apprenticeships as well so that comparisons could be made between the relative costs and benefits of different routes to the same level of qualification.

In the interviews with employers, they were asked to provide information on the direct and indirect costs of providing training (Apprenticeships and WPL) to their employees as well as more qualitative information regarding the benefits they considered to stem from each type of training, the reasons they engaged in a particular programme, and the structure and processes (e.g. recruitment, supervision) they used in delivering the programme to their apprentices/trainees. Employers were also prompted to indicate their reactions if the costs of training were to increase in the face of reduced public funding for certain apprentices in future.

**The employer's decision to train**

- In cases where training was provided to new recruits (thus constituting initial vocational education and training (IVET)), employers indicated that they provided WPL or Apprenticeships in order to provide individuals with the skills required to work in a particular occupation. In some sectors, mainly engineering and construction, the Apprenticeship was considered a *de facto* licence to practice without which individuals could not work in the sector.

- Other reasons for providing WPL/Apprenticeship training to new recruits included: bringing younger people into the organisation; the company had a history of taking on apprentices; enabling training to be tailored to the business' needs and to train individuals up in the culture/ways of the particular employer; and fulfilling corporate social responsibilities.

- Where employers provided WPL/Apprenticeships to existing employees (i.e. as a form of continuing vocational education and training (CVET)), the main reasons for such engagement were largely related to providing motivation, reward and recognition to employees with a goal (in most instances) of increasing staff retention. In a number of cases, particularly health and social care, employees were taken on by an employer for a trial period before then being put onto a training programme in order to provide them with the skills needed for their job. Other reasons of providing such CVET through Apprenticeships/ WPL were to up-skill existing employees to prepare them for taking on tasks/roles at a higher level within the organisation; and, to provide accredited qualifications to employees who might otherwise miss the opportunity for such development.

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### **The costs of WPL and Apprenticeships**

- Overall, the costs to employers of providing Apprenticeships were found to be substantially higher than the costs of WPL at the same level and in the same sector. This difference is at least in part due to the much greater incidence of Apprenticeships being offered to new recruits and other WPL mainly offered to existing staff. Existing staff continue to make a nearly full productive contribution to the business whilst new apprentices start off with lower productivity. This observation can also be made within each type of training, with the costs being higher for new recruits than for existing employees being trained.

- The costs of training to Level 2 through Apprenticeships were found to range from £3,000 in Retailing to £7,250 in Financial Services (though no Level 2 Apprenticeships in engineering and construction were observed in the sample of employers). A combined Level 2 and Level 3 Apprenticeship was found to cost employers £26,000 in construction and nearly £40,000 in engineering – these training programmes had markedly higher levels of supervision and were noticeably longer in duration than Apprenticeship in most other sectors.

- WPL at Level 2 was found to cost employers between £1,250 in Social Care and £2,500 in transport and logistics. An Apprenticeship at Level 2 in social care was notably higher cost at £3,800 compared with WPL Level 2 (£1,250).

- The authors note that the case studies provide indicative rather than definitive estimates of the costs of Apprenticeships (and WPL) to employers but the estimates do provide evidence that there is considerable variation between sectors / frameworks and by level of training. The within-sector variation in costs within Apprenticeships was found to be greater in this study than in previous Net Benefits of Training to Employers studies revealing differences in the ways in which training is delivered across employers.

### **Recouping the costs of training**

- Using the information provided by employers who offered Apprenticeships, the study estimated how long it would take for employers in each sector to recoup the costs of training assuming that they retained their apprentices after completion.

- The payback period was found to be less than one year for a Level 2 Apprenticeship in transport (HGV Mechanic) (6 months), business administration (9 months) and hospitality (10 months). The payback period was between two to three years for Apprenticeships at Level 2+3 in construction (two years, three months), Level 2 in retail (two years, three months), and Level 3 in financial services (two years, six months).

- A Level 2 Apprenticeship in financial services and a Level 3 in engineering were associated with payback periods of more than three years and Level 2 Apprenticeship in social care was also found to have a longer payback period (three years, three months).

- As in previous studies, this study found that the payback period is relatively short assuming that apprentices stay with their employer after completing their training. Though still relatively short, the payback periods found in 2011 are somewhat longer than those estimated in the 2008 study which in part stem from the estimates being based on a relatively small number of observations and from the fact that the economy was weaker in 2011 resulting in a lower return on investment.

### **Responses to higher costs and loans**

- When asked about their likely responses to increased costs of training (resulting from reduced public funding for the programme), employers considered a number of options rather than indicating that they would completely withdraw from Apprenticeships (and other WPL). Possible options included: reducing the number of apprentices trained; shortening the duration of training (though this was not considered viable in sectors like construction and engineering where employers felt shorter training periods would be detrimental); and passing some or all extra costs onto the training provider.

- Where employers used their training programme for essential skills supply they indicated that they would continue as they currently operated as there was no suitable alternative for them. Training was more susceptible to be reduced or dropped where it was offered mainly to existing employees and was used more in order to accredit existing skills and to motivate and reward employees.

**(Continued)**

-The concept of passing some of the costs of training onto the trainee was met with resistance from employers and in many cases, confusion as to how this would be accomplished. Employers were concerned about how expecting individuals to pay for training (through loans) would affect the employer-employee relationship.

- Despite an overall negative response to the idea of apprentice loans/fees, many employers (particularly those with more substantial training programmes in terms of duration and costs) had already introduced clawback clauses in employment contracts to ensure that they could recapture some of their costs if their apprentices were to leave before or shortly after completion of their Apprenticeship training.

Hutchinson, J., D. Devins, T. Hooley and S. Kelsey (May 2012) “**Developing business, developing careers: How and why employers are supporting the career development of their employees,**” Report for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. Wath Upon Dearne: UKCES. 18 pages.

**KEY THEMES:** employers - benefits

This report considers a number of businesses that incorporate career development into their approach to broader business issues. Discussion of two of the seven organisations included in the report focus on their use of Apprenticeships. Some of the benefits reported to accrue to businesses as a result of engagement with Apprenticeships and other forms of career and skills development include: lower recruitment costs; quicker recruitment leading to increased productivity; improved company image (fulfilling social responsibilities); reinvigorated work for existing staff members; enhanced flexibility within the workforce; and an enhanced product/service offer.

It should be noted that this publication is based on individual business case studies, only two of which consider Apprenticeships, and the findings are therefore not applicable to employers in general

Ofsted (April 2012) “**Apprenticeships for young people: A good practice report,**” Report Reference no 110177. Manchester: Ofsted. 50 pages.

**KEY THEMES:** training providers - delivery; good practice; relationship with employers

This report on Ofsted inspector visits to 15 providers, carried out between September and November 2011, identifies the key features of successful Apprenticeship provision. The providers concerned had been judged to be good or outstanding with regards to their effectiveness at their last Ofsted inspection and had recently been involved with young people taking Apprenticeships. The visits to providers included discussions with senior managers, review of documentation and interviews with 105 apprentices, 41 employers and six mentors.

The report explains how providers have been successful in recruiting young people as apprentices and how they have introduced them to working life, supported them in developing their vocational skills and completing the course and supported them into employment and further study.

Some of the report’s key findings include:

- The right attitudes and commitment to employment were considered by both employers and providers to be the most important attributes of a potential apprentice – often being considered more important than academic qualifications. Work experience was considered to provide a good indication of young people’s work ethic.

- Providers were found to use effective initial assessment with not only for identifying individual’s needs for learning support but also for supporting the best match between learners and employers.

- Induction to the requirements of the Apprenticeship was found to be thorough and often was carried out over an extended period. Being mentored by a former apprentice as part of the induction was considered valuable by younger apprentices.

- Good support from the employer was a common key factor in effectively engaging young people in the programme.

- Effective methods of teaching and assessment included teaching apprentices in small groups; providing an immediate chance for theory to be applied to practice; and monthly reviews of progress. Online resources also encouraged extra study and allowed learners to catch up if they had missed training. Teachers were also observed to have good knowledge of contemporary vocational working practices and demonstrated practical skills at a high level which helped to reinforce the idea that skills were developed through commitment and practice.

**(Continued)**

### **Ofsted, Apprenticeships for young people: A good practice report** *(continued)*

- Regular pre-arranged assessor visits to the workplace were found to help keep apprentices on route to meeting targets. Apprentices typically had one key assessor throughout their training – this consistency was considered helpful in creating a productive relationship with the employer. Regular and frequent reviews were also found to be important in ensuring that extra support could be provided to apprentices as needed.

- Experienced tutors were observed to contextualise key and functional skills, making them relevant to employment.

- Both providers and employers encouraged progression onto further training and employment. Most of the young people interviewed had been motivated to undertake more advanced qualifications. The report notes however that there were limited pathways available beyond advanced Apprenticeships (Level 3) and that a recognised Level 4 pathway was not available for all learners.

The good practice report also outlined a number of recommendations for BIS, secondary schools and Apprenticeship providers which include:

- BIS should: improve the national availability of careers guidance on psot-16 options; gather data on unsuccessful applicants for Apprenticeships; encourage development of more recognised progression routes beyond advanced Apprenticeships such as higher Apprenticeships and foundation degrees; and promote clear paths for young people who are not engaged in employment or education that leads to Apprenticeships.

- Secondary schools should: improve local coordination of work experience; improve information about learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) to ensure planning to meet their needs when the move into WPL; provide training and guidance to support students in completing applications.

- Apprenticeship providers should: develop pre-Apprenticeship programmes, particularly for those at risk of not being engaged in education or employment; continue to improve promotion of the programme to underrepresented groups; share good practice in teaching and assessment; and encourage monthly reviews in the workplace.

## RECRUITMENT, PROGRESSION AND RETURNS

### *Total returns / deadweight loss*

Conlon, G., P. Patrignani, R. Flytkjaer and M. Halterbeck (2012) ***The Impact of Investment in Intangible Assets on Productivity Spillovers***, BIS Research paper Number 74, May 2012. London: BIS. 171 pages.

**KEY THEMES:** total economic benefits of Apprenticeships

This report presents a literature review on the impact of investment in intangible assets on productivity spillovers and provides a summary of theory underlying the concepts of intangible assets and spillovers. This study was carried out by London Economics and was commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Within the literature review, the authors cite various studies in which Apprenticeship constitutes one of the investments made which result in benefits to employers and others. The extent of poaching externalities is considered with evidence from Muehlemann and Wolter (2011) cited which indicates that in Switzerland, a one per cent increase in the density of the regional labour market results in a 0.15 per cent decrease in the number of apprentices trained by firms. That study found that poaching externalities were only evident where training firms incurred a net cost of training rather than when there was a net benefit – in which case local labour market density had no effect on the number of Apprenticeships.

Harhoff and Kane (1997) also found that the probability of firms training apprentices and the number of apprentices trained per firm were lower for firms in urban and suburban areas compared to other regions. They also found that the number of other firms in the same industry and county had a marginally significant negative effect on a firm's Apprenticeship training offer.

Another Swiss study (Backes-Gellner *et al.* 2011) found that increasing the number of workers with Apprenticeship qualifications was associated with improved productivity and increased wages of university graduates. The authors concluded that the theoretical approach of graduates and the more practical approach adopted by apprentices were complementary.

In laying out possible directions for future analyses, Conlon *et al.* include Apprenticeships amongst the types of education and training (and investments) that would be useful to consider. They suggest further development of existing studies, such as the IER Net Benefits of Training to Employers studies, in order to understand the investment incentives encountered by firms. In the longer term they suggest analysis of matched employer-employee data to look at various issues such as whether spillovers stem from Apprenticeships and other forms of vocational education and training as much as has been attributed to higher education and who benefits most from investment in different levels and forms of education and training. Looking at the extent to which spillovers result from different types of qualification they highlight the possibility of analysis by sector, type of learner, and firm size.

Conlon, G., Patrignani, P. and Litchfield, A. (2012). ***Assessing the Deadweight Loss Associated with Public Investment in Further Education and Skills***. BIS Research Paper Number 71. Published May 2012.

**KEY THEMES:** total economic returns to Apprenticeship; public investment

This paper seeks to improve the current assessment of deadweight loss (and additionality) associated with Further Education (FE) and skills. The aims and objectives of the study include: developing a conceptual framework to consider the various routes through which deadweight loss (DWL) might occur; assessing previous evidence on DWL in Apprenticeships and other areas of FE; scoping existing datasets with regards to their usefulness in such analyses; providing estimates of DWL for Apprenticeships and other learning streams in FE; and identifying gaps in the evidence and data for future consideration.

Using data from NESS09, the authors provide estimates of quantitative DWL and additionality for Apprenticeships and Train to Gain (TtG). In estimating deadweight loss for Apprenticeships, they considered firms with at least one apprentice of any age but excluded firms who engaged in TtG from both the treatment and counterfactual groups. Propensity score matching was then used to create a comparison group and to finally arrive at estimates of quantitative deadweight and additionality.

*(Continued)*

**Conlon et al., Assessing the Deadweight Loss Associated with Public Investment in Further Education and Skills (continued)**

The authors estimate the quantitative deadweight loss associated with Apprenticeships to be approximately 28 per cent implying that without any public funding for the programme, 28 per cent of apprentices would have received some training anyway. For firms training 16 to 18 year olds only, the estimated deadweight is 16 per cent whilst for firms offering Apprenticeships only to those aged between 19 and 24 years, the estimate is 27 per cent. Deadweight loss was estimated to be higher (44 per cent) amongst firms training apprentices aged 25 years and older only. The authors note that these estimates are lower than those obtained in an earlier study (Anderson and Metcalf, 2003) where the estimates ranged between 44 per cent and 53 per cent. The authors also note that their estimates do not consider qualitative additionality (i.e. the extent to which workers received *better* training as a result of the Apprenticeship programme).

The report signposts a number of areas for further analysis regarding deadweight loss and additionality associated with Apprenticeships and other publicly funded training. The two main problems they encountered in their approach were the quality and extensiveness of the required data and the identification of an appropriate counterfactual. Going forward, they consider there to be two fundamental approaches: 1) ensure that any data being collected through established processes should address the limits they encountered in their analysis; and, 2) new data could be collected which is designed specifically to address deadweight loss and additionality. They highlight that existing data should be used in a manner to maximise benefit and that this would involve, as far as possible, improving current data collection. This may also include incorporating new, more relevant survey questions which would permit enhanced estimation of additionality and deadweight.

The report also suggests that matched employer-employee data is required to estimate various components of deadweight and additionality associated with Apprenticeships. The authors point to the existing Workplace Employers Relations Survey (WERS) for potential further analysis and also highlight the possibility of matching other employer level surveys, such as the BIS survey of Apprenticeship Employers or NESS, to employee level data.

### **Wages and conditions of employment**

Higton, J., K. Kaur-Ballagan, J. Shah and K. Medien (2012) **Apprenticeship Pay Survey 2011**. BIS Research Paper Number 64. March 2012. pp. 1- 156.

**KEY THEMES:** wages and terms and conditions of employment

The 2011 survey of apprentice pay obtained responses from more than 11,000 apprentices in the United Kingdom. This was the third survey of pay for apprentices in England but the first which covered the UK. The 2011 survey was carried out after the introduction of the National Minimum Wage for Apprentices in October 2010.

The survey method differed between Great Britain and Northern Ireland – in GB computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) was used for a disproportionate, randomly selected sample covering 11 Apprenticeship frameworks whilst a postal questionnaire was administered to all apprentices in NI. As a result of differences in survey methods, the results for the UK are limited and in the report, more discussion is presented for GB and for individual nations.

Across the topics covered by the survey (mainly for GB), the results differ by framework with a division noticed (in most cases) between frameworks delivering technical and practical manual skills such as engineering, electrotechnical, and construction) and those in the service sector delivering transferable skills such as business administration, customer services, team leadership and management.

#### **PAY**

- Median hourly pay was found to be £5.87 in the UK and £5.86 in GB. Mean hourly pay was £5.83 in the UK and £5.84 for GB.

- Around five per cent of apprentices reported that they did not receive any pay from their employer. Those reporting this were more likely to be: under 18 years of age; from BAME groups; and undertaking Apprenticeships in childcare, etc. The results show an increase in the share of apprentices receiving pay from 88 per cent (in England) in 2007 to 95 per cent (in GB and UK) in 2011.

**(Continued)**



Higton *et al.*, **Apprenticeship Pay Survey 2011** (continued)

- Overall, the survey responses suggest that many employers are unclear or unaware of the required levels of pay for apprentices and how these vary according to the apprentice's age and the year of their programme (e.g. there were a number of cases where apprentices in their second year of training or in a certain age band received the amount set out for first year or for another age group).
- Lower than average wages were reported by apprentices in hairdressing and childcare. Possibly in response to low pay, apprentices in frameworks with relatively low pay, such as childcare, were more likely to report that they took on other (part-time) paid work, though the incidence was only six per cent of apprentices.

### **HOURS**

- In the UK, 79 per cent of apprentices were contracted to work 30 or more hours per week. The mean contracted hours was 34.5 with the average being highest in Scotland. Overall, five per cent of apprentices were contracted to work less than 16 hours per week – this is lower than the minimum allowed by the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE). Around 54 per cent of apprentices reported that they worked overtime.

### **TRAINING**

- In terms of the receipt of training reported by apprentices, 46 per cent indicated that they received off-the-job training whilst 69 per cent indicated that they received on-the-job training (35 per cent received both). Around 20 per cent worryingly reported that they had received neither off- nor on-the-job training. Those reporting that they received neither type of training were more likely to be apprentices in service sector frameworks.
- Training time was longer in Scotland than in England. Where reported, the duration of on-the-job training was on average, twice as long as off-the-job training.

### **ENTRY ROUTES**

- The majority of apprentices (70 per cent) had already been working for their employer before they started their Apprenticeship – this was highest in Wales (75 per cent) which partly explains why pay was higher there than in the other devolved nations. Most employers then were found to be investing in existing staff rather than recruiting new workers for Apprenticeships. Apprentices in technical / practical frameworks were less likely to be existing employees compared with those in the service sector/transferable skills frameworks. Women were more likely than men to be existing employees prior to their Apprenticeship.
- Where existing employees were undertaking an Apprenticeship, the majority (79 per cent) reported that they experienced no change in their pay when starting their Apprenticeship training. 18 per cent had an increase in pay and just two per cent (4 per cent in hairdressing) had a reduction in pay upon starting their course.
- Where apprentices were new recruits, 56 per cent had been attending school/college before starting their Apprenticeship. Around 30 per cent had been working for a different employer and 14 per cent were unemployed prior to their Apprenticeship. Those undertaking Apprenticeships in customer service and business administration were more likely to have been unemployed.

### **POST-COMPLETION PLANS**

- The main motivation for undertaking Apprenticeships appears to be work-related rather than as a springboard onto other training/education.
- Two-thirds of apprentices planned to stay with their current employer after completion of their Apprenticeship. This proportion was highest in England and was higher for team leadership and management and customer service apprentices compared to those in other frameworks.
- 18 per cent of apprentices planned to stay in the sector, though most likely with a different employer rather than with their current one. This was indicated more often by those in electrotechnical, construction and childcare frameworks than in others.
- Seven per cent of apprentices planned to go onto completely different area of work. Apprentices reporting that they were likely to change sector and employer were more often undertaking Apprenticeships associated with more transferable skills such as hospitality, customer service and business administration.

(Continued)

Higton *et al.*, **Apprenticeship Pay Survey 2011** (continued)

- A further seven per cent of apprentices planned to continue their education (with the highest proportion reporting this in childcare frameworks). Of these, more than half (51 per cent) planned to undertake a higher level NVQ or Apprenticeship (this was more common in England than in the other nations), 23 per cent planned to undertake a degree at university and 17 per cent planned to take a course at college.

Higton *et al.* provide a thorough presentation of the results of the 2011 apprentice pay survey with many breakdowns by framework, age, entry route. The report provides an overview of the results. In order to draw more meaningful conclusions and to really delve into causal relationships and more meaningful associations, the data should be exploited using multivariate regression analysis and other approaches to control for various factors. In future, administering the survey across the UK will allow for additional comparisons which could not be made between this edition of the survey and the 2007 survey for England.

**Progression; Equality; Disadvantaged Groups**

Thomas, E. J. Cox and P. Gallagher (2012) “**Progression to higher education: the voice of the apprentice**” *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 17(1): 93-113.

**KEY THEMES:** progression routes; barriers to progression

This paper explores how the issue of progression to higher level learning (mainly HE) has fit in with the aims of Lifelong Learning networks (LLNs) which were set up to facilitate progression for learners on vocational pathways and to create opportunities for vocational learners to build on their earlier learning. The paper highlights that suitable data for considering progression are often not recorded (Seddon 2005) as there is no requirement for HEIs to collect such information. UVAC (2011) indicated that only four per cent of apprentices progressed onto HE. The Skills Commission (2009) posited that the move to HE is difficult to trace as many apprentices do not progress immediately on completion of their Apprenticeship and that most who (eventually) go onto HE, attend part-time.

Thomas *et al* also note that the employer has considerable influence on apprentices’ attitudes towards progression as well as on the incidence of progression. Based on two pieces of research on LLNs, the authors conclude that there is a degree of dependency on employers for information on available progression routes as well as in terms of access to HE. In a survey of apprentices (n=87), a relatively low degree of awareness of the opportunity of such progression was found and this varied by sector (most awareness in social care). Few apprentices planned to go onto HE studies (one in three) and 38 per cent were uncertain of whether their employer would support them in pursuing HE.

The company’s culture and attitudes towards HE (and the business case for it) are important factors in promoting progression. In their survey of apprentices and cases studies, the authors found a mix of employer attitudes - some were very supportive of progression and others did not perceive a need / value of supporting their apprentices onto HE studies. Also, as apprentices are primarily employees, Thomas *et al* consider it more plausible that apprentices would progress onto HE sometime after completion rather than immediately following the Apprenticeship.

The authors also highlight the issue of HE-readiness – with apprentices indicating that they felt unprepared for HE studies. In their six in-depth interviews with apprentices, they found that key skills were not considered to facilitate progression to HE. The authors acknowledge that their research did not directly address this issue and thus do not draw strong conclusions.

Imdorf, C. and R. Leemann (2012) “**New models of Apprenticeship and equal employment opportunity. Do training networks enhance fair hiring practices?**” *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 64(1): 57-74.

**KEY THEMES:** assisting disadvantaged groups; recruitment and delivery

Looking at a “Training Network” (TN) in Switzerland, this paper considers whether TNs enable the selection of apprentices to be less discriminatory than selection by training employers themselves. TNs are a new organisational form of VET becoming increasingly popular in Switzerland, Germany and Austria. In a TN, a Lead Organisation (LO) recruits apprentices which are then rotated during training amongst a number of companies. TNs have resulted in more Apprenticeship opportunities and more training being offered than many individual companies could provide on their own.’

(Continued)

Imodorf and Leemann, “**New models of Apprenticeship and equal employment opportunity. Do training networks enhance fair hiring practices?**” (*continued*)

The case study explored a medium-sized TN (comprising 130 companies) and considered the effects of ‘outsourcing’ the recruitment process to the LO rather than keeping it within a particular company. The TN in this case was not only obliged to select and recruit apprentices to meet the needs of the member companies in which the apprentices would train, but it was also legally required to fulfil the social mandate of ‘integrating young adults at a social disadvantage into working life.’

The authors hypothesise that recruitment through a TN would result in more equality of opportunity for apprentices however they acknowledge that their research cannot provide conclusive evidence either way. The case study is based on one TN and thus a suitable counterfactual is not established in order to consider what would happen amongst the same companies in the absence of the LO.

### **Delivery, Pedagogy**

Hahn, C. (2012) “**Apprenticeship in higher education in France: an experimental device to help apprentices to link academic knowledge and work experience**” *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 64(1): 75-85.

**KEY THEMES:** pedagogy, teaching

This paper is set out in three parts:

- 1) an overview of the alternance model of education (Geay, 1998);
- 2) a brief overview of the French Apprenticeship system; and
- 3) consideration of the impact of an experimental device on the learning process for apprentices.

#### **The alternance model of education**

Alternance education or training can be defined as that which combines periods in an educational institution or training centre with time in the workplace. Hahn cites Geay (1998) sets out alternance as an interface system which joins up school and business, and one with three dimensions:

- 1) *institutional dimension* – concerning the organisation of training between the firm and the school;
- 2) *personal dimension* – concerned with the construction of personal and professional identity;
- 3) *pedagogical dimension* – focused on devices set up to allow apprentices to link academic knowledge with professional experience.

#### **The French Apprenticeship system**

In France, an apprentice is a worker who is entitled to general work legislation provisions and to those conventions particular to the sector in which the firm operates. Apprentices receive a salary and seniority whilst in school. Hahn provides a summary the history of Apprenticeships and its relationship with higher education. The programme has had varying success in the past. In the 1970s, Apprenticeship was viewed as a ‘second-hand educational system for low-level students who were not able to succeed at school.’ This improved by the end of the 1980s when Apprenticeship became a structured education system which allowed learners to prepare for any professional degree. Furthermore, the development of Apprenticeships in higher education has improved the image of the programme. In 1987, Apprenticeships began to be offered in Higher Education (HE). Currently, around five per cent of HE students are apprentices. The increase in the number of apprentices in France recently has been mainly due to the increase in participation in higher education.

#### **Impacts of an experimental device on apprentices’ learning processes**

The device introduced by Hahn involved having apprentices in a business master’s programme write and develop case studies based on their own experiences which would be expected to help them in applying theoretical knowledge to the workplace and in problem solving. Hahn found that groups of apprentices built generic problems from their own experiences and tried to link these to their academic knowledge. There was also an unexpected effect on mentors and teachers whereby the presentations from apprentices raised awareness of how apprentices were, or were not, using the theories which had been taught in class.

Moore, N. and T. Hooley (2012) **“Talking about career: The language used by and with young people to discuss life, learning and work”** ICeGS Occasional Paper. Derby: International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

**KEY THEMES:** information, advice and guidance

This paper reports on findings of research which set out to understand how young people conceptualise career-related vocabulary with the aim of helping improve the effectiveness of those providing support in young people’s career decision-making. The research was funded by the National Higher Education STEM programme. The project involved speaking to teachers, students and STEM role models in interactive focus groups.

‘Apprenticeship’ was one of the ten most common terms found in careers texts. The researchers found that the term ‘Apprenticeship’ is regularly used by teachers from the time when students are about 15 years of age. For learners, the term was found to not always be fully understood and in many instances was used in reference to the BBC television series. All ages related the term to financial issues, but not always correctly. Not all 11 and 12 year olds had heard of Apprenticeship and those that had referred to Lord Sugar (in the BBC series).

There were a variety of views about what an Apprenticeship entails and there was little consideration of the qualifications that the programme provides (from perspectives of students and role models). By age 16, a number of students saw Apprenticeships as an opportunity to earn and learn but no students named the qualifications arising from Apprenticeship. Year 13 students referred to Apprenticeship as a cheaper alternative to university.

## POLICY AND VIEWS ON EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND QUALITY

Patel, R. (May 2012) “**Are we there yet?: Vocational Education at crossroads,**” *Local Economy*, 27(3): 227-231.

**KEY THEMES:** policy; education system

Patel provides an overview of issues and characteristics of vocational education in the UK with reference to the recent Wolf Review (2011) and how the recommendations of that review will generate missed results unless combined with overcoming other challenges such as the contention between promoting quantity versus quality, the voluntary involvement of employers and price competition. *The article does not present new evidence.*

It is argued in the paper that there is no need for high quality vocational education to be benchmarked against academic education as they are different forms of education and quality should be as much of a concern for vocational education as for academic education. Patel also discusses how Apprenticeships have been ‘touted as *the silver bullet*’ in education with the ability to tackle the NEET problem, create a highly skilled technical class and offer an alternative pathway to university. The author cautions however that with there being a current lack of jobs, the impact of the programme on unemployment could be limited and the result of investment could be significant levels of deadweight.

Patel argues that a top-down national management of vocational education does not work. There is a need for employers to take ownership and whilst there are initiatives to improve this aspect (e.g. the new Employer Ownership Pilots) there are still concerns. Vocational education also needs to offer better progression and there is a need for degree level studies to be available at 18 years.

Patel concludes that the Wolf Review should be ‘viewed at best as a partial attempt at reform.’ Whilst the paper does not offer definitive ideas on how to reform the system and overcome current challenges being faced, he emphasises that a number of strategic issues such as how to enhance employer responsibility and accountability, how to move Apprenticeships ‘upmarket’ and the need for teacher training need more attention.

Clough, B. (April 2012) “**The role and impact of unions on learning and skills policy and practice: a review of the research,**” unionlearn with the TUC Research Paper 16. London: unionlearn. 50 pages.

**KEY THEMES:** policy

This report summarises research commissioned by unionlearn (and some other academic papers) looking at various themes related to union learning including demand for union learning and barriers faced. With regards to Apprenticeship, alongside other issues of skills formation and utilisation, the paper considers the role of unions so far and where there is room greater union involvement. The report highlights that union involvement in intermediate skills, such as Apprenticeships, has been increasing. The TUC has had the role of helping unions: to protect and support apprentices in the workplace; to negotiate a greater take up of apprentice places; and, to pressure government to tackle key policy issues such as concerns regarding the quality of training and increasing employer demand for intermediate skills.

The author discusses the unionlearn Apprenticeship project (supported and funded by NAS) which ‘raises awareness of unions of the benefits of Apprenticeships and provides advice on how to engage employers and protect the pay and conditions and secure the health and safety of apprentices as well as monitoring the quality of the training and helping union reps to provide mentor support.’

Clough also cites the OECD which argues that unions in the UK should participate in a way similar to their counterparts in other countries such as Germany and that unions should be involved in designing Apprenticeships and other WBL initiatives alongside the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs).

Heyes, J. (2012) “**Vocational training, employability and the post-2008 jobs crisis: Responses in the European Union,**” Economic and Industrial Democracy, OnlineFirst Version, 0(0): 1-21.

**KEY THEMES:** policy

Whilst not focused on Apprenticeships alone, this paper considers governments’ approaches to Apprenticeships, other forms of training and other active labour market programmes (ALMP) since the 2008 recession. Vocational education and training (VET) measures have featured prominently in the responses of EU member states and many existing training programmes have been expanded and others have been introduced. The paper considers the UK, Ireland and Germany and highlights the difference between ‘training first’ and ‘work-first’ approaches to dealing with the problem of unemployment.

The author characterises the VET system in the UK as being ‘market-led’ or ‘voluntarist’ compared to the German system which he describes as ‘corporatist’. The UK system is one with a history of ‘weak employer engagement in training policy initiatives’. Germany has been able to preserve the skills base through extensive use of short-time working measures and additional support for training but there has been some reinforcement too of the employment ‘incentive’. Ireland has seen increased financial support for training the unemployed but much of the training has comprised short-term courses and there has been ‘an erosion of unemployment benefit entitlements.’

The author highlights that many of the measures introduced by the UK government in response to the recession and unemployment have been focussed on younger people however, he argues that the coalition government has created new barriers to training and education by eliminating the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), discontinuing TtG, increasing the cost of further education courses and abandoning plans to extend the right for employees to request time-off for education and training to those in SMEs.

The author argues that the UK has strengthened a ‘work-first’ approach rather than ‘training-first’ and that training measures have played a relatively minor role in response to the jobs crisis in ‘market-led’ VET systems like in the UK.

NAS (30 May 2012) “**Statement on Apprenticeship Quality 2012,**” Coventry: National Apprenticeship Service. 2 pages.

**KEY THEMES:** policy; quality

Apprenticeship is defined in this Statement as ‘a job with an accompanying skills development programme designed by employers in the sector.’ Apprenticeships allow individuals to gain technical knowledge and practical experience in a real workplace as well as other functional and personal skills which are required not only for apprentices’ current jobs but also for their future careers. At the end of an Apprenticeship, an apprentice must be able to undertake the complete range of duties require by the job in a confident manner and with competence set by the industry.

Requirements for a high quality deliver model set out in the Statement include:

- An Apprenticeship must equip individuals with new skills and learning;
- Apprentices must be employed in a job role with a productive purpose – it is not sufficient for just a contract of employment to be in place;
- An apprentice should be employed for at least 30 hours per week, though in exceptional circumstances, the absolute minimum is 16 hours per week;
- Apprenticeship Frameworks are linked to specific job roles or occupations;
- The duration of an Apprenticeship should reflect that set out in the relevant Framework document. For 16 to 18 year olds, the minimum duration is 12 months whilst for apprentices aged 19 years and older the Apprenticeship may be less than 12 months if and only if relevant prior learning is recorded; the duration should not in any case be less than six months;
- An Apprenticeship Agreement is required between the employer and apprentices for any programmes starting on or after 6<sup>th</sup> April 2012;
- The opportunity to progress towards Level 2 in English and Maths must be given to all apprentices who do not already have this attained;
- Employers are required to pay at least the applicable rate to apprentices as set out in by the Apprenticeship National Minimum Wage;

**(Continued)**

#### NAS “Statement on Apprenticeship Quality 2012”

- Frameworks reflect the requirements set out in the SASE and providers must ensure that their delivery models deliver these framework requirements;

- ATA Apprenticeships still require strong employer involvement and they should be focused on delivering permanent jobs to apprentices (either during or after training).

Providers are responsible for ensuring that the standards set out by NAS are met which includes challenging or not engaging with employers who are not willing to comply with the above. Providers are also responsible for ensuring that any sub-contractors meet delivery and quality standards .

HoC Public Accounts Committee (2012) “**Adult Apprenticeships**,” Eight-fourth Report of Session 2010-12. HC 1875. London: The Stationery Office Limited. House of Commons Public Accounts Committee. 18 pages + Evidence Submissions.

**KEY THEMES:** public spending; benefits; quality

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) looked into the performance of the Apprenticeships programme, with particular concern over the value for money associated with Adult Apprenticeships. Overall, the Committee deemed the programme a success with significant recent increases in learner numbers (more than 400 per cent increase in starts in the four years to 2010/11) and in the rate of successful completion (from around 33 per cent in 2004/05 to around 75 per cent in 2010/11). The report however also concludes that there is more work to be done by BIS, NAS and the Skills Funding Agency in order to maximise the benefits accruing to the substantial investments being made in Apprenticeships.

Whilst the NAO estimate substantial returns to Apprenticeships (£18 for each £1 public investment) , PAC emphasise the need to consider training that would have taken place even in the absence of public funding and insist that estimates of additionality for the programme need to be obtained. Furthermore, the PAC recommends that BIS improve its understanding of which Apprenticeships deliver the greatest returns and that the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) provide individuals and employers with better information about the benefits arising from different types of Apprenticeships.

The report also recommends that the NAS needs to find ways to: increase employer participation in the programme so that it is more comparable to the level of engagement observed in other countries; and to increase the proportion of programmes that are at the Advanced Apprenticeships level, again moving England closer to the levels found in other systems (e.g. Germany).

One of the greatest concerns emerging from the PAC report is the incidence of short Apprenticeship programmes, particularly those lasting six months or less. The report summarises that such short programmes ‘are of no proper benefit to either individuals or employers.’ This headline finding from the PAC report has been the subject of much comment and discussion in the press since the publication of the Committee’s findings. NAS indicated in its evidence submissions to the PAC that they are taking actions to deal with the problem of short duration Apprenticeships and would continue to do so.

Finally, the report highlights the need to clarify the relationship between the NAS and the SFA so that working arrangements between the two are clear and to ensure that there is minimal duplication.

## OTHER CONTENT

This section summarises a number of press releases, news coverage and other content which has considered various aspects of Apprenticeships. The summaries presented below cover only a selection of recent press and online articles on Apprenticeship. Much of this content is based on some of the research detailed above or other studies and it largely provides commentary on various issues rather than new evidence - this should be borne in mind when considering this content however, presenting a summary of this coverage highlights the attention that Apprenticeships have been receiving - good or bad.

**EAL Website – News and Events** (<http://eal.org.uk/news-and-events/news>) (EAL (Excellence, Achievement & Learning Limited) is 'a specialist, employer-recognised awarding organisation for the engineering, manufacturing, building services and related sectors.')

*“EAL welcomes action to reassure employers on Apprenticeships quality”* published on 23 April 2012

Referring to an independent survey\* that found that 57 per cent of industry employers were concerned about damage to the reputation of Apprenticeships, the EAL backed government plans to improve quality of some programmes. This article notes the coverage of Apprenticeships presented on BBC's Panorama programme ('The Great Apprenticeship Scandal') regarding short duration courses with little delivery of skills and providing little prospects for employment to apprentices. In the survey\* employers indicated a need for some minimum duration for Apprenticeships but also felt that there is a need for flexibility to suit particular industries.

*“Apprenticeships – an Alternative to Higher Education”* published on 10 May 2012

Presents the views of Ann Watson, Managing Director of EAL, that high-quality Apprenticeships are crucial for developing high level skills and for gaining the experience and knowledge required in the workplace. She cites an independent survey\* carried out on behalf of EAL that found that over 70 per cent of industry employers felt that Apprenticeships are at least of equal value to a university degree in helping people prepare for the workplace and to progress in their careers. More than a quarter of employers surveyed were of the opinion that Apprenticeships were more relevant than university degrees. Ann Watson also noted that whilst higher education has its own advantages, during a time of high unemployment the vocational route can offer a valuable and necessary alternative.

*“Micro business Apprenticeships hit by economic crisis”* published on 18 May 2012

Again, this article cites an independent survey\* which found that apprentices recruitment amongst micro businesses (with one to 10 employees) has been harder hit by the economic crisis than has the programme amongst larger employers. This survey\* obtained responses from 500 managing directors and those responsible for HR and training in engineering and manufacturing, building services, construction, logistics, and energy and utilities. Ann Watson, Managing Director of EAL, is quoted in the article as saying that whilst some government initiatives are providing incentives for small/micro employers to make wider use of Apprenticeships, there are still barriers in place and more support is needed. The benefits of Apprenticeships need to be better demonstrated to such employers. Bob Millington, Director of National Liaison and Regional Coordination for the National Forum of Engineering Centres (NFEC) indicated that microbusinesses face difficulties in taking on apprentices including the level of investment doing so requires relative to the size of the business; and the additional workload it imposes on a small number of employees.

This survey\* and the implications for micro businesses were also covered in an article in online magazine, *The Manufacturer* (see: <http://www.themanufacturer.com/articles/engineering-awarding-body-reveals-micro-business-Apprenticeships-are-struggling/>)

\* there is no indication of the source of the independent survey mentioned in the above articles.



**“Straightening out crossed wires”** by Denis Hird. Published online in *ECN Electrical Contracting News*, Volume 32, No. 5, May 2012. (see <http://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk/launch.aspx?referral=other&pnum=&refresh=T1i3wD20J0a7&EID=fa29ddf6-2c48-4310-9a60-9fed655b2786&skip=>)

This article cites 5<sup>th</sup> *Net Benefits of Training to Employers* study (Hogarth *et al.*, 2012) and ‘explains the “how-to” and “why should I” of taking on an apprentice.’ The author of this article relates his experience of employing apprentices and tries to address concerns that employers who have not taken on apprentices might have about doing so. He considers taking on an apprentice to be a valuable investment for a company to make whether during economic growth or recession highlighting benefits such as laying a foundation for long term business development, creating a skilled workforce to meet demand (when it picks up) and enhancing the ability of the company to meet growth opportunities. The article also sets out the obligations of employers including paying apprentices and providing off-site training. The author has had a positive experience and recommends that others consider employing apprentices and contact NAS for further information.

**“A plan for Apprenticeship success”** by Janet Murray. Published online at [guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk) on 15 May 2012. (see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business-skills/a-plan-for-Apprenticeship-success>)

Janet Murray summarises a recent roundtable debate that was hosted by the Guardian in association with BAE systems. Notable issues discussed in the debate include:

- vocational education continues to be viewed by many as ‘second best’ to academic study with more attention paid to such things as the release of A-Levels and GCSE results each year and with degrees being considered the ‘gold standard’;
- some of the participants in the debate felt that the lack of parity between vocational qualifications and academic qualifications could be partly attributed to the fact that Apprenticeships, for example, are not included in the UCAS tariff thus prospective learners can be put off by not seeing obvious progression opportunities;
- the perception of vocational skills varies by geography and depends on the local economy where areas with particular firms and larger employers is often associated with young people being more knowledgeable about vocational skills and seeing pathways such as Apprenticeships as more attractive and recognised opportunities;
- participants also discussed: barriers faced by SMEs; the lack of information about vocational pathways being provided to young people in schools; and the need for greater partnerships between schools, colleges, universities and employers;
- there is also a need to ensure that individuals who have become disengaged from education and employment are not overlooked.

**“Apprentice approval”** published online in *The Engineer: First for technology and innovation* ([www.theengineer.co.uk](http://www.theengineer.co.uk)) on 21 May 2012. (see <http://www.theengineer.co.uk/opinion/viewpoint/apprentice-approval/1012569.article>)

This article expresses views from the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) which recently held an event bringing representatives together from academia, training and business in which they heard from apprentices that at school they were encouraged to pursue higher education at university and that little help was given if they wanted to undertake alternative pathways. The IET welcomed the National Careers Service (launched in April) as it provides information on vocational courses and Apprenticeships as well as more academic routes. The article highlights that ‘Apprenticeships can provide participants with the knowledge and skills for an engineering career without having to embark on a university course, which could leave many saddled with debt and an uncertain future.’ A recent IET skills survey\* indicated that 38 per cent of employers expected to take on more apprentices over the next five years.

\* there is no indication of the details of the IET survey mentioned in the text.

**“UTCs aim to give teenagers the technical expertise they need for Apprenticeships”** by Richard Garner. Published online in *The Independent* on 24 May 2012 (see: <http://www.independent.co.uk/student/career-planning/Apprenticeships/utcs-aim-to-give-teenagers-the-technical-expertise-they-need-for-Apprenticeships-7782478.html>)

This article defines University Technical Colleges (UTCs) as a ‘new breed of school-cum –college concentrating on providing 14- to 19-year-olds with the kind of technical expertise they will need to take advantage of Apprenticeships in tomorrow’s world.’ The article considers plans for the UTC in east London which has sponsors including Ford, Network Rail, and the Prospect Learning Foundation. The UTC would differ from a secondary school with a different ethos and with extra hours which the article indicates would result in students have an extra year’s learning compared to the average secondary school. The article also indicates that 18 UTCs have been approved by Government but not all are in operation currently.

**“Government must work harder to protect the Apprenticeship brand”** by Gordon Marsden. Published online in *FE Week* ([www.feweek.co.uk](http://www.feweek.co.uk)) on 24 May 2012. (see <http://feweek.co.uk/2012/05/24/government-must-work-harder-to-protect-the-Apprenticeship-brand/>)

This article considers an NAO report on Adult Apprenticeships and highlights the concerns regarding short Apprenticeships (less than six months). The author notes that ‘Apprenticeships will and should rightly play a key role as we look to continue to work on boosting Britain’s skills base’ and that it is imperative that future expansion of the programme does not ‘come at the expense of quality’.

**“The Government increases number of UTCs to 34 by approving 15 more”** Published online on [utcolleges.org](http://www.utcolleges.org) on 29 May 2012 (see <http://www.utcolleges.org/newsfolder/the-government-increases-number-of-utcs-to-34-by-approving-15-more/>)

This piece highlights the approval of additional UTCs and overviews the need for UTCs and industrial support. The article provides a list of all 15 newly approved UTCs and indicates that there are already two UTCs in operation, a further three which are planning to open in September 2012 and 14 more UTCs which are working towards opening dates in 2013 and 2014.

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