

Creating knowledge and skills: the troubled relationship between company, college and apprentice in UK apprenticeships

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UK Apprenticeship System

- History of voluntarist approach to vocational education and training
- Apprenticeships available at two levels: foundation (level 2) and advanced (level 3) for 16-25 year olds
- 91 occupational sectors - large variation in quality, content and completion
- Training providers play big role
- State funds cost of training for qualifications and pays weekly 'allowance' to apprentices without employed status. Employers pay wage to apprentices with employed status

Statistics

- Advanced: 104,002 * Foundation: 159,656

Engineering: 28,450

Construction: 24,473

Hairdressing: 22,776

Automotive: 21,753

Business Admin 20,690

Hospitality: 19,528

Customer Service: 14,402

Electro-technical: 14,168

Health & Social Care: 11,577

Retail: 9,496

Completion Rates

Engineering:	41%
Construction:	30%
Hairdressing:	32%
Automotive:	31%
Business Admin:	42%
Hospitality:	27%
Customer Service:	38%
Electro-technical:	43%
Health & Social Care:	17%
Retail:	30%

Girls Losing Out?

- More females than males start on foundation apprenticeship - returns to level 2 poor compared to level 3
- Female dominated sectors have lower pay and career progression
- These sectors have higher labour turnover, less unionised, poor inspection reports

Learners or Workers?

- Labour market model of apprenticeship: fast apprentice journey to productive worker
- Vocational education model: apprentice matures over time - learner identity protected
- Workplace versus educational setting
- Fragility of product markets and business climate - erosion of internal labour market principles

Shifting Definition of Skills

- Concept of skill in manufacturing/technical sectors still has shared meaning between employers and educators
- Concept of skill in service sectors contested
 - inter-personal, ‘soft’ skills merge into attributes of personality, body image
 - Concept of generic ‘employability’

Workplace Environment

- Long-term sustainability versus short-term survival
- Quality of product market - potential for skill development as part of everyday workplace activity
- Employer allegiance: to themselves, product, sector, region, country
- Young people's attitudes to work - less meaning than in the past?

Illusion of the Knowledge Economy

- Tony Blair's goal for 50% in higher education - predicated on concept of 'knowledge worker' in a high skills economy
- Decline of manufacturing clears way for 'new' economic landscape
- Making and mending confined to leisure time
- Employers must determine their skill needs and demand a response from education and training providers

Age-old Prejudice ?

- **Trades and professions' - these are the themes the Muse, Left to her freedom, would forebear to choose'**
(George Crabbe, 1810)
- **These seven sciences (grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy) be called liberal sciences - because they be most meet and expedient to be learned of gentlemen and free men, for it is illiberal and servile to get the living with hand and sweat of the body"**
(William Alley, 1571)

Challenges

- **Educational entitlement?- young people who remain in full-time education under ‘care’ of the State - apprentices under ‘care’ of employers**
- **Apprenticeship in a ‘modern’ economy/social world - viability of model**
- **Implications for vocational teachers and institutions - does adapting to diluted concepts of skill, de-skill them professionally?**