

THE HE PROGRESSION OF ADVANCED APPRENTICES: TRENDS, TRAJECTORIES AND TACTICS

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CONTEXT

- Small percentage of advanced apprentices progress onto higher level study (Chappell. 2011. 4%; HEFCE, 2009. 6%)
- Comparisons with progression rates for those taking other level 3 quals: A levels and BTECs.
- Potentially greater interest from amongst learners for higher-level training (NAS, 2010. 50%)
- Advanced apprenticeship forms a recognised route into higher-level training: *professional or occupational pathway* (UCAS. 2016)
- Push for 'greater parity in the progression prospects of those taking vocational qualifications' (HEFCE, OFFA, Government)
- Those who have taken the occupational route into HE very capable of flourishing and benefiting from HE (BIS. 2015)
- Those taking advanced apprenticeships more likely to come from WP backgrounds (HEFCE. 2009, BIS. 2015).



THE RESEARCH PROJECT

- Commissioned by REACH: the Leicester and Leicestershire NNCO
- Aims:
 - Insight into numbers pursuing advanced apprenticeships and progressing onto higher-level study
 - Explanations and interpretations
 - Recommendations for supporting progression
- Approach and methods:
 - Quantitative trends - regional and local (published reports, data releases, institutional stats)
 - Qualitative analysis - practitioners (teachers, FE and HE tutors, assessors, managers, employer liaison officers, LA officials) and learners (advanced apprentices and those who gone on to HE); semi-structured interviews and focus groups.
 - Case study approach: three colleges offering AA training and HE provision.



A WEALTH OF INFORMATION COLLECTED



INITIAL FINDINGS: REGIONAL PROGRESSION FIGURES

- East Midlands: 8% in 2010/11 (BIS, 2015). Comparable to other regions (highest regional figure was 10%)
- Over the period 2006/7-2010/11, proportion of advanced apprentices progressing to HE fell from 11 to 8%. Consistent with most regions.
- Compares with an increase in overall HE participation rates during the same period: from 42% to 46% (HRIPR) (BIS, 2015. *Participation Rates in HE*).



INITIAL FINDINGS: LOCAL TRENDS

- No readily available progression figures at city and county level
- However, from Government released apprenticeship tables it is possible to identify the numbers achieving their advanced apprenticeships over recent years (*and the potential pool of HE applicants*).
- Analysis of this data reveals significant growth in numbers achieving an AA. Indeed, growth exceeds increase in those gaining intermediate apprenticeships. Local trends consistent with national ones.



APPRENTICESHIP FRAMEWORK ACHIEVEMENTS: LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE, 2005/06 TO 2013/14

Framework	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Growth
Intermediate	1,260	1,300	1,280	1,500	1,790	1,890	3,180	2,810	2,840	125%
Advanced	500	560	610	730	1,020	1,040	1,280	1,580	1,630	226%
Higher	-	-	-	-	-	20	10	20	40	-

Source: GOV.UK. 2016b. FE Data Library: Apprenticeships



INITIAL FINDINGS: EVIDENCE FROM LOCAL PRACTITIONERS

- College 1: ‘We don’t have many apprentices that progress...this reflects modest levels of demand. You have to have demand to make provision of courses sustainable’.
- College 2: Trains some 2,500 apprentices but these are mainly at level 2 and 3. Only a ‘very small number’ progress to level 4.
- Assessment:
 - Low progression rates to HE of advanced apprentices is an ‘issue’; ‘unfortunately, few progress at the moment’
 - I don’t think it is a matter of learners not wanting to progress. They do want to...there is an interest’.



INITIAL FINDINGS: THE EXCEPTION

- College 3: programme sponsored by a large construction company
- Recent progression rates on this programme:
 - 88% of cohort who completed AA in 2012/13 started HE level study in 2013/14
 - Comparable figures for 2013/14 and 2014/15 were 78% and 93% respectively
 - Actual numbers comprising each cohort: 24, 27, 30.
- Compares with overall sector figure for 2010/11 of 5% (BIS. 2015).
- Provides valuable case study (within the larger study) in terms of insights into practices facilitating progression:
 - Drawing on views of practitioners and learners (AA and HE level) involved
 - Representing purposive sample.



QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: BASED ON THE 'LEARNER JOURNEY'

- Findings structured around the 'learner journey' - onto and through the advanced apprenticeship and into HE
- Four phases discerned in the learner journey:
 - Route taken prior to applying for advanced apprenticeship (AA)
 - Transition onto AA programme (first contact-first day)
 - Once on the advanced apprenticeship
 - Transition to HE level study
- Objectives:
 - Insights into the experience
 - Identification of existing practices that support transition
 - Recommendations based on existing practices, and practitioner and learner discussions around further improvements.



INITIAL PHASE OF THE JOURNEY

- Learners: (AA and those who now in HE):
 - Typically, embarked on A levels or BTECs, some completed, at least one gained a university place
 - Considered most of their peers had taken the same route, although reference to a few starting after completing GCSEs
- Practitioners (supporting the same learners):
 - ‘Mixed bag: some straight out of school (5-6), others have done A levels, few started university, some been in work’
- Practitioners (other case study institutions):
 - ‘Learners more likely to progress if they have good GCSEs’
- Research project investigating AS and A level drop-out:
 - ‘They realise A levels are not the right choice and return to their original idea of an apprenticeship’.
- Wider picture: 52% of 2006-07 AA cohort took intermediate app (BIS. 2015).



INITIAL ROUTE TAKEN: ASSESSMENT

- Learners:
 - General view: ‘schools were advising but not on apprenticeships’; ‘push you to uni...sixth form... A levels’
 - Common perceptions: ‘apprenticeship is about hairdressing or working in a garage’
- Practitioners:
 - ‘At schools, it is academic...the route to go’.
Apprenticeship is the poor relation in terms of progression.
 - ‘There is a huge push to do A levels no matter what’.
- The literature:
 - ‘Pupils and parents lack good quality information about apprenticeships and this is leading to misconceptions’
 - ‘For an AA, candidates typically need 4 good quality GCSEs inc. English and Maths’ (Burke. 2016).



TRANSITION ONTO THE ADVANCED APPRENTICESHIP

- Learners:
 - ‘When we want into the job interview it was like a four year learning plan’
 - ‘It is presented as a career really’
- Practitioners (supporting these learners):
 - ‘We talk about what they could have in front of them for the next four years’
 - ‘On recruitment days [we] have HND students there to promote it’
 - ‘Speak to a lot of parents - just as excited to see where their child could go’.
- How typical is this route (onto HND in college setting)?
 - Most of tracked cohort (2006/7-10/11) progress onto NHDs, HNCs and Cert and Dips in HE, followed by first degree (BIS. 2015)
 - 52% of AA in 2010/11 ‘progressed to study HE in an FE college’ (BIS. 2015).



ON THE ADVANCED APPRENTICESHIP

- Learners:
 - CPD unit on programme: ‘learning about the progression route’
 - Informed of ‘jobs associated with level 4 and 5’
 - Role models on site: ‘now I [have] worked with people as well, I am more confident where I will end up once I have done the HND’
- Practitioners (supporting these learners) :
 - ‘Because they are working in the environment, they see the goal. They see an assistant engineer - that seems to help focus them.’
- Practitioners (other case study institutions):
 - Initiative being explored: start IAG at the outset - exploring and identifying career goals, with follow-up meetings to monitor progress with these.
- The literature:
 - Learners would ‘like to have known more about opportunities for progression earlier’ (Dismore. 2012).



TRANSITION TO HE

- Learners:
 - Working with those who completed the course (who offer guidance and are role models): ‘they encourage you’, ‘know people in high positions who have got this HND’
 - Awareness of the benefits of taking a route that combines ‘employment and learning’: ‘I could have done a degree but back to square one again’
 - Gain membership of professional body as part of the programme and appreciation of what this offers
- Practitioners (supporting these learners):
 - Retention Officer: key contact who can refer students to specialist support, who ‘knows all [the] learners, their interests and personalities’.
- Practitioners (other case study institutions)
 - Recruitment of ‘Apprenticeship Ambassadors’ inc. those who have ‘gone through hardship and done well’ and now on HE level programmes.



RECOMMENDATIONS: SCHOOL Y9-11

- Early awareness raising IAG on apprenticeship option and occupational route into further and higher education
- Guidance/clarification on the rise in the participation age to 18.
 - This is concerned with extending the period during which a young person should be in some form of training and education, including the option of taking an apprenticeship
- Presentation of the apprenticeship option as a training pathway that can lead to HE and the acquisition of higher-level skills.
 - Accompanying this, the provision of IAG on the employment opportunities associated with a higher-level qualification
- Recognition of importance of GCSEs in accessing AAs
- The establishment of an apprenticeship club
- The deployment of role models/learners who have taken the occupational route and advanced to higher-level skills training and higher-level employment (ideally, from the same school/college).



RECOMMENDATIONS: Y12-13

- Recognition of App'ship Week and use of NAS's online resources
- Support for learners interested in applying for an AA
- Recognition that the process of gaining an apprenticeship is comparable - time and effort - to gaining an university place, and warrants similar levels of support (in researching vacancies, understanding offers, preparing applications, sitting interviews)
- The hosting of an *Apprenticeship Day*, with aim of raising awareness of AA and professional/occupational route into higher-level training
- Engagement of alumni who have taken the work-based route onto an AA and into higher-level study
- Engagement of employers who can provide information and insights into careers and training opportunities associated with particular industries and sectors
- Need to address parental concerns about routes an AA can offer into higher-level training and employment.



RECOMMENDATIONS: TRAINING PROVIDERS

■ **Advanced apprenticeship applicants**

- Selection to consider those capable of progressing - academic achievement, motivation, interest in higher-level training
- Presentation of the AA as, potentially, first part of a training programme leading to higher-level study
- Collection of case studies of those who have progressed onto higher-level study (inc. route taken, rationale for progression... in their words).

■ **Advanced apprentices**

- Inclusion of a career-planning module (inc. consideration of available local pathways into higher-level study and alignment of qualifications with sector-specific job roles and employment opportunities
- Peer support from learners at next (HE) level of study
- Regular progress meetings with learners (Commencing with exploration of career aims, and est. of an action plan. Subsequent meetings assessing progress).



REFLECTIONS

- Sector demand for higher level skills varies:
 - Level 3 for ‘dental nurse’, ‘fully competent technician’ (motor vehicle)
- Costs of training:
 - ‘In the majority of Leicester and Leicestershire we are talking about small to medium sized enterprises [who may not] have the money to invest in training’
- Importance of employer support and readiness to work with training providers:
 - Characteristic of case study programme (partnership approach).
 - Key arguments: ageing workforce, competitive advantage, employee loyalty.
- Data issues
 - Lack of progression data (HESA feedback), do collect data on entry qualifications but this does not include details on those with apprenticeships.
 - HE entry age of many on this route: 19 plus, thus missed from progression figures.



OVER TO YOU

- Does demand/interest in HE amongst advanced apprentices exceed current rates of progression?
- Do the recommendations make sense/resonate, and are they ‘implementable’:
 - What outreach interventions work best in raising HE awareness and aspirations amongst those on the ‘professional pathways’?
 - How can schools be supported in promoting ‘alternative’ (and less well known) routes through FE and into HE?
- What practices are effective in engaging with employers, and what arguments are likely to be most influential in raising employer interest in higher level skills training?
- How should we deal with the data issue: the focus on participation by 18/19 is likely to understate *true* rates of progression amongst those on ‘alternative pathways’ (19.3% of 2006-07 tracked cohort progressed into HE over the following 7 years. BIS. 2015)?



THANK YOU

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