

APPRENTICESHIP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: FINAL CASE STUDY

Mobilising provider insights for degree apprenticeships: comparing theoretical models to deliver effective integration for on- and off-the-job learning.

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Mobilising provider insights for degree apprenticeships: comparing theoretical models to deliver effective integration for on- and off-the-job learning.

Project overview

This project was designed to investigate provider insights about existing delivery for degree apprenticeships in contexts where employers/stakeholders contributed to the curriculum and apprentices joined networks in academic/work-associated circles. The project explores significant delivery issues such as how to achieve greater involvement in workplace learning, integrating practice and theory, dialogue between tutor and workplace mentor, and better support for tutors and apprentices for developing learning portfolios.

A main aim is to create a roadmap that focuses on providing insights into delivering a more integrated learning experience for apprentices. Senior practitioners asked: “What is actually happening in the 'classroom'? Is that where the actual learning happens or are apprentices presented with the ideas, and it is not until they take away the ideas and apply it in the workplace - following reflection and/or application - that actual learning happens. Where is the *moment of learning*?”

The roadmap will:

1. investigate existing ‘triggers’ as successful elements within the programmes that act as catalysts for high quality learning outcomes (through practitioner interpretation of the integration of on-the-job and off-the-job learning).
2. investigate what enhances these ‘triggers’ to add to the value and the quality of the provision (in terms of retention, progression, completion and achievement).
3. analyse how to develop a facilitator guide as a collaborative roadmap through which the integration of apprenticeship learning and stakeholder engagement can be negotiated (featuring coaching, mentoring and reflection).
4. align the roadmap with other academic models from policy and practice literature to communicate the ‘theories in use’ from the specialist senior practitioners showcased through the business focused degree apprenticeship programmes examined in order to define and address their application within other apprenticeship programmes.

The project seeks to address impact goals for apprenticeship providers on improving achievement rates, increasing retention, reducing withdrawals, increasing apprentice and

employer satisfaction, improved relationships with stakeholder partners leading to improved working, teaching, and training, and learning experiences within degree apprenticeships. A scoping literature review has been undertaken to inform and support the findings and outcomes.

The senior practitioners have collectively reported on successful techniques for delivering business apprenticeship practice and have used their experience and leadership to promote an integrated learning model within a roadmap in order to make this analysis and discussion of practice relevant to other providers:

The focus for the 'Project Beacon' is to identify and evidence the unique or most helpful impactful triggers and to share them among the apprenticeship provider community. These triggers occur at the interface of theory and practice, with catalysts being introduced to reflect on experience to integrate learning.

Using this collaborative partnership, the outputs will provide essential framing for practitioners and curriculum designers to apply to new or existing integrated apprenticeship programmes.

This project will provide a better understanding of how apprenticeships work in higher education, in an environment where there are other graduate learners and employers' expectations are for more independent approaches to developing a range of business-oriented job roles and professions.

Positive outcomes and Impact

The collaboration has been extremely useful as a way of developing a consensus around the integrative nature of learning within the degree apprenticeship and the need to engage in apprenticeship delivery that integrates learning in the classroom (off-the-job) and learning in the workplace (on-the-job).

It is the intention that all project learning is widely disseminated with cross-sector colleagues and wider stakeholders, as we work collaboratively to address government ambitions of increasing achievement rates to above 67%, in addition to achieving other quality measures as outlined in the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework and taking onboard Ofsted and Department for Education guidance on what constitutes high quality apprenticeship delivery.

Impact indicators will be the production of a working model that can be piloted within the collaborative partners to represent a useful toolkit which can be published more widely and benefit both further education and higher education providers.

Outputs will have direct, practical impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and support both practitioner and leadership development in the following ways:

a) Facilitating a better understanding of apprenticeships and their requirements. For faculty members this relates particularly to teaching, learning and supporting activities, with a different level of depth for staff who are new to apprenticeships or are about to design or deliver apprenticeship programmes and those with more experience whose needs relate to specific aspects of design, delivery and programme management. For institutional leaders it relates to having a sufficient understanding to provide an environment that supports sustainable apprenticeship provision and creates systems and structures that integrate apprenticeship provision into mainstream systems.

b) Developing more appropriate approaches to teaching and learning, with more attention to apprentices' development in the workplace; an earlier focus on apprenticeship outcomes;

better integration between academic and practical learning; effective customisation of learning to meet individual needs and starting-points; effective use of Tripartite Progress Reviews (TPRs) as learning and pedagogical tools; and context-sensitive integration of cross-cutting themes in the curriculum.

Unique 'triggers' to learning that The Open University, Middlesex and Consalia Ltd offer that make an impact on apprenticeship learning.

"We believe this is a reflective cycle over time. Only when reflection takes place, does learning happen."

Future activity to support high quality apprenticeship delivery

Impact indicators will be the production of a practitioner guide, the 'roadmap', that can be piloted within the collaborative partners to represent a useful toolkit with readily accessible models for practice. The report can be published and disseminated more widely and benefit both further education and higher education providers.

Project Outputs

Tangible Outputs:

The design and development of a new framework and model that is applicable to apprenticeships whatever the sector, industry or occupation that makes clear an apprenticeship is an 'integrated' programme, not an academic course with 'an add-on'.

Embedded in the 'roadmap' the project team will develop an enhanced approach to learning portfolios that can be used for evaluating apprentices' progress against Knowledge Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) set out in the apprenticeship standard.

Crucially, the roadmap will help practitioners and institutions to develop more appropriate approaches to teaching and learning with more attention to apprentices' development in the workplace; a more precise focus on apprenticeship outcomes; better integration between academic and practical learning and context-sensitive integration of cross-cutting themes in the curriculum.

Transferability:

Each partner will:

1. Disseminate, make sense of, and facilitate the modelling within other higher education institutions.
2. Publish the findings as deliverables with associated learning products such as podcasts or videocasts to explain and disseminate the project findings
3. Present the findings and case studies at conferences such as at the University Vocational Awards Council's (UVAC) annual conference and disseminate through networks such as the Work and Learning Research Centre SIG/CERS at Middlesex University and The Open University.

Future Activity

A scoping literature review has set the context for creating change in the delivery of on-the-job and off-the-job learning for degree apprentices. This has operated as an initial and concurrent knowledge store to respond to the direction the senior practitioners have used to develop the concepts around integrated provision where theory and practice have become interchangeable. The goal is to communicate a work-based and work-integrated approach

that utilises existing cultures within the workplace that encompass the experience of the apprentices and employers as well as the providers.

The Roadmap Brief

- report on successful techniques of delivering business and leadership apprenticeships based on existing practice to promote integrated learning; make it practical and relevant to other providers.

Project Scope

- to gather what works in current practice and evidence how we have made integrated learning happen that recognises the workplace as a 'site' of learning and not just for application

Project Tasks

- to gather and evidence what works in current practice using information gathering sessions on 'triggers' that illicit 'moments of learning'

The variety of workplaces poses a challenge for all providers to establish and engage in learning programmes that feature occupational and subject specialisms while gaining new ground for technical, vocational and professional goals. Coaching and mentoring will be featured as solutions for collaborative practice with employers as partners.

The project thus far has considered classroom practice as well as the workplace as a site of learning, asking:

- 1) When are learning moments?
- 2) What enhances the learning moments?
- 3) How (as providers) can we better facilitate learning moments?

Recommendations for effective collaborative partnership working to address quality improvement in apprenticeship delivery.

- Regular employer review
- Employer Forum
- Reflection on learning journal
- Industry experienced (expert) tutor team
- Teaching delivery (university classroom and industry expert training workshop combined)

Where can colleagues find more information?

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