Hybrid Qualifications – Increasing the Value of Vocational Education and Training in the Context of Lifelong Learning

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Country Report: England

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Section 1 Introduction

1.1 The initial major task of the EU Leonardo project 'Hybrid Qualifications increasing the value of Vocational Education and Training in the context of Lifelong Learning' has been to develop individual country reports. This paper represents the report from England.

1.2 At the time of writing, England (and the rest of the UK) is in the aftermath of a General Election which took place on 6 May 2010. The result was inconclusive, and the UK has a coalition (Conservative – Liberal Democrat) government for the first time in 70 years. The coalition has replaced a Labour government which came to power 13 years ago. Education and Skills policies in England[1] come under the jurisdiction of the new coalition which has created a new Department for Education (from the previous Department for Schools and Families) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) which survives from the previous regime. The exact policy remits and direction of both departments are still being worked out. These developments make it both an interesting and challenging time to be researching and writing about 'hybrid qualifications' in England.

1.3 The transition to a different government provides an opportunity for policy reform and there are indications that the general education, vocational education and training systems are likely to experience change over the next year or so. In this report, we aim to outline the characteristics of the existing system and position of hybrid qualifications and to locate this account in its historical context. We will identify areas of recent change and indicate where future changes of relevance to our project may occur. One such policy is the raising of the participation age (RPA) from 16 to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015. This measure became law towards the end of the Labour government's tenure and will be reviewed by the new coalition. The requirement for young people to remain in a government approved form of education and training until the age of 18 is likely to increase demand for and

[1] Education and Skills policies are devolved in the UK to each of the home countries.

take up of hybrid qualifications as young people seek to keep their options open for further study while gaining vocational knowledge and skills valued in the labour market. At the same time the future of the recently introduced 14-19 Diploma which has been conceived as a hybrid qualification is now unclear.

1.4 As well as potential differences, there are also likely to be continuities between the aspirations of the previous and current governments. In particular, there has been recent all-party consensus on a range of issues. These include agreement that improving the supply of education and skills is vital for the country's competitiveness and economic well being and also that reforms to the education and training system can enhance the life-chances of those from disadvantaged backgrounds. To address these goals there has been great emphasis on, and public investment in, widening participation to higher education, expanding vocational pathways including apprenticeship, developing higher level courses in vocational areas, and progression to higher education from vocational routes.

1.5 It is timely then for this country report to be able to take stock of the hybrid qualification landscape at the same time as emphasising the dynamic nature of the current policy context. The aim of the country reports is to provide an account of hybrid qualifications in each of the countries participating in the study. The findings from the country reports will inform the design of the second phase of the study which will involve some primary data collection. The content and structure of each report has been agreed between the project partners. Consequently, following the Introduction this report will be organised in seven further sections which will:

- Provide an overview of the English education system
- Map the relevant qualification landscape within the English system
- Present an account of the wider historical and policy context
- Provide a quantitative overview

- Develop an account of the currency and value of the qualifications defined as ‘hybrid’ through their potential for progression to the labour market and higher education;
- Outline the institutional realisation of different types of qualifications
- Present an overview of the funding system, and
- Offer conclusions and identify areas to be researched in the empirical phase of the study.

Section 2 An Overview of the English Education System

2.1 This section presents an overview of the English education system. It begins with a summary of the different types of institution within the school sector. It then provides data to indicate their relative size and pupil populations. Finally, it offers an overview of the National Curriculum, which is the framework used to set out the subjects taught, standards required, and to measure pupils' attainment against national benchmarks.

2.2 Children in England between the ages of 5 and 16 are entitled to a free place at a state school. As Table 1 shows, the vast majority attend state schools, which are also referred to as 'maintained' and receive funding from their local authority

2.3 The category of 'maintained' or 'state' school encompasses considerable diversity. The following provides a brief summary of each school type, and has been extracted from www.directgov.uk (accessed 16 August 2010).

Community schools

'A community school is run by the local authority, which:

- employs the staff
- owns the land and buildings
- decides which 'admissions criteria' to use (these are used to allocate places if the school has more applicants than places)

Community schools look to develop strong links with the local community, sometimes offering use of their facilities and providing services like childcare and adult learning classes.

Foundation and trust schools:

Foundation schools are run by their own governing body, which employs the staff and sets the admissions criteria. Land and buildings are usually owned by the governing body or a charitable foundation.

A Trust school is a type of foundation school which forms a charitable trust with an outside partner - for example, a business or educational charity - aiming to raise standards and explore new ways of working.

The decision to become a Trust school is taken by the governing body, with parents having a say.

Community and foundation special schools:

Community and foundation special schools cater for children with specific educational needs.

Voluntary-aided schools:

Voluntary-aided schools are mainly religious or 'faith' schools, although anyone can apply for a place. As with foundation schools, the governing body:

- employs the staff
- sets the admissions criteria

School buildings and land are normally owned by a charitable foundation, often a religious organisation. The governing body contributes to building and maintenance costs.'

2.4 There are currently over 2,974 'specialist' schools in England, representing 92 per cent of all secondary schools and 2.5 million students.

2.5 Specialist schools operate in partnership with private-sector sponsors and receive additional Government funding, allowing them to establish distinct identities through their chosen specialism and achieve targets for raising standards, while working within the requirements of the National Curriculum. For further details see: www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/specialistschools (accessed 17 August 2010).

2.5 Any maintained secondary school in England can apply for specialist status, in the following areas:

Arts
Business and enterprise
Engineering
Humanities
Languages
Mathematics and computing
Music
Science
Sports
Technology
Applied Learning

2.6 Pupil Referral Units (PRU) cater for children who are excluded from school, not attending school for other reasons or who are not gaining qualifications at school. Many of the children attending PRUs will have special educational needs and many of those will also have 'statements', usually for emotional and behavioural difficulties. They will often go in to PRUs to help them cope with immediate problems they are having with their education, and they may then be gradually introduced back into mainstream schools or special schools. See www.kent.gov.uk/education_and_learning/school_attendance__behaviour/exclusion_or_suspension/alternatives_to_school/pupil_referral_units_prus.aspx (accessed 16 August 2010).

2.7 Special schools are different to the 'Specialist' schools referred to above. Special schools (only) take children with particular type of

special needs. Many schools that are not classified as Special schools have dedicated provision for children with particular needs. For example, they may have good access for physically disabled pupils or special teaching for pupils with hearing or sight difficulties or dyslexia. www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/SpecialEducationalNeeds/DG_4000872Directgov.uk (accessed 16 August 2010).

2.8 In recent years, a new type of school known as Academies has emerged. As Table 1 below shows, Academies represented only 2 per cent of provision in 2010. However, the title 'Academy' needs to be treated with caution, as its meaning when originally introduced in 2000 is quite different to that being developed by the recently-elected coalition government. The information below provides an account of the original meaning of Academy under the previous Government:

'The Academies programme was introduced as part of the then Secretary of State David Blunkett's March 2000 speech on transforming secondary education. The first Academy projects were announced in September 2000. Academies are publicly funded independent local schools that provide a first class free education. They are all ability schools established by sponsors from business, faith or voluntary groups working with partners from the local community. Academies provide a teaching and learning environment that is in line with the best in the maintained sector and offer a broad and balanced curriculum to pupils of all abilities, focusing on one of more subject specialisms. Some Academies are brand new schools in areas which need the extra school places. Most of them replace existing weak or underperforming schools. As a broad rule of thumb, the Government is prepared to consider any secondary school where in 2006 fewer than 30 per cent of pupils gained five or more GCSEs at grades A* - C (including English and Maths) as a potential Academy project. In addition, local authorities should always consider an Academy as an option for dealing with a school in special measures, or subject to an improvement notice, whatever its results.' www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/academies/faq/?version=1#582259 (accessed 9 August 2010)

2.9 Following the change of Government on May 11 2010, the emphasis is no longer on 'failing schools', and instead, Academies are being presented as a means to increase parental choice. The 'Academies Bill' was announced in the Queens Speech and then presented to parliament in May 2010. In brief, it enables schools to apply for academy status, and as such to have greater freedom over the curriculum, the admissions policy and the recruitment of teachers than standard 'maintained' schools. The following information is from www.education.gov.uk/academies (accessed 17 August 2010):

> 'Academies are publicly funded independent schools that provide a first-class education.
>
> Academies can benefit from greater freedoms to help you innovate and raise standards. These freedoms include:
>
> - freedom from local authority control
> - ability to set your own pay and conditions for staff
> - freedom from following the National Curriculum
> - ability to change the lengths of terms and school days.
>
> We are also making plans for further freedoms for academies in the way they engage in local partnerships and deliver 14-19 education.'

Independent schools

2.10 There are around 2,300 independent schools in England. These schools set their own curriculum and admissions policies. They are funded by fees paid by parents and income from investments. Just over half have charitable status. Independent schools are not required to teach the National Curriculum and have their own admissions policies, but have to be regularly monitored for standards either by Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/ChoosingASchool/DG_4016312, accessed 16 August 2010).

2.11 The data provided in Tables 1 and 2 below have been taken from the School Census www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000925/SFR09-2010.pdf (accessed 17 August 2010). The Schools Census collects data on pupils in England, and its coverage is broad, ranging from those at nursery school to those in classes at school-based sixth-forms. It does not include those young people aged 16+ who attend further education colleges, sixth-form colleges or any other further education which takes place outside of a school.

Please note that we have excluded nursery schools from the data below.

School type	Number	Percentage
Maintained Primary	16,971	70
Maintained Secondary (including schools with specialist status)	3,127	13
Special	1,054	4
Pupil Referral Units	443	2
Independent	2,375	10
City Technology Colleges	3	0
Academies	202	1
All schools total	**24,175**	**100**

Table 1: Type and number of schools, England (2010)

Source: Schools Census 2010
www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000925/SFR09-2010.pdf
(accessed 17 August 2010)

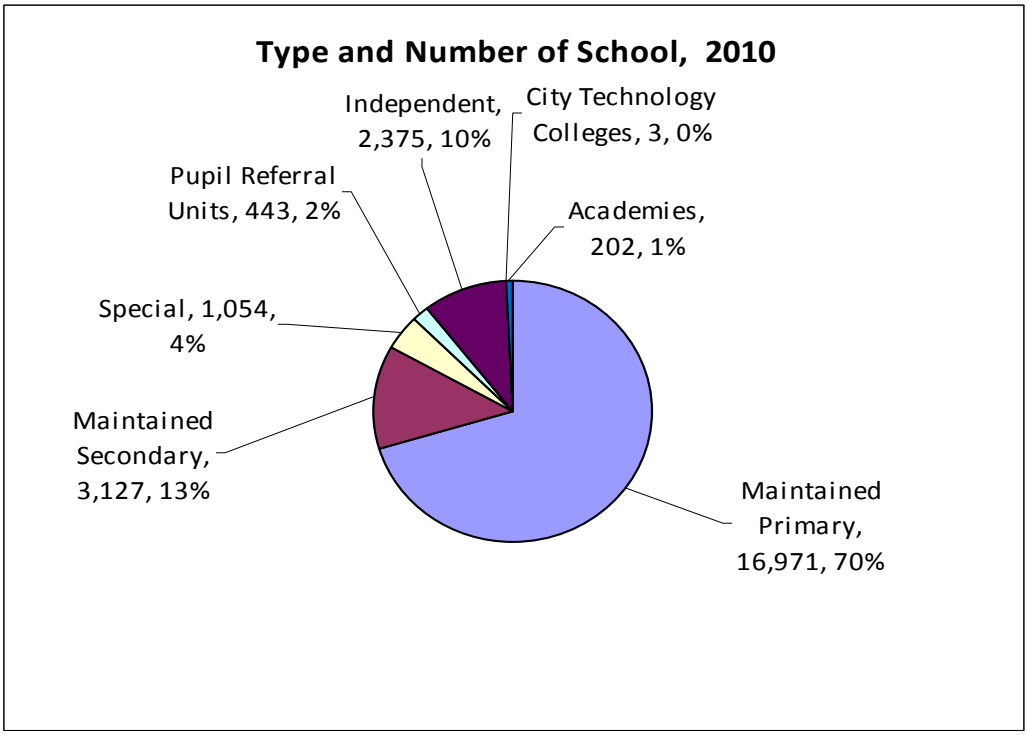


Figure 1: Type and number of schools, England 2010

The following table shows student headcount for England, 2010

School type	Number	Percentage
Maintained Primary	4,093,800	52
Maintained Secondary	3,055,520	38
Special	90,770	1
Pupil Referral Units	12,800	0
Independent	576,810	7
City Technology Colleges	3,440	0
Academies	192,640	2
All students total	**8,025,770**	**100**

Table 2: Student headcount (5-19*) by school type, England, 2010

* Please note that the Schools Census covers pupils who attend sixth forms if they form part of a State or Independent school. Typically, these students will be 16 years old when they join what is known as Year 12. They will begin Year 13 as 17-year-olds. There will be a small number of students who remain in school beyond 18 (approximately 3 per cent of students aged 16+).

It is assumed that their continuation beyond 18 years of age will be in order to repeat an academic year.

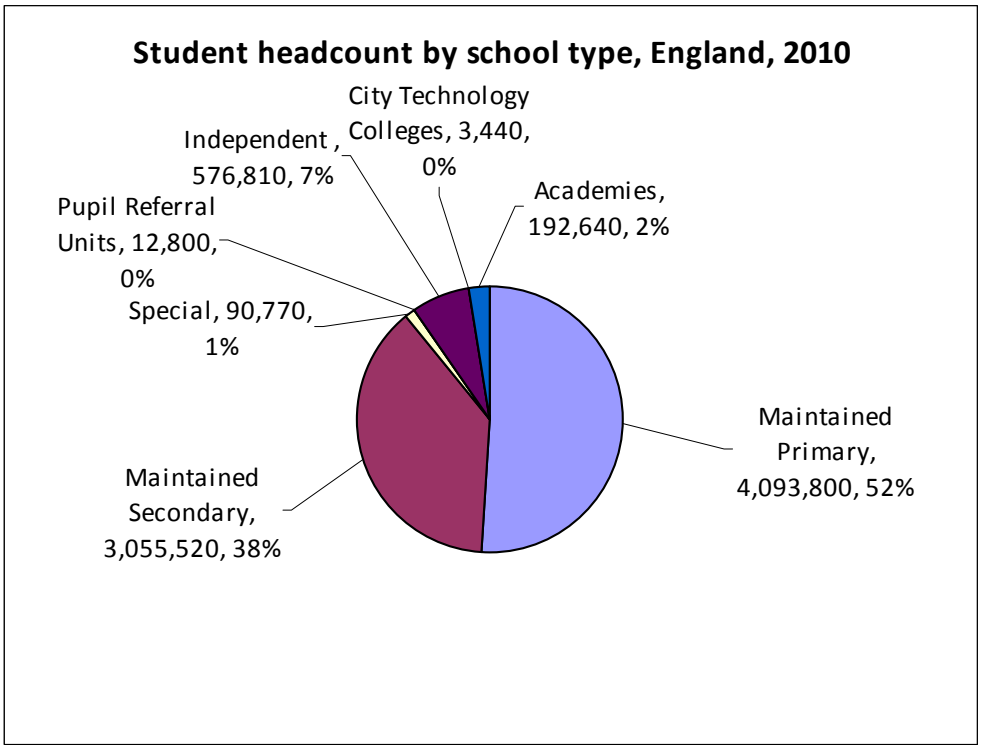


Figure 2: Student headcount, England 2010

National Curriculum

2.12 The National Curriculum is a framework used by all maintained schools. Its purpose is to set out the subjects taught, the knowledge, skills and understanding required in each subject. It is a measure of the attainment or standards expected in each subject. The framework is designed to enable teachers to measure pupils' progress, and teachers are expected to carry out assessments as part of regular activity, and also at the end of what are referred to as 'Key Stages' .

2.13 The National Curriculum is divided into four 'Key Stages' and pupils' progress is assessed against national standards at the end of each stage. The results of this assessment are made public at the end of Key Stage 2 (when pupils are aged 10/11) and Key Stage 4 (when pupils are aged 15/16).

2.14 The assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 cover English, Mathematics and Science.

2.15 The assessments at the end of Key Stage 4 are those national qualifications such as GCSEs.

2.16 Further information and detail on the National Curriculum Is available at www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents (accessed 20 August 2010).

2.17 The National Curriculum is an on-going topic of political debate, and since its original implementation in 1989, it has undergone a number of changes. Nevertheless the teacher assessments and national tests which combine to form the assessment of children at the end of Key Stage 2 continue to hold significance and currency for parents and schools. As is noted in Section 5 of this report, the qualifications gained at the end of Key Stage 4 represent an important moment in young people's educational trajectory and are a key determinant of future options.

Section 3 Qualifications Mapping

3.1 In this section we outline and discuss the National Qualifications Framework and the newly introduced Qualifications Credit Framework.

National Qualifications Framework

3.2 The notion of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in England emerged in the early to mid-1990s, at least in part, in response to the development of National Vocational Qualifications in the late 1980s (Young 2003). There have been various stages in the development of the NQF and attempts to create a framework which acts as an umbrella for the spectrum of academic and vocational qualifications as well as a ladder of attainment from basic through to post-graduate and doctoral levels.

3.3 Table 3 below provides a summary of qualifications by type and level, as they are currently positioned within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The NQF sets out the qualifications for England, Northern Ireland and Wales. The eight levels follow an entry level which encompasses basic skills and skills for life.

NQF Level	General qualifications	Vocationally-related qualifications
1	GCSEs grades D-G	BTEC Introductory Diplomas and Certificate/OCR Nationals/NVQs at Level 1
2	GCSEs grades A*-C	BTEC First Diplomas and Certificates/OCR Nationals/NVQs at Level 2
3	GCE A Levels	GCE A Levels in Applied subjects/BTEC Diplomas, Certificates and Awards/BTEC Nationals/OCR Nationals/NVQs at Level 3
4	Certificate in Higher Education	BTEC Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards/NVQs at Level 4
5	Diploma in Higher Education	BTEC Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards/BGEC HNDs and HNCs/NVQs at Level 4; Foundation Degrees
6	Bachelors Degrees/ Graduate Certificates and Diplomas	BTEC Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards/NVQ at Level 4
7	Master's Degrees/ Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas	BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificate and Awards/NVQ at Level 5
8	Doctorates	BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards/NVQ at Level 5

Table 3: The National Qualifications Framework (implemented in 2006)

(Adapted from: www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039017 (accessed 14 May 2010)

3.4 As an existing and relatively well-understood framework, the NQF offers a helpful reference point and sets the parameters within which we will identify the notion of 'hybridity' within English qualification provision. In this report we draw attention to the main qualifications

which offer the potential to fulfil a 'hybrid' role. However, we also provide a more wide-ranging perspective of the English system. The NQF uses the device of 'levels' to draw different sorts of award together according to the standard of attainment they are deemed to represent. The advantage of the notion of level is that it provides a unifying framework for talking about diverse academic and vocational qualifications. Each level is defined in terms of a benchmark of attainment in academic qualifications. For example, Level 2 is conceived as five GCSE passes at grades A* to C or equivalent. Level 3 is conceived as two A Level passes or equivalent and as the level which is required for entry to Higher Education (HE).

3.5 An interesting aspect of the NQF is the division of undergraduate level provision into three distinct levels (four, five and six in the framework) associated with different qualifications. A typical full-time Bachelor degree in the UK takes three years to complete and using this as a guide, Level 4 equates to the successful completion of the first year, Level 5 the second year and Level 6 the third year. In terms of higher level vocational awards it also allows the positioning of well-established sub-Bachelor degree awards in the Framework as well as the location of the relatively new Foundation Degree (which is positioned as equivalent to successful completion of two years of full-time study at higher education level). The availability of sub-Bachelor level vocational awards has a long tradition in vocational pathways and they are seen as useful rungs in the ladder of vocational and professional qualifications in sectors such as engineering and some areas of construction and the built environment. In recent years, the existence and development of awards at this level has been seen as a way of widening participation to higher education (Parry 2006). Although the increasing availability of sub-Bachelor options can have a positive influence on widening participation, we are concerned that this may have the effect of creating a two tier system where vocational (including hybrids) and work-based qualifications are articulated to entry at sub-Bachelor level (e.g. to HNC/HNC, Certificate in HE, Foundation Degree) while A Levels are articulated to entry to Bachelor degrees (Fuller et al. 2010). This is an issue that will be explored in the empirical phase of the project.

3.6 It is also important to unpack the notion of 'level' on which the NQF is based. The 'levels' are constructs which contrive to equate disparate types of attainment under one rubric. The limitation of the idea is that the meaning and worth of qualifications is context-dependent and constructed in practice through the value attached to particular qualifications by diverse user and recipient populations. Put another way it is one thing to assert parity of esteem through grouping qualifications together under the same level, it is another to achieve parity of esteem in practice across all contexts in which qualifications are used.

3.7 Our key focus in this project is on Level 3 and specifically on those Level 3 qualifications which are positioned as 'hybrids' on the basis that they are a) acceptable for entry to higher education and b) recognised by employers as having currency in the labour market. We will be developing the definition of hybridity further through the empirical phase of the project, and as we supplement data gathered through official discourse with the perspectives of Key Informants involved in conceiving, designing and delivering these qualifications. As the project progresses, we aim to develop a nuanced articulation of hybridity, by placing qualifications that have some claim to being hybrid along a continuum according to their relative value in higher education and the labour market.

3.8 At this stage, we can point to the following qualifications which seem most closely to conform to the general definition of hybrid informing this research. In terms of the existing picture, the qualification that appears closest to the notion of a hybrid qualification is the BTEC National suite of qualifications. As we will discuss below, the BTEC Nationals appear to enjoy high status with employers and are popular with parents and students. Ostensibly a very similar qualification, both in terms of their design and purpose, the OCR National suite of qualifications are less well known than their BTEC equivalents. (See Appendix for details on all qualifications). Both BTEC and OCR Nationals have currency for progression to university through their

inclusion in the UCAS tariff[2]. Looking to the future, the Advanced Diplomas, which have been offered from 2008, also have the potential to meet the criteria of a hybrid qualification. Taking a historical perspective, the earlier GNVQ was designed as a middle way, hybrid qualification positioned between NVQs and A Levels. NVQs were conceived as competence-based occupational qualifications designed to be delivered in the workplace. At the moment the NVQ Level 3 is not included in the UCAS tariff[3]. As outlined hybrid qualifications should have currency in the labour market. A key way in which they may accrue this sort of worth is through the extent to which work (via placements, employment or other forms of employer involvement) is an integral part of the qualification design or pathway.

3.9 An initiative which it is also worth drawing attention to in this section is the recent introduction of the Qualifications and Credit Framework. In discussing the aims and objectives of this new framework, we can begin to see how contemporary priorities are inextricably bound to the past. Through the current initiative to provide a coherent framework of credit for vocational qualifications we can trace past failures to overcome obdurate structural divisions within the English system.

Qualifications and Credit Framework

3.10 The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), which was launched in 2008, is a credit basis for the recognition and accreditation of qualifications (for more detail, see http://www.qcda.gov.uk/qualifications/60.aspx). The QCF is still in the process of being populated, and at present includes only vocational qualifications. Its target for 2008-11 is to convert vocational qualifications to the specifications of the framework. The intention is also to find a way of incorporating government-supported programmes such as Apprenticeships into the NCF. The QCF has also been linked to the European Qualifications Framework.

[2] The UCAS tariff awards points to qualifications as entry routes to university. Academic qualification such as A levels and the International Baccalaureate are included in the tariff but many vocational qualifications are not.
[3] There is one exception, an Accountancy NVQ3 which is included for interesting reasons beyond the scope of this report.

3.11 The QCF contains three qualification titles:

- Awards 1-12 credits
- Certificates 13-36 credits
- Diplomas 37 credits or more

Each qualification title will contain the following information:

- The level of the qualification
- The size of qualification (that is, whether award, certificate or diploma)
- Details indicating the content of the qualification.

3.12 The table below provides a diagrammatic representation of the QCF:

Table 4: The Qualifications and Credit Framework (Source: Engineering and Construction training Board: www.ecitb.org.uk)

3.13 The policy intention of the QCF is to offer a new and more flexible means of recognising skills. As Tait notes (2009: 1), the QCF is part of a national strategy to raise education and skills levels by improving and adding to the existing NQF. The advantages of the QCF are perceived by Tait (ibid) to include:

- a more clear and transparent national qualifications framework
- improved recognition and status for vocational learning/qualifications
- greater flexibility, motivation and encouragement for learners through unit and credit based learning
- more relevant qualifications for employment, employers and learners
- development of non-traditional progression routes into HE based on achievement of agreed units, credits and qualifications
- articulation/integration with HE qualifications and credit systems, and
- use of web based technology to enhance recording of achievement and information, advice and guidance systems.

3.14 If the above points encapsulate the potential offered by the QCF, they articulate too the historical weakness of 'skills' or vocational education in England. As we will discuss below, their trajectory has been a story of haphazard, unsystematic expansion. Thus, any attempt to predict the future success and durability of the QCF must consider the roots of the English system, in particular, the historical divisions between academic and vocational education which characterise it. Furthermore, unlike the relative stability and enduring status enjoyed by general, academic qualifications, there are myriad political, social and economic expectations imposed on vocational qualifications, which serve to shape and determine their position as 'other' to the traditional reference points. As such the potential outcomes are far from certain.

3.15 We suggest that attempts to introduce increased regulation and transparency of vocational provision should be seen through a historical record of highly mixed attempts to do so, and from a recognition of the inferior social status vocational qualifications traditionally have relative to academic awards. Above all, we need to

consider the vocational route as illustrative of its multiple roles and purposes: meeting the needs of a changing labour market; offering progression pathways to an expanded higher education sector; and fulfilling government requirements to address youth unemployment. The QCF aims to provide greater transparency and facilitate a common understanding of vocational provision. It is too early to say if it will achieve this. However, if the goal is to develop a more unified concept of worth around academic, hybrid and occupational qualifications, the QCF is currently failing. This is because academic qualifications have as yet not been included in the framework which gives the impression that the framework's key purpose is to position and categorise vocational qualifications rather than to create an integrated system.

3.16 A clearer framework of vocational provision, if it is to exclude academic qualifications, does not overcome the binary distinction between vocational and academic education, but it may address contemporary policy concerns. This is seen most clearly in the raising of the participation age to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015, and the need to focus attention towards the nature of educational provision for those students who would otherwise reject, or are eliminated from, 'traditional' or 'conventional' academic pathways.

3.17 So, in order to understand the contemporary qualifications landscape, we need to take a broad historical and policy perspective. Therefore, let us now turn to look at how the English system of qualifications has developed, how certain qualifications are illustrative of its particular characteristics, and what we consider to be the key moments in its recent past.

Section 4 History and Policy Context

4.1 The English system of qualifications is complex and opaque, a terrain in which different types and levels of qualifications jostle for space. In order to position hybrid qualifications within this rather dense landscape, we need to disentangle what is acknowledged in the previous Government White Paper on Education and Skills as 'an alphabet soup' of qualifications of different sizes, at different levels, with few clear progression routes between them (2005). The White Paper identifies a need for a more streamlined and simplified qualifications system, and at the same time, it articulates the way in which qualifications reform is associated with a broad political, social and economic agenda. So, in tracing the history of hybrid qualifications within the English system, we need to outline too the broad policy context out of which these qualifications have developed. Thus, what follows below explores what we have defined as hybrid qualifications through a historical lens.

4.2 Contemporary conceptualisations of hybrid qualifications are bound up with the way in which vocational educational policy has developed in the past thirty years; although the seeds of current debates can be traced back considerably further. However, in the interests of providing a succinct account, and with a focus on the more recent developments, we have chosen to limit this historical and policy context to key moments from the 1980s onwards. This section therefore draws attention to the key policy interventions that have shaped the way in which provision for 14-19 year olds has grown over that time. Our brief account of the historical and political context is one in which we can see the status, exchange value and meaning of qualifications undergoing significant and far-reaching change. Perhaps the most important change concerns qualifications as providing entry points to the labour market. Although it is currently possible to leave the education system at the end of the academic year when students are aged 16, as we will seek to explore during the empirical phase of this project, the opportunities for entry to the labour market are limited. So, any assessment of the currency or

status of qualifications must also take account of underlying social, economic and labour market trends as they have impacted on education and training policy, and patterns of participation.

4.3 Any attempt to grasp hold of the notion of 'hybrid qualifications' forces us to confront the long-standing and obdurate division between vocational and general or academic qualifications. This divide, perhaps more than anything, characterises the English system. Indeed, to understand the nature, currency and meaning of hybrid qualifications we have to explore how the current provision for 14-19 year olds continues to exemplify those deep divisions. Although there has recently been an attempt to introduce a more unified system of vocational and academic qualifications through the Tomlinson Review (2004), the potential for the establishment of an overarching, unified system has not been realised. The main thrust of the Tomlinson Review, which had recommended an all-embracing system of qualifications in the form of national diplomas, was not implemented. The introduction in 2008 of a suite of diplomas aimed at 14 to 19 year olds alongside existing academic qualifications can be seen as the latest compromise in a long history of reforms, which have ultimately served to retain the status of academic qualifications. The Advanced Diploma (Level 3) will be discussed further below, and its position as a hybrid qualification will depend on its future trajectory and ultimate place in the qualifications landscape.

4.4 Before turning to consider the way in which particular qualifications have contributed to the English system and its development over time, let us first chart some important points in the history of 14-19 qualification provision. Pring et al. argue that reform of general qualifications moves 'through successive waves of innovation and preservation' (2009:118). Similarly, Tomlinson refers to a 'historical pattern of the opening up of participation, followed by a period of retrenchment' (2005: 55). Thus, the history of both general and vocational qualifications is inevitably determined by the perpetual debates about academic standards, employer needs, social inclusion and in particular, successive governments' commitments to widening participation. However, the volume and nature of government reform

weighs more heavily on vocational qualification provision, whose status is widely seen as relative to the greater stability and esteem in which general qualifications are held (Hodgson and Spours 2008; Tomlinson 2005; Pring et al. 2009). As Eraut points out, vocational qualifications are seen by governments as 'serving wider economic and social purposes', which includes the development of skills for employers and economic development; supporting a more flexible labour market; enhancing 'employability'; motivating those learners who are low-performers or alienated by formal education; and delaying entry to the labour market in times of high unemployment (2001: 88). It is these often competing and conflicting agendas which have exacerbated attempts to develop a stronger and more coherent vocational route as well as uncertain and changing demand-side signals from the labour market.

The NVQ 'competence' route

4.5 The introduction of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), and with it the creation of a new framework of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) in 1986 can be seen as an early attempt to establish coherence to the system which had been characterised, alongside further education more broadly, as 'localised, fragmented and voluntaristic' (Raggatt and Williams 1999: 6). The innovation followed recommendations from the Review of Vocational Qualifications in England and Wales. The working group noted the lack of a 'clear, readily understandable pattern of provision', poorly defined 'arrangements for progression and transfer' (ibid: 53-54). The NVQ framework aimed to bring into being a system of occupational qualifications within which 'competence and capability in the application of knowledge and skill' were prioritised, and with certification defined in terms of a 'statement of competence' (ibid: 55).

4.6 NVQs were therefore designed to accredit the skills, knowledge and understanding required in particular work activities and across sectors – particularly those which previously had few qualifications. As Smithers observes (2002), the 'remit was to bring together existing awards and introduce new ones where gaps were found' (2002),

however as Tomlinson notes, 'according to some critics, NVQs have proved an expensive addition to a 'jungle' of vocational qualifications and embody the separate traditions of academic education versus vocational training endemic in English education' (2005: 45). Furthermore, Pring et al. note that a survey commissioned by the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) reported poor understanding of the NVQs and their relationship to academic qualifications, some twenty years after their implementation (2009: 125).

4.7 The introduction of the NVQ framework can be seen as a further reinforcement of an existing academic/vocational divide, with NVQs providing accreditation of the occupational route in a system which privileged the academic. The status of NVQs was not helped by the fact that despite the framework encompassing five levels, awards were concentrated in the first and second levels. Furthermore, the majority of awards were clustered in two framework areas: 'Providing Goods and Services' and 'Providing Business Services' (Raggatt and Williams 1999).

4.8 NVQs remain important in the qualification landscape, but they would be difficult to classify as fulfilling the dual role of a hybrid qualification for young people in particular. With the exception of the NVQ 3 in Accountancy, they have yet to achieve currency[4] as a route to higher education. They have been included in government supported apprenticeship programmes where they are pursued alongside other qualifications such as a Technical Certificate and Key Skills as part of 'sector frameworks'. NVQs have also been promoted to adults in work via various government schemes (e.g. Train to Gain) which fund their delivery.

[4] The UCAS tariff represents the most important indicator of currency insofar as entry to higher education is concerned. The NVQ in Accountancy is the only NVQ included in the tariff, and attracts 160 points, equivalent to two GCE A levels at grade C.

The GCSE – The platform for progression (a Level 2 programme)

4.9 Let us now turn to discuss the GCSE, which exemplifies the privileging of the academic within the English system, and at the same time, characterises the way in which the potential for unification has been missed. In 1986, the General Certificate for Education (GCSE) was introduced as the public examination at the end of the compulsory education phase for 16 year olds. The GCSE replaced two existing qualifications: the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) and General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) (O Level). The attainment of five GCSEs at grades A* to C (viewed as achievement of a full Level 2 qualification) has provided a key indicator of school and individual pupil performance, as illustrated by school league tables. It also provides the platform for student progression on to the academic Level 3 pathway and from there to university. Whilst the GCSE brought together CSE and O Level, Pring et al. point to 'features of this merger which demand attention because they continue to shape our perceptions of the present system and which affect what might be aspired to in the future' (2008: 4). They point to the devaluing of the 'practical and relevant', 'less room for teacher judgement', the 'more easily assessable writing skills' rather than oral skills, and the continued reference of GCSE pass grades to their O Level equivalents. The nature of this qualification offers a powerful illustration of the symbolic capital which accrues to notions of academic achievement. There has also been the longstanding practice of measuring the value of vocational attainment at Level 2 in terms of the GCSE 'five pass' benchmark.

From GNVQ to A Levels

4.10 Despite the potential of GCSE to provide a unifying qualification, a space remained for those young people who were deemed either less academically able or not motivated by academic study. The introduction of the General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) was announced through a White Paper, *Education and Training for the 21st Century* (DES/DE 1991). The qualification became generally available in 1993, following a pilot launch in 1992.

4.11 GNVQs were offered in five broad occupational clusters: Art and Design; Leisure and Tourism; Manufacturing; Health and Social Care; Business. They were articulated as a means to develop skills, knowledge and understanding beyond the more narrowly-focused, occupationally-geared NVQs, and were designed to provide a general vocational education with a broad sectoral context. GNVQs were available at two levels, 'intermediate' (Level 2, and targeted at 14-16 year olds), where the attainment of a GNVQ was considered equivalent to 'four or five good GCSEs', and at advanced level (Level 3, and targeted at 16-18 year olds) where it was conceived as equivalent to 'two A Levels' passes (DES 1993) (i.e. full Level 2 and Level 3 respectively).

4.12 The intention was that GNVQs would replace a range of vocational qualifications, and they were, as Hodkinson notes, 'aimed at a rapidly growing minority of young people who stayed in full time education but for whom A Levels were unsuitable' (1998: 151). Thus, the GNVQs were to provide a middle-way in a three-track system that was dominated by the academic, and at the same time to address criticisms of the narrowness of NVQs. Moreover, they were seen as offering a potential bridge between the vocational and academic pathways via a practical curriculum oriented to broad vocational sectors. Hodgson and Spours observe that GNVQs were the vehicle through which the Conservative Government developed curriculum innovation during the late 1980s, and their 'main response to rising post-16 participation rates' (2008: 25). As Tomlinson notes, 'a political consensus emerged across left and right to preserve A Levels as a major route into higher education' (2005: 85). So, with GNVQs occupying the middle ground, they offered an alternative to those young people deemed less academic, but who were prepared to stay within full-time education at (usually) further education colleges (for advanced level GNVQs). Indeed, the qualification was introduced first at advanced level, and followed by intermediate and foundation level (at Level 2 and Level 1 respectively). The qualification underwent a number of changes after its launch, and in 2000, the then Secretary of State for Education announced the introduction of new GCSEs in

vocational subjects which replaced the GNVQ at foundation and intermediate level.

4.13 GNVQs were subject to further reform in 2001, when the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) was introduced as part of the Labour Government's 'Curriculum 2000' initiative. The AVCE was intended to be more closely linked with GCE A Level, which continued to provide the reference point for what had been intended as a very different kind of qualification. In particular, the introduction of AVCE brought with it a change from the Advanced GNVQ system of 'pass', 'merit' and 'distinction' to an A-E grading system. Thus the withdrawal of the Advanced GNVQ and the introduction of AVCE can be seen as part of what was later classified as the 'Applied A Level'. Introduced in 2005, the Applied A Level is now offered in ten vocational areas, with their grades mirroring general A Levels. They are currently simply referred to as A Levels signifying the continuing hold of the A Level brand, and moreover, the inability of GVNQs or AVCEs to carve a niche beyond it. With vocationally-oriented qualifications such as GNVQs and AVCEs seen as an 'alternative' to the GCE A Level, they were 'never able to escape the shadow of A Levels' (Hodgson and Spours: 2008: 61) or achieve parity of esteem.

4.14 Once again, the fate of the vocational is bound up with the academic. The development from GNVQs to AVCEs to Applied A Levels illustrates the alternative and subordinate position of vocational qualifications in terms of their lack of visibility and transitory status. Qualifications provision as a route to higher education has been shaped by A Levels, which were introduced in 1951, and which continue to dominate the field.

4.15 The introduction of a broader, more vocationally-oriented suite of qualifications since the 1990s can be understood in the context of successive governments' attempts to offer a pathway for those young people who are not motivated by, or able, to study for traditional qualifications. Moreover, the expansion of qualifications can be understood too as an attempt to support governments' widening participation agenda. Pring et al. note that between 1995 and 2004,

the proportion of students entering higher education with vocational qualifications increased from 18 per cent to 25 per cent (TLRP 2008, in Pring et al. 2009: 154). Nevertheless, as they go on to say, the increase in vocational qualifications as entry routes to higher education was often combined with general qualifications, and ‘does nothing to confirm the status of vocational qualifications as entry routes in their own right’ (ibid 154).

4.16 With its more general, broad based vocational perspective, the Advanced Level GNVQ fulfilled a dual role: of offering preparation for practical vocational training or for entry to higher education. Its dual purpose was articulated in the 1991 White Paper:

> Many young people want to keep their career options open. They want to study for vocational qualifications which prepare them for a range of related occupations but do not limit their choices too early. Some want to keep open the possibility of moving on to higher education. Employers, too, want to have the opportunity of developing their young recruits' general skills, as well as their specific working skills. A range of general qualifications is needed within the NVQ framework to meet these needs. Some already exist which help to meet this need—including some offered by BTEC. But they need to be clearly related to the NVQ framework, to make it easier for people to progress quickly to occupationally specific qualifications. (DES/DE 1991: 18)

4.17 According to Sharpe, the White Paper was significant in that it was ‘the first Government document to set out the concept of a framework of qualifications in diagrammatic form. Academic qualifications, NVQs and GNVQs were lined up at their different levels and the three pathways of progression indicated (1998). Sharpe goes on to link the introduction and implementation of GNVQs with the legislative power provided through the 1988 Education Reform Act, which required colleges and schools to offer only qualifications within the NCVQ framework to students pursuing vocational options. This was part of attempts to rationalise the range of available qualifications, for

example, by reducing demand for BTEC and other vocational qualifications in favour of increased uptake of GNVQs and NVQs. However, the popularity of the former qualifications with individuals, providers and also employers has remained. Moreover, it is important to note that the 'private status' of the awarding bodies in the UK such as EdExcel that awards BTECs has limited the government's ability to control what qualifications are offered and pursued.

BTEC qualifications

4.18 The history and background of 'the BTEC' provides a powerful illustration of the tension between the desire to provide a coherent framework of qualifications, and the operation of market forces for what was and remains a popular qualification. The Business and Technical Education Council (BTEC) was formed in 1984 from the Technician Education Council (TEC) in 1973 and the Business Education Council (BEC) in 1974. Raggatt and Williams (1999) provide an account of BTEC's progression through the challenging terrain of the 1980s until the integration of the qualifications within the national framework. After resisting what were seen as overly narrow constraints imposed by the National Council of Vocational Qualifications during the 1980s, a compromise was eventually reached, and in 1993 BTEC became embedded within the framework. In 1996, BTEC merged with London Examinations to form Edexcel, which continues to offer and develop a range of BTEC qualifications. In 2001, the introduction of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) resulted in the BTEC National suite of qualifications being located alongside A Levels at Level 3.

4.19 BTEC National Diplomas are a 'tried and tested', robust and respected qualification (Hodgson and Spours: 2008). The BTEC National Diploma is usually studied full-time and equates to three A Levels, and its focus is towards particular vocational sectors, for example, art and design; business; construction and the built environment; health and social care; retail, logistics and distribution; engineering, and media. BTEC Nationals have a distinct orientation towards vocational sectors but at the same time, have a clear progression route to higher

education. The qualification is available in three sizes, referred to as the BTEC National Award, Certificate and Diploma equivalent to one, two or three A Levels respectively[5]. It is common for the National Certificate and Award to be pursued part-time, often as part of Advanced Apprenticeship programmes. So, these Level 3 courses present an established and widely available pathway in further education, and moreover, unlike many vocational qualifications, enjoy a clear, distinctive and longstanding identity. Employer familiarity, together with a clearly defined route to higher education, mean that currently the BTEC National is the closest approximation in the British system of what a hybrid qualification at Level 3 might look like. Arguably the relative success of this qualification lies with its ability to be seen as a distinctive qualification in its own right, rather than an alternative or paler reflection of academic qualifications. Furthermore, unlike many vocational qualifications, it has recognised currency in the UCAS tariff. For example, an applicant who achieves three Distinctions in their BTEC National Diploma accrues the same number of points as their peer who accrues three A grades at A Level. This is not to say, however, that applicants to university will all be treated the same in practice. The admissions process commonly specifies the specific qualifications and A Level grades candidates are expected to achieve to entry particular courses.

4.20 Recent research on progression to higher education followed a cohort from entry to a Level 3 BTEC in academic year 2002/2 to their completion in 2004/5 (Gittoes 2007). The study found that 41 per cent of those starting a BTEC course in 2002/3 and who had gained a BTEC qualification two years later progressed to higher education. Of those, 24 per cent enrolled on a degree, 17 per cent to another undergraduate course, for example, HND or HNC programmes. Carter (2009) draws on that data, together with further data provided by Connor et al. (2006) and Seddon (2005) to compare the progression routes for learners with A Levels, BTECs and Advanced Apprenticeships. Whilst we have noted that only 41 per cent of BTEC students progressed to HE, Carter found that this compared with 90

[5] These qualifications are currently being re-branded as the Extended Diploma, Diploma, and Subsidiary Diploma, for inclusion in the QCF.

per cent of A Level students. This is despite BTEC's inclusion in the UCAS tariff. As we will discuss below, for Advanced Apprenticeships, progression to higher education is far lower.

The apprenticeship framework

4.21 Apprenticeships have a long history, and the post-war period until the 1970s has been seen as its heyday (Fuller and Unwin 2008). The economic crisis in the 1970s, and the restructuring of the labour market during the 1980s, led to a severe reduction and lack of visibility of apprenticeships. Although apprenticeship is a pathway to skill formation that can lead to qualifications, it is not a qualification in itself. The concept of the apprenticeship is worth some discussion as it has enjoyed a distinctive position within the English system, historically as a route primarily available to young men in traditional construction, manufacturing and heavy industries. In 1994, the Modern Apprenticeship was introduced by the then Conservative government to offer a government supported apprenticeship programme in a broader base of occupations and related work-based learning leading to 'intermediate skills' and Level 3 qualifications (Gospel and Fuller 1998).

4.22 Apprentices in the government supported programme mostly have 'employed status'. They gain skills on the job as well as studying for qualifications usually delivered by a local training provider such as a further education college. Apprenticeship frameworks include 'competence-based' and 'knowledge-based' components which usually map on to an NVQ and Technical Certificate respectively. Apprenticeship frameworks are available at Level 2 and Level 3 but recently a few have also been available at Level 4 (so called Higher Apprenticeships).

4.23 Traditionally, apprenticeships consisted of private arrangements between employers, individuals and providers. In 1994 the then Conservative government introduced the Modern Apprenticeship to cover a much wider area of the economy and to appeal to a more diverse population (Fuller and Unwin 2003). Importantly, it was

conceived as a Level 3 programme to establish its distinctiveness from government supported Youth Training schemes which were predominantly available at Level 2. Most trainees on these schemes did not have employed status and were paid a training allowance by the government. A few years after the election of the Labour government in 1997, the Modern Apprenticeship was expanded to include the (then) government supported Level 2 programme, 'National Traineeship'. The extension of apprenticeship at Level 2 was seen to lower the status of apprenticeship as a pathway for young people (Fuller 2004).

4.24 The Advanced Apprenticeship is positioned as a Level 3 programme and until recently the NVQ3, which is conceived as a 'full' Level 3 qualification was a mandatory element. A full Level 3 qualification is deemed to be equivalent to two A Level passes and hence should provide the currency expected for progression to HE. In terms of UCAS points, this equates to at least the number of points accruing to two A Level passes at grade E or two Pass grades on a BTEC National course (i.e. 80 points). However, with the exception of the NVQ3 in Accountancy mentioned earlier, NVQ3s are not included in the UCAS tariff and so are not normally recognised for entry to HE. The currency of the knowledge-based qualification component, the Technical Certificate, is often uncertain. There is a wide variety of Technical Certificates available at Level 3 but many of them are too small in size to be equated to a full Level 3 and do not attract UCAS points.

4.25 In 1994, the Modern Apprenticeship was a new attempt to stimulate interest from employers in the face of the collapsing youth labour market (Hodgson and Spours 2008). Its current renewal can be seen as having its stimulus in contemporary labour market conditions too. The apprenticeship route is viewed as contributing to successive governments' goal to increase the proportion of young people remaining in education or training post-16. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill (DCSF 2009) sets out the first legal framework for government supported apprenticeship programmes. The recent White Paper *Skills for Growth* (BIS 2009) spans the whole skill spectrum from basic literacy to higher education but there is

emphasis on vocational attainment at levels 3 and 4. The stated strategic aim is to create a technician class as part of a commitment, articulated in the Leitch Report (2006), to the development of a world-class skills base.

4.26 *Skills for Growth* (Analytic Report) reports that the UK compares unfavourably with its counterparts and currently lies 18th out of 30 OECD countries in terms of the proportion of adults who have achieved at least Level 2. In particular, it identifies a weakness in the provision of skills at what are described as the 'intermediate technician, associate professional and skilled occupation levels'. In so doing, the White Paper recalls the earlier Conservative government discourse that underpinned the launch of the Modern Apprenticeship more than 15 years ago.

4.27 As we have already noted above, progression to higher education via the Apprenticeship route is very low, and as yet, few of the qualifications provided through Apprenticeship frameworks[6] are recognised in the UCAS tariff. Nevertheless, the commitment to expand Apprenticeship provision includes an intention to remedy this:

4.28 From April 2011, all apprenticeship frameworks at Level 3 and Level 4 must have UCAS tariff points, so learners' achievements can be compared to other qualifications on application to higher education (BIS 2009). However, it was announced in July 2010 that there would be a 'comprehensive review' of the UCAS tariff to be completed in 2012 (www.ucas.ac.uk accessed 10 September 2010). The commitment to include apprenticeship frameworks in the tariff by 2011 looks then to have been put on hold.

4.29 The priority given to expanding the number of Apprenticeships contributes to a revised articulation of the widening participation agenda. In place of the previous goal, that 50 per cent of 18 to 30 year olds should participate in higher education, there is a 'new

[6] The passing into law of the 'Apprenticeships Bill' has been followed by the publication of a new blueprint for apprenticeship frameworks known as Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE).

overarching ambition' that three quarters of people (under the age of 30) should participate in higher education or complete an advanced apprenticeship or equivalent (i.e. attain at least Level 3). Thus, we are given another illustration of the growing policy expectations of vocational qualifications as responses to the wider social, political and economic demands.

The suite of Diplomas

4.30 To conclude this section, we will turn to the most recent addition to the qualifications landscape, the (14-19) Diploma. The concept of the Diploma originated from the Tomlinson Report (Working Group on 14-19 Reform, 2004). However whereas the recommendation was for a more unified approach which would ultimately replace GCSEs and A Levels, the Government decided to preserve these as separate qualifications. The Diploma model was presented in the 2005 White Paper *14-19 Education and Skills (February 2005)*. The Diploma is offered in a range of vocational areas and at three levels, Foundation, Higher and Advanced. The Foundation Diploma is positioned at Level 1 (and as equivalent to four or five GCSE passes at grades D to G); the Higher Diploma is positioned at Level 2 (and as equivalent to seven GCSE passes at grades A* to C); and the Advanced Diploma is positioned at Level 3 (and as equivalent to three and a half GCE A Levels). The Advanced Diploma is a candidate for labelling as a hybrid qualification: it has been ascribed points on the UCAS tariff, and it has had employer involvement in its development. Its potential as a robust and long-standing qualification is yet to be seen.

4.31 Early indications suggest that there is still work to be done in promoting understanding and recognition of the Advanced Diploma. Gill Haynes and colleagues at the University of Exeter have been commissioned to evaluate the Advanced Diploma. Their findings so far provide some positive indicators as far as understanding and enthusiasm for the Diploma amongst Higher Education Institution managers and admission tutors. However, they note that the initial take up is considerably lower than had been anticipated, and as such,

institutions are able to consider students on a case-by-case basis (Richardson and Haynes 2008).

4.32 Furthermore, their survey of Higher Education Institutions' attitudes towards the Diploma suggested that the GCE A Level would retain significance:

> A large majority anticipate specifying Additional and/or Specialist Learning, most commonly in the form of attainment in an A Level subject. (Richardson and Haynes 2008: 1)

4.33 The implication is that GCE A Level is seen as a quality endorsement for the Diploma package. The currency of the Advanced Diploma as a hybrid qualification is yet to be fully tested, and if it is to secure a long-term future, then its identity will need to be forged beyond simply yet another 'alternative' to the academic. Above all, the Diploma pathways will need to have a clear and distinctive role in the qualifications system. If the Diploma is to supersede existing qualifications, it will need to construct a position between traditional academic qualifications and longer established vocational awards. In occupying a space in the middle terrain the qualification's success or failure remains bound up with its ability to address the broader social, political and economic challenges which define this territory.

4.34 We thus return to the questions which dominate this account of the English system, and which are acknowledged in the 2005 White Paper: 'we have never had in this country a vocational education track that is as well understood as the academic one, nor one which has been seen as a naturally effective means of preparing young people for work or further study' (p. 20). Whilst there are signs that the landscape of vocational qualifications is being streamlined into a more transparent and 'tidy' system, for example, with the development of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), the more fundamental issues remain. The cycle of reforms continues to be shaped by externally-driven exigencies, and the past is constantly seen through the present.

4.35 So far, this report has mapped out the qualifications offered within the English system, and we have provided an overview of the system's historical and policy context. In the next section our aim is to offer a quantitative picture of young people's educational participation.

Section 5 A Quantitative Overview of participation for 16-18 year olds in England

5.1 The primary aim in this section is to provide a numerical picture to complete our sketch of the English post-16 education, training and qualification landscape. We draw from government statistical releases, together with the more contextual and nuanced picture offered by the Youth Cohort Survey (YCS) and Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE). The focus here is on the immediate post-compulsory phase and, therefore, on the 16-18 year old age group. Student age refers to age at the beginning of the academic year (September). Thus, if following an uninterrupted, linear trajectory, young people beginning their first year of post-compulsory education are aged 16, and will become 17 during that academic year. As already noted, this first year of post-compulsory education is often referred to as 'Year 12'. The second year of post-compulsory education is referred to as 'Year 13', and students are aged 17 at the beginning of that academic year.

5.2 Secondly, we provide an overview of the Higher Education system, its institutions and types of qualifications awarded.

5.3 The datasets referred to below cover the full range of post-16 educational, training and employment activity. They include young people's participation at sixth-form colleges, general and specialist further education colleges, and less commonly, higher education institutions. They also include students attending school-based sixth-forms, and which were reported in the School Census referred to in Section 2.

5.4 The education, training or employment activity of 16-18 year olds is illustrated through Table 5 and Figure 3 below. It is noted that in 2009, 82.7 per cent of 16-18 year olds were in some form of education or training, whether that was full-time or combined with employment. Just over two thirds (68 per cent) of the cohort was in full-time education. Just below 10 per cent were not in employment,

education or training (NEET). The remainder, representing approximately one fifth of the total, were in employment (some of which included training) or were engaged in work-based learning, for example, apprenticeships.

5.5 Table 5 below provides a summary of the different types of participation in 2009, for 16-18 year olds

Participation	Percentages
Maintained schools	20.1
Academies and City Technology Colleges	1.2
Independent schools	4.2
Sixth-form colleges	7.7
General FE, tertiary and specialist colleges	26.1
Higher education institutions	8.6
Work-based learning	6.4
Employer funded training	3.0
Other education and training	5.6
Not in Education or Training	8.1
Not in Education, Employment or Training	9.2
Total (exceeds 100 due to rounding)	100.2

Table 5: Participation in education, training and employment by 16-18 year olds in England (2009). Source: Statistical First Release 18/2010, published 22 June 2010)

5.6 The figure below shows the types of educational institutions attended by the 68 per cent of 16-18 year olds in full-time education in 2009.

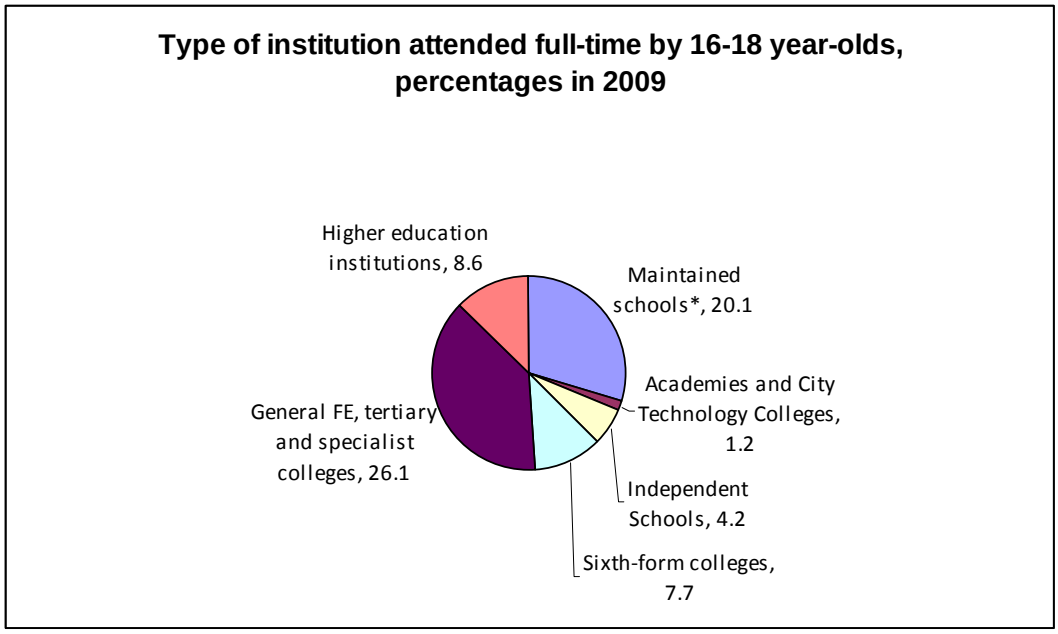


Figure 3: Type of institution attended full-time by 16-18 year olds, 2009

5.7 Data from the same source provides a picture of the type of qualifications being studied by 16-18 year olds in 2009, and this is shown in Table 6 below and illustrated in Figure 4. It is noted that whilst 68 per cent of 16-18 year olds are engaged in full-time education, the qualifications studied are varied according to type and level. Just over 44% of 16-18 year olds were in full-time education and studying for qualifications at Level 3, and which is most commonly represented by GCE/VCE/AS/A Levels. However, just over 15 per cent were studying at Levels 1, 2 or below.

Full-time education	**68 per cent**
Higher education	8.5
Further education	59.5
comprised of:	
Level 3	**44.2**
GCE/VCE A/AS	*32.0*
NVQ 3 and equivalent	*12.2*
Level 2	**8.8**
GCSE/Intermediate GNVQ	*1.7*
NVQ 2 and equivalent	*7.2*
Level 1	**4.5**
Foundation GNVQ	*0*
NVQ 1 and equivalent	*4.5*
Other courses	**2.0**

Table 6: The nature of full-time education, showing the breakdown of further education (2009)

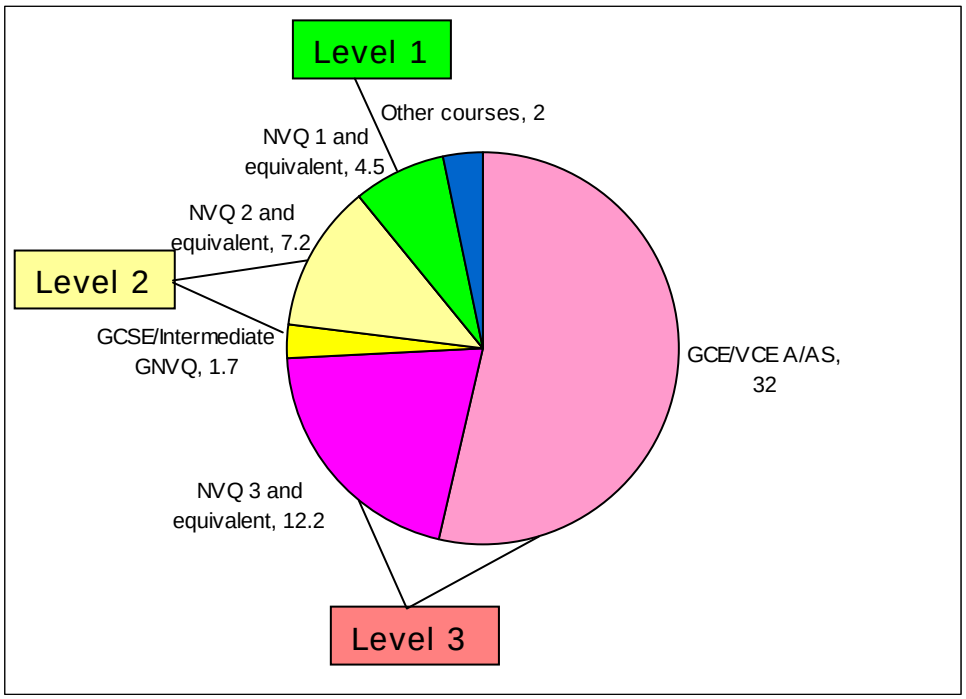


Figure 4: The nature of full-time education - share of 60% full-time further education, 2009

5.8 In Table 7 below, we can see that only 6.4 per cent of 16-18 year olds are engaged in work-based learning, and that just 1.5 per cent are on Advanced Apprenticeships, positioned as Level 3 programmes.

Work-based Learning	**6.4 per cent**
Apprenticeships	5.2
Advanced Apprenticeships	*1.5*
Apprenticeships	*3.7*
Entry to Employment	1.1
Other	0.1

Table 7: The nature of work-based learning (16-18 year olds), England 2009

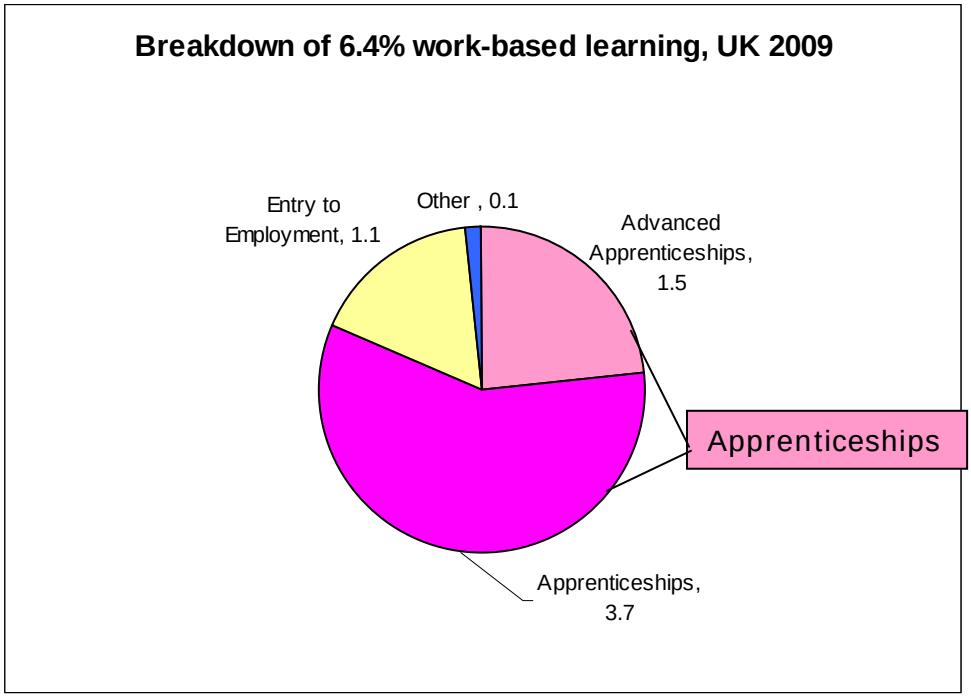


Figure 5: The nature of work-based learning, UK 2009

5.9 The national datasets referred to above enable us to see the nature of post-compulsory participation in a given year, and to make comparisons over time. However, the YCS and LSYPE provide a more detailed picture of young people's participation in education, training and the labour market. We draw first from the most recent report,

(www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000937/index.shtml , accessed 17 August 2010). This latest report details the main activity of the cohort as they begin the academic year 2008/09 as 18-year-olds. Thus, the young people in this most recent cohort had completed their compulsory education in 2006.

5.10 This report [7]notes that the most common activity for young people aged 18/19 years was full-time education (45 per cent). About a third were in work, of which considerably more young people cited that they did not receive training (22 per cent) than did (11 per cent). 7 per cent of the 18/19 year olds were on Government Supported Training (GST). 15 per cent of the 18/19 year olds were not in education, employment or training (NEET).

5.11 The YCS/LSYPE report published in 2009 provides information on what the same cohort of young people were doing as 17/18-year-olds. (www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000850/index.shtml , accessed on 24 January 2010). The most common activity for young people aged 17/18 was full-time education (63 per cent). About a fifth, 21 per cent, were in work, of which slightly more young people cited that they did not receive training (12 per cent) than did (9 per cent). 7 per cent were in GST. Fewer than one in ten, 8 per cent of young people, were NEET.

5.12 Using this more detailed, contextual data allows us to explore the nature of the transitions for a representative cohort of just under 15,000 young people between the ages of 16/17 (their first year post-compulsory education) and most recently, when aged 18/19. The nature of the young people's main activity at 16/17 was clearly linked to their main activity at 18/19. The main activity for the young people at 18/19 years of age was as follows:

45% were in full-time education
11% were in a job with training

[7] DCSF: Youth Cohort Study and Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: The Activities and Experiences of 18-year-olds: England 2009.

22% were in a job without training
7% were in GST
15% were NEET

5.13 However, if we look at the main activity at 18/19 in relation to what the young people were doing at 16/17, we see some important patterns:

56% of those in full-time education at 16/17 were in full-time education at 18/19.
11% of those in full-time education at 16/17 were NEET at 18/19
43% of those in a job without training at 16/17 were in a job without training at 18/19
30% of those in GST at 16/17 were in Government Supported Training at 18/19
52% of those who were NEET at 16/17 were NEET at age 18/19

5.14 This cohort data illustrates the dynamic and fluid nature of educational and labour market participation as a cohort makes the transition from 16/17 to 18/19. It also enables us to explore the nature of participation in relation to educational outcomes at the end of compulsory schooling. The largest differences in types of participation appear when comparing young people with differing levels of Year 11 attainment (when the young people were 15/16). Nearly four in ten, 37 per cent, of young people with no qualifications were NEET at 17/18, compared with 2 per cent of those with 8 GCSEs at grades A*- C. In between these two levels of attainment, young people were more likely to be in work or in GST than those who were better qualified, and also those who were less well qualified.

5.15 There is a wide spectrum of attainment at the end of the compulsory phase, which might be categorised in five groups: those with 8+ GCSE at A* to C; those with 5-7 GCSE at A* to C; those with 1-4 GCSE at A* to C; those with 5 GCSEs at D to G and those with fewer or no qualification attainment. The first two groups have clearly attained Level 2, the third and fourth groups Level 1 and the final group as

pre-Level 1. Those in the second, third and fourth groups, whose attainment we might define as 'good to moderate', are less likely to be participating in full-time education than the highest attaining group. Just 60 per cent of those attaining 5-7 GCSE A*-C, 43 per cent of those attaining 1-4 GCSE A*- C, and 33 per cent of those attaining 5+ GCSE D-G are in full-time education. This compares with almost 90 per cent of those attaining 8+ GCSE A*- C. In summary, the lower the individual's attainment at the end of compulsory schooling, the less likely he or she is to be in full-time education.

5.16 Students' achievement at the end of compulsory education remains an important performance indicator, and the nature of progression beyond that is strongly associated with the attainment of Level 2 via five or more 'good' GCSEs (considered to be five GCSE grades A* to C). However, it is important to note that a sizeable group, four out of ten of those attaining very good results at GCSE are not still in full-time education at 17/18. This finding highlights the challenge involved in raising the participation age to 18 by 2015, when so many of the young people that are qualified to 'stay on' to 18+ are actually leaving the full-time route at an earlier age.

5.17 Other ways of attaining Level 2 include: BTEC first diplomas and certificates, OCR Nationals and NVQs. The attainment of 'five good GCSEs' is commonly cited as an expectation for those wishing to pursue A Level study, and those five GCSEs are increasingly expected to include English and Mathematics. Thus, despite the multitude of proposed equivalences at Level 2, the GCSE has established exchange value, in terms of symbolic and material currency, for educational progression. In particular, GCSE attainment is used as a signalling device to channel successful students towards the 'academic' or general pathway.

5.18 The proportion of young people achieving five GCSE grades A*-C has increased in the last two decades. Alongside the statistical picture offered through cohort studies, a complete picture of young people's attainment of Level 2 qualifications is provided by using the matched administrative data. (SFR 06/2010: Level 2 and 3 attainment by young

people in England). Using these data, we can chart progression for successive annual cohorts through given years and as they reach the age of 19 in the years between 2004 and 2012. As Table 8 below shows, the percentage of those attaining Level 2 qualifications at 16 increased from 49.6 per cent to 63.9 per cent between 2004 and 2009. Table 9 shows, using the same administrative data, that the proportion of young people qualified to Level 3 has increased through the cohorts, with an increase from 42.1 per cent to 51.4 per cent of those aged 19 between 2004 and 2009 achieving Level 3 by age 19.

Young people aged:	**16***	**17**	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**Population****
19 in 2004	49.6%	56.6%	62.4%	66.7%	69.4%	71.3%	615,000
19 in 2005	50.5%	58.5%	64.8%	69.1%	71.6%	73.4%	618,000
19 in 2006	52.3%	60.1%	66.9%	71.2%	73.7%	75.6%	632,000
19 in 2007	53.2%	61.8%	69.4%	73.7%	76.2%	78.0%	652,000
19 in 2008	55.5%	64.4%	72.2%	76.5%	78.8%		645,000
19 in 2009	57.7%	66.7%	74.7%	78.7%			656,000
19 in 2010	59.0%	68.2%	76.7%				662,000
19 in 2011	60.9%	70.6%					659,000
19 in 2012	63.9%						637,000

Table 8: Proportion of young people qualified to Level 2 or higher, by age and cohort

Young people aged:	16*	17	18	19	20	21	Population**
19 in 2004	0.1%	11.8%	36.4%	42.1%	44.9%	46.6%	615,000
19 in 2005	0.1%	15.0%	39.0%	45.4%	48.2%	49.9%	618,000
19 in 2006	0.1%	15.2%	40.1%	46.7%	49.6%	51.4%	632,000
19 in 2007	0.1%	15.8%	41.1%	48.1%	51.4%	53.2%	652,000
19 in 2008	0.1%	16.0%	42.1%	49.8%	53.0%		645,000
19 in 2009	0.1%	17.2%	43.4%	51.4%			656,000
19 in 2010	0.1%	17.0%	44.8%				662,000
19 in 2011	0.1%	17.5%					659,000
19 in 2012	0.1%						637,000

Table 9: Proportion of young people qualified to Level 3 or higher, by age and cohort

Source: www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000917/SFR06-2010-Cohort.xls (accessed 21 May 2010)

5.19 Attainment trend data available from combining the YCS and LSYPE cohort data shows that the percentage of students gaining five GCSE A*-C or equivalent increased from 30 per cent to 58 per cent between 1988 and 2006. However, the more nuanced information available from such studies reveals that GCSE attainment is associated with factors such as social class, parental education, ethnicity and disability. Whilst these intersections do not provide the key focus for our particular research, it is important to acknowledge the underlying structural influences on young people's educational routes. The cohort data allow us to focus on a representative group of young people and follow their progress over time, however to capture the entire cohort of any given year we need to turn to government administrative data.

5.20 As we saw from Table 5 some very different modes of participation are included in the headline rate of approximately 80 per cent participation in education or recognised training. Interestingly, one in ten of young people in this sample are categorised as 'not in education or training' but in contrast to another 10 per cent (the NEET group) are

in employment. The government often refers to this category as 'jobs without training[8]'.

5.21 A Levels are the most popular qualification taken by young people aged 16-18. Table 10 below shows Level 3 achievements of students aged 16-18 by qualification route.

Qualification Route	% of candidates on qualification route
GCE A Level	69.5%
Applied A Level	4%
International Baccalaureate	0.9%
BTEC/OCR	22.2%
NVQ/VRQ	3.5%

Table 10: Qualification route to Level 3. Source: adapted from Statistical First Release SFR02 2010 www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000906/SFR02_2010.pdf (accessed 14 May 2010)

5.22 The table above shows that almost 70 per cent of those attaining Level 3 did so through acquiring A Levels, with another 4 per cent by attaining Applied A Levels. We noted earlier that, of those 16-18 year olds whose main activity was full-time education, just over 44 per cent were studying for a Level 3 qualification. Although A Level qualifications are the most commonly studied of Level 3 qualifications, and indeed, as noted in Section 3, attract considerable symbolic currency, we must remember that the proportion of 16-18 year olds studying for A Levels is 70 per cent of less than half the total cohort of 16-18 year olds (i.e. about one third overall).

5.23 Taken together, 'BTEC/OCR' represent just over 22 per cent of attainments at Level 3 and 3.5 per cent are listed as NVQ/VRQ (vocationally-related qualifications). It has to be assumed that this

[8] However, as research by Quinn et al. (2008) suggests, these jobs should not be thought of as being without learning opportunities or even more structured training. They are not 'counted' as providing training in the administrative data because the employers do not offer training and qualifications in a form which is officially recognised, for example by coming within one of the government schemes.

latter category comprises vocational qualifications which are other than BTEC/OCR/NVQ, but their precise nature is unclear. In answer to our question as to the precise nature and meaning of vocationally-related qualifications, we were advised by a DCSF official that 'they are offered by a large number of awarding bodies and range from broad based VRQs to specialist qualifications designed for a particular industry. They are different from NVQs. They can serve a range of purposes in different sectors and at different levels, and so vary greatly in terms of size, level and assessment method. Candidates who gain VRQs can follow a pathway to employment, or can go on to complete the full NVQ' (personal communication).

5.24 There are a growing number of VRQs, as illustrated through data on awards and completions. An increase from 1.7 million to 2.1 million vocational related awards was reported from 2007/08 to 2008/09 (SFR 25 March 2010). The award of NVQs/SVQs from academic year 2005/06 to 2008/09 has increased from 525,000 NVQ/SVQs awarded in 2005/06 to 849,000 awarded in 2008/09. For VRQs, the number of awards rose from 1,071,000 to 5,834,000 for the same period.

5.25 As we have already noted in the previous section, the apprenticeship programmes at Level 2 and Level 3 are not qualifications in their own right. Each apprenticeship is associated with a framework which includes specification of a range of approved awards. As such apprenticeships need to be seen as part of the overall landscape of vocational provision. Apprenticeship programme achievements for those aged 16-18 years have remained reasonably consistent over the period 2005/06 to 2008/09. For programmes taken by 16-18 years at Level 2, there were 44,600 achievements in 2005/06 and 49,900 in 2008/09. A bigger increase is recorded for those aged 19-24, with 25,300 achievements recorded in 2005/06 and 35,500 in 2008/09. At the advanced apprenticeship (Level 3), there were fewer achievements, with 13,900 recorded for 16-18 year olds in 2005/06 and 17,500 in 2008/09. Again, there was a larger increase for 19-24 year olds, with 14,300 recorded in 2005/06 and 22,400 in 2008/09. It is important to note Apprenticeships or Advanced Apprenticeships are only being taken by a very small minority of 16-18 year olds, just 5.2 per cent

(Statistical First Release 18/2010, published 22 June 2010). This is despite there being support across all the major political parties for the programme and its expansion.

Hybrid qualifications as routes to higher education or the labour market

5.26 This section now turns to consider the numerical picture of progression from hybrid qualifications to higher education or the labour market. We will start by looking at progression to higher education, and begin with an overview of that system.

The higher education system

5.27 The following provides an overview of the Higher Education (HE) system, its institutions, programmes of study and student population, and is adapted from information provided by www.universitiesuk.ac.uk (accessed 25 August 2010).

5.28 All UK universities undertake a mix of research and teaching, although the mission focus and balance of activities varies. Some institutions focus on teaching, and are often referred to as 'teaching-led'. Others are more research intensive, and described as having a 'research-led' mission.

5.29 Universities vary according to the profile of their student intake, with some universities recruiting from the local region and others attracting international students.

5.30 Universities in the UK are thus diverse in their missions and student populations. The following groups have been developed according to different university missions:

- The 1994 Group, so called because it was founded in 1994, consists of 19 UK universities, who share common aims, standards and values.
- Million+ (formerly Campaigning for Mainstream Universities (CMU)) is a university think-tank. They work to help solve

complex problems in higher education and to ensure that policy reflects the potential of the UK's world-class university system. It mainly comprises post-1992 universities.

- The Russell Group is an association of 20 major research-intensive universities of the United Kingdom. The group is so-called because it traditionally met at the Russell Hotel, London.

- The University Alliance was formally launched in 2007. Its member institutions have a balanced portfolio of research, teaching, enterprise and innovation.

Table 11 provides a summary of HE institution types in the UK as a whole, and by individual country.

Country	**Universities***	**Higher Education Institutions****
England	89	131
Scotland	14	19
Wales	10	11
Northern Ireland	2	4
United Kingdom	**115**	**165**

Table 11: Number of institutions (as at August 2010)

Source: Higher Education Funding Council for England, Scottish Funding Council, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland.

5.31 There are also a significant number of further education colleges at which HE students study.

5.32 As noted above, the HE system is differentiated in terms of individual institutional mission and standing relative to others. Furthermore, in addressing issues of access to higher education, we must deconstruct not only the nature of the institution, but also the type of qualification being studied. The following provides a summary of the most common

qualification types. It is important to note that in the UK there are two main types of undergraduate provision leading to Bachelor and sub-Bachelor level awards. These are often referred to as 'undergraduate' and 'other undergraduate' respectively in the statistics.

Types of undergraduate qualification

5.33 The following information on Bachelors degrees, Foundation degrees and Higher National Certificates and Diplomas was extracted from www.direct.gov.uk (accessed 25 August 2010).

Bachelor degrees

5.34 'This is by far the most common qualification type and it leads to a qualification such as a Bachelor of Science (BSc) or a Bachelor of Arts (BA). It typically takes three or four years to complete on a full-time basis. Foundation degrees and Higher National Degrees and Certificates require the equivalent of two years of full-time study.

There are a vast number of different Bachelors degree courses to chose from. Some subjects like medicine, law and architecture prepare you for a particular career. Others, like English or history can equip you with skills for a wide range of jobs.'

Foundation degrees

5.35 By contrast, Foundation degrees are described as follows:

'Foundation degrees are higher education qualifications that combine academic study with work-based learning. Designed jointly by universities, colleges and employers, they are available in a range of work-related subject.'

Higher National Diploma and Higher National Certificate

5.36 A further kind of sub-Bachelor award is the Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Higher National Diplomas (HND), described as follows.

> 'HNCs and HNDs are work-related (vocational) higher education qualifications. While Bachelors degrees tend to focus on gaining knowledge, HNCs and HNDs are designed to give you the skills to put that knowledge to effective use in a particular job. They are highly valued by employers both in the UK and overseas, and can also count towards membership of professional bodies and other employer organisations.'

5.37 'HNCs and HNDs are provided by over 400 universities and further education colleges. HNCs can take one year to complete full time and two years part time (or in other situations such as distance learning). HNDs take two years full time and can also be taken part time (which takes longer)'.

5.38 The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) records data on student enrolments, qualifications obtained and subjects studied across the UK as a whole. The data in the tables below was accessed at www.hesa.ac.uk/dox/dataTables/studentsAndQualifiers (accessed 25 August 2010).

Table 12 below provides an indication of the volumes of student enrolments of all HE courses in 2008/09

Undergraduate student enrolments were as follows:

Full-time students		
	UK	1,114,865
	Other EU	61,175
	Non EU	95,995
	Total	**1,272,035**
Part-time students		
	UK	558,790
	Other EU	12,200
	Non EU	16,220
	Total	**587,205**

Table 12: Enrolment in HE, 2008/09

(Source: HESA Table 1 – All student enrolments on HE courses by level of study, mode of study and domicile)

5.39 The following provides an indication of the number of students qualifying in 2008/09, and the nature of qualifications they attained. (Source: HESA: Table 14)

369,000 full-time UK domiciled students obtained qualifications in 2008/09. This overall figure is disaggregated as follows:

37,090	higher degrees
26,219	other postgraduate degrees
253,720	first degrees
51,975	other undergraduate qualifications, for example HND and Foundation degrees

5.40 165,670 part-time UK domiciled students gained qualifications in 2008/09. This overall figure is disaggregated as follows:

28,530	higher degree
28,635	other postgraduate
33,985	first degree
74,529	other undergraduate, for example HND and Foundation degrees

Source: www.hesa.ac.uk/dox/dataTables/ (accessed 25 August 2010)

5.41 The subjects studied by those taking first degrees compared with those taking other undergraduate qualifications reveals a different distribution across those two levels of study. The subjects studied in Foundation, HNC and HND courses are dominated by the following:

Subjects allied to Medicine
Social Studies
Business and Administration
Education

These subjects represent 65 per cent of foundation degrees awarded in 2008/09. This subject distribution compares with a more even spread of bachelor degrees awarded in the same period. The full listing of subjects studied, by level and mode is available at www.hesa.ac.uk/dox/dataTables (accessed 25 August 2010).

Access to higher education

5.42 As a Level 3 qualification, the GCE A Level is regarded as the main route to higher education (HE). Prior attainment of five 'good' GCSEs, followed by three or four A Levels remains the most common route for those who follow a linear and uninterrupted pathway to HE, and through which each qualification milestone is reached by the expected academic age.

5.43 Entry to HE via vocational routes forms part of the Government's recent policy initiatives and is articulated in two White Papers (*Skills for Growth and Higher Ambitions 2009).* Vocational routes to HE

represent an important strand of the widening participation in HE agenda, but it is important to deconstruct the nature and type of that participation. As noted above, the English HE system has long been characterised by a status hierarchy, and with deeply-embedded divisions represented through binaries of 'old' and 'new', 'traditional' and 'modern', 'selecting' and 'recruiting', which in different ways serve to carve out distinctions between institutions. The transition to HE via a vocational pathway can be seen on the one hand as fulfilling a widening participation goal, but on the other hand, as reinforcing those deep divisions. As Hoelscher et al. found, transitions from vocational routes to HE are to particular places within this highly-stratified field (2008) Using large-scale administrative data sets to explore the different routes to HE, Hoelscher et al. oberved that transitions from vocational routes were to 'less prestigious' institutions, and that 'despite the Government claim of 'parity of esteem', the traditional A Level route still opens up the best opportunities into those institutions with higher reputations' (2008: 149).

5.44 Hoelscher et al.'s findings illustrate the association between particular educational pathways and type of HE institution accessed. Prior attainment through vocational qualifications alone is closely associated with access to what are known as 'post-1992' institutions. The classifications 'post-92' and 'pre-92' can be understood as one, albeit fairly broad and crude, measure of institutional status and history. Those institutions classified as 'pre-1992' are more likely to apply 'selective' recruitment policies, and enjoy a high status achieved through international, research-based missions. In contrast, those institutions classified as 'post-1992' were formerly polytechnics prior to the removal of the so-called 'binary divide' in 1992. Those institutions are more commonly known for their teaching excellence, and have a stronger local or regional perspective.

Progression to HE from Apprenticeship

5.45 We thus need to explore not only whether vocational qualifications provide a pathway to HE, but to unpack the nature of that participation

amidst a stratified system of provision. We will look first at progression from apprenticeships. Although the data are limited, the table below summarises research by Gittoes which tracked progression from Level 3 and Level 2 apprenticeships.

	Year of completion	Non-WB HE*	WB HE	No HE	Total	Into HE
Advanced (Level 3)	2002-03	150	425	14,810	15,390	4%
	2003-04	160	615	13,120	13,900	6%
	2004-05	235	570	16,070	16,875	5%
Foundation (Level 2)	2002-03	130	85	21,850	22,070	1%
	2003-04	215	95	29,045	29,360	1%
	2004-05	370	185	43,630	44,185	1%

Table 13: Number of completing apprentices who progressed to HE within one year of completing (Gittoes: HEFCE 2009).

Note: WB HE stands for 'work-based higher education', and includes pathways to higher level qualifications (Level 4 and above in the NQF) such as NVQ4 (and above) pursued in the workplace.

5.46 The table shows that the number of apprentices who entered HE in the year after they completed increased each year. The proportion of apprentices who progressed within one year ranged from 4 per cent to 6 per cent for Advanced Apprentices. The proportion of Foundation Apprentices who progressed within one year remained at around 1 per cent for each completing cohort. Other work on progression to HE from apprenticeship has also estimated that around 5 per cent of apprentices enter HE (Seddon 2005).

5.47 As we have noted already, the BTEC National suite of qualifications offer a closer articulation of the notion of hybridity, with their currency established in the UCAS tariff. Table 14 below summarises data from Gittoes' report of progression to HE via BTEC prior qualifications.

Qualification status	Degree	OUG*	FE	No FE or HE	Total	% Degree	% all OUG	% FE
Reported as qualifying	8,341	5,711	14,380	6,193	**34,625**	24%	41%	42%
Reported as not qualifying	597	647	6,653	6,780	**14,677**	4%	8%	45%
Unknown	1,463	1,278	6,759	2,882	**12,382**	12%	22%	55%
Total	**10,401**	**7,636**	**27,792**	**15,855**	**61,684**	**17%**	**29%**	**45%**

Table 14: Progression of all registered BTEC students by qualification outcome (Gittoes: HEFCE 2007)

Note: OUG stand for 'other undergraduate' and includes the sub-Bachelor level awards referred to earlier in this report.

5.48 For those students reported as having gained a BTEC National qualification, the table shows that similar proportions progress to both undergraduate and FE-level study (this is likely to refer to provision at Level 3 or below): 41 per cent and 42 per cent respectively. When we consider students reported as not qualifying from their BTEC course, or whose qualification outcome is unknown, we see that progression to FE-level study is prevalent: 45 per cent of non-qualifiers progress to FE-level study, while the equivalent figure for unknown qualification status is 55 per cent. The table also shows that the proportion of non-qualifiers who progress to study at undergraduate level is 8 per cent, and that among students with unknown qualification outcomes, 22 per cent progress to HE.

5.49 Due to the recent implementation of the 14-19 Diplomas there is as yet no data available on progression to HE. The first cohort of Advanced Diploma students completed the course this Summer (2010).

Progression to the labour market

5.50 A numerical picture of entry to the labour market via hybrid qualifications is made difficult through an absence of specific data on this topic. Whilst we have already referred to the data available from

LSYPE, and indeed drawn on material from the Statistical First Release (SFR 12/20090, there is a paucity of information on those young people who leave school or college between the ages of 16-18 to enter the labour market. We know little, if anything, about the nature of their labour market participation. The focus of the administrative data is on tracking participation rates in education rather than recording any detail on trajectories into employment. We therefore intend to further our understanding of the employment route via our empirical research, during which we will attempt to fill in this rather sketchy picture.

5.51 Drawing on what might be seen as innovative statistical methods, McIntosh (2004) attempts to overcome the lack of longitudinal data through combining data from the Labour Force Survey. He presents findings from what is described as a 'pseudo cohort', and uses combined quarterly figures from the Labour Force Survey, of individuals who left school in the mid-1990s. He goes on to show the extent to which unqualified school leavers are able to improve their labour market status through gaining vocational qualifications. The findings show that vocational qualifications at all levels can improve the employment chances of unqualified school leavers, but that few unqualified school leavers follow the vocational route to qualification achievement. McIntosh concludes therefore that a significant minority of school leavers at 16, who have failed to gain qualifications through the academic pathway, are also unlikely to reach Level 2 or Level 3 along the vocational route. Moreover, this is in contrast to their peers who have left school with Level 2 academic qualifications and subsequently enjoy labour market success via vocational routes.

5.52 As highlighted earlier in the report, the vast majority of those following Level 3 apprenticeship programmes have employed status. They are highly likely to be retained in employment on completion of their framework and the associated package of qualifications, and as a report from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) found, some 90 per cent of apprentices were in employment upon completion, although there is some evidence this is falling, and we assume this is due to the economic downturn (2009). The challenge for the apprenticeship route

is increasing the progression rate to HE rather than achieving articulation with the labour market and employment.

Section 6 Institutional Realisation

6.1 In this next section, we consider the way in which qualifications attain institutional realisation, and focus in particular on how those which have the potential to be classified as 'hybrid' gain their currency as routes to higher education and by employers in the labour market.

6.2 For those young people whose progression is from Level 2 to Level 3 and then HE in a linear and interrupted manner along the academic pathway, the UCAS tariff offers a clear and readily-understandable indication of the extent to which their qualifications are recognised and valued by HE. However, the UCAS tariff (see Appendix A) does not include comprehensive coverage of vocational qualifications. Where vocational qualifications are listed, there are inconsistencies in terms of points' allocation, with for example, capped maxima for BTEC National Diplomas relative to the introduction (2010) of a new A* grade at A Level.

6.3 So, whilst the UCAS tariff represents the 'currency converter' for higher education institutions to evaluate applicants, it is a system which fails to reflect the spectrum of Level 3 qualifications. Whilst one indicator of the institutional realisation of qualifications is through the points awarded on the UCAS tariff, this is just one measure of the exchange value that accrues to qualifications. Although universities in the UK depend on public funding for many of their activities, they retain private charitable status which enables them to act with some autonomy, for example, in terms of how they position themselves in the HE market. Individual institutions choose to represent their entry requirements according to their position. Those institutions which are able to select students from an over-supply of applicants can set higher criteria than those which have to recruit to secure their numbers. In addition then to specifying the number of UCAS points expected, selecting universities and courses typically ask for specific A Level subjects at top grades. This exposes the limitations of the umbrella concept of 'level' as it reveals the realities of within category segmentation and the extent to which the value of different

qualifications is context-dependent including being subject to external factors affecting supply and demand for university places.

6.4 The concept of 'level' is problematised further when considering that the worth of qualifications can also be gauged by their 'Guided Learning Hours'. The notion of Guided Learning Hours (GLH) provides a way of signalling the size of a qualification. It thus offers a notional measure of the qualification's substance relative to others. The GLH includes an estimation of the time allocation for teaching, tutorials, directed project work or assignments. Importantly, it should not be equated with time off-the-job as might conventionally be available to apprentices attending college one day a week. The GLH tariff does not include the time trainees or students might spend in private study.

Articulation to career pathway

6.5 The dynamic and contingent nature of a qualification's currency can be evidenced through its ability to be realised in the labour market. Occupations and professions which require individuals to have a particular qualification in order that they can be licensed to practice, clearly have an absolute value. In the UK having such a license to practice is a requirement of a restricted but growing number of jobs in, usually, highly regulated sectors. One way of assessing the extent to which qualifications are recognised by employers is through the material available published by the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). These are publicly funded organisations that are conceived as 'employer-led' and have a key role in developing sector occupational standards. They are responsible for approving vocational qualifications for inclusion in the apprenticeship frameworks and the QCF. The examples below illustrate the very different degrees of currency accruing to the sectorally specific qualifications available to those wanting to build careers within two diverse sectors of employment: accountancy and construction.

Accountancy

6.6 Routes into and careers in accountancy are very clearly mapped and articulated by the relevant sector organisations including those designed and awarded by the Association of Accountancy Technicians (AAT). Individuals who achieved the (Level 3) AAT accounting qualification are entitled to become members of the association (MAAT). The website states:

> Using the letters MAAT after your name makes you stand out. They tell employers and clients you've proven your expertise - and made a commitment to maintaining it (www.aat.org.uk)

6.7 The qualification also provides a recognised platform to progression to professional status including exemptions from some aspects of accounting and finance Bachelor degrees and exemptions from 'All the UK's chartered and certified accountancy bodies' (www.aat.org.uk)

Retail

6.8 In contrast to the clear opportunities to progress in the labour market and to chartered professional represented through the qualification ladder available in accountancy, the situation for those pursuing qualifications in retail is less well articulated. There is no requirement to have retail qualifications to 'get into' retail or to progress in retail employment. In recent years, the national occupational standards have been used to develop retail qualifications (for details see www.skillsmartretail.com). However, in contrast with accountancy, there appears to be no particular labour market advantage for those with retail qualifications versus academic qualifications. In addition, they have weak currency for exchange for places in the HE system. Work experience and proven ability are highly valued in the retail sector so achieving qualifications via an apprenticeship, particularly if this is in a company with a good reputation for training is likely to be viewed positively by employers.

6.9 In comparing the career pathways of two contrasting sectors, we can see the quite starkly different articulations of career progression. In contrast to the transparent route into and within accountancy, the link between qualifications and careers for those in retail were far less certain.

Lifelong Learning Networks: Supporting vocational progression to HE

6.10 The implementation of publicly funded Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) provides a useful illustration of policy-led practice within the context of the English system's characteristically voluntaristic VET system. The LLN initiative was introduced in 2004 by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Learning and Skills Council and the Department for Education and Skills to foster progression to higher education from vocational routes. Sir Howard Newby, who as at that time Chief Executive of HEFCE explained the idea behind the LLN initiative as 'an attempt to create networks of institutions...which would typically link colleges and HEIs across a city, region or area' (Colin Bell Memorial Lecture: 30 March 2004).

6.11 As Fuller et al. observe, their task, which is supported by fixed term funding over three yeas, has been carried out during an extremely 'busy' period in the widening participation policy arena, and amidst a shifting landscape of FE and HE provision (2010: 4). The LLN's remit must therefore be understood as responsive to changing government priorities, and potentially, as short-lived organisations.

6.12 The creation of 'Progression Agreements' between Level 3 courses and providers and higher level provision has been central to the work of most LLNs. The following example is taken from a presentation delivered by the South London Lifelong Learning Network (http://www.f-a-c-e.org.uk/conference08) and captures the key principles which underpin the notion of the Progression Agreement.

- A formal agreement that has been negotiated and signed between providing institutions and receiving institutions;

- A means to clarify the progression opportunities for vocational learners;
- A method of ensuring that vocational learners are treated equally in the selection process;
- A mechanism to make the selection process clear and transparent for learners by providing information on entry criteria.

6.13 It has been noted in an interim evaluation of the LLNs (Little et al. 2008) that networks had been effective in terms of mapping existing provision, developing HE provision with a particular focus on Foundation degrees, and forging progression agreements between further education (FE) colleges and higher education institutions (HEIs). However, it was found that engagement with other relevant stakeholders, notably Sector Skills Council (SSCs) has been less effective.

6.14 The evaluators also pointed out that 'the specific approaches proposed by LLNs to fulfil the overarching objective would vary, as would local economic contexts and regional skills needs' (2008). They identified the relationship between providing institutions as crucial and uncovered some concerns that progression agreements could undermine institutional/departmental autonomy in terms of admissions policies and practices'. Thus, with some degree of apprehension about the extent of codification and regulation bound up with the LLN's progression agreements, we are reminded of the recurring tensions between autonomy, flexibility and consistency.

6.15 Little et al. (2008) found that in the main the LLNs had focused on full-time young vocational learners' progression to higher education, rather than those already in the workplace such as advanced apprentices. Recent research by Fuller et al. (2010) has focused specifically on progression to higher education from Advanced Apprenticeship in one LLN and across seven vocational areas and found that despite the work of the network considerable challenges to progression remain in all sectors.

Good practice

Advanced Apprentices

6.16 Fuller and Unwin (2003, 2007) have used case study evidence from organisations in the public and private sectors to explore the variable and contingent nature of apprenticeship programmes. They argue that organisational and pedagogical approaches to the development and training of apprentices have to be understood on the one hand, within their historical context, and on the other hand, in the light of current institutional priorities. From their research they have identified that the following features are common in organisations deemed to be examples of good practice in apprenticeship:

- Investment in publicity about the apprenticeship programme helps to sustain a reputable image in the community at large
- Investment over and above government funding is crucial for the provision of an apprenticeship programme that builds capacity for the future
- Young people are regarded as important for the future success of the organisations and are made to feel valued
- Well-designed recruitment policies and practices help to select young people who can benefit from an apprenticeship and contribute to the organisation's (ever) developing skill base
- Dedicated personnel monitor the progress and welfare of apprentices and liaise with line managers, supervisors and trainers to ensure both personal and organisational needs are being met, and
- Training (on and off-the-job) is seen as relevant to the apprentices' work tasks and as providing a platform for further progression.

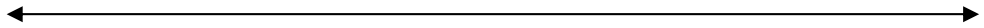
6.17 Fuller and Unwin suggest that whilst these features are commonly present within the apprenticeship programmes, in themselves, they are not sufficient to guarantee successful provision and implementation. They recognise that anoter key factor is the

organisations' identification of a clear business case to recruit and train young people as part of the organisations' wider strategic and workforce goals.

6.18 Fuller and Unwin have developed a conceptual framework ' the expansive –restrictive continuum' which can be used as analytical tool to locate apprenticeships programmes as more or less expansive. This is reproduced in Figure 6 below:

The Expansive–Restrictive Continuum

Approaches to Apprenticeship



Expansive	Restrictive
Participation in multiple communities of practice inside and outside the workplace	Restricted participation in multiple communities of practice
Primary community of practice has shared 'participative memory': cultural inheritance of apprenticeship	Primary community of practice has little or no 'participative memory': no or little tradition of apprenticeship
Breadth: access to learning fostered by cross-company experiences built into terms of programme	Narrow: access to learning restricted in tasks/knowledge/location
Access to range of qualifications including knowledge-based vocational qualifications	Access to competence-based qualification only
Planned time off-the-job including for college attendance and for reflection	Virtually all-on-job: limited opportunities for reflection
Gradual transition to full participation	Fast—transition as quick as possible
Apprenticeship aim: rounded expert/full participant	Apprenticeship aim: partial expert/full participant
Post-apprenticeship vision: progression for career	Post-apprenticeship vision: static for job
Explicit institutional recognition of, and support for, apprentices' status as learner	Ambivalent institutional recognition of, and support for, apprentice's status as learner
Named individual acts as dedicated support to apprentices	No dedicated individual *ad hoc* support
Apprenticeship is used as a vehicle for aligning the goals of developing the individual and organisational capability	Apprenticeship is used to tailor individual capability to organisational need
Apprenticeship design fosters opportunities to extend identity through boundary crossing	Apprenticeship design limits opportunity to extend identity: little boundary crossing experienced
Reification of apprenticeship highly developed (eg through documents, symbols, language, tools) and accessible to apprentices	Limited reification of apprenticeship, patchy access to reificatory aspects of practice

Figure 6: The expansive–restrictive continuum

Source: Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2003: 411)

6.19 The concept of the 'expansive-restrictive' continuum draws on the notions of 'legitimate peripheral participation' and 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger 1991), and at the same time focuses attention on the role of formal education in the learning process. Fuller and Unwin (2003) suggest three inter-connected themes which underpin the expansive-restrictive continuum: opportunities for participation, personal development and institutional arrangements. They argue that the expansive - restrictive continuum can be used to understand the lived experience of apprenticeship in terms of a range of key organisational and pedagogical features including:

- Participation in multiple communities of practice inside and outside the workplace
- Access to a range of qualifications including knowledge-based vocational qualifications
- Planned time off-the-job, including for college attendance and for reflection, and
- Post-apprenticeship progression.

6.20 Case study research such as that referred to above provides insights into the lived experience of apprentices, and the nature of their trajectories to skilled status. Fuller and Unwin argue that where the approach to apprenticeship is expansive, the benefits to apprentices and their employers are likely to be substantial.

6.21 In ending this section on 'good practice', we should note the role of The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), which has a mission to promote apprenticeships and develop policy and practice. It has developed the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE) which sets out minimum requirements for apprenticeship frameworks. Further information about the NAS is available at: www.apprenticeships.org.uk/About-Us/National-Apprenticeship-Service/Our-responsibilities.aspx

Section 7 Didactic Patterns/Assessment/Subject Areas

7.1 This section focuses on the didactic patterns, assessment and curriculum of those qualifications which have the potential to be defined as 'hybrid'. However, first as a point of comparison, we include an overview of the GCE A Level.

GCE A Level

7.2 There are over 80 A Level subjects in total.

Courses: A Levels are split into units. AS (Advanced Subsidiary) units are studied in the first year of a course. Most subjects have two AS units although some, like science and music, have three. A2 units are taken in the second year. Most subjects have two A2 units but some, like science and music, have three. The AS Level and the A2 each make up 50 per cent of the overall A Level grade. The AS Level can either be used as a free standing qualification, or provide the first half of the full A Level. If students continue with the subject for a second year they have the opportunity to attain a full A Level.

7.3 In year two of a full A Level, students take the A2 – this is not a separate qualification, but the second half of the A Level. The A2 is designed to add to knowledge gained during the AS Level. For students starting A Levels after September 2008, there is the option to take what is described as the 'extended project'. This is equivalent in size to half an A Level and requires students to produce a single piece of work which offers evidence of planning, preparation, research and working on their own.

7.4 *Assessment:* Each unit is assessed separately through a mix of internal assessment, external moderation and public examinations.

7.5 AS (Advanced Subsidiary) and A (Advanced) Level qualifications focus on traditional study skills. They normally take two years to complete full-time, although they are also available to study part-time. The qualifications are available from a wide range of academic subjects, as

well as some 'applied' subjects. Applied A Levels are described by the Government Careers Advice Service as follows:

> Applied A Levels are vocational qualifications that prepare you for work or higher education. They are the next qualification up from GCSEs and BTEC First Certificates and Diplomas. They're work-related courses in broad work sectors like Applied Business, Engineering, and Applied Information and Communication and Technology (ICT) www.careersadvice.direct.gov.uk/helpandadvice/whichcourse/vocqual.htm , accessed 20 July 2010)

GCE A Level qualifications awarded in 2009

7.6 The data below is provided by the Joint Council for Qualifications, and shows awards for GCE A Level, UK-wide, for 2009

Almost 850,000 GCE A Levels were awarded in 2009 and this compared with just over 50,000 Applied GCE A Levels (single or double awards). Applied GCE A Levels represented just 6 per cent of GCE A Levels awarded in the UK in 2009. Figure 7 below illustrates their position relative to standard GCE A Levels.

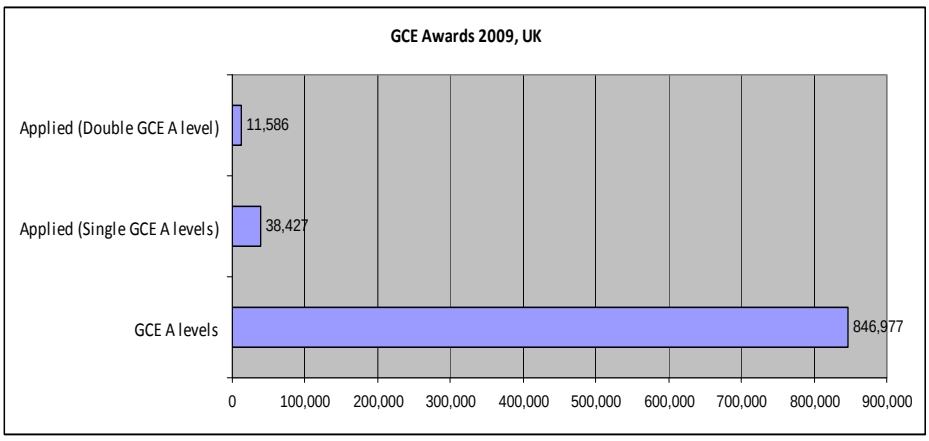


Figure 7: GCE Awards 2009, UK

(Source: Joint Council for Qualifications: GCE A Level awards UK-wide 2009)

For Applied GCE A levels, the following subjects make up 77.5 per cent of single awards and just over 81 per cent of double awards:

Business
ICT
Health and Social Care

Advanced Diploma

7.7 The Advanced Diploma is presented as being equivalent to 3.5 A Levels (www.direct.gov.uk/diplomas). It requires around 1,080 guided learning hours (GLH) to complete. As we noted earlier, the GLH provides a notional measure of a qualification's size. Table 15 (below) shows how the qualification is structured:

Principal Learning	**Generic Learning**	**Additional & Specialist Learning**
50% Applied Learning (540 GLH)	Functional skills in English, Maths, ICT Extended Project (120 GLH) 10 days' work experience	(360 GLH minimum, but up to 540 GLH)
Personal, learning and thinking skills (60 GLH)		

Table 15: The Advanced Diploma (adapted from www.edexcel.com)

7.8 From 2009, there were 14 subject areas, or 'lines of learning' available: Business; Administration and Finance; Construction and the Built Environment; Creative and Media; Engineering; Environmental and Land-based Studies; Hair and Beauty Studies; Hospitality; Information Technology; Manufacturing and Product Design; Society, Health and Development; Public Services; Retail Business; Sport and Active Leisure; Travel and Tourism.

7.9 There was an intention to introduce three general lines of learning: Humanities, Science and Languages but the new coalition government has announced that it will not proceed with these.

7.10 The Edexcel web-pages (www.edexcel.com/quals/diploma/about) are drawn on to provide the following details about the Diploma design. The principal learning component is sector and subject-related, and consists of qualifications that provide the knowledge, understanding and skills specific to the chosen line of learning. Principal Learning is the core of the Diploma. It is the compulsory course focused on the learner's chosen field of study, their 'line of learning'. As well as providing a balanced mix of skills and knowledge, Principal Learning requires learners to develop an awareness of the current issues affecting their subject and gain work-relevant skills and understanding. Half of the Principal Learning must be completed in a work-related or applied learning context. Principal Learning provides opportunities to gain sector-specific knowledge as well as the wider learning valued by employers and higher education

7.11 The 'specialist' component of the Diploma consists of qualifications related to the specific line of learning, and which 'support progression within these employment sectors and/or on to further and higher learning' The 'additional learning' consists of those from outside the principal learning area. So, as part of an Advanced Diploma, students may opt to take a GCE A Level or BTEC National Award, for example

7.12 The generic learning element comprises the following:

- a project
- functional skills in English, maths and ICT (at Level 2)
- personal, learning and thinking skills, and
- work experience (minimum 10 days).

7.13 Each part of the course is assessed separately through a mix of examinations and internal assessment, including practical tasks. Students must pass all parts of the course to gain the Diploma. There

are a number of Awarding Bodies approved for the Diploma. The breakdown of the course of study into the three components provides some flexibility in how vocationally-oriented the overall experience may be. On the one hand there is scope for the vast majority of the course to be focused on the vocational line of learning and on the other for only about half of it to be. The inclusion of ten days work experience is apparently mandatory for all Diploma students. Most of the course is likely to be delivered in the students' educational institution but some elements may require them to attend other institutions belonging to a local consortium of educational providers.

Advanced Diplomas awarded in 2010

7.14 The following data has just been released on the number of Advanced Diplomas awarded in 2010, the first year in which a cohort completed the Advanced Diploma since its launch in 2008. From approximately 1200 young people who started an Advanced Diploma programme in 2008 as the first cohort, just 594 completed in 2010. These completions were distributed across the following lines of learning:

- Construction and the Built Environment (9.8%)
- Creative and Media (26.9%)
- Engineering (24.6%)
- Information Technology (19.5)
- Society, Health and Development (19.2)

BTEC and OCR programmes

7.15 BTEC Nationals are made up of units which count towards the overall qualification. Unlike the Advanced Diploma, the qualifications relate to National Occupational Standards and so can be conceived as more explicitly work-related than the Diploma, although they do not claim to develop 'occupational competence'. Learners study real-life, work-based case studies and complete projects and assessments that contribute to the achievement of each unit.

7.16 The following subject areas are offered for BTEC and the similar range of OCR Nationals: Business; Art and Design; Health and Social Care; Information Technology; Media; Public Services; Science; Sport.

7.17 The BTEC National suite of qualifications is offered as Award, Certificate and Diploma at Level 3 on the NQF. The award is equivalent to one GCE A Level and has six units. The certificate is equivalent to two GCE A Levels and has 12 units. The Diploma is equivalent to three GCE A Levels and has 18 units. Units vary in terms of their GLH, and range from 30 to 120 GLH. To complete an award, certificate or diploma, students take a number of compulsory and optional units. The following example is taken from the BTEC National Award in Art and Design and is included for illustrative purposes (www.edexcel.com/migrationdocuments/BTEC%20Nationals/318710_BN018465_NACD_in_Art_and_Design_L3_PLU.pdf). The basic structure of all BTEC Nationals is the same irrespective of vocational area:

Edexcel Level 3 BTEC National Award in Art and Design

The Edexcel Level 3 BTEC National Award in Art and Design consists of four core units **plus** professional specialist or specialist units that provide for a combined total of 360 guided learning hours (GLH) for the completed qualification.

Unit Core units GLH Level

1 Visual Recording in Art and Design 60
2 Materials, Techniques and Processes in Art and Design 60
3 Ideas and Concepts in Art and Design 60
4 Visual Communication in Art and Design 60

Professional specialist units

7 Design Methods in Art and Design 60
8 Design Principles in Art and Design 60
9 Professional Practice in Art and Design 60
10 Personal and Professional Development in Art and Design 60
11 Freelance Work in Art and Design 60
12 Computers in Art and Design 60

13 Art and Design Specialist Contextual Investigation 60
14 Community Art 60

Specialist units

15 Photography Media, Techniques and Technology 60
16 Darkroom Practice 60
17 Understanding Video Technology 60
18 Film and Video Editing Techniques 60
19 Producing Video Installation Work 60

/cont. (There are 115 specialist units for this vocational area)

7.18 BTEC and OCR Nationals are graded: Pass, Merit or Distinction. The attainment of three Distinctions in the BTEC or OCR National Diploma equates to 360 UCAS points, or three A graded GCE A Levels.

7.19 Students complete a range of assignments, case studies and practical activities, as well as a portfolio of evidence. All assessment for BTEC and OCR Nationals are internally assessed, with students assessed by teachers or trainers in their place of study. Each unit within the qualification has specified assessment and grading criteria, and students must meet all the pass criteria for each unit to attain the qualification. Thus, students who fail to achieve passes for all units are marked as 'unclassified' for the qualification overall. In order for providers (known as 'centres') to offer a particular BTEC programme they have to have been approved via Edexcel's independent and external quality assurance procedures. Unlike the Advanced Diploma no other Awarding Bodies are involved in the assessment of BTECs or OCR qualifications.

7.20 The BTEC and OCR programmes are marketed as 'vocational' or 'work-related' by education providers. However, the extent to which BTEC and OCR's include work experience varies from college to college. For example, at some colleges BTEC Nationals contain 'up to two weeks work experience', and at others there is simply a reference to the programmes being delivered through 'realistic workplace situations and activities'. However, as an exception, the BTEC National,

BTEC National Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development, applies a common requirement for students to complete 800 hours of work experience.

7.21 Another key difference between the design of the BTEC/OCRs and the Diplomas is that all the units in the former related to the vocational area being studied, whereas there is scope in the latter to include content that is unrelated to the principal line of learning.

7.22 As we noted in Section 3 of this report, the BTEC Nationals remain popular with parents, students and employers. Over 230,000 Nationals were awarded during 2009/10, and a full list of the Awards, Certificates and Diplomas which comprised this total is below is found in Appendix C. It is worth noting that the following five sector areas made up almost one half of BTEC Nationals at Level 3 (from over 20 sector areas):

Art and Design
Business
Health and Social Care
ICT
Sport

7.23 It should also be noted that in some vocational areas/sectors whilst in certain sector areas BTEC Nationals are gained as part of an Advanced Apprenticeship framework. However, for the majority they are part of FE or school-based study. (Personal communication with EDEXCEL)

7.24 As has been noted previously, OCR offer vocationally-related qualifications across similar sectors to BTEC, although in much smaller volumes. Statistics provided by Ofqual for vocationally-related OCR awards (2009) showed a concentration in the following occupational areas at Level 3 National Certificates, Diplomas and Extended Diplomas:

Business
Health, Social Care and Early Years
Media
Sport
Travel and Tourism

Table 16 below summarises the OCR VRQ Level 3 awards by sector, and this is illustrated in Figure 8.

OCR Level 3 VRQ certificates awarded 2009	**Certificate**	**Diploma**	**Extended Diploma**
Art and Design	20	17	13
Business	545	360	47
Design	1	0	0
Health, Social Care and Early Years	380	603	196
ICT	78	19	0
Media	6	6	1
Media	367	283	149
Public Services	48	11	28
Sport	372	328	64
Travel and Tourism	310	216	48

Source: Ofqual.gov.uk/research-and-statistics

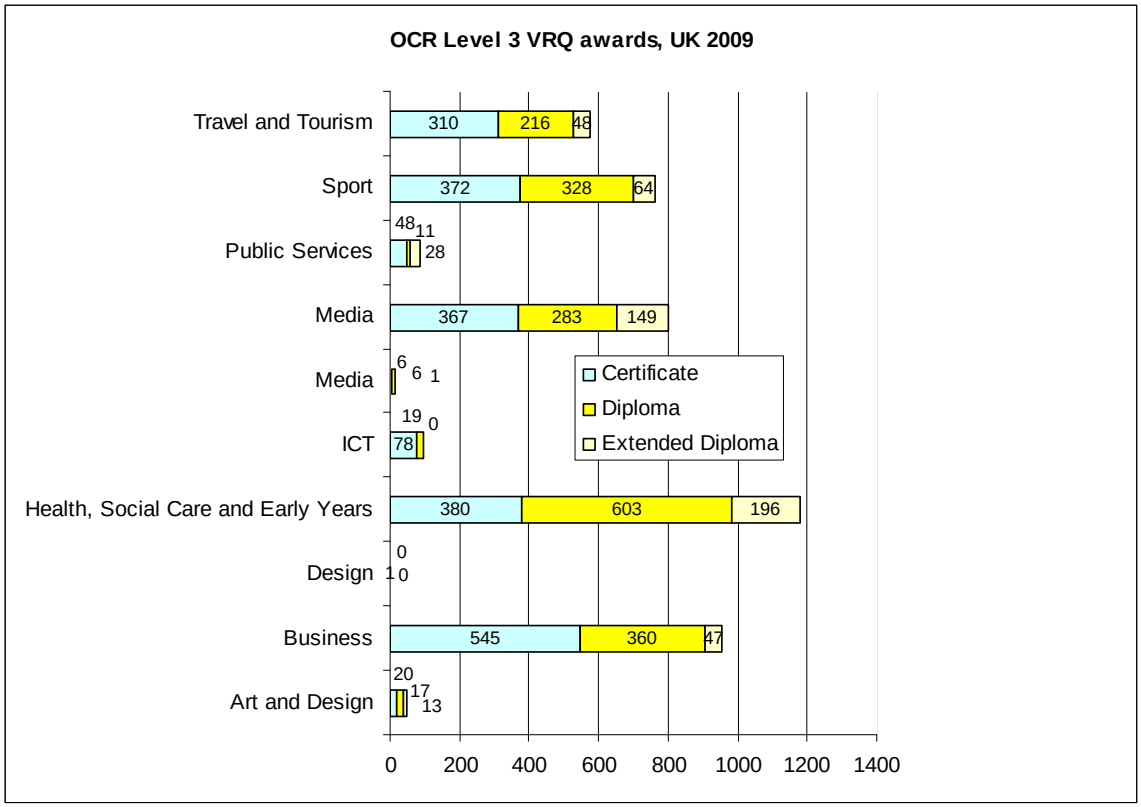


Figure 8: OCR Level 3 VRQ awards, 2009

NVQs

7.25 There are over 1,300 different NVQs (information drawn from http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039029). They are available in the vast majority of industrial and business sectors, including:

- business and management
- sales, marketing and distribution
- health care
- food, catering and leisure services
- construction and property, and
- manufacturing, production and engineering

7.26 NVQs are based on National Occupational Standards and are primarily designed for delivery in the workplace. In order to obtain an NVQ (at any level), candidates have to produce evidence to 'prove'

that they are competent against the national standards. Diverse types of evidence can be used including testimonials from a work supervisor, written documentation to show that a work task has been completed satisfactorily, photographic evidence to show the candidate 'doing' a particular task, written assignments, oral question and answer, assessment of practical tasks in the workplace by the qualified assessor and so on. Taken together the candidate submits a portfolio of evidence for assessment by a qualified workplace assessor and which is also quality assured through a system of internal and external verification.

7.27 There are no fixed time limits set for completion of NVQs, although often they can be completed relatively quickly as they provide a process for assessing whether someone is 'competent' and are often obtained by already experienced employees.

Which paradigm?

7.28 Qualifications can be conceived as falling within either an education or employment paradigm. GCSEs and A Levels provide good examples of qualifications which come within the former and NVQs of qualifications which come within the latter paradigm. As we have outlined in this report, the persistence of the academic – vocational divide has made it difficult for hybrid qualifications to emerge and become established as a route, or paradigm, in their own right. The concept of hybridity may be one way of facilitating the creation of such a new paradigm. At Level 3, the BTEC National suite of qualifications perhaps come closest to the idea of a hybrid qualification in the English system, being neither clearly in the education or employment 'camp' but having recognition by employers and HE. However, although the whole programme revolves around one vocational area or sector, work experience or a work placement is not a mandatory element of the route, nor does the qualification count as a license to practice. Both these features bring the strength of the qualification's labour market currency into question. As we have seen the Advanced Diploma is potentially a hybrid but at present falls

further into the education paradigm than the BTEC. This is partly because it is more likely to be available in schools (BTECs are more often provided by FE colleges). It can also contain non-vocational elements and only includes a minimal work experience element.

7.29 This brings us to the government supported Advanced Apprenticeship programme, the third candidate we have considered for hybrid status. Apprentices studying for BTEC National Certificates via part-time (day-release) attendance at college as part of their apprenticeship framework can be considered as having a hybrid experience and also as being on a route that has hybrid currency. They are gaining skills in the workplace and improving their employability in a particular organisation and sector at the same time as acquiring vocational knowledge that will be certificated and recognised for entry to HE. However, most Advanced Apprentices are not following frameworks which contain a technical certificate such as a BTEC National that is recognised in the UCAS tariff. The currency of these apprenticeships as a platform for progression to higher education is weak. The inconsistency of what can count as an apprenticeship in the government supported programme currently means that its 'hybrid capacity' is highly contingent on the specific make up of qualifications available in individual sector frameworks (Fuller and Unwin 2009).

Section 8 Funding

8.1 We have decided to include a section on funding arrangements in this report to recognise its relevance to the availability of qualifications and related institutional behaviour. Until April 2010 the government machinery for post-16 funding was via the Learning and Skills Council. Funding has now been divided between two agencies: the Young People's Learning Agency (www.ypla.gov.uk) and the Skills Funding Agency (www.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk).

8.2 The YPLA web-site provides the following summary of its role:

> The YPLA was established by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and launched in April 2010. Sponsored by the Department for Education (which is the name, from May 12 2010), we are responsible for planning, allocating and funding education and training for all 16–19 year olds in England - a remit that brings these three strands together for the first time.
>
> Our work covers three interlinked areas:
>
> - we help local authorities to fulfil their new responsibility for commissioning education and training for 16 -19-year-olds
> - we fund and support academies, providing a platform for the expansion of the academies programme, and
> - we provide financial support for young learners, most often in the form of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for 16 - 19-year-olds.

8.3 The web-site of the Skills Funding Agency describes its role as follows:

> We invest public spending - £4 billion per year - in colleges and training organisations to fund training for adults in England. The training is mainly to improve skills so that people can do their jobs better, get new jobs, or progress in their careers. We

work to an annual budget, targets and priorities set by the Government's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) through the Skills Investment Strategy, published each autumn. It's the responsibility of many organisations in our sector to influence and inform this strategy. We work at a 'short arm's length' from BIS, allowing a fast and effective response to policy, while reinforcing the autonomy of the FE sector. We allocate 'envelopes' of funding to colleges and other skills and training providers who have discretion over expenditure to meet the needs of local businesses and communities. (http://www.skillsfundingagency.com/)

Demand-led funding

8.4 The Edexcel 'hands-on guide' (2010) provides detailed guidance for providers who have to work with the funding criteria and its level of detail goes beyond the needs of this report. However, it is worth highlighting the key principles which underpin funding allocation of qualifications in the English system.

8.5 Funding is allocated according to a 'demand-led model' which distributes resources according to a number of factors. The formula includes weightings according to costs association with delivery of a programme, and costs linked to geographical location (for example high costs in the South of England) or 'disadvantage uplifts' incurred through providers' 'attracting, retaining and supporting disadvantaged learners' (Edexcel 2010: 33).

A complex system for 14-19 resource allocation

8.6 The landscape of funding for 14-19 year olds is complicated by its division into school based and adult based funding. With the new 'LibCon' coalition just weeks old, it is difficult at this stage to know whether alongside the change of name, the new Department for Education (from the Department for Children, Schools and Families) will introduce a radically different funding regime. For the purposes of

this report, we will simply note that uncertainty, and describe the funding mechanisms that existed in April this year.

8.7 The DSCF was responsible for funding young people's qualifications, and was the lead department with responsibility for achievement of Level 2 and Level 3 attainment by 16-19 year olds.The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) was the lead department responsible for apprenticeships and working age adults. It held responsibility too for increasing participation to higher education for 18-30 year olds. The complexity which surrounds the funding of English qualifications is noted by Lumby and Foskett (2005).

8.8 Funding for post-16 year olds is made more complex by the loss of resource suffered if students fail to complete their programme of study, and 'attracting and retaining learners is key to survival both in schools and colleges' (Lumby and Foskett: 123). Nevertheless, as Lumby and Foskett observe, whilst for schools, the majority of students will remain on the roll until 16, for sixth forms and colleges the situation is less clear and these institutions 'must balance enrolling the largest number with excluding those who will not stay and achieve, or those who may involve too high additional costs' (ibid).

Section 9 Conclusions

9.1 This country report for England has outlined the current qualifications and pathways which may count as 'hybrids' and the historical and policy contexts in which they are located. The focus of the analysis has been on both the qualification itself and the processes involved (e.g. mode of attendance in educational institution, availability of work experience, extent of engagement in employment) in obtaining it. Within the context of very flexible and fluid system of post-compulsory educational provision in England it is understandable, perhaps, that the emphasis is on the qualification, as something that can be measured and counted. There is a far less developed concept and realisation of 'system' in the English education and training context than in comparator European countries.

9.1 The qualifications we have investigated have different levels of currency for exchange in the labour market and HE. From the perspective of higher education, recognition in the UCAS tariff as well as in the entry criteria specified for courses provides evidence of a qualification's exchange value. From the perspective of the labour market, recognition by employers, professional bodies and, or license to practice provide indicators of exchange value. However, on close examination the situation for the qualifications and the pathways that we have surveyed is complex, context-dependent and dynamic. The worth associated with particular qualifications is often established in practice and over time and in relation to other factors such as the reputation of the employer in which an apprenticeship has been completed or the familiarity HE institutions have with a particular award.

9.3 Furthermore, the segmented and stratified character of the HE landscape in England (and the UK) requires us to ask questions about what type and level of higher education can be accessed through attainment of which qualifications. In comparison with the academic 'gold standard' A Levels, we found that vocational qualifications will often only give access to sub-Bachelor level higher education rather

than being recognised for direct entry into Bachelor degree programmes. As we noted in Section 5 of this report, whilst A Levels make up 70 per cent of the qualification route to Level 3, just one half of the 16-18 cohort attain Level 3 qualifications by the age of 19. At the same time, we know rather little about the qualifications and future trajectory of young people whose attainment by year 13 is other than that represented through the A Level qualification.

9.4 We have distinguished between two paradigms, education and employment and indicated the challenge for qualifications (hybrids) which do not clearly fall within one or the other. We have pointed out that this is not a new challenge in the context of the English system which has a longstanding vocational – academic divide legacy. Nonetheless, our analysis suggests that at Level 3 there are candidates (Advanced Diploma, BTEC/OCRs and Advanced Apprenticeships) which are trying to break the two paradigm stranglehold and our research in this project will continue to explore their respective strengths and weaknesses as platforms for career and higher education progression.

9.5 In phase 2 of this research we propose to develop our understanding of the issues raised in this country report via an ongoing focus on developing the quantitative picture, and by a round of key informant interviews with a range of stakeholders including:

- Policy-makers including from the Department for Education and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
- Edexcel and other relevant awarding bodies
- Sector Skills Councils sample
- Foundation Degree Forward (body overseeing and promoting this sub-Bachelor level qualification)
- Employer sample
- Professional body sample
- Funding agencies, and
- National Apprenticeship Service.

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Appendix A: Summary of Level 3 qualifications

Qualification/Level	Guided Learning Hours*		UCAS Tariff
NVQ	Variable according to workplace		Only Accountancy, maximum 160 points
Advanced Diploma		1080 hours	Maximum 490 points available
BTEC Nationals	Diploma	1080 hours	Maximum 360 points available
	Certificate	720 hours	Maximum 240 points available
	Award	360 hours	Maximum 120 points available
CACHE Certificate and Diploma in Childcare and Education	Diploma	1009 hours	Maximum 360 points available
	Certificate	360 hours	Maximum 110 points available
	Award	120 hours	Maximum 30 points available
GCE Advanced Levels		360 hours	Maximum 140 points available
GCE Advanced Levels Double Award		720 hours	Maximum 280 points available
GCE Advanced A Level with AS Level units		540 hours	Maximum 200 points available
OCR Nationals	Extended Diploma	1080 hours	Maximum 360 points available
	Diploma	720 hours	Maximum 240 points available
	Certificate	360 hours	Maximum 120 points available

*Qualification guided learning hours

A notional measure of the substance of a qualification. It includes an estimate of the time that might be allocated to direct teaching or instruction, together with other structured learning time, such as directed assignments, assessments on the job or supported individual study and practice. It excludes learner-initiated private study.

APPENDIX B: List of GCE A Levels, UK 2009

GCEs	Numbers	Percentage
Art and Design subjects	45,839	5.4
Biology	55,485	6.6
Business Studies	31,674	3.7
Chemistry	42,491	5
Classical Subjects	6,294	0.7
Communication Studies	2,168	0.3
Computing	4,710	0.6
Critical Thinking	2,491	0.3
Economics	20,987	2.5
English	91,815	10.8
Drama	16,925	2
French	14,333	1.7
General Studies	50,012	5.9
Geography	32,227	3.8
German	5,765	0.7
History	49,071	5.8
Information/Communication Tech	11,948	1.4
Irish	339	0
Law	16,288	1.9
Mathematics	72,475	8.6
Mathematics (Further)	10,473	1.2
Media/Film/TV Studies	33,822	4
Music	10,425	1.2
Other Modern Languages	7,932	0.9
Physics	29,436	3.5
Performing/Expressive Arts	3,591	0.4
Political Studies	13,392	1.6
Psychology	52,872	6.2
Religious Studies	21,079	2.5
Science Subjects	4,496	0.5
Sociology	29,445	3.5
Spanish	7,334	0.9
Sport/PE Studies	21,672	2.6
Technology Subjects	17,442	2.1
Welsh	941	0.1
All other subjects	9,288	1.1
All subjects	**846,977**	

Appendix C: List of BTEC Nationals by sector, UK 2009/10

ALL Nationals					*Sum of 2009-2010*
Sector	**FE**	**HE**	**Schools**	**WbL**	**Grand Total**
Applied Science	6,369	19	3,657	13	10,058
Art And Design	20,089	415	2,249	108	22,861
Beauty Therapy	856	23	50		929
Business	15,617	37	8,073	74	23,801
Construction	3,816		340	39	4,195
Dental Technology	43			5	48
Engineering	11,898		651	1,299	13,848
Food Science	56				56
Health And Social Care	20,496	105	4,540	321	25,462
Hospitality	991	39	299		1,329
ICT	16,380	33	4,491	47	20,951
Landbased	10,698	400	109		11,207
Law	424		209		633
Media	10,387	34	2,040	18	12,479
Music	4,898	17	1,243		6,158
Music Technology	4,573	5	664	36	5,278
Performing Arts	10,852	17	4,480	40	15,389
Photography	1				1
Public Services	12,560	69	1,763	57	14,449
Retail	284		261		545
Sport	21,316	148	11,770	631	33,865
Transport	1,711	8	20	3	1,742
Travel and Tourism	6,175	73	1,706		7,954
Grand Total	**180,490**	**1,442**	**48,615**	**2,691**	**233,238**
AWARD					
Applied Science	1,989	17	2,963	13	4,982
Art And Design	3,854	24	1,176	67	5,121
Beauty Therapy	188	1	26		215
Business	4,997	4	5,025	2	10,028
Construction	1,529		221	39	1,789
Engineering	2,419		383	564	3,366
Food Science	8				8
Health And Social Care	3,948	31	2,283	20	6,282
Hospitality	146		194		340
ICT	4,772	2	3,314	31	8,119
Landbased	2,343	78	52		2,473
Law	424		209		633
Media	2,383	17	1,398	18	3,816
Music	1,360		980		2,340
Music Technology	1,300		559	15	1,874
Performing Arts	2,960	1	2,481	3	5,445
Public Services	3,294	19	1,273	35	4,621
Retail	284		261		545
Sport	4,794	31	5,215	153	10,193
Transport	534	1	18		553
Travel and Tourism	1,569		1,186		2,755
Grand Total	**45,095**	**226**	**29,217**	**960**	**75,498**

CERTIFICATE					
Sector	**FE**	**HE**	**Schools**	**WbL**	**Grand Total**
Applied Science	914		508		1,422
Art And Design	1,530	90	729	41	2,390
Beauty Therapy	32		18		50
Business	3,312	2	2,473	11	5,798
Construction	759		102		861
Engineering	5,032		191	726	5,949
Food Science	10				10
Health And Social Care	3,457		1,467	300	5,224
Hospitality	358		83		441
ICT	2,524		886	16	3,426
Landbased	1,082	112	35		1,229
Media	851		447		1,298
Music	831	3	206		1,040
Music Technology	448		75	21	544
Performing Arts	973		1,321	37	2,331
Public Services	1,819	1	254	8	2,082
Sport	3,571		4,629	395	8,595
Transport	293	3		3	299
Travel And Tourism	1,694	13	468		2,175
Grand Total	**29,490**	**224**	**13,892**	**1,558**	**45,164**

DIPLOMA					
Applied Science	3,466	2	186		3,654
Art And Design	14,705	301	344		15,350
Beauty Therapy	636	22	6		664
Business	7,308	31	575	61	7,975
Construction	1,528		17		1,545
Dental Technology	43			5	48
Engineering	4,447		77	9	4,533
Food Science	38				38
Health and Social Care	13,091	74	790	1	13,956
Hospitality	487	39	22		548
ICT	9,084	31	291		9,406
Landbased	7,273	210	22		7,505
Media	7,153	17	195		7,365
Music	2,707	14	57		2,778
Music Technology	2,825	5	30		2,860
Performing Arts	6,919	16	678		7,613
Photography	1				1
Public Services	7,447	49	236	14	7,746
Sport	12,951	117	1,926	83	15,077
Transport	884	4	2		890
Travel And Tourism	2,912	60	52		3,024
Grand Total	**105,905**	**992**	**5,506**	**173**	**112,576**