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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

School of Education

**The Individual and Institutional Experiences of the Young
Apprenticeship ‘Experiment’**

by

Frances Lansley

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Education

January 2013

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

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Doctor of Education

**THE INDIVIDUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE
YOUNG APPRENTICESHIP ‘EXPERIMENT’**

Frances Lansley

The Young Apprenticeship (YA) programme is the latest in a long line of vocational qualifications to exist fleetingly within the English education system. Introduced in 2004, the YA programme offered Key Stage 4 students the opportunity to combine academic and vocational study within specific industrial sectors.

Evaluative studies of a quantitative nature evidence a positive response, both in terms of perceived usefulness and actual success (90% completion rate of the Sport YA, (SkillsActive, 2009)) from students, providers and employers. Never attaining more than pilot status, the programme was closed to new entrants in 2011 following recommendations made by the Wolf Report, condemning it to the role of yet another vocational education ‘experiment’. Little is known about how the students experience a programme that occupies a significant proportion of their Key Stage 4 timetable. Outside of their immediate institutional context, the YA students are a hidden population.

This study seeks to examine and give voice to the experiences of the individuals who have participated in the programme, within their institutional context. Through a qualitative research methodology, it is proposed that observed changes in individual disposition during participation in the YA programme allow it to be considered as a ‘lived experience’ for the participants. It is argued that Situated Learning theory and the Community of Practice concept are useful analytical tools through which to make sense of the learning processes in which the YA students engage.

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Academic Thesis: Declaration Of Authorship

I, Frances Lansley,

Declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

The Individual and Institutional Experiences of the Young Apprenticeship 'Experiment'.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission.

Signed:

Date: 6th January 2013

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List of Abbreviations

CAF/P	Common Application Form/Process
CPVE	Certificate in Pre-Vocational Education
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EBP	Education and Business Partnership
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
GTA	Group Training Association
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
KS	Key Stage
LA	Local Authority
LSRC	Learning and Skills Research Centre
MSC	Manpower Services Commission
PDM	Partnership Development Manager
SSC	Sector Skills Council
SSCo	School Sports Coordinator
SGO	School Games Organiser
SSP	School Sports Partnership
TVEI	Technical and Vocational Education Initiative
VET	Vocational Education and Training
UTC	University Technical College
YA	Young Apprenticeship/Apprentice
YPLA	Young People's Learning Agency

Chapter One – Introducing the Young Apprenticeship Experiment

Since the 1970's, an increasing number of education-work and work-related learning programmes have been introduced into the English education system by successive governments in the belief that Vocational Education and Training (VET) can and should be stronger. The focus of this research project is the Young Apprenticeship (YA) programme for 14 to 16 year-olds. More specifically, it explores the students' experiences of participating in the Young Apprenticeship as a component of their Key Stage 4 curriculum. The study is located within an analysis of relevant literature and a personal desire to increase awareness of this population of young people and their experiences of participating in this programme of study.

This chapter provides an overview of the research and a guide to the remaining chapters in addition to a snapshot of the political and educational landscape within which the research is situated, a turbulent climate of significant education policy making and reform. An outline of the Young Apprenticeship programme, from its introduction in 2004 to its closure, following the publication of the Wolf Report in March 2011, is presented.

At the time of writing, a Coalition (Conservative-Liberal) government, the first for over seventy years, is currently in the process of making sweeping reforms to the education system, from the development of Academies, Free Schools and University Technical Colleges¹, to the reality of significant cuts in public spending in an attempt to redress a budget deficit. Pension reforms and a national public sector pay freeze have led to industrial action, including three days of strike action by teachers and other public sector workers (29th June 2011, 30th November 2011 and 10th May 2012). GCSE equivalency values of vocational courses, including BTEC Certificates and Diplomas have been re-calculated and significantly reduced and a new system of assessing schools within national league tables has been introduced; the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). Successful completion of the EBacc requires students to achieve higher grade passes (A*-C) in six full course

GCSE's; English, Maths, two Sciences, an Ancient or Modern Foreign Language and a Humanities subject, currently either History or Geography.

The emergence and development of the YA programme and its position within this educational context is discussed in the following chapter, but a brief outline of its purpose and function is necessary here in order to establish the rationale behind this research project.

The Young Apprenticeship Programme

The YA programme was introduced as a pilot project in 2004, which it remained until its closure in 2012, with the purpose of providing

An opportunity for 14 to 16 year olds to combine the practical application of skills and knowledge in a vocational context with studying for qualifications that relate to particular occupational sectors. (DfES 2004)

The programme was designed as a small scale, high quality route offering able, well-motivated pupils the option to pursue vocational programmes in partnership with employers and involving extended work experience. It remained central to Ministers' vision for a spectrum of vocational routes at Key Stage 4 to suit a variety of needs, and closely integrated with progression to post-16 options in education, training or employment (DfES, 2004: 24). Choosing a Young Apprenticeship at 14 should not limit the range of choices at 16. On completion pupils can take up an Intermediate or Advanced apprenticeship within their sector or continue to pursue vocational or general academic qualifications.

The YA offers pupils the chance to gain a taste of real work in a supported way and to lay the foundations for a Post-16 apprenticeship whilst retaining the full range of other options for future training or study. (DfES, 2007: 1)

Pupils spend on average two days per week on the programme over two academic years with the remaining three days each week based at their home school studying their core curriculum subjects. YA programmes are delivered in a variety of settings including schools, FE colleges and sector specific training providers.

Pupils study for at least one Level 2 sector specific qualification and undertake 50 days (300 hours) of relevant work experience over the two years. Figure 1 is taken from the Learning Skills Council (LSC) guidance *YA - The nature of the Programme* and outlines what a typical YA students' timetable might consist of.

School	Employer/ College/ Training Provider
Standard curriculum:	Vocational curriculum:
3 days per week	2 days per week
GCSEs	1 day: Level 2 Qualifications related to sector
Maths, English ICT, Science	1 day: Work experience and work-based learning with employer/s (50 days)
Careers advice and all other National Curriculum requirements	
Monitoring of individual learning, enterprise, enrichment options	
Partnerships	
Selection , co-ordination, programme monitoring and evaluation, health and safety, insurance and child protection safeguards, assistance with pupil specific funding,	

(LSC, 2010:2)

The programme has robust but not mandatory eligibility criteria including; Key Stage 2 Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) results of Level 4 in Maths, English and Science, a combined Key Stage 3 Teacher Assessment score of 14 or higher in Maths, English and Science, attendance and behaviour at the level of the average for year 9 within the school and evidence that parents or guardians support the pupils choice.²

Recruits [to the YA] are expected to be pupils with a level of ability that is commensurate with the demands of a challenging Level 2 course of study, who are already motivated to progress on to work-based learning or to other vocational programmes at 16, and who have the support of parents or guardians in their choice. (DfES 2004: 9)

As outlined in Figure 1 above, each YA programme is situated and operated within a partnership of providers, made up of the particular schools, colleges, or training providers involved in the commissioning process. Selection and recruitment onto YA programmes is thus a collaborative activity run by partnerships involved in each particular YA sector and programme. There is no standardised application process onto the YA programme and as such, significant variation exists between sectors, Local Authorities and providers (DfES, 2006b: 10). Completion of the programme results in a nationally recognised YA certificate endorsed by the Sector Skills Council (SSC) within which the particular programme is operating.³ National YA success targets are for 50% of completers to progress onto post-16 apprenticeships (LSC, 2010).

In Cohort 1 (2004-6), 1000 pupils started across 39 partnerships covering five sectors; Art & Design, Business & Administration, Engineering, Health & Social Care and the Motor Industry. Cohort 7 (2010 -12), the final cohort to start the programme, is nearing completion and involves 9,400 young people across 15 sectors (The Excellence Gateway Treasury, 2012). When the YA programme was established in 2004, funding was standardised across sectors and providers. In Cohort 1, the allocation was £3,500 per student for their first year and a further £2,500 in the second, totalling £6,000 over the duration of the programme. By Cohort 7, funding was £3,200 per student for the duration of the programme, a reduction of nearly 50% from the original allocation. In the latter cohorts, increasingly complex contractual agreements drawn up between partnerships resulted in some providers accessing a fraction of the original allocation.

In 2005 Ofsted was commissioned by the DfES to inspect schools over a three year period to establish how well work-related learning was being conducted and how the YA programme was being introduced. In an interim report, published in November 2005, Ofsted found that the YA had made a good start and the teachers, staff and students involved were positive about the impact.

The YA programme has made a successful start. The majority of students enjoy their study, are making progress and have a clear idea of their future. Students enjoy their YA work, responding well to a different, often more adult environment than they are accustomed to in school. They tend to have higher work rates and increased application compared to their peers. (Ofsted, 2005: 26)

A subsequent report published in October 2006, inspecting only the YA programme, found that the YA provided a successful alternative to academic disciplines. Students were highly motivated and enjoyed the programme. They achieved well in over half of the partnerships and developed good practical skills and knowledge related to their sector. Prior attainment data was being well utilised to ensure that pupils were at the right level for the course and students and their parents were knowledgeable about the programme. A strong feature of the YA programme was the motivation and commitment of the students, reflected in almost 100% attendance on some programmes (Ofsted, 2006: 1).

The Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) (2010) also conducted an evaluation of the YA in 2010, finding that 78% of all YA participants achieved five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, compared to 64% among all learners nationally, suggesting that participation in the YA programme compared favourably with following a more traditional Key Stage 4 programme of study. The report also stated that

Learners who completed the third cohort of the YA programme gained significantly more points in total (94 points more), at the end of Key Stage 4 compared with similar learners in the same schools who had not participated in the programme. (YPLA, 2010: 7)

In establishing the educational and political climate within which my research takes place, it is necessary at this point to introduce and outline a review of vocational education commissioned by the coalition government early into their term of office that resulted in the publication of the Wolf Report in March 2011, a document that proved highly significant to the future of the YA programme.

The Wolf Report

In a letter addressed to Stephen Stubb, head of SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council for Sport and Active Leisure, Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State for Schools, writes

The department confirmed on the 28 March that there will be no more new entrants to the national Young Apprenticeship pilot. We have made the decision because the high programme costs of young apprenticeships are not justified in the current economic climate.

(19 April 2011) (Appendix i)

The events preceding this letter and its announcement began in September 2010 when the Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove wrote to Alison Wolf, Professor of Public Sector Management at King's College requesting an independent review of vocational education. Professor Wolf was asked to consider the following questions: How can we improve the organisation of vocational education for 14-19 year olds? What is the appropriate target audience for a vocational education offer? What principles should underpin content, structure and teaching methods? How can we improve progression from vocational education to positive destinations? (September, 2010) (Appendix i)

In March 2011, Professor Alison Wolf delivered her evidence in the form of the Wolf Report. In it she made recommendations relating to vocational education and qualifications across the 14-19 age range. Whilst first acknowledging that there are some very successful vocational courses for 14-19 year olds, Wolf stated that,

Alongside the many young people for whom vocational education offers a successful pathway into employment or Higher Education, there are hundreds of thousands for whom it does not. (Wolf, 2011: 7)

As a result, Wolf concluded that many are leaving education without the skills that will enable them to progress. In relation to the 14-16 age range, under consideration in this research project, Wolf made the following recommendations. There should be a clear distinction between those qualifications, both vocational and academic, which can contribute to performance indicators at Key stage 4, and

those which cannot. Non-GCSE qualifications should make a limited contribution to an individual's score on any performance measures. The statutory duty for schools to provide every person at KS4 with a standard amount of work-related learning should be removed (Wolf, 2011).

In a specific reference to the YA programme itself, Wolf (2011: 110) stated that, in contrast to the findings outlined above, 'YA participation had a significant negative impact on the likelihood of passing Maths and English GCSE A*-C' although no empirical evidence is offered to substantiate this claim. The only other reference to the YA is in relation to its cost, which Wolf states as being 'extremely expensive' (2011: 109). Despite the positive experiences and results reported by Ofsted (2005, 2006) and the YPLA (2010), Wolf presents a critical view of the YA with little evidence to justify her position.

In response to the Wolf Report, the government set out its intended course of action (DfE, 2011: 4), accepting and 'acting upon all of Professor Wolf's individual recommendations' and in the aforementioned letter from Nick Gibb addressed to the Head of SkillsActive, stated

Professor Wolf sets out her view that general, rather than sector or occupationally specific routes are more appropriate to the 14-16 age range group; and that vocational education should normally be confined to around 20% of a pupils' timetable at Key Stage 4. (Nick Gibb, April, 2011)

Consequently, there were no new entrants to the YA programme in any sector in September 2011 and the final cohort of YA students will be completing their programmes of study in July 2012. The YA programme, like many other vocational initiatives that have preceded it (Technical Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), Certificate in Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE), Youth Training Scheme (YTS)), has ultimately become another 'experiment' in vocational education in England, an issue discussed further in the following chapter. It is the experiences of this experiment upon the individuals and institutions involved that is the main focus of this research project. From an epistemological perspective, qualitative research methods are the means by which this will be investigated.

Research Rationale

My own position within this research is such that in my role as a teacher in a comprehensive secondary school, I am also a ‘provider’ of a YA in Sports Management, Leadership and Coaching within my local partnership. Delivery of the YA programme for me began in 2008, with 13 students in Cohort 5; 17 students in Cohort 6 completed in the summer of 2011 and a further 18 students in Cohort 8 are due for completion in the summer of 2012. These will be amongst the last cohort of students to follow the YA programme following the closure of the programme nationally. It is with respect to all of the students in the final cohort that the YA programme and its students are referred to throughout this research in the present tense. While the programme may well be coming to an end, at the time of writing it is still ‘live’ and there are still students working to complete their YA.

My interest in studying the young people involved in the YA stemmed from, what I perceived, the remarkable development and achievements of my first cohort. Their commitment to an innovative and unique programme, significant personal development and fierce pride in what they were involved in was inspiring as a teacher and the attainment of some individuals within the group far exceeded what they were predicted to achieve. It also quickly became apparent that in following the YA programme they were very much a hidden population of students within the school community. Aside from being recognisable on their timetabled YA days by a distinctive uniform, little was known about what they did outside of their immediate community. This was emphasised further by additional students within the school who attended a local Further Education (FE) College to follow different YA programmes in sectors such as Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy and Hospitality & Catering for whom their days out of school were a mystery to both teaching staff and their peers, including those following the YA in Sport. The adage ‘out of sight, out of mind’ was very much applicable to these young people.

In conducting some preliminary reading, I recognised similar processes happening within the YA programme in other partnerships and that whilst quantitative evidence relating to attendance and retention rates, employer satisfaction and

completion statistics was gathering as each cohort completed the programme, very little was known or recorded about how the young people and the institutions in which they were studying were actually experiencing the programme (SkillsActive, 2008). Fuller and Unwin (2007) had already concluded, through qualitative research within the realm of the government supported (post-16) apprenticeship programme, that very little is known about how apprenticeship is experienced and used in different sectors and by individual employers. Taylor (2008), through research based in Canadian provinces also highlights that there has been virtually no tracking of apprentices to see how they fare over time. The process of gatekeeping by training providers makes it very difficult for researchers to access them (Taylor, 2008).

My position as practitioner researcher, actively involved in teaching, including on the YA programme, is one which affords access where outsider researchers may experience resistance. It is from this position of privilege that the experiences of the Young Apprentices and the adults involved in the delivery of the programme are explored through this qualitative research project. The conceptual lens through which these experiences are made sense of is that of situated learning and by the application of communities of practice theory as an analytical tool. It is argued that the affordances offered by this analytical approach offer a means by which to better understand the particular and contextually specific experiences of the Young Apprentices.

Ultimately then, my research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How are the practices of the Young Apprenticeship programme experienced by the students and adults involved in it?
2. How does this experience differ based on the institutional context?
3. Why could it be considered to be a 'lived experience' for the students?

The first of these questions seeks to explore how the students and adults experience the delivery of the programme. The second examines the impact of the

different practices encountered in each delivery site through which the YA programme operates and consequently, how this alters the experiences identified in the first question. The final question seeks to examine the impact on the individual of participation in the YA programme as expressed by the students, particularly in relation to personal development and change over the duration of the two year programme of study, leading to the identification of themselves as 'YAs'.

Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter Two presents a critical exploration and analysis of the literature related to the Young Apprenticeship programme, its historical development and political and educational context. An examination of the research into concepts related to the study of learning, particularly in relation to communities of practice is also presented. Chapter Three discusses the methodology for the research project, including a reflection on research styles and a rationale for the processes that have been adopted. Chapter Four examines the institutional context of each of the YA programmes involved in the data collection through a detailed outline of each of the providers, comparison of their practices and related impact upon the students' experiences. Chapter Five begins the thematic analysis and discussion of the findings of the research relating to the first research question, the way in which the YA programme is experienced by the individuals involved. It examines themes of selection and recruitment, teaching and learning, and work experience, categorised as the 'practices' associated with the YA programme. Chapter Six explores themes of personal change, identity and progression through the analytical lens of the communities of practice approach, examining how participation in the YA programme involves a process of 'becoming a YA'. Chapter Seven draws the research findings together and discusses them in relation to the wider body of research within which they are situated, highlighting limitations of the analysis approaches adopted. Finally, Chapter Eight concludes the study through the clarification of key research findings, areas for further research and implications for future practice amongst those involved in the ongoing vocational education of young people.

1. Academies are state maintained independent schools set up with the help of outside sponsors. They were first established by Tony Blair in 2000 in a bid to drive up education standards by replacing failing schools in struggling education authorities with business sponsored academies. Free Schools are state maintained schools not under the control of a Local Authority. Introduced in 2010 making it possible for parents, teachers, charities or businesses to set up and run their own schools. Whilst not bound by the National Curriculum, they are subject to Ofsted inspections and must comply with performance measures. University Technical Colleges are a type of Free School, led by a sponsoring university. They offer a combined academic and vocational curriculum for 14-19 year olds, specialising in subjects requiring technical and modern equipment. The first UTC was the JCB Academy, established in 2010. They are designed to offer clear routes into Higher Education or further learning in work. UTC's are sponsored by the Baker Dearing Trust.
2. Education in England is divided into 4 Key Stages that learners progress through depending upon their age. Key Stage 1 is Years 1 and 2 in primary school, Key Stage 2 is Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 of primary school. Key Stage 3 is Years 7, 8 and 9 of secondary school and Key Stage 4 is Years 10 and 11 of secondary school. Post-16 education (up to the age of 19) is variously described as Key Stage 5, Further Education or Sixth Form.
In all National Curriculum subjects, the criteria for assessing learners progress are set out in descriptors of performance, Assessment Levels, at nine levels: Levels 1-8 and 'Exceptional Performance'. Level 2 represents expectations for most 7 year-olds, Level 4 represents expectations for most 11 year-olds and Levels 5/6 represent expectations for most 14 year-olds. At the end of Key Stage 2 (11 years old), all learners are tested in national Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) intended to show whether learners are below, at or above the target level for their age. SATs tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were abolished in 2008 by Ed Balls, the then Education Secretary, and so the use of Teacher Assessment scores became common practice as an alternative guide to students progress at this time, helping schools to guide the KS4 options process. The Teacher Assessment score identifies the achievement levels in English, Maths and Science that the students are expected to achieve at the end of Key Stage 3. Thus a score of 14 or above, as required by the YA entry criteria could typically consist of a Level 5 in English, Level 5 in Maths and a Level 4 in Science, giving a total of 14.
3. Sector Skills Councils are state-sponsored organisations covering specific economic sectors within the UK. Currently, there are 25 in the UK, responsible for reducing skills gaps and shortages, improving learning and increasing productivity in their sectors. The framework of each YA programme has been developed in conjunction with its parent SSC. SSC's are also required to contribute to the development of Post-16 Apprenticeships.

Chapter Two – The Research Context of the Young Apprenticeship

The purpose of this chapter is to explore and examine literature related to the Young Apprenticeship (YA) programme, its development and the practices in which it is engaged. In isolation, the YA programme has generated limited published research, much of which is authority driven evaluative documentation or inspection findings, typically quantitative in nature (LSC, 2008; Ofsted, 2005, 2006; SkillsActive, 2008, 2011). In creating a more complete picture of the YA and its contextual setting, the review also takes into account research relating to the wider vocational education context.

A number of themes have been identified for consideration during this review in order to best represent the literature and to form a basis from which to critically reflect on the YA as a programme of study. Firstly, the development and emergence of the YA programme, situating it within its political, educational and institutional context. The current climate is complex and fast-moving, necessitating discussion of the place and purpose of the YA. Secondly, the characteristics of the young people who participate in the YA programme and vocational education generally are considered. In attempting to understand the nature of the YA programme, it is appropriate to discuss the young people involved in it. Thirdly, the practices involved in the delivery of the programme across different providers are examined. As a new mode of delivery, especially within the 14-16 age range, much of the research focus to date has been on the practical reality of how rather than justifying why particular content and teaching methods have been utilised in the delivery process. In order to begin to add to the existing research, it is necessary to begin to evaluate and analyse practices and pedagogy, identifying best practice as a means by which to improve. The chapter concludes with an examination of the literature relating to learning in vocational education, including an introduction to the concepts of situated learning, communities of practice and identity formation.

Emergence and Development of the YA Programme

An overview of the YA programme was presented in Chapter One, describing the operational set-up of the programme and its position within the Key Stage 4 curriculum in England. In order to situate the YA contextually, this chapter examines research relating to the development of vocational education in a wider sense. In particular, there is a focus on the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) programme operational during the 1980's as there are significant common features between its development and that of the YA programme. Clarke and Winch (2007) indicate that the international and comparative study of vocational education in Britain has proceeded rapidly since the 1980's, though it has been largely dominated by sociological and economic concerns. In relation to educational reform in general, Lumby and Foskett emphasise that 'as with many sudden manifestations, the preparation has been a long time in the making' (2005: vii). I will suggest that the YA programme has historical links to educational change which are important in understanding its place and purpose within the educational and political agenda of the time.

In 2004, as the YA programme was introduced, the Labour government were two years into a policy that aimed to provide more coherent pathways through the 14-19 age range for young people of all abilities (DfES, 2002). The significance of the age range under consideration was in that it crossed two well established Key Stages within education, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5, replacing them with one over-arching term 14-19. The term became an officially recognised expression in 2002 through the consultation document *14-19 Education: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards* (DfES, 2002).

From this point until the present time, the term 14-19 remains stable within the political agenda and has been the topic of significant study and publication, both policy and academic (Bailey, 2003; DfES 2005, 2005b; DCSF 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d). The emphasis of the concept was on achieving greater coherence in the experience of the young person across this period of their education. Lumby and Foskett (2005) question whether this has been achieved, as the term 14-19 is

not widely recognised outside of the education system, the vast majority of the population, including employers and families, still understanding education phases as 14-16 and 16-19 years.

As a direct consequence of this perceived lack of coherence within the education system, an independent review of 14-19 education was commissioned, funded for six years, commencing in 2003, through the Nuffield Foundation. The Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training was hailed by the co-directors as 'the most thorough investigation of every aspect of this educational phase for decades' (Pring, Hayward, Hodgson, Johnson, Keep, Oancea, Rees, Spours & Wilde, 2009: i). Part of its rationale was to provide clarification of the wide range of qualifications and programmes that existed on many different levels within the education system for this age group.

Policy on 14-19 education in England & Wales is littered with an alphabet soup of acronyms, most of which can barely be recalled even by those who have to teach in this kaleidoscopic qualifications landscape. (Pring et al 2009: vii)

In addressing the question, 'What counts as an educated 19 year old today?', the authors of the review argue for a broader vision of education in the future, a greater respect for more practical and active learning, a more supportive system of assessment, a more unified system of qualifications ensuring more coherent progression routes, the creation of collaborative local learning systems and a more reflective approach to policymaking (Pring et al, 2009: i).

The Nuffield Review covers a wide spectrum of analysis and it is surprising that, despite claiming a focus on 14-19 education, there is almost no mention of 14-16 year old students within the research. The Nuffield Review Issue papers (Issue Paper 3, 2008a; Issue Paper 4, 2008b) that are devoted entirely to the subject of apprenticeships and are published four years after the introduction of the Young Apprenticeship programme make only a single mention of the scheme throughout the entirety of the discussion, whilst the focus remains purely on the post-16

phase. In aiming to promote the 14-19 phase as a unified phase rather than two separate stages, the Review appears to be guilty of doing just that.

In analysing the confusing array of qualifications on offer at different ages, attention also focuses on the value of different vocational qualifications and their equivalency in relation to the GCSE examination. The YA programme, as a collective qualification¹, struggles to feature in discussion relating to stand-alone qualifications and therefore remains undisclosed, isolated as a unique programme of study not neatly packaged into any of the pathways under discussion.

Coinciding with the introduction of the YA was the publication of the Tomlinson Report (2004), which introduced for the first time the idea of abolishing GCSE and A Level examinations, replacing them instead with a Diploma framework covering all 14-19 year olds. The response to the controversial Tomlinson report was the White paper *14-19 Education & Skills* (DfES, 2005) published by the then Education Secretary Ruth Kelly. The GCSE and A level system were retained, in addition to the proposed development of specialised Diplomas to run alongside them and an expansion of the apprenticeship system. In considering the impact of both the White Paper and Tomlinson's proposals upon vocational education, Huddleston, Keep and Unwin (2005: 10) argued that the proposals were overly complex, created more questions than answers and treated employers as 'fall guys' for the failure of the system. Tomlinson's plan for a wholly unified system did not materialise, although the Diplomas, in a different guise did.

The chronology of the 14-19 term provides an indication of the turbulence which has characterised the sector, despite 'current rhetoric being towards the pursuit of a successful and stable system' (Lumby & Foskett, 2005: 27). It is therefore important to look more historically at where the impetus for the YA has emerged. From the 1960's onwards, apprenticeship numbers dropped due to economic recession and manufacturing decline (Fuller & Unwin, 2007). The plethora of education-work initiatives through the 1980's and early 1990's (Bailey, 2003) unwittingly absorbed much of the existing provision until the Modern

Apprenticeship was reintroduced in 1994 for 16-25 year olds. It was not until fifteen years later, with the publication of the Apprenticeships Bill (DCSF, 2009) that Britain had a statutory definition and framework for post-16 Apprenticeships.

The early 1980's is well documented for the large number of government driven vocational education initiatives to hit schools and colleges (Youth Opportunities Scheme (YOPS), Youth Training Scheme (YTS), Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), Certificate in Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE)) (Lumby & Foskett, 2005: 7). Of the myriad of initiatives that characterise this period, Bill Bailey (2003) recognises the significance of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) as marking the first post-war government intervention related to 14-19 year olds. I suggest that the YA programme has strong associations with this initiative through its work with employers and the collaborative nature of its delivery, though not necessarily in relation to the emphasis on teaching pedagogies and certainly not in relation to the scale of the initiative.

TVEI was launched as a pilot programme with participating local authorities in 1982, aiming to improve the vocational curriculum for 14-18 year olds. Funded by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), it carried with it a strong emphasis on collaborative work between schools, employers and colleges, aimed at encouraging students to start a vocational programme of study at 14 that would continue through to college and be completed by the age of 18. Funding and curriculum time associated with it gave creative freedom to teachers to develop a curriculum with local employers and training providers that they deemed appropriate for their students. Helsby and Saunders (1993: 45) described TVEI as 'the largest ever national curriculum development project in the United Kingdom, and also the most evaluated.' Yeomans (1996) talks of teachers claiming it to be their most fulfilling and rewarding time in teaching, creating remarkably stimulating developments within curricula. Robinson, Williams and Taylor (1991) argue that enhanced teacher enthusiasm and endorsement may be desirable, but if these are not translated into the betterment of pupils' education, then the aims of the

programme have not been met. Helsby and Saunders (1993) believed that the legacy of TVEI was more likely to be in the bidding and monitoring systems which it pioneered, rather than in the curriculum changes it promoted.

TVEI was increasingly marginalised until its closure in 1997. Bailey (2003), states that little was learned from the successes of the TVEI programme during the following 20 years or more, until the introduction of the YA as the first vocational initiative to take into account the 14-16 age range. No other educational reform considered the introduction of a combination of academic and vocational study at age 14, with the freedom to design a curriculum ‘neither narrowly academic nor occupationalist’ (Bailey, 2003). As has been the case with the YA programme, the development of TVEI in schools made it possible for teachers and managers to take on responsibilities for leadership and to develop expertise in the collaborative delivery of work-related learning. Stanley (2012) recognises that, just as was the case after the closure of TVEI, it is possible that this expertise will continue to support work-related learning in schools and colleges but the posts, structures and partnerships that have been developed through the delivery of the YA programmes may not survive.

The YA programme also has much in common with the Increased Flexibility programme (IF). Introduced in 2002, its aim was to enhance vocational and work-related opportunities for 14-16 year olds. Students were given the opportunity to follow vocational qualifications at a local FE college alongside their core GCSE subjects through a process of day release from school (Devitt & Roker, 2005). Partnerships of schools, colleges and training providers were established to offer a variety of different vocational opportunities. Unlike the YA, the IF programme was aimed at students with low levels of academic achievement or poor behavioural records, as a means by which to engage them in a positive learning experience. Judged to be a worthwhile experience by the majority of staff and students involved, the IF programme was undervalued in relation to the superior GCSE route followed by the majority of students (Devitt & Roker, 2005).

The YA programme reflects aspects of both TVEI and the IF Programme, perhaps even owing its existence to these two initiatives out of the many that have come and gone over the last few decades in education. The closure of the YA programme despite successful outcomes establishes a further connection, in that they have all been established and operational as an experiment within the education system for as long as it suits the political agenda for it to do so. Huddleston and Oh-Su (2004: 83) describe this cyclical nature of government policy in relation to work-related learning as a 'magic roundabout' with a number of recurring themes.

The evaluation of policy and practice has been the main focus of research into vocational education programmes such as TVEI (Fraser, 1986; Merson, 1992; Heath, 1995). The next section of this chapter examines research relating to students' experiences of vocational education.

Experiences of Participating in Vocational Education

At the present time, there is little research relating to the lived reality of the YA programme, hence the purpose of this study. Characteristic of research related to the YA programme is its focus on the demographics of the student population. The programme has clear eligibility guidelines regarding the academic attainment and behavioural attributes of potential participants in addition to targets relating to equal opportunities and gender.

The Young Apprenticeship Programme must be open to all pupils regardless of social background, gender, physical need or ethnic origin. Partnerships should develop strategies that: target groups that are socially disadvantaged; counter gender stereotyping by encouraging boys and girls to follow courses of study that depart from traditional patterns and that target ethnic minorities, SEN and disabled pupils by using suitable role models and removing barriers to entry. (LSC, 2008: 4)

The guidelines also refer to an investigation by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC, 1999) which identified perceived barriers to pupils at Key Stage 4 who were considering studies in particular occupational areas such as girls into engineering and boys into health and social care.

In relation to post-16 Apprenticeships, the proportion of female students shows that intakes remain heavily skewed towards stereotypically gendered expectations (DfES, 2007). Figures from the DfES show that in 2007, 61% of those completing an Advanced Apprenticeship were male. When broken down by sector in the academic year 2008-9 the Construction and Electro-technical apprenticeships contained only 1% female starts, with Engineering at 3%. Hairdressing and Health & Social Care were made up of 92% female starts and Childcare 97%. One of few sectors demonstrating a more even gender split was Retail with a 69% female start (TUC & YWCA, 2010).

Ofsted (2005: 10) expressed concern that the same issues have been allowed to gain a hold right from the start of the YA programme. Where lessons may have been learned from the experiences of the Modern Apprenticeship scheme, they state that the same divisions have become established in the YA programme as well. Weaknesses identified included that some sectors were dominated by gender and were not representative of the ethnic diversity of the schools involved.

In response, Newton, Miller, Page and Tuohy (2007) recommend greater emphasis on equal opportunities within the Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) provided by schools and training providers. Taster sessions for the young people as part of the IAG process were believed to be particularly successful in raising awareness of alternative subject choices. The LSC stated as such in their guidelines to YA providers.

YA Delivery Partnerships should encourage non-stereotypical choices by young people. Evidence has shown that taster sessions are already an established part of selection process in some areas and all YA Delivery Partnerships are encouraged to build on this good practice (LSC; 2008: 5).

Investigating the reasons behind subject choices and gender divisions, Beck, Fuller and Unwin (2006) conducted research funded by the EOC on the apparent resistance to crossing traditional gender boundaries shown by young people's choices of apprenticeship subjects. The study was located within a conceptual

framework of ‘risk’ and its impact on young peoples decision making and career choices, with ‘risk’ being seen as a useful concept with which to identify the factors influencing career decisions. The route considered least risky by the young people was to stay in education, enabling the delay of any significant decision making about jobs and careers. Risk factors increased considerably if the choice was made to follow a non-traditional (for either males or females) vocational area through apprenticeship. Exposing young people to males and females in non-traditional jobs and work experience were highlighted as methods of mitigating perceived risk and thereby encouraging more young people into non-traditional occupations.

The central aim of IAG within schools should be to ensure that learners are on the right courses where they are likely to engage and reach their potential and importantly, where they can move on to chosen destinations (Nuffield Review, 2008). The Nuffield Review suggests that there are clashes within the education system due to a lack of impartiality on the part of providers who have a vested interest in learners doing certain courses in order to satisfy budgetary, timetabling, staffing and development plan requirements and targets. ‘They have both a guidance function and a marketing function.’ (Nuffield Review, 2008: 7). Teachers, often a key source of IAG, struggle to keep ahead of all the different courses on offer and who they are aimed at, thereby unwittingly advising students onto the wrong courses for the wrong reasons (Wright, 2005).

One of the aims of the YA programme is for students, on completion, to be able to access the full range of available courses post-16, whether that be onto a post-16 Apprenticeship or onto A-Level and Level 3 courses of study. Within the commissioning process, potential and existing providers are required to state how they ‘demonstrate evidence of post-16 progression’ (LSC, 2008: 6) for each cohort. Marson-Smith, Golden and McCrone state that

Evidence from the YA programme suggests that young people who have studied on these programmes progress onto a variety of routes at Post-16 level. (2009: 8)

Had the programme continued to be operational, this would have become increasingly significant in forthcoming years due to the raising of the compulsory participation age to 17 by 2013 and 18 by 2015. The majority of the young people participating in the first cohort of the YA programme felt that their participation had positively influenced their choice of post-16 participation, in particular by increasing their awareness of opportunities that were available to them after Year 11 (Marson-Smith, Golden & McCrone, 2009).

In researching progression from post-16 Apprenticeships, Fuller (2004), found that the variability in the currency of apprenticeship - related qualifications carried consequences for progression to HE institutions (Fuller, 2004). This relates directly to the qualifications gained through participation in the YA programme, particularly following the significant reduction of the GCSE equivalency values of qualifications such as the Level 2 BTEC Certificate/Diploma following the recommendations made in the Wolf Report.

Whilst it would appear that there is much support and impetus for apprentices to progress, apprenticeship is not regarded as preparation for entry to HE and few apprentices or their employers look at apprenticeship as a stepping stone to university level study. (Shaw & McAndrew, 2008: 135)

In attempting to combat this perception and improve the links between apprenticeship and university qualifications, the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) announced in February 2012 that they would be working in partnership with the Baker Dearing Education Trust (BDT) to deliver apprenticeships for students from the age of 14 onwards in University Technical Colleges.

Through the programme, there will be the opportunity for the students to progress to a Higher Apprenticeship or go onto University. Making these choices available to young people is a vital demonstration that Apprenticeships provide a great lift-off for the working lives of talented people and for making businesses more productive. (David Way, NAS, 2012)

Ryan, Gospel and Lewis (2006) reported the need to address more fundamental barriers in the perceptions of post-16 apprentices, their employers and their families in believing that HE was attainable, appropriate and worthwhile. Many of the apprentices in their research were from family backgrounds with little culture of progressing beyond the completion of training required to find employment, a factor which has been shown to create artificial barriers to progression.

Whilst research relating to the YA programme is yet to focus on the experiences of the students once actively participating, there is some evidence of research relating to students' experiences of previous vocational programmes. Flood and Denton (1986: 14) for example, examined how a residential experience conducted as part of the TVEI curriculum provided the opportunity for the students to develop the inter-personal skills that were difficult to achieve during the 'school bell driven' everyday timetable. As the students began to 'live' the simulation experience, they began to 'gel' quickly as a team, developed a sense of responsibility for themselves and each other and recognised the need for positive attitudes.

Hazlewood, Fitz-Gibbon and McCabe (1991) conducted an evaluative study of student perceptions of the TVEI experience, concluding that the TVEI students experienced a more student-centred approach with greater emphasis on group work, discussion, choice and off-site activities. Correspondingly, they perceived less of a traditional, didactic approach in their teaching. Unfortunately for the outcomes of TVEI, the performance indicators examined in the same study demonstrated that the TVEI students completed fewer qualifications overall and achieved lower grades.

The following section of this chapter examines more closely research relating to the pedagogical approaches and processes of delivery of the YA programme.

Processes and Pedagogy

Much of the research to date has focused on the practicalities of how the YA programme has been delivered rather than why certain approaches might be considered as best practice. Ofsted was commissioned by the DfES to inspect

schools between 2004 and 2007 to establish how well the YA programme was being introduced. In an interim report, published in November 2005, Ofsted found that while the 'YA has made a good start and the teachers, staff and students involved are overwhelmingly positive' (2005: 4) there are practical difficulties within partnerships stemming from poor communication and liaison. Some partnerships do not meet the academic achievement criteria during their selection process and some fail to meet the 50 day work experience requirement. Where there is less collaborative planning within the partnership, schools have struggled to meet the allocated time criteria without adversely affecting the remainder of the students' curriculum. In summary, substantial variation was experienced between partnerships, making the process of quality assurance difficult. The same issues were previously highlighted within the Modern Apprenticeship scheme, Fuller and Unwin (2003: 41) concluding that 'not everyone is going to have the same quality of apprenticeship', the variation due to a similar factors related to communication, planning and employer engagement.

When the IF programme began in 2002 followed by the YA in 2004, students as young as 14 began taking courses in local FE colleges and training providers. This raised a number of issues for those providing the teaching (Huddleston & Unwin, 2007). College lecturers with no experience of working with students under the age of 16 were faced with the different teaching, organisational and behaviour management styles more associated with the younger students. The transition brought a 'different cohort of young people into colleges with very different learning needs' (Huddleston & Unwin, 2007: 153) and was not without difficulty. Davies and Biesta (2007) found divisions amongst the staff in FE colleges in the willingness of lecturers to be involved with the courses. This stemmed from a variety of factors, including the course content, the age of the students and corresponding likelihood of behaviour management issues. The increasing presence of the younger age group was also seen to impact on the college as a whole in terms of the expansion of inspection and quality assurance processes (Huddleston & Unwin, 2007).

From the perspective of the students, Davies and Biesta (2007) argue that they can highly value the experiences offered by the FE colleges, but the extent to which they actually benefit from the opportunity depends crucially upon the way in which the process is managed. This includes the need for the learning experience to be different from the normal school experience, in terms of what is learned and how and where the learning occurs. This is supported by the work of Lumby (2007: 3) who proposes that the enrolment of learners of compulsory school age at a FE college is driven by the belief that their experience will be in some way different from that at school, and potentially more successful in terms of supporting attainment and progression.

The success of young people in FE is due to a pedagogy that uses experiential and social forms of learning in an environment that allows students to connect more fully to a future adult world. (Lumby, 2007: 2)

From the perspective of the students, the most commonly expressed positive aspect of the learning experience at the FE college was a different kind of relationship with teaching staff. Harkin (2005) found that students value relationships with teachers that are based on mutual respect in an emotionally and socially positive learning environment which is containing rather than restricting. The positive aspects of the experience were highlighted as a sense of increased trust, a degree of freedom in making choices, the tone and volume of classroom communication, humour, smaller groups, more individual attention and the use of specialist equipment (Harkin, 2005).

Attending a Further Education college had provided an alternative that was liberating and that reinvigorated their learning at college, and in some cases, at school. (Lumby, 2007: 4)

In looking to the future, Lumby (2007) concludes that young people will only continue to gain from the experiences of being in a FE college if their presence remains a relative minority to those over the age of 16 otherwise maintaining the existing environment and culture becomes difficult.

A key feature of the YA is the inclusion of 50 days (300 hours) of work experience relevant to the sector to be undertaken over the two year programme. The commissioning process asks providers to detail how they will be providing both 'relevant' and 'quality' work experience for the students (LSC, 2008: 16). It is the subject of much legislative documentation and presents perhaps the most challenging aspect of the programme for many providers. In 1995, the DfEE described work experience as

A placement on employers premises in which the pupil carries out a particular task, or duty, or a range of duties, more or less as would an employee, but with the emphasis on the learning aspects of the experience. (DfEE, 1995: 5)

Similarly, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 1998) placed emphasis upon the need for young people to engage in tasks and activities that are authentic and relate to the role of a young worker rather than that of an observer, as in work shadowing. In an evaluative report from Cohort 5 of the YA programme, SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for the Sports Management, Leadership and Coaching YA reported that 100% of employers involved in the Sport YA programme rated their Young Apprentices as Satisfactory or Very Satisfactory (2010: 3). Similarly, 91% of employers involved in the Engineering YA programme rated their Young Apprentices as Satisfactory (Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies Alliance (SEMTA), 2007: 3).

Unlike countries such as Germany and Switzerland, the UK does not have a strong sense of a 'social partnership' between employers, the government and the education system and is therefore reliant on volunteer employers. Brockmann, Clarke and Winch (2010: 122), in work relating to the post-16 sector, claim that a new framework needs to be developed, in which social partnerships such as in Germany are not considered an optional extra for the apprenticeship scheme, but a precondition of success. Through the combined role of the SSC's and the training providers, employers play a particularly passive role. The homogenous nature of the term 'employers' is not deemed helpful within literature as it suggests that any interaction and provision for work placements can be established in exactly the

same way regardless of the nature of the work environment (Fuller & Unwin, 2007; Huddleston, 2011).

Employers are not a homogenous group; any pronouncements allegedly representing the views of employers need to be considered within the context of the sector of employment, the size of the organisation and its product market. (Huddleston, 2011: 29)

Hodgson and Spours (2008) conclude that the quality of experience is therefore variable across sectors and traditions with the public sector a particularly poor performer compared to those with strong apprenticeship traditions such as engineering (Hodgson & Spours, 2008).

The quality of workplace learning is also significantly affected by institutional arrangements and features. Fuller and Unwin (2003a) draw a distinction between 'restrictive' and 'expansive' work-based learning environments. Prolonged study of workplaces and their key characteristics has allowed them to place approaches to apprenticeship along a continuum between those deemed 'expansive' and those deemed 'restrictive'. Expansive apprenticeships afford the apprentice opportunities to participate in multiple communities of practice, give access to learning through different tasks, knowledge and locations, such as off the job learning at a local FE college, recognise and support the existence of the apprentice and allow time for reflection. In contrast, restrictive workplaces are driven by hierarchies, group affiliations, personal relationships and cultural practices, all of which can restrict the opportunities for the apprentice to learn.

Our research has indicated that unless the Modern Apprenticeship can have a more expansive impact on the quality of apprentices' participation and opportunities for personal development, then the programme will continue to add little value to the lived realities of the work-based route for many young people. (Fuller & Unwin, 2003a: 411)

It is also acknowledged that the constraints under which many apprenticeship programmes operate determine the extent to which the programme can become more expansive, even if the desire to do so was expressed by training providers

and employers. This chapter continues by examining the relationship between academic and vocational programmes of study.

The perception of vocational education being of lower status than traditional academic subjects has never been fully shaken off, a problem further compounded by a stream of government initiatives confusing both employers and the general public (Lumby & Foskett, 2005). The comparison between vocational and academic educational routes will continue to exist until like is compared with like in league tables and other 'ever more complex' systems by which schools are compared (Kelly, 2012). The White Paper published in 2010 set out the ongoing commitment to raising the profile of vocational education, as many governments have done before.

Vocational education has been the poor relation, its inherent value ignored, and its content made pseudo-academic, rather than developing the different but equally rich cognitive skills associated with practical and technical education. (DfES, 2010: 48)

Figures state that in 2004 around 15,000 vocational, or vocationally related, qualifications were taken in schools. By 2010 this had risen to around 575,000, a 3,800% increase (DfES, 2010: 48). There are few documents on education and training that do not point to the difference in the perceived quality and value of these qualifications as problematic in terms of the status issues it creates (Lumby & Foskett, 2005).

The problems of vocational education have to be seen in its negative relationship with the dominant academic track. This will be exacerbated with the raising of the participation age to 18 as disaffected and lower attaining learners are decanted away from the selective general education track towards alternative provision. (Hodgson & Spours 2003: 95)

The problem with being separated into pathways also results in the 'inhibition of innovative combinations' where theoretical and applied skills are linked. (Lumby & Foskett, 2005: 63).

Winch (2003), in considering the philosophical dimensions of what he terms pre-vocational education (taking place between the ages of 14 and 16), believes that to start preparing someone for a specific job from the age of 14 is to run the risk of pre-empting career choices later in the education process. He argues that the overall role of vocational education at age 14 is

To prepare young people to enter the world of work and to understand what this involves without preparing them for specific jobs. (Winch, 2003: 7)

Based on the assumption that by this age some young people have formed ideas about the broad trajectory of their future lives and where they consider their interests and abilities lie, the 14-16 curriculum should give them extended opportunities to expand their experience of practical activities connected with certain well-established industries and occupations (Winch, 2003: 9).

Pring (2007: 131) highlights that a fundamental difference between the UK and some other European countries is the lack of general education in vocational programmes in the UK. He describes the situation as an 'impoverished dichotomy' between academic and vocational study. In the Scandinavian countries, apprentices are expected to continue to study a variety of subjects including their native and a foreign language alongside their apprenticeship studies (Pring, 2009).

Pring (2007) sets out a series of guiding principles upon which he believes that vocational curricular should be based. These include; relevance to vocational need; a central place for guidance and counselling, with the help of work experience; greater focus on the process of learning and practical learning; emphasis upon personal effectiveness including personal confidence, skills to communicate to different audiences and the interpersonal skills needed for purposeful interaction with others; greater community consciousness related to the wider society; emphasis upon equal opportunities and a clear system of assessment, recording what has been achieved in all its breadth and depth. Consideration will be given during this study as to whether the YA programme fulfils these principles.

The final section of this chapter examines research relating to the learning that takes place within vocational education programmes.

Learning in Vocational Education

In conducting research relating to young peoples' experiences of an educational programme of study, the issue of learning is one that cannot be overlooked.

Research relating to learning in vocational education has taken a variety of forms and approaches, considering aspects of identity formation, transfer of learning and learning within communities of practice. One unifying feature emerging from the research lies in the acknowledgement of the difficulties encountered with assessing and evaluating learning without a measurable set of criteria from which to work.

The learning taking place within many vocational education contexts does not always have that luxury.

Hager (1998: 529) believes that the increase in the amount of vocational education taking place within school curricula warrants renewed interest in informal workplace learning, which he describes as the attainment of know-how related to a particular job or trade. One of the problems that he acknowledges is that the know-how gained by informal workplace learning is not strictly equivalent to any course content and therefore hard to assess. It is also highly contextual, requiring an 'increased capacity to make appropriate judgements in the changing and often unique circumstances that occur in many workplaces'. Assessing learning within the work experience aspect of the YA programme, where specific assessment criteria are lacking, will reflect these findings.

If learning in vocational education is conceived as learning about a job and developing an occupational identity, Vickerstaff (2007: 342) explains that it must also consider the wider aspects of the world of work and membership of a specific work culture. Wortham (2006) describes identity as the way that individuals behave in certain circumstances and the way that this is interpreted by others. In understanding the characteristics of identity, the context within which they are being displayed is vital as it can affect the way in which the behaviour is

interpreted. For young people participating in YA programmes, this could include behaviours that they exhibit whilst in the classroom environment at their home school, whilst attending the FE College or within employers' premises while on work placement. Brockmann (2010) advocates the use of a biographical approach in studying identity formation with young people as it affords recognition of the interrelation between social contexts and individual action, rather than a focus on structural factors.

Accomplishing transfer of learning and crossing organisational boundaries is recognised as a complex and challenging process by Engeström and Middleton (1996), one which requires individuals to engage in a process of reflexive learning as they learn to transform learning into practice in different contexts. For Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström (2008), transfer means the capacity to transfer knowledge and learning gained in an educational context to a workplace context. The concept of transfer is problematic in that it is assumed that students will automatically be able to apply their theoretical knowledge in the workplace. For the YA students, this has the added complexity of several different contexts within which they might be operating. In reality, crossing the boundary and successfully transferring knowledge between school and work is recognised as being difficult to achieve. Säljö (2008) in the conclusion to Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeströms work, states that

To learn is to appropriate powerful intellectual and physical tasks, and to realise how they can be put to productive use in a range of continuously changing practices. (Säljö, 2008: 320)

With this in mind, Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström confirm that researchers need to maintain a critical perspective about learning processes and not become too ideological in their outlook.

Situated learning theory, as developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) provides a rich conceptual framework for analysing the processes by which apprentices become full participants in a community of practice (Fuller & Unwin, 2003: 407) and offers

the greatest potential for the analysis of learning within the present study of the YA programme. The community of practice referred to is defined as,

A set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation to other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 98)

Lave (1997) conceives learning as a social process, based on participation with others in 'ongoing social practice' (1997: 149). This is supported by the work of Guile and Young (1998) who argue for a more reflexive learning approach taking into account the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) on communities of practice, recognising that individuals can learn through participation. Lave and Wenger (1991: 34) urge that this participation must be what they refer to as 'legitimate peripheral participation' in order for it be considered effective in moving individuals closer towards membership of a particular community of practice. This is defined as 'engagement in social practice that entails learning as an integral constituent', more than merely learning by doing.

Hughes, Jewson and Unwin (2007) claim that these concepts of 'situated learning', 'communities of practice' and 'legitimate peripheral participation' have collectively

Transformed the assumptions and metaphors guiding the study of learning, opened up new areas of empirical research and investigation, reinvigorated existing fields of enquiry and facilitated interdisciplinary exchanges of knowledge and expertise. (2007: 1)

Whilst acknowledging the significance of the shift in the way that learning is studied within the social sciences as a result of the work of Lave and Wenger, Hughes, Jewson and Unwin (2007) offer a range of critical perspectives for consideration by researchers utilising the concepts within empirical research. Lave and Wenger themselves describe the concept of a community of practice as a 'largely intuitive notion' (1991: 42). The problem for researchers lies in setting measurable and definable boundaries for the community of practice under consideration and how to conceptualise the learning that has taken place within that particular situation.

Further perspectives offered by Hughes, Jewson and Unwin (2007) include the notion that communities of practice are not static social situations but always in a state of flux, a concern over the oversimplification of the relationship between novices and knowledgeable practitioners and the inability to recognise the implications of multiple settings and networks of relationships (Hughes, Jewson & Unwin, 2007: 5). These are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

In reviewing the literature for the YA programme, the following themes have been discussed; the emergence and development of the YA programme within its educational and political landscape, the experiences of participating in vocational education, the processes and pedagogy involved in the delivery of vocational education and how learning is studied and conceived within vocational education. Each of the themes is reflective of the literature that exists in relation to the YA programme and vocational education overall and highlights where there are gaps in the existing literature that this study aims to make a contribution towards. This is particularly so in relation to the experiential, 'lived' aspect of the YA programme where there is currently no existing research. The following chapter presents the methodology for the research processes employed during this project.

1. Students' final YA qualifications are made up of a compulsory Level 2 sector specific qualification and then a selection of other sector specific or National Governing Body awards. This selection is determined by and at the discretion of the programme co-ordinators and the resources to which they have access. The qualifications followed by the Sport YA students at Oak View School for example, are as follows:

<i>Award Title</i>	<i>Awarding Body</i>
GCSE PE	AQA
BTEC Level2 Diploma in Sport	Edexcel
Level 2 Fitness Instructors Award	CYQ (Central YMCA Qualifications)
Level 1 & 2 Sports Leaders Awards	Sports Leaders UK
Level 1 Paddle Sport Award	BCU (British Cane Union)
Junior Football Organisers Award	FA (Football Association)
Tennis Leaders Award	LTA (Lawn Tennis Association)

Chapter Three – Researching Young Apprentices

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the research methods used in this study. In outlining the focus of the research, the rationale and philosophy behind the methodology will be revealed and explained. Decisions made regarding the choice of data collection methods will be analysed and the reality of the research process will be explained. Analytical decisions and methods will be discussed towards the end of the chapter. Bridges and Smith (2007: 1) argue that ‘researchers cannot evade the responsibility for critically examining and justifying the philosophical ideas that their enquiries incorporate’. Philosophy is necessary to clarify values and principles and especially to provide a framework to structure ideas of knowledge, truth and objectivity. This chapter seeks to make explicit the values and ideals upon which the current study rests.

Research and Research Design

At the start of any research process, a decision has to be made about a problem, issue or experience to be studied and why it is worthy of research. As outlined in the introduction to this study, my own background and involvement in the Young Apprenticeship programme as a practising teacher and YA provider sparked my initial interest in both the programme itself and the students enrolled on it.

Examination of the literature has highlighted a significant gap in relation to investigation of the students involved and their experiences of a programme of study that takes up a significant proportion of their curriculum time and exposes them to different learning experiences to the majority of their peers.

The research questions posed at the beginning of this study were as follows: How are the practices of the Young Apprenticeship programme experienced by the students and adults involved in it? How does this experience differ based on the institutional context? Why could it be considered to be a ‘lived experience’ for the students?

This chapter seeks to outline how the research design enables each of these questions to be answered from the evidence gathered during the data collection.

Research and its constituent parts have been variously described and defined by researchers (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001; Robson, 2002; Creswell, 2003). Borg (1963: 5) stated that research is ‘a combination of both experience and reasoning and must be regarded as the most successful approach to the discovery of the truth’. It is on the basis of personal experience within the research setting and considered discussion about which methods are the most successful in that setting that this study seeks to answer the research questions above.

Kerlinger (1986: 279) describes a research design as ‘a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems’. This should be governed by the notion ‘fit for purpose’ in that the purposes of the research should determine the methodology and design of the research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001: 73). The research process typically goes through five distinct phases, formative, design, operational, analytical and evaluative. As will become evident through the description of the research processes involved in this study, these phases often overlap and are at times revisited throughout the process of the research, not necessarily following a linear pattern. In addition, research may not unfold ‘according to the plan’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001: 90). This provides reassurances to the novice researcher that the process may evolve during the fieldwork as changing situations are encountered, allowing for a responsive approach rather than a prescriptive one.

Research approaches have multiplied to a point at which investigators or inquirers have many choices, bewildering to the inexperienced. This development has resulted in less of a quantitative versus qualitative dichotomy as was the traditional dilemma facing researchers. An increasing proportion of modern educational and sociological research is situated somewhere along a continuum between the two, with a tendency towards one or the other (Plowright, 2011). The development of

mixed methods research practices has been such that a new journal, the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* was launched in 2007, challenging the notion that different approaches to conceptualising and undertaking research cannot be used together and that research can be constructed around ‘frameworks’ rather than distinctions between one form or another (Plowright, 2011). With these arguments in mind, the present study adopts a predominantly qualitative, interpretive approach to seeking answers to the research questions. Whilst it could be considered as case study research, there are justifications for not declaring it as such. Firstly, the sample is too restricted to be considered a realistic case study of the YA programme overall, as it is not reflective of the diverse nature of the programme as it is delivered across the country. Secondly, the focus of the research questions is too broad for a detailed comparison of each of the programmes under consideration, further investigation into the specific contextual details of each institution would have been necessary in order to fulfil this role. Ultimately, the methods chosen reflect those deemed most appropriate in answering the research questions.

The intent of qualitative research is to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group or interaction. It is largely an investigative process where the researcher gradually makes sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing and classifying the object of study (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Qualitative research occurs in natural settings, where the researcher is the primary instrument in data collection. The data are descriptive and the focus is on participants’ perceptions and experiences. Qualitative research is often grounded in an interpretivist epistemology, the branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge, including the validity of our assumed knowledge. Emphasis is placed upon the meanings of social action and the priority lies in seeing the world through the eyes of those being researched (Bryman, 1988). This is particularly relevant to the focus of this research as my investigation of the ‘lived experience’ of the YA programme attempts to make sense of the young peoples’ experiences through their interpretations rather than my own as researcher.

Interpretive researchers argue that data collection is a social activity, with the researcher in the field confronted by a series of methodological dilemmas, the solutions to which determine the data that are collected. Those fieldwork dilemmas involve researchers in making decisions about how they should conduct themselves, and are therefore concerned with the rights and responsibilities of both researcher and researched.

The way researchers choose to manage the data which they collect, and interact with the participants in the research project who provide them with that data, determines the epistemological status of the research. (Scott & Usher, 1996: 68)

Rather than starting with a theory, inquirers generate or 'inductively develop' a theory or pattern of meaning (Creswell, 2003: 8-9). Fielding and Fielding (1986) believe that achieving this involves moving beyond selecting data simply to fit a preconceived or ideal perception of the phenomenon or because they are spectacularly interesting. Data selected must be representative of the sample, the whole set, if they are to address validity.

Maxwell (1992) argues for five kinds of validity in qualitative research, which it will be the aim of the current study to uphold. Firstly, *descriptive validity*, through the actual and factual accuracy of the account without distortion; *interpretive validity*, being able to capture the meanings and interpretations that the participants intended for themselves, rather than as the researcher interprets them; *theoretical validity*, recognising the extent to which the research explains phenomena; *generalisability*, that the theory generated might be useful in understanding similar situations and finally; *evaluative validity*, in acknowledging that the researchers own evaluative agenda will influence any judgemental application of the research.

For research to be reliable, it must demonstrate that if it were carried out on a similar group of respondents in a similar context, then similar results would be found. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) argue that such replication might include; the status position of the researcher, the choice of respondents, the contextual

situation and the methods of data collection and analysis. Kvale (1996) stresses that this is not to strive for uniformity though, as doing so would negate the inherent value of qualitative research. In interviewing, Kvale suggests that there might be as many different interpretations of the qualitative data as there are researchers. It is inevitable that, because interviews are interpersonal, the interviewer will have some influence on the interviewee and thereby, on the data. In other words, interviewer neutrality is a 'chimera' (Denscombe, 1995: 146). The research that has taken place here will be presented in as honest and open manner as is possible, taking all reasonable precautions. Where interpretations are made, it will be acknowledged that they are made from my own perspective as both researcher and practitioner, and all that that entails.

This study utilises different methods of data collection to suit differing needs and situations. Semi-structured interviews form the bulk of the process and are supplemented by document analysis and the use of observational field-notes made throughout the data collection period. The data collection also has a longitudinal aspect in which the participants are interviewed more than once over the duration of the research. Each of these methods has a long history with its own advocates and critics. This chapter does not seek to present or do justice to this history, but to rationalise why they were chosen as the most appropriate methods for the project being undertaken.

Research Processes

The methods chosen for the present study are influenced by my own skills, the resources available to me and the sample population. Pring (2004: 33) believes that 'one notable feature of educational research is the variety in it. Different approaches are used to answer different questions' and there is a need to be fluid in order to adapt to situations in a state of flux.

Semi-structured interviews allow for comparisons to be made between participants by exploring similar themes. They also afford the researcher the opportunity to explore unanticipated themes and connections as they arise (Heath et al, 2009).

The advantages of semi-structured interviews are that they enable the objects of the research, the individuals involved, to ‘speak for themselves’, attaching significance to actions and activities that would not be attainable through questionnaire answers. Without the rigidity of a structured sequence of questioning, there is the opportunity for the researcher to draw out the deeper significance of the event (Pring, 2004: 39). The process of interviewing is not without limitations. Despite references to interviews as ‘conversations with a purpose’ (Burgess, 1984: 102), interview data are undeniably the products of a very ‘specific and manufactured interaction’. Indeed, the mere presence of the interviewee is likely to elicit different responses and possibly alternative interpretations of events and experiences (Heath et al, 2009: 88; Creswell, 2003). For the purposes of this study, these arguments strongly support the use of semi-structured interviews in answering the research questions.

Longitudinal research designs involve repeated measures for the same group on an extended series of occasions, examining effects over time. In principle, they are very attractive but can be difficult and complex to run with problems related to sample attrition in particular (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Robson, 2002). Drake and Heath (2011: 97), point to longitudinal research with young people as a ‘powerful tool for shedding light’ on the process of identity formation. Repeat interviews allow for an ‘engagement with change’ as it unfolds over time and allows research participants to reflect back on what they might have said in a previous interview. The collection of longitudinal data within the present study was an important process in being able to examine the experiences of the YA’s across the two year programme, capturing aspects of change.

Document analysis, the examination of any documents pertinent to the study, has the advantage of being an unobtrusive and non-reactive, in that it is not affected by the researcher, form of data collection, readily available for use at any time (Robson, 2002). As a supplementary form of data collection, it enables the researcher to gain contextual information, possibly of a social, cultural or political nature (Robson, 2002). In my research, the documents examined included

minutes of National SSC meetings, minutes of YA steering group meetings and a termly YA newsletter published by the LA within which three of the four providers were situated. Creswell (2003) acknowledges the limitations of using documentation to include inaccuracies, a lack of objectivity, incomplete or out of date.

Researching Youth

The attitudes and experiences of young people are constantly picked over and subjected to close scrutiny by social researchers, with regular pronouncements made about the state of the nation and its prospects for the years ahead (Heath et al, 2009). The results have even been likened to that of a ‘social barometer’ (Jones & Wallace, 1992: 5). In keeping with the practices of the literature referred to throughout the present study, the terms ‘*youth*’ and ‘*young people*’ will be used interchangeably.

Many researchers who chose to work in the area of youth studies do so out of a sense of commitment to challenging the ways young peoples’ lives are represented, perhaps with an intention to making an improvement (Heath et al, 2009: 13). The increase in youth based research has resulted in a corresponding increase in the methods used, broadening and strengthening the rationale for different approaches. Most methodological issues are the same as with any other group within society, although Heath et al (2009) indicate that there are specific issues relating to youth as a research population. In particular, that their lives are structured by a range of age-specific contexts and institutions, such as schools, colleges, clubs and youth groups. Heath et al (2009: 6) conclude that ‘the simple fact of possessing a certain biological age brings with it differential access to social power’ and this must be acknowledged by those who choose to study them.

Young people spend the vast majority of their time in the company of other young people in socially interactive situations. Eder and Fingerson (2003: 35) argue that young people ‘acquire social knowledge through interaction with others as they construct meanings through a shared process’ and as such, any research process

involving young people must acknowledge and consider the social and cultural context within which their lives are taking place.

Qualitative interviewing is the method most often used within research involving young people. It is deemed young person friendly, allowing them to talk about their lives on their terms. ‘Interviewing has a certain iconic status in contemporary society’ (Heath et al, 2009: 79). It is witnessed in the media in many forms; magazines, radio, TV, internet and as such is a social encounter with which young people are particularly familiar.

In studies of youth, it is especially important for interviewers to emphasise non-directed, open and inclusive questions. Children will then have more opportunity to bring in topics and modes of discourse that are familiar to them (Eder & Fingerson, 2003: 36).

It is from this standpoint that Eder and Fingerson (2003) argue for the use of group interviewing strategies when researching young people. Indeed, they go so far as to suggest that group interviewing should be the default option when interviewing young people. Their rationale includes a reduction in the power and influence of the interviewer and consequently a less threatening environment in which to be interviewed. Conversely, Creswell (2003) argues that there will be situations where individuals talk less about themselves in front of other people and that key details may never be revealed. This will vary depending on the area of the research topic, becoming more evident when the questions are of a more personal nature.

Allied to the use of interviewing as a method of data collection is the need to consider the location in which the interviews are conducted. Physical space is rarely neutral, but instead has the potential to confer advantage on one or other party. Youth researchers often do not have the luxury of choice, particularly if the interview is being conducted through an institutional setting, generally being allocated a spare classroom (Heath et al, 2009: 93). Meeting with young people in a neutral place as would generally be the case with an adult research population

requires considerable planning and a further level of parental consent. As a researcher, I would argue that it is not necessarily limiting to have the balance of power shifted in favour of the young people in order to maintain their comfort, familiarity and safety levels.

Youth researchers need to attend to the temptation to prioritise the collection of data over ethical considerations. Not all research data is 'fair game', regardless of the originality of the insights or the brilliance of the methods of data collection (Robson 2002: 65).

Ethical decisions arise when we try to decide between one course of action and another not in terms of expediency or efficiency but by reference to standards of what is morally right or wrong. (Barnes, 1979: 16)

In drawing a distinction between ethics and morals Robson (2002: 66) also stresses that maintaining a balance between the researchers 'right to know' and 'make known' against the participants' right to privacy, dignity and respect is vital. In other words, publishing what might be considered important data at the expense of the privacy or dignity of a participant is the balance that researchers must get right. One of the key ethical decisions and actions to be taken by researchers involving young people as their participants is that of informed consent. According to the British Sociological Association, informed consent is

A responsibility on the sociologist to explain as fully as possible, and in terms meaningful to the participants, what the research is about, who is undertaking and financing it, why it is being undertaken and how it is to be disseminated. (BSA, 2002: 3)

Informed consent should be negotiated as part of an ongoing process as no researcher can ever fully predict the path that the research process might take, or the outcomes of the research. Young people should be reminded frequently of their option to opt out at any point or to veto the inclusion of any data relating to themselves. The issue of informed consent can also become a legal consideration

where children under the age of 16 are involved and the BSA suggests that gaining parental consent in these instances is ‘highly advisable’.

It is not unusual for gatekeepers of youth-oriented institutional settings to insist upon parental consent before allowing minors to participate in a research project (Creswell, 2003). Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks may also be required by some institutions before access to children can be granted. Schools are not expected to permit Ofsted inspectors onto their property without evidence of identity and CRB checking therefore it can be safely assumed that researchers will require the same. Gaining access to young people for the purposes of research is also dependent upon the goodwill of institutional gatekeepers. These people are charged with the responsibility for making decisions on behalf of the young people in their care, including whether or not to grant access to researchers. Whilst this is rightly designed to protect those in their care, Alderson (2004) argues that at times it may also serve to silence or exclude them.

The terms anonymity and confidentiality are important to consider in relation to the ethics of a research proposal. Researchers working with young people must be seen to be taking the time to ensure that the participants understand the difference between the two and be regularly reminded of what that means in reality for the data that they provide (Heath et al, 2009). Anonymity refers to the protection of the specific identities of individuals involved in the research process, ‘information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 61). This can be guaranteed in instances such as a respondent completing a questionnaire that bears no identifying features such as names or addresses but not within face to face interview situations. Confidentiality refers to promises not to pass on to others specific details known by the researcher pertaining to other peoples lives. Care must be taken that when this has been promised the specifics of an individuals’ life do not render them easily identifiable within the written text of the research report.

The use of incentives as a method by which to encourage participation in research projects with young people is an issue of contention. McDowell (2001: 95) states that ‘I strongly believe it is important to recompense the individuals who are prepared to answer what must often seem like intrusive questions from social scientists’. The appropriateness of the reward must be carefully considered and guidance should be sought from the gatekeepers of educational establishments if there is an intention to do so. Heath et al (2009) distinguish between offering an up-front incentive to participate and a token reward given post-participation, thus becoming a ‘thank you’ rather than a ‘please’.

In considering the shift in approach towards the involvement of young people in research projects, Davies (2011) concludes that

A new respect for children is evident, one that recognises the value of collaborating with children and youth as research participants, that is, as research subjects rather than research objects, as people who have views that are directly relevant to our enquiries about the understandings and practices that inform their lives. (Davies, 2011: 146)

The principle expressed by Davies is one which is supported in this research project.

Practitioner/Insider Research

Robson (2002: xv) states that ‘research’ is a term that tends to put people off, viewed as some ‘esoteric enterprise’ done by outside experts. An insider or practitioner researcher (the terms are used interchangeably) may be described as an individual who possesses intimate knowledge of the community and its members (Hellawell, 2006: 483). Educational research is characterised by a diversity of purpose, closely related to the questions that it asks and the complexity of the contexts within which it operates. Given this level of complexity, it is difficult to see how the ‘outside’ researcher, from brief acquaintance, can understand it (Pring, 2004: 123).

Advantages of insider or practitioner research lie within collegial connections, in depth contextual knowledge of the organisation, and significantly improved access to information, people and institutions. Practitioner researchers recognise that their access to a research setting is privileged, enabling them to access participants in a way that outside researchers may not. Naturally, this comes with challenges.

There is the potential for the researcher to lose the broader perspective, to lack neutrality and to be influenced by dominant ideology. Relationships with colleagues and students are put at risk and identity as a researcher needs to be carefully considered (Drake & Heath, 2011). The critical position that must be adopted by the practitioner researcher (Drake & Heath, 2011) is complex, requiring the researcher to maintain a fluid and flexible stance with respect to each contextual situation, behaving sometimes as a professional, sometimes as a researcher and 'at all times an author who is making meaning out of their interactions and presenting them to an external audience' (Drake & Heath, 2011: 2). My own position within the present study reflects this concept as my role changes from being an interviewer of students, an interviewer of key stakeholders within the programme, an active participant in meetings regarding the delivery of the programme and an active provider myself.

The biographies of practitioner/insider researchers are influential on the way in which they form their identity as researcher and on the way in which identities are interpreted (Robb, 2007). In this way, there is a degree of scepticism regarding the level of critical distance that can be maintained by insider researchers. The idea that it is impossible to achieve an appropriate degree of critical distance is refuted by Drake and Heath (2011). They argue that engaging in critical reflexivity during the research and writing process does allow an appropriate level of distance to be maintained.

An insider researcher must defend the decision to conduct the research in their immediate workplace or elsewhere. The answer within this study was elsewhere due to the importance of maintaining a good working relationship with my own students. Despite having access to my own cohort of YA students, with whom I

spend a significant amount of time on a weekly basis, I made the decision that it would not be appropriate or conducive to include them as participants in the project. This is not to say that the experiences that I have had in teaching them will not influence the observations and interpretations made. Loyalty may have prevented them from critiquing the programme that they were engaged in for fear of jeopardising their grades or future prospects.

This chapter continues by detailing the data collection processes used during this study.

Data Collection

The sample population for the current study was drawn from existing YA programmes within England. Where documentation is referred to, it is drawn from Local Authority YA steering group meetings or from the minutes of national SSC meetings. The YA programmes involved in the study were drawn from providers volunteering at a YA steering group meeting. I explained my research to those present and asked if providers would be interested in participating. Initially six different partnerships offered their direct support, indicating that their students and institutions would be open to involvement. Contact was then made with key gatekeepers at the different establishments to seek permission to approach and work with their students. Samples were finally drawn from five different sectors of the YA programme delivered by four different providers; Sports Management, Leadership & Coaching, Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy, Health & Social Care, Hospitality & Catering and Engineering, with two of the cohorts being made up of Sport programmes. The providers consisted of two secondary schools from two different Local Authorities, a sixth-form college and a sector specific training provider. The purpose of the different settings was to give an insight into the varied contexts within which the YA programme is delivered and how this contributes to differing experiences for the students involved in response to the second of the research questions outlined in Chapter One. The use of four different settings, representing the common types of context within which the YA is delivered nationally allows for this comparison to be made. Each of the providers

and the way in which the YA programme operates within that setting is explained in detail in the following chapter.

Once permission to approach the students and teachers had been granted by the gatekeepers within each institution, an initial visit was made to establish which students were willing to participate and to begin the process of informed and parental consent. The research was explained to the entire cohort and then students were selected to include a reflection of the gender balance within the cohort, where possible, and the home school in which they were based from those who expressed an interest in participating. The research project was explained in greater detail to the potential participants who were then given two letters to take home, one addressed to them asking for their consent to participate and one addressed to their parents asking for their consent for their child to participate (Appendix ii). During the initial visit, arrangements were made for the first of the interviews. All the students who took consent letters gained parental consent and were then involved throughout the research process.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with YA students and their teachers in all four delivery settings. Students in both the first and second year of study were interviewed in the early part of the academic year beginning September 2009. In one of the settings, Year 12 students who had already completed the YA programme and moved on to further study at the attached sixth form centre were also available to be interviewed about their experiences. All interviews were conducted at the delivery site, some individually, some as small groups. This was dependent upon the availability of the students being released from lessons to take part in the study. Where possible, the students were interviewed in small groups within their own year group and YA programme.

The students interviewed at the beginning of their first year of the programme were then re-interviewed during their second year, providing the longitudinal aspect to the data. The longitudinal process allows for a sense of change to be examined as the interviewees get to reflect upon their responses given at the start of the

programme and identify any changes in their experiences over the duration of the two year course. The participating adults in each of the settings were interviewed once. Interviews were also conducted with a selection of key stakeholders within the YA programme: the deputy head at one of the secondary schools, the 14-16 manager at the FE college and the YA co-ordinator at the training provider. Overviews of the interviews conducted in each of the providers can be seen in the Tables 1-4 below. All providers and participants have been assigned randomly generated pseudonyms for the purpose of anonymity. The rationale behind this is detailed later in this chapter. Further details relating to the characteristics of the participants are outlined in the following chapter.

YA Provider	YA Sector	Student Interviews	Adult Interviews	Other Data
Training Provider 1 – Oak View School	Sport	Sept 2009 <i>Group Interview 1.</i> Yr 1: 3 students <i>Group Interview 2:</i> Yr 2: 3 students <i>Individual Interviews:</i> Post-YA Year 12: 3 students Oct 2010 <i>Follow Up Group Interview:</i> Yr 1 students re-interviewed in Yr 2 – 3 students as a group.	<i>Individual Interview:</i> Teacher responsible for YA Sport, Deputy Head.	Progression Data Ofsted Inspection report Total Interviews: 5 Total Interviewees: 9 students, 1 adult Total Interview Time: 96 minutes

Table 1: Data Collection Overview, Oak View School

The interviews were semi-structured in nature, consisting of a series of open-ended, discussion based questions around key themes. For the first year YAs, the themes included choosing the YA programme, the logistics of the programme, their first impressions of the course and their thoughts for the future. The second year YA interviews covered similar themes but also asked the students to reflect upon their first year of the course, including any work experience that had been completed. Students who had already completed the programme and had progressed onto Key Stage 5 were asked more reflective questions about their

experiences whilst doing the YA. In the adult interviews, the themes revolved around the introduction and development of the YA programme within the context of their workplace. Questions were based on the nature of the student cohorts, the logistics of delivering the programme, fulfilling work experience commitments and their expectations of the future. (See Appendix iii for interview schedules)

Provider	YA Sectors	Student Interviews	Adult Interviews	Additional Data
Training Provider 2 – Meadowside College	Hospitality & Catering Health & Social Care Hair & Beauty Therapy	<p>Sept 2009 <i>Group Interview 1:</i> 2 Yr 1 students from Hospitality & Catering <i>Group Interview 2:</i> 2 Yr 1 students from Hair & Beauty <i>Group Interview 3:</i> 2 Yr 1 students from Health & Social Care</p> <p>Oct 2010 <i>Group Interview 4.</i> Yr 1 students re-interviewed in Yr 2: Same students from each programme as a group.</p>	<i>Individual Interview:</i> 14-16 Manager <i>Individual Interview:</i> Director of Faculty – Vocational Studies	Progression Data Ofsted Inspection report Total Interviews:6 Total Interviewees: 6 students, 2 adults Total Interview Time: 131 minutes

Table 2: Data Collection Overview, Meadowside College

In the second round of interviews, students in all providers were shown a transcript of the first interview and given time to reflect on what they had said and whether it had been recorded accurately. They were offered the opportunity to clarify any points that they were unsure of or to make changes to what they had said if they felt it did not reflect their current opinion or that I had misrepresented what they were trying to say. This process turned out to be a very helpful start point by reminding the students what we had talked about and enabled the second interview to begin by looking at what, if anything had changed since our previous meeting. The second interviews then focused on what other aspects of the course

they had since completed, work experience being a typical example, and also on what their plans were for the future. (Appendix iii)

Provider	Sector	Student Interviews	Adult Interviews	Additional Data
Training Provider 3 – Newtown Engineering	Engineering	Sept 2009 <i>Group Interview 1.</i> Yr 1: 3 students <i>Group Interview 2.</i> Yr 2: 3 students Nov 2010 <i>Group Interview 3.</i> Same Yr 1 students re-interviewed in Yr 2	<i>Individual Interview:</i> Marketing Manager responsible for YA programme. <i>Individual Interview:</i> 2 Course Tutors	Progression Data Ofsted Inspection Report Total Interviews: 5 Total Interviewees: 6 students, 3 adults Total Interview Time: 137 minutes

Table 3: Data Collection Overview, Newtown Engineering

The second interviews with the students just entering Year 11 provided the longitudinal aspect of the data without putting pressure on the older students to be involved in a second round of interviewing at the end of their YA programme, coinciding with the summer examination season. The total timescale for the data collection was from September 2009 to March 2011.

Provider	Sector	Student Interviews	Adult Interviews	Additional Data
Training Provider 4: Stanton School	Sport	Sept 2009 <i>Group Interview 1:</i> Yr 1: 4 students interviewed Oct 2010 <i>Group Interview 2:</i> Same students re-interviewed in Yr 2 of the course.	<i>Individual Interview:</i> Course Tutor <i>Individual Interview:</i> Deputy Head with responsibility for Curriculum.	Progression Data Ofsted Inspection Report Total Interviews: 4 Total Interviewees: 4 students, 2 adults Total Interview Time: 68 minutes

Table 4: Data Collection Overview, Stanton School

Analytical Processes

This section outlines the methods by which the data gathered during the fieldwork were analysed. The process of data analysis involves making sense of the data, preparing it for analysis, conducting analyses, representing the data and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data. Coding is the process of organising the material into chunks before bringing meaning to those chunks. It involves sorting data into categories and labelling those categories with a term (Rossman & Rallis, 1998: 171).

There are few fixed formulas or cookbook recipes to guide the novice. Instead, much depends on an investigator's own style of rigorous thinking, along with the sufficient presentation of evidence and careful consideration of alternative interpretations. (Yin, 1994: 103)

This was the basis upon which the data was handled, read, re-read and managed. All interviews were transcribed personally as soon after the interviews took place as possible. In addition, field notes were taken immediately after each interview capturing my personal thoughts and reactions to what had taken place. This was in case there were aspects of the interview process that I felt were important but that might not be recognisable from the transcripts. Facial expressions, general demeanour and appearance of the students, whether they maintained eye contact with each other or with me when they were talking, how animated they were when speaking for example. Whilst time consuming, the process of transcribing the interviews personally was important in maintaining a close feel for the data and to be able to co-ordinate the spoken content with the field notes taken at the time. In listening to the interview recordings, particularly the earlier ones, I was also able to consider my own part in the process and make adjustments to questions and techniques as necessary. As a novice researcher, this was an important part of the learning process.

Once all the interviews were completed and transcribed, the data were subjected to rigorous cross-examination and coding to identify themes across YA sectors, across age groups, genders and delivery sites. This process was also undertaken

by hand for the same reasons as previously outlined regarding interview transcription. Copies of the transcripts were coded under a range of key themes that had emerged during the transcription process. Figure 2 contains an extract from an interview transcript indicating some of the coding used during the analysis process.

Question: Do you have a different relationship with your YA teachers than your other teachers?

	CODE
A: Yes, a lot.	R
G: We get to know them a lot better.	R
A: And they treat us as if we are adults.	R
G: They treat us with real respect	P
M: There is a much more friendly relationship with them.	R

Question: Is that a good thing for you?

G: Yes, because you feel a lot more confident and comfortable in that class rather than presenting to people you don't know.	R/P
G: Yes, we spend a lot of time together.	
A: Even though it has only been 6 weeks, we're all really close already and really good friends.	R
G: I think when we go away we'll get to know each other even better.	R

Question: What are your first impressions of your YA programme?

G: The free kit, the trips, everything – it just builds up to be one massive brilliant thing.	
M: Hard work but...	
A: Worth it, very worth it.	
G: There's just nothing else out there like it that gives you the same opportunities to build up towards careers.	Q/Pr

KEY TO CODES: R = Relationships; P = Personal Impact: Q/Pr = Qualifications and Progression

Fig 2: Extract from Interview Transcript demonstrating use of Coding.

Tesch (1990) takes a step by step view of the analysis process in terms of identifying themes, and topics, coding those and then grouping data relating to the identified topics. Repetition of this process until all possible connections, themes, ideas have been exhausted engages the researcher in a systematic process of analysing textual data. May (1997) similarly describes the process of analysis as picking out what is relevant and piecing it together to create tendencies, sequences, patterns and orders. Colour coding, abbreviated codes and the

physical cutting up of sections of data are all techniques recognised as being helpful in this process. It is suggested by Tesch (1990) that researchers look for codes that readers would expect to find, codes that are surprising and codes that address a larger theoretical perspective in the research. These are all processes that were utilised and found to be helpful in the data analysis for this research.

During the process of collating and analysing the data, all the individuals, providers and institutions involved in the project were assigned pseudonyms and are presented and discussed in the following chapters under those names. This was outlined to the participants during the consent process. Whilst this presents a potential risk to anonymity and the possibility that the names picked may well be the same as real people, schools, colleges and training providers not involved in this research project, they have been selected at random, representing only the gender of the individual speaking. Any links to real people or places is purely coincidental. The advantages of giving them names as opposed to coded letters and numbers is intended to make them appear more real for the reader. The purpose of the research relates to the personal experiences of real people in real life situations and the need for the reader to be able to connect with those actors is important in gaining a sense of what the research is about. The benefits of this were believed to outweigh the potential risks. In developing further this sense of the individual and personal experience of the YA programme, a series of vignettes for one student on each of the YA programmes in the sample were created from the data.¹ (Appendix vi)

Discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the research processes employed here takes place in the concluding chapter where the implications of the research findings on future practice are also assessed. The following chapter examines the institutional context within which each of the YA programmes involved in the research is situated, providing a landscape from which to analyse the data presented by the individuals involved. This relates directly to the second of the research questions concerning how the YA experience differs based on the institutional context within which it is situated.

1. As part of the analysis process and in trying to making sense of the individual data from within the group interviews, a series of vignettes were developed, one from each of the YA programmes involved in the study sample. The vignettes themselves do not directly assist in answering the research questions and as such are too lengthy to be included in the main body of the text. They do offer the reader the opportunity to become more familiar with some of the individuals involved in each of the YA programmes and their personal journeys through the programme and have therefore been included as an appendix to which the reader can refer.

Chapter Four - Institutional Context

The purpose of this chapter is to detail the institutional context within which the YA programmes in this study are situated. One of the research questions raised by this study seeks to establish the ways in which the nature of the institutional setting influences the practice and experiences of the YA. Due to the variety of ways in which the YA programme can be delivered and subsequently experienced, in order to fully understand the experiences of the YA students and their teachers, an understanding of the settings in which those experiences are formed is relevant. Illustrative quotes from the interview process are used throughout the chapter to clarify contextual details.

The four institutions from which the research sample has been drawn consist of two secondary schools from neighbouring Local Authorities in England, a FE college and a sector specific training provider. The two schools involved both deliver the YA in Sports Management, Leadership and Coaching, the FE college delivers YA programmes in Hospitality & Catering, Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy and Health & Social Care and the training provider delivers the YA programme in Engineering.

For the purpose of comparison, each of the four institutions is described not only in terms of their characteristics but also in relation to how the YA functions within that setting. The details of the data collection that took place within each setting are also presented. The purpose of this is to highlight the differences between each of the institutions, not only in the way their YA programme operates but as a direct consequence, the variations in the process of data collection. That the data collection process varied significantly between institutions is considered a reflection of the very nature of the YA programme. As described in the previous chapter, the names of each of the establishments and all participants in the study have been changed for the purpose of anonymity and have been assigned randomly generated proxy names.

The total numbers of students enrolled on YA programmes within each of the institutions is shown in Table 5 below.

Provider	YA Sector	Cohort 4 (2007-9)	Cohort 5 (2008-10)	Cohort 6 (2009-11)	Total
Stanton School	Sport Management, Leadership & Coaching			22	22
Oak View School	Sport Management, Leadership & Coaching	21	21	23	65
Meadowside College	Hospitality & Catering	13	17	10	40
	Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy		28	17	45
	Health & Social Care	12	14	5	31
Newtown Engineering	Engineering	12	12	12	36

Table 5: Numbers of students enrolled on YA programmes in the four institutions.
(YA Cohort 6 LA Census 2010).

The table indicates where programmes have been introduced in different institutions at the beginning of different cohorts and the variation in student populations from year to year. Some cohorts, such as engineering, have remained consistent due to the number of places available at the training provider and regular oversubscription allowing all places to be filled. Other institutions, such as Meadowside College, are more flexible in accepting all suitable applicants onto their courses.

The breakdown of male and female YA students within the above programmes by sector are shown in Table 6. As can be seen, a number of the programmes follow a very traditional gender bias, including 100% male or female cohorts in some cases, others have a more even balance and some are seen to vary between cohorts. The Hospitality & Catering course for example has a heavier male contingent one year, then a heavier female contingent the next.

YA Sector	Cohort 4		Cohort 5		Cohort 6		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Sport Man, Lead. & Coaching	17	4	13	8	25	20	55	32
Hospitality & Catering	4	9	7	10	7	3	18	22
Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy			0	28	1	16	1	44
Health & Social Care	0	12	0	14	0	5	0	31
Engineering	11	1	9	3	5	7	25	11
<i>Total</i>	32	26	29	63	38	51		

Table 6. Numbers of male and female YA students in each of the cohorts and sectors from which the sample population is drawn. (YA Cohort 6 LA Census 2010)

The first institution under consideration is **Oak View School**. Oak View is a co-educational 11-18 comprehensive school with 1651 students on roll, of which 419 are in the sixth form. Of those students, the percentage eligible for free school meals, 7% (DfE, 2012a), is below the national average of 15.9%. 14.1% of students are identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN), also below the national average of 19%. 12% of the students on roll are from a range of ethnic minority groups, the remainder being of White British heritage. GCSE results from the academic year 2010-11 were 61% achieving 5 A*-C grades including English and Maths (national average 58.9%, DfE, 2012). The latest Ofsted report, conducted in November 2009, described Oak View School as Outstanding (Ofsted, 2009a). Oak View is also identified as a High Performing Specialist School, with dual specialism status in Sports and Science.¹

Sporting activities have an extremely high profile throughout the school and the wide range of sports-related options continues to provide excellent opportunities to promote students personal development. (Ofsted, 2009: 4)

Oak View School has been involved with the YA in Sports Management, Leadership and Coaching for three years, ‘complementing an outstanding curriculum’ (Ofsted, 2009a: 7). The programme is coordinated by the Director of Sport who is also on the school Senior Management Team. He is assisted by two other members of the PE department who are involved in delivering particular aspects of the programme. The cohort has remained stable at between 21 and 23 students each year and all of the funding allocated to the school is protected for use by the programme coordinator, who acknowledges that his position as a senior teacher enables this to be the case. Of the first cohort to complete the award, 19 of the 21 have continued with a sports related course as at least part of their Key Stage 5 study. Each cohort is made up entirely of students from Oak View School.

There is a rigorous application and selection process for this over-subscribed option at Key Stage 4. Following an assembly presentation to all interested students and their parents during which details of the YA programme are outlined and promoted, the students are invited to write a letter of application. From this, a shortlist of potential candidates is drawn up and interviews are held.

Some of the parents have found it difficult that we didn't even interview their child because their letter of application wasn't strong enough. It isn't all about them being a national Badminton player, they need to tell us about their leadership and management skills too.

(James Marshall, Director of Sport, Oak View School).

The interview process involves three senior members of staff, each candidate being interviewed individually. On reflecting on this process, a Year 11 YA student recalls, “It was so nerve-wracking! We had three senior teachers in there!” (Luke, Year 11, Oak View). The programme coordinator himself acknowledges that the students really have to prove themselves to get onto the course.

The YAs go through a really tough process to get on to the YA here. We have so many apply that we can afford to cherry pick the best students. 56

students applied for 21 places in the cohort starting Sept 2009.
(James Marshall, Director of Sport, Oak View)

The programme is delivered over one and a half days per week. In addition, the YA students are expected to stay after school every Friday for two hours to complete some of their Governing Body Awards. Two of the half term breaks during Year 10 are also committed to the programme for involvement in residential visits and festivals. The YA students achieve the following qualifications during their programme: BTEC Level 2 Diploma in Sport, GCSE PE, X-bike Leaders Award, Level 2 Fitness Instructors Award, Junior Football Organisers Award, Tennis Leaders Award, Sports Leaders Award, Paddle Sport Level One. The work experience criteria are fulfilled through a combination of school-based sports leadership activities, residential work during school holidays and a two week placement at a local private gym complex with which the school has a close working relationship.

All the YA students are provided with a distinctive uniform, different from the standard school PE kit, that they wear when involved in YA activities.

The YAs have become almost the elite set. They work their socks off for it, but are aware of that from the beginning. I'm sure there are some elements of negativity from other staff or students because we do so much with them and they are a bit elitist.

(James Marshall, Director of Sport, Oak View)

Over a period of two days spent at the school in Oct 2009, I interviewed YA students from Years 10, 11 and 12. The Year 12 students had already completed the YA programme and were studying towards A Levels in the school sixth form. The current Year 10 and 11 students were chosen at random from the groups. During the initial visit I introduced myself to the whole cohort and briefly outlined the reason for my presence including the purpose of the research. In response to a request for volunteers every one of the students raised their hand in both year groups. Consequently, James Marshall, the programme coordinator, used the class register to give each student a number, separating the girls and boys to ensure an equal representation of each. I was asked to select numbers at random from the list and they formed the group of participants that made up the sample.

All the volunteers who began the consent process continued through to become active participants in the study.

The interview groups then consisted of 1 boy and 2 girls from Year 10, 2 boys and 1 girl from Year 11 and 2 boys and 1 girl from Year 12. Small groups, as outlined in the methodology chapter were chosen as the most appropriate method for interviewing, allowing the students to share ideas with each other without there being too many voices to prevent each individual from expressing their thoughts. On returning for the second set of interviews in October 2010, I was able to re-interview the same Year 10 students as they entered Year 11. All the interviews took place in James Marshall's office, which was large enough to seat the groups comfortably and had been used for a number of the application interviews, something which became clear as the students reflected on it during my time with them. The room was quiet and undisturbed during the interviews. James Marshall was not present in the office at the time of the interviews. The details of the interviewees from each of the four institutions including gender, year group and proxy names are presented in Tables 7-10 throughout this chapter.

Name	Gender	Year Group (when interviewed)	YA Programme
James Marshall	M	Deputy Head Director of Sport	
Steven	M	12	Sport
Joshua	M	12	Sport
Gemma	F	12	Sport
Daniel	M	11	Sport
Luke	M	11	Sport
Charlotte	F	11	Sport
Connor	M	10 & 11	Sport
Lucy	F	10 & 11	Sport
Emily	F	10 & 11	Sport

Table 7: Interviewees at Oak View School.

The second school involved in the study was **Stanton School**, a co-educational 11-16 comprehensive. Stanton has 587 students on roll, making it a smaller than average school. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is 9%, below the national average of 15.9%. The proportion of students with SEN, 21.3%, is above the national average of 19%. The majority of students are of White British heritage but there is an increasing number from minority ethnic groups or whose first language is not English (6%, DfE, 2012). In its latest Ofsted inspection, conducted in June 2009, the school was described as Satisfactory, having been given a notice to improve at its previous inspection. GCSE results for the academic year 2010-11 were 30% achieving 5 A*-C grades including English and Maths (national average 58.9%, DfE, 2012). Stanton school is situated on an extensive five school campus, comprising two primary schools, two special schools and Stanton itself. In addition to each of the school's individual management teams, there is a campus management team that coordinates resources, facilities and collaborative work between all of the schools. The significance of this for the YA programme is in the organisation of the work experience for the YA students, outlined later in this section.

Attainment of students entering the school is below the national average, while the proportion of students who have learning difficulties is well above the national average. Following a turbulent period of underachievement and changes in leadership, an enthusiastic and resilient head-teacher has galvanised his leadership team and gained the respect of his parent body (Ofsted, 2009c: 3).

A new skills-based approach to the curriculum in Key Stage 3 is currently being implemented at Stanton and the range of opportunities for vocational study increased at Key Stage 4.

The large number of initiatives introduced has improved students standards, progress, attendance and pride in the school. There is a good balance between academic and vocational courses available to students in KS4, which now cater well for the needs of older students (Ofsted 2009c: 7).

At the time of the research the school was in its first year of delivering the YA in Sports Management, Leadership and Coaching. Other students go from the

school to the local sixth form college, opened in 2007, to follow YA programmes in Hospitality & Catering and Motor Vehicle Mechanics. Although instigated and overseen by one of the Senior Leadership Team and the Head-teacher, the programme is delivered solely by a young member of the PE department who recognises that she is ‘flying by the seat of her pants’ (Evelyn Cook, Programme Coordinator, Stanton) in learning about the programme as she delivers it. She volunteered to take on the YA programme as other members of the department had already taken on responsibility for alternative Key Stage 4 courses. She fulfils the School Sports Coordinator (SSCo) role within the School Sports Partnership and it is partly within this allocated time that the YA programme is timetabled². Specific funding for the programme has not yet been allocated to the programme coordinator and is currently subsumed into the school budget as a whole. The programme coordinator is unsure of the funding received for each student and any associated financing is currently requested from the PE budget.

The cohort consists of 22 students, six of whom are from other schools within the area consortium³. These six students come from their home schools to spend one day each week at Stanton following the YA programme. On the day that they attend, they are also integrated into the school house system and have a pastoral tutor group like every other Stanton student. Being involved with a tutor group and attending assembly with them is intended to make the visiting students feel part of the school as a whole rather than just the YA programme. The consortium teachers discuss and plan collectively the way in which the visiting students are to be accommodated into each of the delivery schools, including sharing of personal and medical information as required. Each of the YA students at Stanton wears a matching polo shirt on their allocated YA day, this being a generic consortium garment worn by YA students on all strands of the programme, not specific to the YA in Sport.

The qualifications that the YA students gain as part of their programme include OCR National PE (Level 2), Level 1 and 2 Sports Leadership, Football Organisers Award, Tennis Leaders Award and Netball Organisers Award. At the time of the

interviews, the teacher could not confirm if there would be others as she was uncertain of the financial backing to deliver more.

The YA programme is allocated one day a week on the students' timetable, with no formal budget. Finding money to run coaching courses or provide kit is pretty impossible. Any awards the students do will all have to be done as twilight sessions in order to fit them in.

(Evelyn Cook, Programme Coordinator, Stanton)

The remainder of the allocated time for the YA programme is made up through discrete blocks of time within the school calendar. An activities week in the summer term for example is an opportunity for the YA students to assist with the events on offer during the week, such as sports festivals and off-site visits. The recruitment and selection process for the Stanton students involves an assembly presentation about the YA programme with all of the students in Year 9 during the options process in the spring term. Recruitment is restricted within the area consortium to those schools that permit their students to go off-site to follow alternative programmes.

There is also a particular difficulty in that they are coming to us and we were the 'failing' school so other schools and parents don't want their kids to come here to study.

(Evelyn Cook, Programme Coordinator, Stanton)

Students register their interest through a Common Application Form (CAF) used by all the consortium schools and the local FE College, on which each students' home school provides data relating to attainment, attendance and behaviour records. As the first cohort through the YA programme at Stanton, all the students who applied were accepted onto the programme without any further processes.

After we'd chosen it, there was this big meeting with our parents and there was a presentation and we got told about it and what qualifications we'd end up with and what we could go onto after it and things like that. My parents thought it sounded a lot better than what they had when they were at school
(Jade, Year 10, Stanton)

Work experience criteria are fulfilled using a variety of methods but do not currently include direct involvement with local employers. The 50 day requirement consists of involvement in sports festivals, competitions and coaching within the primary schools and special schools that are situated on the same campus as Stanton. There are no plans in place for expanding into local employers unless the students take the initiative for themselves. Enrichment visits to national events such as the launch of National Apprenticeship Week are also used to fulfil the required work experience hours.

Some of us are running a multi-skills session with year five and six after school each week, and there's this thing called the Stanton project which is where the parents come in with their kids from five until six and play badminton and then we run a fitness session with them afterwards. Some people come in and do some coaching on a Saturday morning as well so there's quite a lot expected of us outside of school time.
(Aaron, Year 10, Stanton)

The participants in the 'Stanton project' are those drawn from the schools located on the same campus, as outlined previously.

As the school was in its first year of delivering the YA programme during the data collection process, the only cohort of students available as a sample were those in Year 10. The cohort consisted of 22 students, including eight girls. As at Oak View, I introduced myself during an initial visit to the whole group to explain my own background and introduce the project. When I asked for volunteers, a large number of the group expressed an interest. Two boys and two girls were chosen at random to make up the sample group. One of the four was a student from another school. An even gender split within the sample was reflective of the cohort itself. All of those initial volunteers continued on to become active participants following the consent process. When I returned to re-interview the students at the start of Year 11, I was able to re-interview the same students. No students had withdrawn from the course during the transition from Year 10 to Year 11. The interviews were conducted in a study room within the school library, an area that the students were familiar with for doing group work and which was quiet and

undisturbed. Table 8 below shows the interviewees involved in the study from Stanton School.

Name	Gender	Year Group (when interviewed)	YA Programme
Richard Perkins	M	Deputy Head	
Evelyn Cook	F	Teacher	
Ashley	M	10	Sport
Taylor	M	10	Sport
Jade	F	10	Sport
Mel	F	10	Sport

Table 8: Interviewees at Stanton School

Meadowside College was the third of the institutions involved in the study. The college is a Further Education college with 1760 students on roll. 300 of those are aged 14-16 years on part-time courses (Ofsted, 2009b). The colleges' primary focus on vocational courses at all levels, promoted widely to schools within the locality has created this large population of younger students. Around 76% of the young people in the local area are known to remain in full-time education post-16, attending one of six FE colleges or sixth form centres, of which Meadowside is one (Ofsted, 2009b). Colleges and sixth form centres are compared locally and nationally through their point scores per student rather than actual qualification results due to the wide range of qualifications that the students may be working towards. With GCSE, BTEC, A Levels and NVQ qualifications all being followed, comparison between institutions would be incredibly complex. A points scoring system allows for direct comparison to be made between establishments regardless of the type of qualification being undertaken. The average point score per student at Meadowside College in the academic year 2009-10 was 628.6 and average point score per examination entry 207.1 in the same year. These figures are below the National Average for all colleges, which stands at 728.3 per student (DfE, 2012), but only slightly below the national average for similar colleges

(Ofsted, 2009b). Less than 3% of the college students are from ethnic minority groups, mirroring the profile of the local community (Ofsted, 2009b).

In its most recent Ofsted inspection, conducted in January 2009, the college was graded as Good overall. In the same report, for learners aged 14-16,

The range of courses and the achievement of students is outstanding. Success rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy are particularly high, with the standard of students work outstanding. (Ofsted, 2009b: 6)

Students in the research sample were drawn from the Hospitality & Catering, Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy, and Health & Social Care sectors. The college employs a dedicated 14-16 Manager who is responsible for the organisation and welfare of the 300 students within that category at the college. She also acts as the liaison officer for the college within the local schools, attending careers events and information evenings in the nine secondary schools forming the college catchment area.

The college's positive commitment to provision for students aged 14-16 is clear. As a result, these courses enjoy high status within the college. Day to day operational management is outstanding, enabling courses to run smoothly and effectively (Ofsted, 2009b: 10).

The college has been involved with the YA programme since its inception in 2004. The YA strands offered have varied with each cohort as demand has necessitated or as programmes have been either discontinued, modified or newly introduced. Some of the programmes are delivered in partnership with local training providers. For example, the YA in Sports Management, Leadership and Coaching is coordinated and delivered within two local Specialist Sports Colleges. Delivery contracts are drawn up between the college and external providers to ensure consistency of provision and distribution of funding for the students.

An online Common Application Process (CAP) is used for all applicants from all schools to all YA programmes. This application consists of a student section

including an extended personal statement and a supporting section completed by the home schools, detailing attainment grades, behaviour and attendance records. Applications are processed by each of the sector specific coordinators who then conduct assessment and interview processes relevant to their programmes. As a minimum, all the students attend at least an interview with staff from the relevant programme. In many instances, the presence of a parent or guardian is requested for at least part of this interview in order to clarify the level of commitment required on the programme and to ascertain the level of support that the student is likely to receive in getting to and from work experience placements on a weekly basis.

Each of the YA programmes has a specific uniform relevant to their sector, chefs' whites or beauticians' smocks for example, each embroidered with the students name and the YA programme on which they are enrolled. These are provided for the students out of the funding allocated to the college for the delivery of the YA programmes.

My mum was impressed with our uniform because they have our names on them and everything and she didn't have to pay for them! I thought I'd look a bit of an idiot when I first got them but it makes it feel more like the real thing because this is what you would be wearing in a pro kitchen anyway.
(Tim, Year 10, Meadowside)

The arrangements for work experience provision varies between sectors and is organised by the coordinator of each programme, although the 14-16 manager has overall responsibility for Health and Safety and liaison with Education Business Partnership (EBP), a company used to source and insure work placements for students in full-time education. All of the placements undertaken by the YA students are unpaid, whether undertaken during normal school hours or weekends. For the Health & Social Care students, work experience consists of the completion of three different placements, sourced for them by the college at differing health-related institutions. For example, one of the students completed placements in a nursery, a drop-in health clinic and a residential care home for the elderly. Even within the sector, the logistics of these placements varied depending on the amount of time that individual students were released from their home schools.

One of the students interviewed was released from her home school for the full two days and was therefore able to complete all of her work experience hours within that time, spending a full day each week in one of her three placements. Another of the students was only released from her school for one day each week and therefore had to fulfil her work experience hours at weekends and during school holidays, working most Saturdays and several days in each of the holidays.

This arrangement is mirrored in the Hospitality & Catering YA programme, although students are able to gain a significant number of hours working in the colleges' on-site restaurant which is open to the public. Similarly, the Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy students are able to fulfil the majority of their work experience hours working in the colleges' on-site salon and treatment centre, either during the college day or early evenings. This is also open to the public, offering a range of treatments. The students are expected to gain further experience at weekends and are given assistance in finding salons with vacancies. This was recognised by the college staff and the students themselves as being the accepted norm within the industry.

A large, formal presentation evening is held every November specifically to celebrate the successes of the YA students from the college. This includes the presentation of subject specific awards and nominations for the YA of the Year. YA stories feature regularly in the college newsletter which is distributed to all the secondary schools within the catchment area, including photographs and acknowledgement of the schools that the YA students come from. Articles and photographs are also sent to the Local Authority for inclusion in their quarterly YA newsletter, distributed across the county.

Over three days spent at the college, I interviewed two YA students in Year 10 on each of the Hospitality & Catering, Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy and Health & Social Care programmes in both their first and second years of the programme.

As in the two previous institutions, I was able to introduce myself to each of the Year 10 cohorts and outline the research. In each of the sector areas, there were more volunteers than I could realistically interview. The selection of two students from each cohort was left to the tutor of each of the groups, although a representative sample of gender and home schools was requested where possible. All of those who initially volunteered gained full consent and became active participants in the study. Once consent had been agreed, the participants were interviewed together, in their YA sectors, within the vicinity of their specific accommodation in the college. Due to the large campus of the college, it was both more practical and appropriate to interview them within their locality than to move them to another area of the college. For example, the Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy students were interviewed in an office off the salon workshop where their training took place. Similarly, the Hospitality & Catering students were interviewed in the college restaurant, which was closed to the public at the time. The same students were all available and willing to be re-interviewed at the start of their second year of the course. All of the students interviewed in year 10 had progressed onto the second year of the course. Table 9 shows the details of the interviewees from Meadowside College.

Name	Gender	Year Group (when interviewed)	YA Programme
Sarah Routledge	F	14-16 Manager	
Shaun Cole	M	Curriculum Director	
Nicola	F	10 & 11	Hair & Beauty
Abigail	F	10 & 11	Hair & Beauty
Rahul	M	10 & 11	Catering
Tim	M	10 & 11	Catering
Poppy	F	10 & 11	Health & Social Care
Amelia	F	10 & 11	Health & Social Care

Table 9: Interviewees at Meadowside College

The final institution involved in the study was **Newtown Engineering**, a training provider for the engineering sector and member of the Group Training Association (GTA). Newtown is a private company and a registered charity. The company was established in 1970 and is set up as an association with a membership drawn from local engineering companies. The accommodation at Newtown consists of a large workshop fitted with a range of machinery related to both mechanical and electrical engineering operations and two lecture rooms, one of which is fitted with a suite of computers. The company currently has 400 trainees on roll, aged between 14 and 19 years old, of which 26 are YAs. Figures relating to Free School Meals and SEN are not available for this particular institution. Results for the academic year 2009-10 include 93% completion rate for YA students. Framework achievement success rates for advanced apprenticeships are rated by Ofsted as High at 80%, compared to the national average of 65% (Ofsted, 2009d: 6).

The overall effectiveness of the provider was graded as Satisfactory during its latest Ofsted inspection in 2009.

Current learners on all programmes are making very good progress and timely success rates for this group are higher still. Young Apprentices achieve extremely well and success rates are outstanding, at over 90% for the last two years (Ofsted, 2009d: 5).

Newtown has been delivering the YA programme since its introduction in 2004, when the Learning Skills Council (LSC) approached the company and asked if they would be interested in a pilot scheme within the local authority. The marketing manager recalls how they saw the potential in the programme from the start.

For once, it was a programme aimed at higher achievers rather than an increased flexibility one. In engineering, these are the kind of students that we would be aiming apprenticeships at anyway. We saw it fitting in with what we were doing.

(Chris Shaw, Marketing Manager, Newtown)

Cohort sizes have stayed constant each year (12 students), governed by the workshop space available at Newtown. All the available spaces have been filled

each year and since the start of the programme, only 11% of students have not completed the full two years of the programme. Since the first cohort, a minimum of four of the available places have been set aside for female applicants and the marketing manager spends time in each of the local feeder schools, talking specifically to the girls about careers in engineering. The highest number of girls in any one cohort has been five, the lowest two. 37% of the YA students have progressed onto post-16 Apprenticeships with employers using Newtown as their training provider after completing their YA since the first cohort in 2004.

Newtown delivers the YA over one day per week after finding that the local schools from which the students were drawn were reluctant to allow them more time. Two course tutors work solely with the YA students on the day that they attend Newtown. The programme is administered by the marketing manager who is able to separate the funding received for the YA from the remainder of the company finances. The qualifications gained by the YA students include NVQ Level 2 in Performing Engineering Operations, First Aid, Workshop Health & Safety and Computer Aided Design (CAD).

The recruitment process for the YA at Newtown has developed as the programme has become more established and now consists of a formal interview and aptitude tests in addition to a Common Application Form (CAF) utilised within the local authority schools and colleges. The aptitude tests are part of a range of tests used with the advanced apprentices and take place during a day visit to a local power station.

Once we had applied, we had to do a Newtown taster day to learn more about the programme. There were more people there than there were places available so you knew it was also some kind of test as well. We had to do some tasks to see who was the most willing and enthusiastic, it was really scary but worth it for those of us who got on the course!
(Andrew, Year 10, Newtown)

The YA students are provided with overalls and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to wear within the workshop environment. These are embroidered with

apprenticeship and company logos. The colour of the overalls is different to other apprentices within the company who each have colours representing either the level they are working at or a particular employer that they are sponsored by. Outside of the workshop environment, the code of dress for the YA students is smart casual in keeping with the rest of the employees.

The work experience requirements of the YA programme are coordinated by the marketing manager at Newtown. The programme is credited with 10 days experience by their SSC, SEMTA, to account for the workshop experience that they get at the company, in recognition of the fact that they are working amongst employed apprentices within an industry specific workshop environment. The remainder of the time consists of a two week placement with another employer during Year 10, visits to local engineering providers and open evenings. The cohort of Year 10 students from which the research sample is drawn have also committed to an extra week of work experience during their school holidays. Newtown sources engineering related placements for the students during the fortnight of statutory work experience conducted by schools during Year 10. The drawback of this for Newtown is that as the students are drawn from 10 different schools across the area, these all occur at different times of the year, depending upon when it is timetabled by their home school. It is recognised that they are more fortunate than other providers in their well-established links with experienced employers.

We are lucky in that because we train employed apprentices, we have a pool of committed employers who are generally quite happy to take on work experience students. The employers' love the YA programme because the students go away with a much better understanding of what engineering is about and how the training and job market works within the industry.
(Chris Shaw, Marketing Manager, Newtown)

The company website and quarterly newsletter carry information and articles relating to the promotion of the YA programme, including a video made by the students themselves to advertise their YA programme and links to local radio interviews involving the YA students and the marketing manager. These are used

on promotional visits to the local schools during the recruitment process each year. Presentation events for all Newtown apprentices are held annually and have included the YA students since the first year of delivery.

As with the previous institutions, I was introduced to the whole cohort during an initial visit to Newtown and given the opportunity to explain my research to the YA students. During the period of time that I was conducting the interviews, a significant number of the Year 10 students were spending a proportion of their day with their employers and hence the availability of a number of participants was restricted. The sample was drawn from those students who were available at the times when the interviews were to be held and had volunteered to be involved in the study. Two Year 10 students and six Year 11 students were interviewed. Of the Year 11 students, two were girls. All the students who initially volunteered gained consent and became active participants. Once the consent process was completed, all the students were interviewed during the autumn term of 2009. The Year 10 students were re-interviewed at the start of Year 11. Both of the students who had been interviewed in Year 10 were available for the second interview in Year 11.

The availability of space within the Newtown premises is restricted and little is unused at any part of the day. Two of the interviews were conducted within the workshop environment which, whilst being a place of familiarity for the YA students, was a challenging environment in which to conduct an interview due to the significant amount of background noise from working machinery. The remaining interviews with the YA students, course tutors and marketing manager were conducted in the marketing managers' office, which was quiet and undisturbed. She was not present in the office at the time of the interviews. Table 10 below shows the details of the participants from Newtown.

In total, 27 YA students and eight adults associated with the programme were interviewed over 20 interviews within the four institutions, interview time totaling seven hours and twelve minutes. Of these, eleven YA students were interviewed twice, providing the longitudinal perspective of the study. No YA students that

were involved in the study in Year 10, their first year of study, failed to progress onto Year 11 and ultimately, completion of the programme. Similarly, none of the students who were already in Year 11 at the start of the research failed to complete the programme successfully. The details of each of the providers included in this chapter illustrate how the YA programme varies between providers as a result of contextual arrangements

Name	Gender	Year Group (when interviewed)	YA Programme
Chris Shaw	F	YA Coordinator	
Martin	M	Course Tutor	
Paul	M	Course Tutor	
Steph	F	11	Engineering
Rachael	F	11	Engineering
Beth	F	11	Engineering
Phillip	M	11	Engineering
Jason	M	11	Engineering
Matt	M	11	Engineering
Andrew	M	10 & 11	Engineering
David	M	10 & 11	Engineering

Table 10: Interviewees at Newtown Engineering

The amount of time allocated for delivery of the programme can be seen to vary from a minimum of one day to a maximum of two, a significant difference within the weekly timetable of the students involved. Arrangements for fulfilment of the work experience criteria also differ significantly between providers. How factors such as this impact upon the overall experience for the YA students is explored in the following chapters.

Chapters Five and Six seek to present the data relating to the experiences of the YA students and the adults involved in the YA programme with them. The first of these chapters thematically analyses the data relating to selection and recruitment,

teaching and learning and work experience, collectively categorised as the ‘practices’ of the YA programme. This relates directly to the first two research questions posed at the beginning of this study, in seeking how the practices of the YA programme are experienced by the students involved in the light of the different institutional contexts in which they are located. The second of the two chapters examines the process of ‘becoming a YA’ in the light of the individual aspects of the data collected. This chapter seeks to answer the final research question regarding how and why the YA could be considered to be a ‘lived experience’. Collectively, the two chapters will then form a basis from which to discuss these experiences relative to the context within which they are situated. This discussion takes place in Chapter Seven.

1. *Specialist Schools* are state secondary schools that aim to be the local centre of excellence in their chosen specialism, benefiting from public sector funding under the Specialist Schools Programme. Schools may bid to become specialist schools in a maximum of 2 subject areas (dual specialism) through a comprehensive bidding process including the presentation of a 4 year development plan and the raising of £50,000 in private sector capital.
2. Within the specialist schools designated as Sports Colleges, a number of personnel roles are created to facilitate the implementation of the development plan. Each Sports College has a *Partnership Development Manager* (PDM) whose role it is to oversee this implementation process. Each of the schools within the local ‘cluster’ of schools that the Sports College is part of employs a *School Sports Coordinator* (*School Games Organiser* as of Sept 2011) who liaises with the PDM in the sports college in the dissemination of the development plan across all the schools in the cluster.
3. Schools often refer to their local group of schools as a ‘*consortium*’, where collaborative planning and professional development activities take place. Historically, this is particularly active within PE, where local ‘consortiums’ become the sports leagues within which the school teams compete throughout the academic year and can then go on to represent in district/county competitions. Many curriculum subjects have begun to operate similar collaborative exercises with schools in their locality.

Chapter Five – The YA in Practice

A number of themes have been identified through the data analysis process, outlined in Chapter Three. These will form the framework within which the data is discussed. The themes have been structured into two organisational categories, each with three analytical themes discussed in relation to illustrative evidence. This chapter is concerned with the first of the two organisational categories; how the students and teachers experience the day to day activity involved in the delivery of the YA programme over the two year timescale. As expressed by the title to the chapter, this is discussed in terms of the ‘practice’ of the programme and responds to the first and second of the research questions detailed at the beginning of the study. The first of the analytical themes in this category relates to the process of selection and recruitment of students onto the programme itself, regularly referred to by both the YAs and their teachers during the interviews. The second relates to the approaches to teaching and learning in the delivery of the programme. This examines the manner in which the YAs experience their teaching and learning across the different institutions, identifying common and what the YAs consider important features of the pedagogy they encounter. Finally, this chapter examines the way in which work experience is organised and managed by each of the institutions, considering the successes and obstacles faced by the teachers and the perceptions of the YAs in relation to what they have experienced.

In categorising the themes of selection and recruitment, teaching and learning and work experience as the practices of the YA programme, the opportunity is created to highlight the differences between the experiences of the YA as a vocational programme of study and the more conventional classroom teaching experienced through the remainder of the students’ curriculum. The YA programme has been criticised for lacking consistency between programmes, institutions and sectors, resulting in the fact that no two YA programmes are the same (Ofsted, 2005). In drawing out the best practices witnessed in each of the institutions involved in the study, it is possible to envisage how a successful pedagogy for future vocational

programmes could be established, minimising the variation between providers and creating a system which is more rigorous, robust and comparable. The practices under consideration in this chapter are those where both the greatest variety and the greatest consistency have been found within the programmes involved in this study and therefore provide a platform from which to begin to identify best practice.

Selection and Recruitment

Previously addressed in Chapter Four, the process of selection and recruitment varies significantly between delivery sites and programmes. Strikingly in common but in contrast to published literature (Foskett, 2004; Wright, 2005), is the sophistication of the application process and the detailed consideration that takes place in YA delivery institutions before students are accepted onto the programme. This is particularly evident and articulated by the teachers working in providers who have been involved with the programme for more than one cohort.

We were lucky that the first cohort that went through just worked. We're getting much better at running it, certainly learning and improving each year. The success of that first group has influenced the choices of subsequent cohorts.

(James Marshall, Director of Sport, Oak View)

For James Marshall, experience in delivering the programme has brought a perceived understanding of the skills and qualities desirable for success. Significant time and attention is therefore given to ensuring that the right students are accepted onto the right courses, not merely for the benefit of the provider, but for the benefit of the students themselves. The providers indicated that they were looking for students who demonstrate good teamwork, were reliable, had good attendance and behaviour records, were aware of the commitment they were about to make in terms of their own time and had the appropriate academic ability as stipulated by the application forms. Contrary to the perceived notion of biased and impersonal advice provided in schools by teachers competing for numbers of students regardless of the appropriateness of the course for the student (Foskett, 2004; Nuffield Review, 2008), the YA providers and in particular those who have gained experience appear to take a far more pragmatic view and are mindful of the

needs of the student before their need to fill their places. The practices observed are also in direct contrast with the impression given by the DfE in suggesting that schools were putting pupils on courses to boost their performance in league tables rather than considering the future prospects of the pupils themselves (DfE, 2012). Following the Press Notice which contained this statement, Professor Alison Wolf expressed in a national news broadcast interview that schools were guilty of 'lying to kids' about where their qualifications might lead them (BBC, 2012).

Conscious of the fact that each place is allocated funding, and avoiding the 'marketing function' of IAG as suggested by the Nuffield Review (2008: 7), the local authority within which three of the providers are situated operates a policy whereby any unused funding is returned to a central pool. This is then available for redistribution to providers who might have a greater number of suitable candidates than they were currently allocated funding for. For example, an undersubscribed engineering provider may return the allocated funding for their surplus places which can then be redistributed to an oversubscribed sport provider to fund their additional candidates. Without this system in place, any unused funding is lost and those courses oversubscribed are unable to offer the extra places, leaving potential students disappointed. In contrast to the competitive nature of recruitment and place allocation as suggested by the Nuffield Review (2008) and Professor Wolf (2012), this provides evidence of a much more collaborative system, operating for the common good of LA provision.

Stanton school is part of a consortium that deliver different YA programmes for the benefit of the community of schools. Students travel from their home school one day each week to the provider for the particular YA programme that they wish to follow. This was the intended method of delivery for the YA programme when it first began and was also expected to be standard practice for Diploma delivery. In reality, there are not many instances where this actually happens except for those YA programmes delivered by FE colleges or training providers who are already in a position where they draw students from a number of different schools. The logistics of having common timetabling across a consortium of schools and the

issues surrounding the sharing of personal and confidential information about the students had a significant impact on the success of the proposal. In addition, schools were uncertain of the ownership of those students and any grades that they gained as part of their studies in another school. School leaders were understandably cautious. At Stanton, the consortium invested significant time into developing a system within their schools that allowed the collaborative process to happen but in practice, it still faced some difficulties. Being in the infancy of the delivery process, the recruitment and selection of the students is not as highly developed as in other providers involved in the study. More information is offered to the student after the options process than before and much of it is aimed at the gatekeepers at each of the consortium schools rather than to the students themselves. Common misunderstandings as to what the YA is all about and who it is aimed at exist, resulting in schools not offering it to the students it was designed for.

I fight to get the message over to the other schools that the YA is not a drop zone. One of the teachers from another school said to me 'I've just realised that [student name] is doing the YA, why is that then, he's quite bright?'
(Evelyn Cook, Programme Coordinator, Stanton)

Those institutions new to the programme have found that they are in a position where they are educating colleagues in both their own establishments and within their consortium schools as to the nature of the programme, as experienced in the case of Stanton School. This supports the evidence suggested by Wright (2005), that in many instances, the teachers who are advising students about options are themselves ill informed about the courses that are on offer. As new curricula, qualifications and programmes within the English education system are in a constant state of flux, this is perhaps an inevitable consequence.

We are in our seventh cohort now and our local schools know exactly the right kind of student to send us. At the start, you know the students that were being advised to come onto the programme were those that the school wanted out of the way for a day or so, the naughty ones that disrupt others from working. Now, we have got the message across that these are not the right students and they won't be successful. (Martin, Tutor, Newtown).

Where providers are operating within local consortia, the process is exacerbated by having to negotiate the individual policies adopted by each school towards alternative programmes of study for their students. Morris (2011: 136) acknowledges that the increase in new pathways enabling students to mix academic and vocational qualifications has placed greater importance upon them receiving independent, realistic and up-to-date information and advice. She also recognises that this, unfortunately, is not always the case. Some schools continue to see non-statutory careers education as of limited significance for their pupils despite the introduction, in 1997, of delivery to all pupils at Key Stage 4.

There are some of our schools who operate a very closed shop when it comes to Key Stage 4 courses for their students.

(Sarah Routledge, 14-16 Manager, Meadowside)

Wright (2005) found that some schools simply do not engage with vocational education or engineer their options process to the point that it is virtually impossible for students to opt for it alongside popular subject combinations. Newton et al (2007) concluded that many teachers still consider vocational routes to be a second-rate option and therefore not all eligible pupils are receiving the information they need in order to make informed choices.

Providers of new qualifications also have to sell their product to the parents of the students involved. Meadowside College actively involves the parents of prospective YA students in their interview processes, expecting them to attend the interview with the YA student in order that the level of commitment can be fully explained. As many of the YA programmes offered by the college include work experience commitments outside of normal working hours, the college recognises that the success of the student at the age of 14 is heavily reliant upon the encouragement of significant adults in keeping their attendance levels high.

We have actually got much better at the selection process too. The first cohort was a bit hit and miss, get them in and fill all the spaces, perhaps ignoring the fact that they might not actually fulfill all the criteria. We've

definitely refined that. We did actually reject several hair students last year because their behaviour and attendance records were not good enough.
(Sarah Routledge, 14-16 Manager, Meadowside)

When asked about the selection and recruitment process at Newtown Engineering, the YA manager explained that their specific interview and aptitude testing days have become an integral part of the recruitment process, providing an opportunity for the students to witness first hand the kind of environment they were entering and to introduce the students to one another before the start of the programme. One of the tutors on the programme also explained the importance of parental support in making it work.

The YA's that are the most successful are the ones who come to interview with their parents. Even if they just sit there quietly, they at least know the environment and more about what their youngsters are doing. For those students who have to catch up on missed lessons it is even more important.
(Martin, Course Tutor, Newtown).

For the YA students at Oak View School, where the course is heavily oversubscribed, the selection process is a daunting prospect for many. The interview process, for those students who get through to that stage, is conducted by senior members of staff in a formal setting.

Because of the tough process, they really value what they do. We have had tears in interviews because it means so much to them.
(James Marshall, Director of Sport, Oak View)

We were really nervous. You didn't know what was going to happen or what they were going to say.
(Jake, Year 12, Oak View)

When asked why he felt that the YA had become such a popular option within his institution, the teacher at Oak View responded;

It captures people, adults and students alike.
(James Marshall, Director of Sport, Oak View School)

The selection and recruitment process for each of the providers adheres to guidelines produced by the DfE in relation to equal opportunities and in particular gender stereotyping. Despite this, many of the YA programmes under consideration follow stereotypical gender typing in terms of the numbers of boys or girls on the courses, reflecting the nature of the industrial sector in which they are based. A large majority of boys study in the engineering sectors (92% Cohort 4 Newtown Engineering) and a large majority of girls study in the Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy sector (94% Cohort 6 Meadowside College). The non-traditional apprenticeship sectors, such as sport, also reflect this lack of tradition in having a much more balanced ratio of boys and girls (48% Girls Cohort 6 Oak View School).

Each of the SSC's has an equal opportunities policy and the recruitment of the non-traditional sex onto each of the programmes is actively encouraged. The application form for providers wishing to deliver the YA programmes includes a statement of intent as to 'how you will ensure equality of opportunity and challenge gender stereotyping' (Cohort 7 Application Form, LSC South East, 2010: 6). In reality, what is written into this is often little more than rhetoric. Newton et al (2007) found that, while partnerships were aware of the requirement for equal opportunities, many felt that this had to be balanced with their other priorities, such as good prior attainment, attendance and behaviour reports. Good practice that had been witnessed included opportunities for taster sessions, involvement of parents and guardians in the IAG process and access to male and female peers already enrolled on YA programmes.

The only provider in the current study with an active involvement in challenging gender stereotypes is Newtown Engineering with a programme of workshops and visits operating within their feeder schools encouraging girls into engineering. Every cohort has included a small number of girls, all of whom have completed the programme successfully. Following the success of these girls, Newtown has introduced a policy of reserving five out of the twelve places that they offer each year for female applicants. This represents a far higher involvement of girls in the programme than is seen at post-16 level where in the academic year 2008-9, 97%

of engineering advanced apprenticeship starters was male. (Fuller & Davey, 2010: 16). This raises a number of questions about the potential for female progression from the YA onto post-16 Apprenticeship courses which are addressed in the following chapter.

The data for the present study relating to gender is drawn from the cohort application form produced by the DfE and SSC's and from statistical data provided by each of the institutions and LA's relating to numbers of male and female students on their programmes. Specific questions relating to gender were not included in the interview schedules as the topic of gender was not a significant aspect of the research rationale. Whilst a much discussed aspect of the recruitment process in a number of the YA programmes, the data from the present study suggests that there is actually little to distinguish between the experiences of the YAs once on the programme based on their gender. This supports the findings of the YPLA (2010) evaluation which concluded that there was no statistically significant difference between the achievements of YA students based on their gender. The reality of the experience, which is the essence of this study, does not suggest differences between the boys and girls on any of the YA programmes. The nature of the comments in all of the themes identified cannot be separated in terms of gender. Where comments are made around the themes of personal feelings and relationships, which might be considered to be more feminine topics of conversation, the ratio of data between the girls and the boys within each interview group is the same. For example, when asked about their first day starting a course in a different setting to their school, the following responses came from boys and girls on different courses in different institutions.

It was a bit scary because you didn't know anyone.
(Tim, Year 10, Meadowside)

I was really nervous.
(Poppy, Year 10, Meadowside)

Similarly, when reviewing the reflections of the different students in relation to their work experience placements, an area found by Beck, Fuller and Unwin (2006) to raise issues regarding stereotypical behaviour and attitudes, there was little to distinguish between the experiences and expectations of the YA students. The only comment throughout the interview process to be made in relation to gender was from Rachael, one of the Year 11 female engineering YA students when asked whether she would recommend the programme to others. In an extract from the interview transcript, she says;

Rachael: It's changing peoples' minds about what engineering is about, especially for girls.

FL: That's a good point. Did anyone say anything to you at school when you told them that you were doing engineering?

Rachael: They thought I was going to turn into a butch lesbian! (laughs) The boys here are fine but they were a bit competitive with us to start with.

At this point the topic of conversation changed and no further reference was made to the fact that the experience had been any different for the boys and girls within the group or that they had been treated any differently by their peers, teachers or employers. This argues in favour of greater promotion of all courses to both sexes, exposing potential students to the experiences of existing female and male YA students in all sectors, in order to minimise the perceived risk involved in applying for non-traditional programmes.

The selection and recruitment processes evidenced in this study demonstrate significant variation between providers and sectors. The use of interviews and taster days has a positive impact on the success of the programmes. Firstly, by attracting students who have a genuine interest in following the programme, as opposed to those trying to opt out of other curriculum subjects, and secondly, by raising the profile of the programme. As has been evidenced in the case of Oak View School, the students value their places highly and are therefore more motivated to work hard, knowing that they have earned the right to be there. For schools such as Stanton, new to the programme, the sharing of the experience and

knowledge gained by the existing providers would have aided them in setting up a similar process within their consortium of schools, thereby educating colleagues and raising the profile of the programme from the very beginning. Standardising recruitment and selection practices would be recommended for the benefit of both the providers and the students in the future.

The next section of this chapter examines the second analytical theme within the organisational category of practice, that of the teaching styles utilised by the different delivery institutions and how they translate into learning experiences for the YA students.

Teaching and Learning

Whilst the data collected in the present study does not enable direct comparisons with other Key Stage 4 courses and the manner in which they are delivered, the YA students were keen to express the difference for them between the YA and other subjects that they studied. Almost universally, the small group sizes, relationships with staff and the way in which they were taught are presented as positive aspects of the programme. This was particularly the case for the YA students attending either the FE college or the training provider, where the majority of the other people that they came into contact with during the day were adults.

We just get on with our work here, rather than people looking over us all the time. We are expected to get on with things and think for ourselves. There's more freedom here. We've learned to be more independent and do things for ourselves because that's what everyone else does.

(Andrew, Year 10, Newtown)

The feeling of being treated more as adults is a common theme from the YA students in all the sectors. This supports the findings of Lumby (2007) who suggests that the success experienced by students under the age of 16 attending FE colleges is due to a pedagogy that uses experiential and social forms of learning in an environment that allows students to connect more fully to a future adult world. Smaller groups with a more relaxed, informal manner make the students feel that the atmosphere for learning is more grown up and that they are

afforded greater respect, encouraged to be independent and can negotiate deadlines for work. Huddleston (2012: 34) also recognises the value of instructional input and behaviour modeling from 'real' hairdressers and chefs within the functioning salons and restaurants found in many FE colleges and training providers.

Teachers normally spoon feed you in other lessons and in this one we have to get on with it by ourselves, we're given more responsibility.
(Charlotte, Year 11, Oak View)

Lumby (2007: 3) proposes that the enrolment of learners of compulsory school age at a FE college is driven by the belief that their experience will be in some way different from that at school and potentially more successful in terms of supporting attainment and progression. Without being able to describe exactly how and why, Tim acknowledges that being at college is not the same as being at school.

They do treat us differently here, more like adults. It's hard to explain but it does feel different.
(Tim, Year 10, Meadowside)

Harkin (2005) also found that students value relationships with teachers that are based on mutual respect in an emotionally and socially positive learning environment. The effect for the students is that they feel more secure, comfortable and willing to work hard in their lessons.

For the students, it's like any college experience, and they are expected to behave in a more mature way and to take more responsibility. I don't think I've come across any student who hasn't enjoyed and relished that.
(Sarah Routledge, 14-16 Manager, Meadowside)

We don't have to call the teachers sir, or miss or anything, we call them by their first names. It seems they're more like friends, not that they're out to get you all the time. You feel more grown up.
(Amelia, Year 10, Meadowside)

The students also comment on the nature of their session and the way in which they are taught. More of an emphasis on practical skills appropriate to their sector seems to balance out the more theoretical aspects of the programmes for the YAs.

I'm a more hands on person. I like to just get on and do it and you get to do that here. Literally, you're hands on and on your feet all day.
(Nicola, Year 10, Meadowside)

One of the students interviewed was even able to refer to this in terms of his preferred style of learning.

It's definitely better for kinaesthetic learners.
(Jason, Year 11, Newtown)

When asked if he could explain to me what that meant, he was able to do so, comparing it accurately to other learning styles such as visual and auditory and giving examples of each. The notion of a different style of learning is supported by the work of Jaarsma, Maat, Richards and Wals (2011) who studied the concept of materiality in relation to learning on an apprenticeship programme in a motor vehicle plant in Ghana. Jaarsma et al (2011: 448) describe materiality as the process of learning through being in the environment of the trade in which the apprentice is being trained. For example, the topography, the physical characteristics, the use of tools and equipment and the relationship with other actors within the environment all form an essential part of the curriculum for an apprentice. Just being in the materially-intensive environment 'might even be the main feature of what makes apprenticeship learning distinct from learning in a classroom setting'. Hager (2007: 88), in comparing vocational education pedagogies with those found in the academic curriculum, concludes that the 'learning as participation' often associated with vocational education and the 'learning as acquisition' more directly related to classroom based learning, should not be considered as mutually exclusive and that successful vocational pedagogies should involve both.

Feeling different on returning to school and to 'normal' lessons is a common feature identified by all the YA students who go to different delivery institutions for their YA programme. The impact on their behaviour in lessons, of feeling different to other students, adapting to being taught in larger groups and in different ways are all part of the experience for the students. The majority have commented on a

positive impact on their behaviour in school as a result of greater focus on their future. Lumby (2007) refers to this as having their learning 'liberated and invigorated' through their experiences within the more adult environment of the FE college, or in this instance, the training provider. The realisation that certain subjects are important for their chosen profession induces a greater affinity for the subject and the understanding that it is a necessity if they wish to be able to progress. When asked what they felt they had learned about themselves from participating in the programme the dominant theme was an increased awareness of their own capabilities.

It has motivated me to do more at school. I know that if I pass this, I can fast track next year onto a higher level course but I need to have C's in my English and Maths. I am really determined to get them now, I wasn't bothered before.
(Abigail, Year 10, Meadowside)

It's made me realise what I need to do and I don't really muck around any more. I just get things done without making a fuss.
(Poppy, Year 10, Meadowside)

Even for the students whose YA programme is delivered within their home school, there is still the feeling that they are treated differently in YA sessions, without actually leaving the school campus. This is expressed in terms of their relationship with the teachers on the programme and the nature of the way in which they are taught.

It kind of became like you were learning in different ways to all the other teachers. There was no kind of sitting down with the teacher preaching at the front sort of thing. Like when we were learning about muscles, we would go out on to the volleyball court and actually play and think about the muscles we were using to do each action. Being closer and friendlier with the teacher made it so much easier to learn.
(Gemma, Year 12, Oak View)

In visiting and spending time in each of the institutions, interviewing the teachers and the students and observing them in action, it is possible to recognise the basis upon which these reflections are made. In the exchanges between teacher and students, there was an air of familiarity yet respect, good humour and a relaxed

formality. Reflecting upon a cohort that had recently completed the YA programme, one of the teachers recalls;

The way they came together as a group really helped. They were a great group of kids, smashing.

(James Marshall, Director of Sport, Oak View School)

Undoubtedly a positive experience for the YA students, the nature of this pedagogy is such that it is not particularly easy to replicate in every classroom situation for every student to experience. Lumby (2007) reflects that the positive experiences gained by the younger students attending the FE colleges will only be sustainable if they remain as a minority population in relation to the remainder of the college. If the 14-16 population of the college continues to increase, the very nature of the 'adult' world into which they have entered is jeopardised. The nature of the YA students, in actively applying for and opting onto a specialised programme and experiencing a selection process during which some people do not succeed also creates a rather unique group of students, unlike that found in the classes of the core subjects within an average secondary school.

One of our tutors summed up the YA just the other day. The kids love it, we love it, the instructors love it, the teachers love it, the employers seem to love it – they're bound to stop it. It's too good for its own good.

(Chris Shaw, Marketing Manager, Newtown Engineering)

Whilst the overwhelming attitude towards the programme is positive from adults and students alike, for the providers there are concerns over quality assurance and accountability that many feel is lacking from the specification of the YA programme. This is expressed particularly in terms of the content of the programme and completion of the work experience commitment. Aside from the compulsory elements of the programme as previously discussed, it is entirely down to individual providers how the allocated curriculum time is filled, including the choice of enrichment activities and additional qualifications. This affords a significant degree of freedom and therefore professional responsibility upon the providers to ensure that the programme offered is worthy of the time and money invested in it.

In a very honest fashion, the providers all refer to the lack of quality assurance as unnerving.

There is no quality assurance with the YA like there is with the Apprenticeship scheme because there is no clear ownership of the whole programme. Each SSC controls their own programmes and they even filter down through the local authority for financing and to the individual providers for content and delivery.

(Shaun Cole, Director of Faculty, Meadowside)

As a result of the accountability culture that exists within the English education system, providers are unaccustomed to being afforded such autonomy and are uncomfortable with the variation in outcomes that is inevitable.

No two YAs are the same, even with providers who are just a few miles down the road from each other. The success of the YA programme has been by luck, goodwill and the professionalism of the providers.

(Shaun Cole, Director of Faculty, Meadowside)

In reflecting on the fifty day work experience requirement that exists for all YA programmes, another provider expresses wonder at the lack of accountability.

Last year all we did was tick a box on a form to say that they had completed the relevant number of days. There was no checking by any of the SSCs to see that they had done what they should have.

(Sarah Routledge, 14-16 Manager, Meadowside)

The analysis of approaches to teaching and learning within the YA programme reveals a high level of consistency between providers and sectors, with all the students responding positively to the more informal, adult style adopted by teachers and tutors and the depth of relationships developed with peers and adults. That these teaching styles and methods have been adopted across all of the institutions and programmes involved in this study is more by coincidence than by an explicit agreement of best practice. The planning of future vocational education programmes would benefit from taking evidence such as this into account to ensure that teaching and learning follows similar approaches as standard.

Analysis of the experiences of the YA students and teachers interviewed reveals that much of their reflection on their YA work experience is in relation to the organisation and logistics involved. The potential affordances of extended work experience as a method of learning rather than merely a criterion box to be ticked in order to gain the qualification have yet to be fully explored and capitalised on by the YA providers. Had the programme continued to become embedded within the 14-16 curriculum, the richness of the experiences gained by the YA students through their work experience may have gained greater significance in their learning.

Work Experience

The value of work experience has been overlooked by the SSC's in gathering evidence about work-related skills and in engaging the YA students in sharing their experiences. Currently, as no evidence gathering is required by the providers, little evaluation or reflection on this activity takes place. It is seen simply as an objective to be achieved, the learning opportunities presented by it remain undeveloped. The fifty day (300 hours) work experience commitment is regarded as one of the most challenging aspects of the YA programme, organisationally speaking, for providers due to the difficulty in arranging suitable, enriching and sustainable work experience placements for 14 year olds. Even for a well established provider, the YA coordinator admits that it is difficult to set up and maintain.

The work experience is a real challenge for us, it has always been a challenge.

(Chris Shaw, Marketing Manager, Newtown)

Consequently, work experience is the most varied aspect of the YA both among and between sectors in terms of quality and quantity. Providers find loopholes in order to 'make up' hours through activities, many of which are essential to the ethos of the programme, but would not ordinarily be considered as work experience. For example, the YA students at Oak View School attend a residential

course for younger students in the role of student leaders, organising evening games and activities. They are then credited with fifty hours towards their work experience total for doing so. At Newtown Engineering, the YA students are credited a total of ten days (60 hours) for the time that they spend doing practical work in the on-site workshop. Similar activities are utilised within the FE college.

We bring a phone into the salon at college sometimes and practice answering it and making business calls.

(Nicola, Year 10, Meadowside)

Whilst simulation exercises such as this may be considered as highly valuable enrichment activities associated with each of the programmes, they are not the employer-based work experience that was intended. For some of the providers, in reality, only two weeks are spent in what would be considered genuine employer-based work placements, no more than is the national entitlement for all Key Stage 4 students. Whether or not this is impacting on the value of the programme for the students is debated. Huddleston (2011: 30) argues that employer based work experience with 'no explicit purpose or intended outcome' is, like any other educational activity, simply not worth doing. Thus, in some instances, if the providers cannot find appropriate placements for their students, they may well be better off filling the time commitment with the enrichment style activities that they know have clear learning outcomes.

For Huddleston (2011), the links between the theoretical elements of the engineering YA as studied in the classroom and its corresponding practical activity in the workshop are authentic and evidence of progressive work-related activity. Students learn about the theoretical aspects of workshop procedures in the classroom then carry out these procedures in a workplace using industry standard equipment. The output of the effort can also be judged against recognised industry standard criteria. Huddleston (2011) places limited value on college based salons and restaurants in that their purposes are training-based rather than business focused but she recognises the beneficial learning environments that they provide.

To start with we were just doing skills and now we spend most of our time doing service in the restaurant. We've got all our skills and now we're using them in real life situations.

(Tim, Year 11, Meadowside)

Stanley (2012: 165) argues that the environment within which the experience takes place can make the most significant difference to student learning. In a school or college classroom, there is an assumed emphasis on learning, but student learning can also be stimulated by other kinds of environment. The adult environment of a work placement can transform the disposition of young people to learn, performing a calculation in a workshop can carry a completely different meaning from what it would in a classroom. Students also learn from those around them, both by interacting with them and by sharing beliefs and knowledge.

The development of attitudes and aspirations can be powerfully influenced by social learning such as teamwork, competitive challenges, interviews, mentoring and work experience. (Stanley, 2012: 168)

Lave and Wenger (1991: 98) judged that by working alongside trained adults and experts in their trade, apprentice learners know that there is a field for the mature practice of what they are learning to do, this provides apprentices with continuity-based 'futures'. This notion supports the inclusion of the enrichment activities that form a significant function in the YA programmes in this study. By having the opportunity to work alongside their PE teachers in planning, organising and running a sports festival, the Sports YA students are experiencing a mature 'future' directly related to the programme that they are following. By operating within a particular community of practice the students are better exposed to opportunities for learning about the practices of the trade. Lave and Wenger (1991) also introduce the concept of legitimate peripheral participation, the engagement in genuine activity within the workplace that results in learning taking place. They emphasise that apprentices learn mostly in relation with other apprentices.

Where circulation of knowledge among peers and near peers is possible, it spreads exceedingly rapidly and effectively. (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 93)

Of the students interviewed in the current study, many were very positive about the work that they had been doing under the heading of what they understood to be work experience. Some had been financially rewarded for their efforts, some were offered paid work in the future and many felt that they had genuinely broadened their horizons.

I went to [a local processing plant] and was working on massive pumps. The work I was doing was above NVQ Level 3 they said. I worked on 3D drawings. All day I worked non stop and I felt very welcome there. In actual fact, they paid me quite a lot so I was very happy!
(Phillip, Year 11, Newtown)

The YAs on every programme are conversant in the numerical requirements of the work experience but not necessarily how it should be composed. When asked a very general question about it, one of the first responses expresses their knowledge about what they are required to do.

We have to complete 300 hours by the end of the programme. Each of the sessions that we run in the primary schools counts as two hours and we have already started doing some things in our own time to make up the rest of them.

(Jade, Year 10, Stanton)

The YAs at Stanton were unaware if they were likely to be working with any local sports-based employers as part of their programme or whether the completion of their hours was entirely through sessions associated with schools. The teacher in charge of the programme at Stanton School felt that this was unlikely and so hadn't discussed it with the students at this stage.

The work experience is made up of festivals, competitions and coaching within the cluster primary schools. There is little scope for expanding into local employers unless the students take that action for themselves as a Saturday job.

(Evelyn Cook, Programme Coordinator, Stanton)

Having not been an active partner in the commissioning process for the programme that she was delivering, the emphasis of the employer based work

experience as set out in the application is not as clear for Miss Cook as it may be for others who have written their own applications.

The best practices in relation to work experience in the institutions involved in this study were found in Meadowside College and Newtown Engineering. Both establishments had a rigorous and robust system of setting up work experience placements for their YA students outside of the delivery site utilising a network of established placements where the employers have been actively involved in the programme for a number of years and are familiar with the requirements. At Meadowside, the setting up of placements begins as early as the point of interview, when parents are present too.

With the current Year 10 students, when they come for their interview, they complete a work experience request and consent form there and then, so that their parents realise the importance of that aspect of the programme. We are then able to make it clear that this may have to be done on a weekend or in the evenings depending on which YA programme they are involved in. The catering YAs often have to work in the evenings and the Hair and Beauty YAs on a Saturday because that's what that particular work sector does!

(Sarah Routledge, 14-16 Manager, Meadowside)

For those YA students attending these providers, the work placements feature more often in their conversations and are a significant aspect of their experiences. This is in relation to what they have learned whilst on placement and also the time commitment involved.

I really enjoyed mine. I got offered a full apprenticeship at the end of it and I got to do loads of practical that I had never done before. It was quite scary but really fun.

(Rachael, Year 11, Newtown)

Not all of the experiences are positive for the students. Some find that they are very restricted as to what they are allowed to do or that their employers appear too busy or disinterested in them.

I felt really uncomfortable at my first placement because they weren't very good at letting me know what to do. The manager went out and they just kind

of left me to get on with things and then at the end of the day said to me that I shouldn't just stand around doing nothing!
(Abigail, Year 10, Meadowside)

The data from the present study provides only a glimpse into the world of the work experience associated with the YA programme but still hints strongly towards the findings of Fuller and Unwin (2003) in relation to their location of different approaches to apprenticeship learning on an expansive-restrictive continuum. Drawing on the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and situated learning theory, the expansive-restrictive continuum framework helps to analyse the processes by which apprentices become active participants in a community of practice. Whilst on a much smaller scale than the research of Fuller and Unwin (2003), the reflections of the YA students bear a striking resemblance to those heard from the older, full-time apprentices. Where the YA students have been allowed to learn through a variety of tasks requiring different aspects of knowledge, where they have been supported and made to feel part of the working community and where they have operated in different environments all point towards a more expansive experience as developed by Fuller and Unwin. In contrast, where the students have been limited in opportunities to fully participate in the work of the employer, driven by existing workplace cultures and personal relationships, there is evidence to suggest that their experience has been closer towards the restrictive end of the continuum. In terms of applicability of the framework, Fuller and Unwin argue that the extent to which an expansive or restrictive approach to apprenticeships is applied impacts upon the participants' ability to become part of the associated community of practice which subsequently impacts on the depth of the learning possible.

Fuller and Unwin (2003) consider this in relation to post-16 Apprenticeship programmes in England, concluding that many of the restrictive approaches encountered are a result of deep-rooted historical and cultural constraints rather than conscious management decisions. Taylor (2008) applied the framework in research relating to high-school apprenticeship programmes in Canada, concluding that in these instances too, restrictions were applied to learning as a result of

tensions in power relations or historical divisions in attitudes towards vocational education. In both instances, the researchers have been able to use the framework to suggest improvements to the programmes. Applied to the YA programme, the framework could be employed to illustrate the expansive-restrictive nature of workplace learning on different YA programmes and the variation between sectors, identifying best practice and making suggestions for future development.

This chapter has examined the data and previous research relating to the practices of the YA programme, as experienced by the YAs and their teachers and expressed through the interview process. The analytical themes within this category were identified as selection and recruitment, teaching and learning and work experience. Within each of the thematic analyses, the variations and consistencies between YA providers have been examined and areas of best practice that could be developed as a model for the pedagogical underpinning of future vocational education programmes identified.

The following chapter focuses on the ‘lived experience’ of participating in the YA programme, in response to the final research question posed at the beginning of the study. It explores the process of ‘becoming a YA’ through examining themes of identity, personal change and progression.

Chapter Six - Becoming a Young Apprentice

This chapter focuses on the ‘lived experience’ of participating in the YA programme in relation to the final research question posed by the study. During the data analysis process, the evidence suggested that what the YAs had to say about their experiences of the YA programme was significant to them on a personal level. Relationships with peers and significant adults, development of personal and interpersonal skills, experiences of change and perceptions of their futures featured highly in the comments made by the YAs from all delivery sites and on all YA programmes.

In seeking to make sense of these closely linked areas, the data were initially organised thematically under the headings of identity, personal change and progression as they appeared to capture the essence of what was being said whilst retaining the individual nature of the raw data. However, communicating and discussing these themes became problematic both logically and conceptually as in attempting to separate them the personal nature of the data, the very essence that was being conveyed, was lost in blurred boundaries between the themes. Consideration was then given as to how they could be presented and discussed simultaneously, constructing a picture of what was being said by the participants about their experiences of becoming a YA. The work of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991, 1998) was thereby adopted as the means by which to do so. Several of the key concepts as constructed by Lave and Wenger allow for a meaningful picture to be created of the journey experienced by the YA students through their YA programme. This chapter therefore seeks to present the data as the process of ‘becoming a’ YA. This begins with a discussion of the affordances of identifying the YA as a community of practice.

The YA as a Community of Practice

A Community of Practice is formed as groups of people pursue shared enterprises over time and is considered by Wenger (1998) as the primary unit of analysis for a social account of learning. Being a member of a community of practice implies

participation in an activity system about which the participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Communities of practice are defined as

A set of relations among persons, activity and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 98)

Communities of practice are everywhere and, as individuals, we all belong to several, simultaneously. They are located in family groups, between work colleagues, students at school and in leisure activities without clear delineation.

Communities of practice are an integral part of our everyday lives. They are so informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus, but for the same reasons they are also quite familiar. (Wenger, 1998: 7)

Based on this concept, Wenger believes that most individuals can identify communities of practice that they belong to and even distinguish between those where they are a core member and those in which their membership is more peripheral. Individuals within a community of practice in which they are a full member are in familiar territory, handle themselves competently, know how to engage with others and share the resources to communicate. It is with this premise in mind that I have conceptualised the YA programme as a community of practice in its own right. One in which there are identified norms, ideals and expectations of behaviour, one which is simultaneously unique to its institutional context but which retains commonality across providers and sectors. In a sense, each individual YA programme being a community of practice within the larger YA community of practice at the level of the occupational sector or even the programme as a whole. The data from the YAs and their teachers is suggestive that they are conscious of a sense of belonging in the way that they identify themselves as 'YAs' and the features that they associate with being successful as a YA.

We are expected to get on with things and think for ourselves. They won't just tell us the answers like they do at school sometimes, we have to work it out for ourselves. Also, the machines here are really dangerous so we have to be responsible and safe so that we don't hurt ourselves or anyone else.
(Alan, Year 10, Newtown)

The concept of the YA as a community of practice is evidenced further in the activities of the providers. In the Local Authority in which three out of the four providers is situated, regular meetings and networking sessions for providers are an integral aspect of the programme, during which best practice is shared and concerns discussed in relation to successful delivery of the YA programme. Without a formalised checklist of qualifying criteria, there exists a recognised ideal in relation to the common goal that the providers are working towards. A newsletter specific to the YA is produced and distributed to all schools and colleges within the county containing details of award ceremonies, individual success stories and information for the YAs and their providers relevant to each of the sectors involved.

Wenger identifies a learning process where the practices of the community create the potential curriculum, that which may be learned by newcomers with legitimate peripheral access.

In spite of curriculum, discipline and exhortation, the learning that is most personally transformative is the learning that involves membership in these communities of practice. (Wenger, 1998: 6)

The question of what is learned is answered in terms of identity formation and becoming full members of the relevant community of practice (Fuller, 2007). It is this aspect of personal change that is recognised by the YA students as being the significant factor in their relationship with the YA programme.

Becoming a successful member of a community of practice requires acquiring the right characteristics, and acquiring knowledge in the formal setting involves participation in the relevant community of practice. (Fuller, 2007: 22)

Jade, a Sport YA at Stanton School, identifies the process of change that she has observed in herself and her fellow YAs in relation to the leadership aspect of their programme.

Standing up in front of a group of children and teaching them seems like really scary but we've all just got on and done it.
(Jade, Year 10, Stanton)

Wenger (1998: 73) describes this process as 'mutual engagement', where individuals within a particular community of practice engage in actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another. In this instance, the practice of sports leadership is the action which has a shared meaning within the particular context of that YA group, or community of practice.

When examining this process of becoming members of a community of practice, the fact that individuals operate within many communities of practice simultaneously makes it complex to establish learning going on at any given moment and in which community of practice the learning is taking place. There is no distinct, linear progression from newcomer to fully fledged member and indeed, in some, cases, individuals never progress from more than peripheral members of a particular practice; they may, concurrently, have become an expert in another (Fuller, 2007).

From this perspective, the remainder of this chapter seeks to illustrate how the YA students perceive their journey towards gaining the relevant knowledge and characteristics to enable them to become full members of the YA community of practice. The YA students are required, over the lifetime of the programme, to participate successfully within a number of new communities of practice; that associated with the YA group itself, that within a new delivery site and that within their work experience placements. In each, there has to be a rapid negotiation and adaptation of behaviour and disposition, 'learning', in order to be successful in the given situation. The following comment from Ashley talking about his first leadership experience illustrates how he has adapted his normal behaviour to suit the situation.

I felt a bit nervous because they were only little kids and you have to get to their level and make sure they understand what they are doing.
(Ashley, Year 10, Stanton)

Wenger links the concept of a community of practice with the notion of identity, which is an aspect of the YA programme frequently discussed by the YAs in their interviews. Identity is integral to a social theory of learning and therefore inseparable from issues of practice and meaning (Wenger, 1998: 145).

The formation of a community of practice is also the negotiation of identities. (Wenger, 1998:149)

For the YAs, this begins with being given a new uniform to wear when they are actively involved in their YA programme. The next section of this chapter discusses their feelings towards this and how they perceive themselves when in their respective uniforms.

Identity – The Impact of a Uniform

Part of the funding provided for the YA programme is used, almost universally across the different YA strands and providers, to obtain a uniform for the students, relevant to the sector in which they are working. For example, chefs whites for the Hospitality & Catering students, beauticians smocks for the Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy students, tracksuits for the Sports students and so forth.

Wenger stresses that identity is more than an explicit self-image or identification and that caution must be adopted when categorising the demonstration of certain behaviours or traits in a given situation as the formation of identity as it is in reality a far more diverse and complex process. In practice, our identities are produced by the activities that we engage in, and those that we do not, and therefore the discussion has relevance in this setting.

On first analysing the data gained from the interviews and visits to each of the delivery sites, the theme of identity appeared strongly, initially in relation to the physical and visual impact made by the different YA groups in their unique

uniforms. As the analysis process became more in-depth and involved, my understanding of this process evolved into recognising that there was more to the process than simply looking like everyone else and being part of another uniformed group of young people. Thus the focus of the analysis shifted from a point where identity was perceived simply in relation to the physical commonalities between groups of individuals wearing the same clothing, a uniform, to the associated behaviours that that same group of individuals begins to adopt in relation to the uniform and the social conditions relative to it. Nicola makes a direct link between the wearing of her uniform and the attitude she adopts towards what she is doing.

I feel more grown up straight away.
(Nicola, Year 10, Meadowside)

This shift in analysis reflects the way in which the interview responses from the YAs also changed as the interviews progressed and supports the relevance of the longitudinal dimension of the methodology. Interview answers to questions pertaining to identity initially focused around the physical and material aspects of having been given a new uniform that was different to their peers and only worn by a select group of individuals.

I did think I was going to look like a bit of an idiot when I first put them on but then when I saw everyone else in them I thought they looked ok. My mum was quite impressed because they have our names on and we didn't have to pay for them.
(Tim, Year 10, Meadowside)

Follow up questions revealed that the wearing of the uniform, coupled within the environment within which the uniform was worn, elicited the development of positive behaviours and attitudes relative to the sector within which the YAs were operating. For example, adherence to safety guidelines, taking on responsibility, communicating more clearly and listening carefully to instructions. The wearing of a unique uniform has created universal agreement amongst the YAs that they are different from their peers, somehow special and is unanimously regarded as a positive aspect of their programme.

It was good to look different from the normal Oak View PE kit. When we first started, other people didn't really know what it was about. Now that there have been a couple of year groups doing the course, everyone around school knows who you are.

(Steven, Year 12, Oak View)

The students all seem to recognise the relevance of the uniforms that they wear and that it is aiming to instil a sense of professionalism into their work. They also recognise that it is indicative of the profession that their YA programme is related to. The catering students indicating that one of the reasons that they felt good about wearing their uniform was the fact that it was recognised as being what professional chefs wear.

It wouldn't feel like proper cooking. This is what you would wear if you were in a proper kitchen so it's more like the real experience.

(Tim, Year 10, Meadowside)

Tim recognises that his uniform makes the YA experience for him a step closer to being a 'real' experience without actually being the real thing. It does not take long for the students to recognise that the wearing of their YA uniform has an effect, generally positive, on the way on which they behave.

I feel more like....professional. I love it, it's brilliant!

(Abigail, Year 10, Meadowside)

Vickerstaff (2007) explains identity as a process of more than learning about a job, but also typically involving wider aspects of the world of work and membership of a specific work culture. In practice, this can include the wearing of a related uniform and the associated behavioural characteristics that go with it.

Teachers talk to you differently when you're in your kit. I don't know what it is but they do. I think people actually look up to us when we're wearing it.

(Charlotte, Year 11, Oak View)

The programme coordinator at Oak View expresses clearly to the Sport YA students that there are expectations of behaviour and attitude when wearing the

uniform. It represents an ideal of professionalism and is associated with a set of behavioural norms in relation to that profession.

I'm sure the reason that so many of our kids do well here is because they see these students and think to themselves 'I want to be like that, like them'. They are great role models and that is what you want your best kids to be.
(James Marshall, Director of Sport, Oak View)

Jaarsma et al (2011) describes this process of identifying with and learning from the physical environment within an apprenticeship context as materiality. They describe the learning that takes place as being as affected by the material surroundings and environment as much as it is affected by the formal input from instructors, teachers or mentors. Whilst this will be discussed further in the following section, it has relevance here in relation to the concept of identity and how individuals are perceived in relation to what they are wearing. The engineering YA students at Newtown explained that the older, post-16 apprentices in the workshop wore different coloured overalls depending upon who their employer was. The YA students learned about their position as the youngest and least qualified of those operating in the workshop and through interaction with the adult apprentices learned about the skills and knowledge required in order to progress. Jaarsma et al (2011) firmly believe that such skills and knowledge are not best obtained through formal education but by being in and interacting with the material environment within which the apprenticeship is based. The legacy of the students' involvement is also evident at Oak View School where those who have completed the YA programme at Key Stage 4 often stay on to study in the sixth form.

Even though we're in college and sixth form now and don't have the uniform to identify us, people still remember us as YA students. They still know what we did which is nice.
(Gemma, Year 12, Oak View)

Without the identifying features and sense of belonging that is brought by the wearing of the YA uniform, Gemma can still identify the characteristics of her membership of the YA community of practice that have remained with her.

Having discussed the impact that a collective identity has on developing a sense of belonging to the YA community of practice, the next section of this chapter addresses the concept of legitimate peripheral participation and how it applies to the experience of the YAs.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation – Working with the ‘masters’

The concept of legitimate peripheral participation is based on the belief that learning occurs most effectively when it is an incidental by-product of genuine participation in meaningful activities. Legitimate peripheral participation considers the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice, suggesting that the nature of the activity or process of engagement is important in the learning process. In terms of analysing learning, it is necessary to shift the analytical focus from the individual as learner to learning as participation in the social world (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 43).

A likely outcome from engaging in a task which is new to an individual is to extend what they already know. Billett (2004) argues that the sources of the knowledge to be learned are mostly social, requiring interaction with other individuals who already possess that knowledge or with physical artefacts which embody the knowledge to be learnt. Thus, the process of learning can be understood through the concept of participatory practices, both social and material (Billett, 2004).

Wenger (1998) argues strongly that education is maximised when there are interactions among generations. Teachers and other educators constitute learning resources, not only through their pedagogical or institutional roles, but also through their own membership in relevant communities of practice. If institutional practices displace the ability of educators to act as adults, they lose their most powerful teaching asset. In essence, what students need in developing their own identity is contact with a variety of adults who are willing to invite them into their adulthood (Wenger, 1998: 277). The reflections of the YAs in relation to their interactions with their YA teachers indicate that there is an engagement in this kind of learning

as a result of spending more time with the same teachers and in smaller group environments. The situation is more conducive to the teacher acting in a more relaxed fashion rather than eliciting a form of classroom management that may appear evident in other settings.

We all really, really bonded as a group and with our teacher. It kind of became like you were learning in different ways to all the other teachers.
(Gemma, Year 12, Oak View)

Colley, Hodkinson and Malcolm (2003), in a report for the Learning and Skills Research Centre (LSRC) conclude that it is not possible to separate formal and informal/non-formal learning in ways that have applicability or agreement. They argue that each has attributes that are more or less beneficial depending upon the context within which they are used. Thus adopting this more informal style of learning evidenced within the contexts under consideration may have beneficial consequences for the YAs. The process of engaging in activities that reflect the real-world practice of the sector is the argument upon which participation in the YA programme is believed to fulfill the requirements of legitimate peripheral participation. Apprentice learners need to know that there is a field for the mature practice of what they are learning to do. This provides learners with continuity-based futures (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 110).

I think it helps that we are working with people who are on a day release course, adults who have a day out of work to do a catering course. They are in the same kitchens as us so it almost feels like we are adults because we are working alongside them.
(Tim, Year 10, Meadowside)

The practice of working alongside adult apprentices in the engineering workshop, of delivering genuine sports festivals and competitions alongside their PE teachers, of preparing and serving food to genuine paying customers in a working restaurant, of conversing with and treating paying customers in the beauty salon are all examples of genuine participation in the activities of the community of practice of the various YA sectors, activities that the YA students are regularly involved in

throughout their two year programme. As outlined in the previous chapter, the activities where the theoretical element of learning is put into practice within industry specific environments are also highly valued as work-related learning pedagogy (Huddleston, 2011).

I went to [company name] Engineering. They had me doing practical work and got me really involved in what they were doing. They took me out to the different companies that they work with and introduced me to them and showed me round too, it was really good.

(Steph, Year 11, Newtown)

I really liked mine too. I got offered a full apprenticeship at the end of it and I got to do loads of practical that I had never done before. It was quite scary but really fun.

(Rachael, Year 11, Newtown)

These activities, undertaken by YAs as part of their studies, involve a process of ‘joint enterprise’ towards a common goal. Wenger (1998: 77) characterises this as a ‘negotiated response’ to the situation for which each participant carries ‘mutual accountability’. By involving the YAs in work-related enterprises such as those outlined here, there is an underlying assumption that the YAs are accepting their role in the process and becoming partly accountable for the outcome.

For Jaarsma et al (2011: 439), apprenticeship learning is as much a material process as it is a social process. The role of the material environment and the interaction with other significant individuals and how they interact with the material environment should be considered as factors in the learning process. Jaarsma et al interpret the material environment as the physical characteristics, the use of specific tools, the topography of the area and the interaction with significant ‘others’. This is reflected in the interview data, as the YA students speak of the specific environments within which they are operating and how their behaviour has adapted in response to its demands.

Putting on safety goggles and a lab coat every time you enter the workshop just seems like normal now.

(Steph, Year 11, Newtown)

References to the interactions with their teachers and tutors also feature regularly through the interviews. These would be considered by Jaarsma et al to come into the category of ‘significant others’ and is further evidence of the YA students engaging with the material and social context of their particular YA (Billet, 2004).

The instructors are completely different to our teachers. They treat us more like adults and you get more responsibility.
(Jason, Year 11, Newtown)

As with this comment from Jason, many of the YA students have associated the concept of differing relationships with their teachers to adaptations in their behaviour, the implication of being treated more as adults is that they then act in such a way. Attributes such as independence, maturity, responsibility and confidence serve as examples of the perceived ‘adult’ characteristics that the YAs feel they have gained from the particular context of the YA programme.

This section has discussed the notion that the activities in which the YA students are engaged over the duration of their programme constitute legitimate peripheral participation. It has proposed that the YAs are engaged in processes that facilitate learning and progress them towards a more central membership within the YA community of practice. The next section considers the process by which the students ‘become a’ YA, the way that being labeled as such impacts on their sense of belonging and the characteristic behavioural traits that they adopt in self-labeling themselves as such.

Learning as Becoming – I am a YA

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that ‘becoming a’ requires a transformation of the individuals involved, with mastery not located in particular individual experts but in the organisation of the occupational practice. Wortham (2006: 32), states that ‘when socially identified, an individual often enacts a mode of being’ and that young people are essentially ‘apprenticed into a type of institutional practice’, developing a sense of how to be in different situations.

I find it completely different, like I'm two different people sort of. You know, the same person but behaving in different ways because of where you are and what is expected of you.
(Matt, Year 11, Newtown)

Matt is conscious that he is operating within different social contexts that require him to display different behavioural attributes. The process that he has identified here supports Wenger's (1998: 82) idea of 'shared repertoire', where participants within communities of practice create shared resources for the negotiation of meaning within that practice.

The repertoire of a community of practice includes routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence.
(Wenger, 1998: 83)

Thus, for Matt, the outcome of having a shared repertoire within his YA programme that is different to the shared repertoire associated with the rest of his school studies makes him aware that he acts, behaves and communicates differently in those two contexts.

'Becoming a' is both taking on the label and giving the label specific meanings through engagement in practice (Wenger, 1998: 150). Because learning transforms who we are and what we do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming. Gemma, one of the students interviewed who had already completed her YA programme supports this concept of becoming something or someone in her view of the impact that the YA had on her as an individual.

It does change you as a person I think. Like your personality, confidence and things like that, more responsible and that as well.
(Gemma, Year 12, Oak View)

Wenger also identifies the process of becoming as offering a trajectory for young people, an identifiable future directly related to a recognised past and present. For

the YAs, this embodies the success of the programme in that they could identify a change in their behaviour and attitude from that expected of them in their YA that affected their participation in their other subjects.

A large number of the students were able to report a positive impact on their school work as a result of their experiences on the YA programme. The students can relate to a 'past' where they lacked interest and motivation, to a 'present' which is engaging them in positive learning experiences, to a 'future' in which they perceive themselves as being more successful than they would have been without the intervention of the YA programme in their lives.

At school, most people are younger than you so you learn to act more maturely here where people are older. We've had more responsibility in the second year as well. It has affected the way that I behave back at school and at home as well.

(Poppy, Year 11, Meadowside)

Throughout the interview data, the adults involved in the delivery of the programmes refer to the students as 'YAs'. From my own experience, this is how each cohort of students on the programme has become known, whether collectively, 'the YAs are organising a festival today' or individually, 'Steph is a YA, isn't she?' This term of reference further encapsulates the notion of the YA programme as a community of practice in its own right, one in which the members are identified from outside, by 'non-members', as well as by the students themselves, 'I am a YA'. Through regular positive referrals to the work of the YA group, this soon gains recognition in the minds of the students as a positive image with which to be affiliated and is thus taken on by the students themselves when talking about themselves. It would be an interesting comparison if the public references were generally negative in nature, would the students still refer to themselves in that fashion in the same way, would they associate themselves with the group so readily? As, in the providers in this study and in the many others that I have had personal contact with over my own involvement in the programme, the collective identity of the YA is positive, it is one which the students readily associate themselves with. The YA students do not make the correlation between

their success as YAs and the contribution of that success to the widespread positive image that the term has within their institutional context. For them, it is the programme that has created the image for them to become associated with, not the other way round.

This section of the chapter has discussed the idea of 'becoming a' YA and the ready association that the providers and YAs make with the title YA as a term of reference. In connecting with the practices of the YA community, the YAs thus identify themselves as members of that community and the associated image that that creates. The next and final section of this chapter addresses the YAs' perceptions of the future and how they believe it to have been influenced by their involvement in the YA programme.

Progressing – And so to the Future

During the interview process, the YAs articulated a direct positive correlation between participation in the YA programme and their future lives. The new skills and qualities gained are spoken about as skills for life, impacting on a new, brighter future than that which they had perceived before the YA programme.

I was, like, really shy and stuttering and things but now that the course is over and we're in the sixth from, I'm fine with getting up and doing presentations. I've got a lot more confident.
(Joshua, Year 12, Oak View)

This section aims to consider the impact of the YA programme upon the way in which the YA students construct their futures in the light of what they have gained from the YA programme.

The progression routes of the YAs on completion of their programme is one of the few statistical criteria upon which the programme has been judged over the time that it has been operational. The ideal of the programme initially was that 50% of the students would continue with employer-based apprenticeship programmes following their YA course, the remainder being able to access the full range of

available courses post-16. In reality, the take up of post-16 apprenticeship by YA students is low, just 7% in the present study, the majority of the students following BTEC or A level routes post-16. This is significantly less than the findings of the YPLA evaluation of Cohort 3, where 19% of those whose destination was known progressed onto an Apprenticeship (2010: 8). The nature of the sample population within the present study is a contributing factor in this discrepancy. In this study, a large proportion of the YA students are participating in the Sport sector where progression onto Apprenticeship is not an option. Despite this, there are examples of students within the study sample for whom the apprenticeship route is their chosen pathway.

I've applied for two apprenticeships so I am intending to go on developing my skills.

(Phillip, Year 11, Newtown)

Among the YA students there is an overwhelmingly positive image towards the impact that the YA programme has had on them as individuals and the relationship that has with their perceptions of the future. Comments such as the one by Andrew below who has recognised the need for certain subjects that he is studying at school if he wishes to be successful in his ambition of continuing with a career in engineering are typical of the views of the YAs involved in the study.

I work much harder in maths and science now because I know that I need them in order to carry on with engineering.

(Andrew, Year 10, Newtown)

Gemma, now in the sixth form at Oak View School, relates her future career aspirations to the capital gained from her participation in the YA programme in the form of qualifications and experience.

Every company that I have sent my CV to, even if they haven't anything on offer, have said that its really impressive that I have all these qualifications and experiences to offer and that's all come from the YA. So, it's great for the future and not just for now.

(Gemma, Year 12, Oak View)

Emily, another student at Oak View School, has a general view that her participation in what for her has been a high profile programme at her school is going to give her a head start over her peers in terms of gaining employment and university places.

I don't know but I think the YA opens doors for you.
(Emily, Year 10, Oak View)

Marson-Smith, Golden and McCrone (2009: 8) state that 'evidence from the YA programme suggests that young people who have studied on these programmes progress onto a variety of routes at post-16 level.' The majority of the young people participating in the first cohort of the YA programme felt that their participation had influenced their choice of post-16 participation; in particular by increasing their awareness of opportunities that were available to them after Year 11. This echoes the findings here in that most of the YA students interviewed said that the YA had made them more interested in pursuing a career in the particular sector in which they had been studying.

In considering the reasons behind the YAs decisions to follow BTEC and A level qualifications post-16 rather than continuing along the Apprenticeship route, the notion of risk is believed to be a significant factor (Beck, Fuller & Unwin, 2006). Whilst opting for what might be perceived as a higher risk pathway at 14-16, one that challenges the norm, the students were already aware that if they decided not to pursue that particular vocational pathway further, they still had all their options open to them on completion. This was one of the intentional design features of the YA programme, in that the students were not restricted as to what they could choose to do post-16 by what they had chosen to do at 14. The issue at 16 is that the element of risk is that much greater. The perceived commitment to a career choice is greater than if a range of A level courses are studied which seem to keep more options open for longer, thus minimising 'risk'.

Hoeschler et al (2010) found that despite the best efforts of the Labour government in making Higher Education accessible to all, the preferred and by far the most successful route into the majority of HE institutions and courses remains via A - levels. It is this argument that supports methods of combining academic and vocational study for much longer so that students are not forced into this area of risk negotiation at such an early age. The continuation of study towards common core subjects even at post-16 level, alongside vocational courses would serve to minimise the risk involved and perhaps encourage more students to continue with the choices they had made earlier. One of the YA students on the engineering course explains that whilst she is interested in pursuing a career within engineering, she wants the safety net of having A-level qualifications behind her before committing to that direction. She states that instead of following an apprenticeship route,

I'm going to go to college. But they [the employer that she had completed her work placement with] said that there would be a place open for me if I wanted to go back after college which was really nice.

I'm taking A-levels in Health & Social Care, Psychology, Art and Maths.
(Beth, Year 11, Newtown)

In Beth's mind, the 'risk' associated with following a non-traditional career path has been minimised by following what she perceives to be safer route first.

Many of the students interviewed demonstrate the desire and ambition to progress to HE despite having chosen to follow a vocational route for part of their curriculum.

I'd like to carry on doing some sport and go to college. I don't think I'll get into university, I'm not clever enough.

(Taylor, Year 10, Stanton)

I want to go to Loughborough because it's the best sports university in the UK.

(Connor, Year 10, Oak View)

These two contrasting comments made by YA students from the two schools are indicative of the aspirations held by their peers and demonstrate the students

taking on the characteristics of the environment in which they are operating. Thus, the students at Oak View, where the programme is delivered by senior teachers, is well funded and consistently promoted as being for the best students engenders in the students the idea that they are successful and that they should have high aspirations of themselves. In contrast, the students at Stanton school, which receives no direct funding, is delivered by a relatively junior member of staff and is not well publicised throughout the school community has yet to make an impact upon the future aspirations of the students involved, eliciting less ambition in their perceptions of their futures.

This serves to demonstrate the different communities of practice created within different institutions that exist under the overarching communities of practice that are the YA programme within the Sport sector and the YA programme as a whole. While there are unifying characteristics within both institutions, the process of 'becoming a' YA shows greater depth and development at Oak View than at Stanton. In critically analysing the YA programme through the framework of a community of practice, it is possible to identify where YA communities of practice are more fully formed than in others. From the evidence presented by the YAs and their teachers, the key characteristics of practice as identified by Wenger (1998), mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire, are more clearly identifiable in contexts such as Oak View and Newtown than in Stanton for example.

At Oak View School, there is a clear vision of what being a YA means in practice, one that is recognised and acknowledged by both the teachers and the students. This manifests itself through high expectations of appearance, attitude and positive behaviour at all times, not merely when in YA kit. The recognition that younger students look up to the YA students as aspirational role models reflects a well established community within which new members understand their position and the common goal they are working towards, the joint enterprise. At Newtown, the presence of adult apprentices within the workshop environment provides a setting in which the YA's also have the opportunity to become peripheral members of the

wider community of practice that is engineering and its associated workshop practices. This is also evident at Meadowside where the YA students have the opportunity to work within the college salon and restaurant with both older, more qualified students within their sector in addition to members of the public. The opportunity to develop and become proficient in the shared repertoires of these environments is key in creating and maintaining the community of practice that is the YA in those particular sectors.

That the YA programme has only been established for a single cohort at Stanton impacts significantly upon the identification of the community of practice that is the YA there. The YA students are not as clear about their identity as YA's, the programme tutors vision of what the YA is about is not as defined and the opportunities to experience and engage in joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire are not as well developed as in those institutions within the sample that have been providing the YA programme for a number of cohorts. This demonstrates that the development of a recognisable community of practice is a process rather than a single action or decision; it does not merely spring into existence fully formed. If a positive link to practice was evidenced in those institutions where the YA community of practice is strongest, then further investigation into the sharing of best practice would be wholly justified.

Further discussion of the affordances and limitations of using the community of practice framework as a tool for analysis takes place in the following chapter.

This chapter has proposed the notion of the YA as a community of practice, one with recognised characteristics of behaviour and attitudes towards work. Consideration has been given to the impact of the respective uniforms towards creating the community and the relationships that the students have with the uniform and its associated public image. Evidence to suggest that the activities that the YA students are engaged in constitute legitimate peripheral participation has been presented and the perceptions of the students towards their futures discussed. The work of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in relation to communities

of practice has been utilised as a framework within which to locate these discussions. The next chapter of this study seeks to discuss the key findings of the research, identifying strengths and limitations and suggesting areas for future study. The implications of the research upon practice and pedagogy are also considered.

Chapter Seven – Discussion of Research Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to draw together the findings of the research as presented in the preceding chapters in response to the research questions and in relation to existing literature. The research questions posed at the beginning of the study were:

- How are the practices of the Young Apprenticeship programme experienced by the students and adults involved in it?
- How does this experience differ based on the institutional context?
- Why could it be considered to be a ‘lived experience’ for the students?

The chapter aims to highlight where the present study contributes to the evidence and knowledge surrounding the YA programme. Firstly, the key findings relating to the students’ and adults experiences of the YA programme are discussed in relation to previous research. Secondly, the similarities and differences between the institutions in relation to the delivery of the programme are considered, particularly with respect to the impact on the students’ experiences of the programme. Thought is also given to the reciprocal impact of the YA programme on the institutions themselves. Finally, the chapter presents a critical reflection of the operational status of the community of practice framework as a means by which to analyse learning in empirical research settings.

The Experiences of the YA Programme

In evaluating the success of the first cohort on the YA programme, Ofsted (2005) declared a substantial variation in the pedagogies employed by providers. Without making this a direct criticism of the programme, they were raising early awareness of the fact that students were gaining very different experiences depending upon what and where they were studying within the YA programme. Harkin (2005), Huddleston and Unwin (2007), Davies and Biesta (2007) and Lumby (2007) all document the affordances and limitations of students aged between 14 and 16 years of age following programmes of study in FE colleges. There is a general

consensus among these researchers that the younger students do benefit from the more adult environment, specialist equipment, smaller class sizes and less formal styles of teaching where teachers are acting more as facilitators than classroom managers. This is supported by the YAs participating in the present study who have articulated their preferences for the more relaxed teaching styles, reliance on independent learning and greater expectations in terms of responsibility and accountability. Lumby (2007) acknowledges that engagement with a more adult world using experiential and social forms of learning is what benefits the students most. Harkin (2005) refers to a form of 'status' denied at school relating to the relationships with tutors that are more containing than restricting, based on mutual respect, trust, increased freedom, different forms of communication and humour, attributes similarly identified in the previous chapters by the YAs in their interviews. The behaviour modeling and instructional input from practising experts in YA programme sectors such as catering, engineering and hairdressing has been acknowledged by the YAs as being inspiring and motivational, supporting the work of Huddleston (2012) in this respect.

Whilst the findings are supportive of existing research with respect to the experiences of the YA students, there is a significant gap in contemporary research relating to the experiences of teachers delivering programmes such as the YA. Huddleston and Unwin (1997) and Huddleston and Stanley (2012) examine the pedagogy of Vocational Education and Training (VET) and the teaching and learning of vocational programmes but empirical research considering the teachers' experiences of YA programmes is scarce. Earlier research relating to teachers experiences of delivering new vocational education programmes was in relation to TVEI (Robinson, Williams & Taylor, 1991; Helsby & Saunders, 1993).

In studying the evidence gathered from the teachers involved in the present study, there is a significant link to the experiences of teachers documented during the TVEI initiative of the 1980's in relation to their experiences of working on the YA programme. Research relating to the TVEI era acknowledged that the teachers were given the creative freedom to develop a curriculum with local employers and

training providers that they deemed appropriate for their students. Yeomans (1996) stated that teachers claimed it to be the most fulfilling and rewarding time of their careers, creating stimulating developments. There is a strong resemblance to this in the evidence of the teachers involved in the YA programme, prompting the consideration that further research in comparing the two programmes and their impact on schools and teachers would be valuable. When asked if, given the opportunity, he would deliver the YA programme again, James Marshall from Oak View School responded ‘Oh yes, definitely!’

Yeomans (1996: 144) also expressed the belief that ‘new curricula do not spring fully formed into practice’, suggesting that time must be given for new programmes to become established and for areas of best practice to be identified within the contextual setting. This is evidenced in the present study when comparisons are drawn between those institutions in which the YA programme has been running for several cohorts and the one institution in which it has yet to complete its first. In a rare piece of research in this area, Stanley (2011) considers the changes in school structures to those at the time of TVEI. Responsibilities, teaching posts and curriculum structures put in place for TVEI, much as they have been for the YA programme, are unlikely to be sustained now that the programme has ended, much as they weren’t after the closure of TVEI. The lasting legacy, both positive and negative, on teachers and school structures should be subject to greater scrutiny and is considered further in the concluding chapter.

In relation to the notion of personal change and the ‘lived experience’, the YAs were able to identify and articulate changes in themselves over the two year period of the YA programme that they attributed directly to their participation in the YA. Once again, the evidence supports existing research in some aspects but adds to the body of knowledge in others. In supporting existing research, the current study reflects the findings of Lumby (2007), who acknowledges a greater affinity with core curriculum subjects through the potentially liberating and invigorating experiences gained in studying at a FE college or training provider. Marson-Smith, Golden and McCrone (2009) evidence that those who have studied on the YA

programme progress onto a variety of routes at post-16 level and that the majority feel that their involvement in the YA programme has influenced their progression choices by raising awareness of what is available. What can be seen in the present study that adds to this body of knowledge is the perceived development of more adult behavioural attributes such as greater confidence, better communication and leadership skills, improved organisation and a more mature sense of responsibility. There is a gap in existing research in relation to the development of these personal skills and qualities during the 14-16 phase of education.

This chapter continues by examining the impact of the institutional setting on the YAs experiences of the YA programme in response to the second of the research questions.

The Institutional Impact

As mentioned previously, in an early evaluation of the YA programme, Ofsted (2005) acknowledged that there was significant variation between programmes depending on where and how they were delivered. Evaluative reports conducted and produced by the SSCs at the end of a particular cohorts' participation lack detail about specific programmes operating in specific institutions. Thus the evidence considered here in relation to this aspect adds to the current body of knowledge. The following is a summary of the key differences and similarities between the institutions involved in the YA programme. Further research of a case study nature would be of value in developing the key themes that are presented here.

The key differences that emerge between the institutions involved in this study include the time allocation for the YA on the curriculum, formal qualifications gained by the students as part of their YA package, organisation of work experience, selection and recruitment procedures and the profile or 'status' of the YA students within their institutional settings.

Only one of the four institutions follows the two day per week model of delivery as stipulated by the DfE and LSC when the programme was first established. Meadowside College operates a collaborative timetable across the consortium in which it is situated where all the schools have common allocated days when the YA programme is delivered. Even this process is restricted to the students within Year 10 however, so that during their second year of the programme, much of their work experience has to be fulfilled in their own time, the one remaining common YA day being used to complete the requirements of the mandatory qualifications. The remaining institutions all deliver the programme in less than the two day allocation, the outstanding time being made up as out of school hours sessions that the YAs are expected to commit themselves to. The impact of this upon the students is witnessed through the time commitment for YA related activities, particularly work experience, outside of their normal curriculum time. Without a high level of motivation and considerable parental support, many of the students would be unable to fulfil the requirements of the programme and it is questionable as to whether this should be the case for such a young age group. Future development needs to ensure that programmes such as the YA have mandatory time allocations, ensuring consistency of delivery across all sectors and providers.

As has been identified in the previous chapters, the way in which the work experience is delivered varies significantly between institutions, with the most highly developed being evidenced at Newtown engineering and Meadowside College. These providers acknowledge that existing links with employers through the delivery of other established vocational courses helps considerably in this respect. In the schools delivering the sports courses, much less time, if any, is spent in genuine employer placement, the experience being made up of enrichment style activities such as the organisation and delivery of sports competitions, courses and festivals for the local community of schools and within their own school, the focus being almost entirely on sports leadership and coaching as opposed to management and the leisure industry.

The impact of these differences on the YA experience for the students involved is important to consider in relation to quality assurance processes and the work-related skills gained as a result of completing the programme. The YAs themselves do not attach particular significance to it as they are, in general, unaware of the structure of YA programmes other than their own and are therefore not in a position to compare their experiences with those of other YAs. This too, highlights the potential for further research. None of the institutions make effective use of the work ‘experience’ in terms of evaluative and reflective work by the students about what they have learned. Raising awareness of the opportunities for evaluative and reflective work following employer placements within vocational education programmes would further enrich the potential of the experience.

The selection and recruitment process for each of the institutions is another significant variation focused on by the YA students themselves during the interviews, each deeming it relevant in different ways. There is a clear difference between those institutions who have well established YA programmes that have been in operation for more than a single cohort. These include letters of application, taster days, interviews and a genuine process of selection as opposed to merely accepting everyone who has shown an interest in participating in the programme. The processes set up by the different institutions are recognised as having importance in establishing expectations of commitment, behaviour and attitude. Inferring a sense of importance by having an interview process, even if everyone is accepted, raises the profile of the programme that the students are embarking on and as can be seen by the comments of the YA students, is something that they remember well and attach particular significance to.

The advantages gained in having some knowledge and understanding of the programme and its differing demands is evidenced in the different relationships that the institutions have with their feeder schools. Newtown Engineering, having been operating the YA programme for a number of years, has well-established relationships with its local schools who know exactly what the programme entails and what is expected of the students on the programme. At Stanton School, where

the programme is new, the coordinating teacher is struggling to get the message across to her local schools and even to the teachers in her own school about the YA programme and the academic and behavioural attributes that are expected of applicants. For the sake of future vocational programmes such as the YA, a common application and selection procedure across all institutions and sectors would ensure consistency and add legitimacy to the process.

There is a difference in the experiences of the students who remain on their home school site to follow the programme as in the case of the two sports YA programmes involved in the current study and those students for whom their programme is delivered either in a FE College or training provider. At Oak View School, the YA students in their distinctive uniform are used to embody the example of what the other students should be aspiring to. They are actively involved in public activities around the school, regularly mentioned in assemblies and newsletters and generally celebrated within the school community. The YA students themselves are aware of this in the evidence they give about being 'looked up to' by younger students. In comparison, the students following their YA programme at the FE College said that the majority of their teachers and peers back at their home schools had little idea what they did when they were away from school on their YA days, making them very much a hidden population outside of their YA contexts. For them, the recognition as a YA is based within the college or training provider environment where, far from being the role models that others aspire to, they are the youngest and least qualified of the community within which they are studying.

In examining the differences between the institutions, it is important to acknowledge the characteristics of each institution and how this impacts on the way in which they YA is constructed within that setting. Oak View School, for example, is an oversubscribed, high achieving school located within an affluent community, where there is a pervading ethos of success. The YA programme operating there has been developed under this contextual setting and therefore reflects the nature of the school. The expectations of the students, in terms of

behaviour and attainment are high, both within their YA studies and in the rest of their curriculum. The programme is well funded and managed by a knowledgeable and experienced senior member of staff who has manipulated the implementation of the programme in order to create a cohort of students to whom the younger students in the school can aspire. Compare this to Stanton School, which is undersubscribed, recently out of Special Measures, has a new senior leadership team and is located in an area of social deprivation. The programme is being coordinated and delivered by a young member of staff, openly lacking in knowledge about the YA, with little in the way of funding. The students, although doing similar activities in an equally challenging timetable to the YAs at Oak View, are not celebrated in the same way, reflective of the operational status of the school itself.

From my own personal perspective, having planned and delivered the YA programme myself, the similarities between YA programmes and institutions are more striking in that they have emerged unwittingly, in the absence of collaborative planning, by the teachers and programme coordinators sharing a vision as to what the YA programme is about based on a relatively loose and un-prescribed programme specification. The evidence suggests that the key similarities between the institutions and the YA programmes that they deliver lie in the sense of identity created by the unique uniforms provided to the YA students, expectations of behaviour embodied by all the providers, relationships between YAs and their teachers and overwhelming recognition of the potential of the programme. It is these unifying characteristics that have helped to identify the YA as a community of practice, considered further in the next section of this chapter.

All the institutions across all sectors provide some form of specific uniform for the YA students, an aspect of the programme recognised as significant by the YAs. The reasons provided for this stem back to arguments in favour of the use of a uniform in any given setting, the notion of a collective identity, clothing that is suitable, appropriate and safe to work in, negating any differences in material wealth between the members of the particular group. It is perceived as creating a

sense of professionalism related to the sector within which they are working and is something that the YAs are generally proud to wear and be seen wearing. The physical association goes some way toward developing a sense of identity and an affinity with the YA programme and is characteristic of the YA community of practice. The point of interest here is that there is no reference to a specific uniform in any of the DfE specification guidance or SSC materials for any of the YA programmes. Each of the providers has taken the decision to do so of their own volition, sharing in a common interpretation of the programmes aims and ideals.

Throughout the research process, the feedback from both teachers and students involved with the YA programme was the high expectation of behaviour associated with following the programme. This was evident either in terms of being in a specialist environment where significant dangers were present, such as the engineering workshop or the college kitchens or in the situation such as Oak View where it was made clear to the YA students that they were the role models for the rest of the school population. In all these contexts, the students were expected to demonstrate more adult characteristics of behaviour, such as being responsible for their own learning, following specific health and safety guidelines and demonstrating leadership qualities. This also related to the way in which they were expected to approach learning and work associated with the programme. Independence, self-motivation and organisation are characteristics that the YAs acknowledge their teachers expected of them. They also recognised that this was different to the way in which they were treated by many of their other subject teachers. The idea of being 'spoon fed' was raised by one of the YAs when comparing the way in which work was approached by teachers in other subjects. These high expectations were never questioned by any of the YAs during the data collection process as being unrealistic. The impression from the students is that they were accepted, almost welcomed, as if it provided further evidence that they were privileged to be on the programme and that not all of their peers would be able to keep up with what was expected of them.

Closely aligned with this phenomenon is the significance placed by the YAs on their relationships with their YA teachers, all of them recognising that the adults involved in their programmes have impacted significantly on them as people. They describe and demonstrate more informal, friendlier, relaxed relationships with these individuals than with their other teachers. This could be due to a variety of factors, not least the large amount of time that is spent with the same adults during the two year programme. Other factors include the institutional context, being in a college or training provider environment where more adult relationships are the norm and the configuration of the individual cohort on each of the YA programmes, the nature of which is going to be different to the average class of students in a Maths or English lesson for example. The mutual respect and trust between the students and their teachers was something regularly remarked upon in the field-notes taken during the research process, that the atmosphere and 'banter' between the students and adults was based on understanding and good humour in all of the settings. Once again, this acknowledges the significance of the pedagogical approaches encountered in the delivery of the YA programme, where the adults are enabled to act more as facilitators than as classroom managers.

The final similarity encountered through the research was the overwhelming emphasis on the positive outcomes of the programme that emanated from both the students and the adults interviewed. The students all stated that they have gained from the YA programme, whether personal skills, qualifications, knowledge or experience. For the teachers, it was evidenced in the examples given of particular students' success or in the development of a strong relationship with a particular group of students. The outcomes of the programmes vary through the differences highlighted at the beginning of this section, but the ethos and spirit of the programme is uniform across the different institutions. There were very few opinions articulated that were not a positive reflection of the programme as a whole.

It captures people, staff and students alike.
(James Marshall, Director of Sport, Oak View)

As highlighted when considering the differences between the institutions, the contextual setting of these similarities needs to be taken into consideration in future research around vocational education, in particular programmes such as the YA which can be delivered in a variety of settings. In this particular instance, the similarities between the context of Meadowside College and Newtown Engineering would suggest that many of the characteristics highlighted here are simply a result of their normal operational practices. In not being schools, and in dealing mainly with an adult population, the methods of delivery and processes involved will not be perceived as anything innovative, but are reflective of their general practice. What makes them of particular significance to the YA students is in the contrast to their normal school experiences.

The next section of this chapter considers the use of the community of practice framework as a means by which to analyse learning in social settings within empirical research, drawing upon the work of a number of researchers who have critically reflected on the process.

The Community of Practice Framework

In the literature review and in Chapter Six, the concept of a community of practice was presented as a means by which to analyse the data gathered during the research process and as a potential framework by which to analyse and compare YA programmes in different sectors and different institutions in the future. In doing so, it is important to consider and critically reflect upon the affordances and limitations of the community of practice framework as an analytical tool.

Since its first introduction by Lave and Wenger in 1991, the concept of a community of practice has been the focus of much discussion and consideration, including by Wenger himself (1998). Included in this ongoing development have been examples of researchers utilising the framework within empirical research studies as an analytical tool (Jewson, Hughes & Unwin, 2007; Fuller, 2007b; Goodwin, 2007; James, 2007). As in the present study, the process of doing so has led to critical reflection on the potential of the concept, throwing up ‘new

challenges for the theory and giving a real world perspective' (Jewson, Hughes & Unwin, 2007: 11). This section of the chapter considers some of the arguments presented by these researchers in connection with the findings of the present study. Jewson, Hughes and Unwin (2007: 14) reflect on communities of practice as 'a rich, useful and potentially fruitful concept, but one which requires considerable further development, specification and illustration.'

In relation to the YA programme and the present research, the use of the community of practice framework has enabled consideration of the individual, 'lived' aspect of the evidence presented by the YA students, highlighted the common features and characteristics that make each programme and each YA what they are, facilitated comparison between programmes, sectors and institutions based on the common features that make up the community of practice that is the YA and allowed learning in relation to the YA to be evaluated through observations of the progress that is being made towards membership of the community of practice and through workplace participation. Fuller (2007) acknowledges that conceptualising learning as a social practice provides a strong theoretical foundation from which to research learning in a variety of workplace settings but is also quick to establish that the debate on how research involving communities of practice can be taken forward, particularly with regard to its empirical operationalisation, is far from over.

In discussing the community of practice framework, Wenger (1998) emphasises that communities of practice already exist throughout societies, both realised and unrealised. Using them as a means by which to analyse learning is a matter of natural progression.

Couching organisational or educational issues in terms of a coherent, established conceptual framework provides new ways to think about them. (Wenger, 1998: 240).

Within the present study, one of the significant aspects of the YA programme as identified by the students was their relationship with the adults involved in the

delivery of their programme. For Wenger (1998), this would be a highly significant feature of the community of practice and the processes of learning that occur within it. ‘Newcomers’ need to be able to connect with the mature members of the community in order for learning to take place, particularly if those mature members are active in genuine activities related to the community of practice.

Being an active practitioner with an authentic form of participation might be one of the most deeply essential requirements for teaching. (Wenger, 1998: 227)

Thus having the opportunity to engage in legitimate participation with their teachers in running sports festivals, preparing food for customers in the college restaurant or operating machinery next to employed apprentices in the workshop, as evidenced in the practices of the YA programmes involved in this study fulfills Wenger’s criteria, opening up the possibility for ‘mutual engagement that can become an invitation to participation’ (1998: 229). From the point of view of the YAs, acceptance by and interaction with acknowledged adept practitioners, as seen in the present study, makes learning legitimate and of value (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 110). Goodwin (2007) also supports this evidence in concluding that the young workers involved in his research identified their interaction with older workers as significant in the learning process and that mixing with the older workers had changed their behaviours and attitudes. Goodwin believes that Lave and Wenger do not actually make enough of this process, acknowledging the development of occupational behaviours but missing the importance of the acquisition of adult behavioural standards as part of the transition process (Goodwin, 2007: 106). Billett (2007) concluded that both theorists and practitioners have welcomed the community of practice concept as a premise to understand how learning occurs through individuals’ engagement with social partners and institutions. From this perspective, in terms of analysing how individual students ‘become a’ YA, this would appear to be an ideal framework.

Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasised, in their initial work, that communities of practice were not static social situations, but dynamic, always in a state of flux due

to the constant cycle of the leaving of full members and the arrival of newcomers. Newcomers bring their own take on things and therefore the community of practice is continually evolving. This is particularly relevant to the YA community of practice where the students themselves are only active within the community of practice for the two year duration of the programme. Changes to the teachers and course tutors during the lifetime of the programme could also be a possibility. Lave and Wenger (1991: 111) do not perceive this as problematic. Assuming that 'continual interaction on new perspectives is sanctioned,' the community of practice continues to function.

Whilst these opportunities presented by the community of practice framework can be directly related to characteristics of the YA programme and the opportunities presented by the conceptualising of the YA as a community of practice appear straightforward, critical reflection of the limitations would appear wise. Jewson, Hughes and Unwin (2007: 27) state that one of the purposes of their book offering critical perspectives on communities of practice is to take up the challenges identified, but not addressed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and to critically explore the meanings of communities of practice in the sorts of conflictual social settings which characterise many contemporary work organisations.

Fuller (2007), identifies a number of weaknesses in applying the communities of practice framework to empirical research in contemporary workplaces: concerns about the adequacy of the 'learning as participation' metaphor, ambiguities surrounding the definition of communities of practice, doubts about the innovative and transformative capacities, oversimplification of the relationship between novices and knowledgeable practitioners, failure to consider the full range of trajectories experienced by members and the inability to recognise the implications of multiple settings and networks of relationships (Hughes, Jewson & Unwin, 2007: 5). Whilst it is not the possible for this study to fully consider each of these identified weaknesses in relation to the YA community of practice concept, examples will be drawn where there is a direct connection between the evidence presented by the present study and that indicated by existing research.

In supporting Fuller (2007), Hughes, Jewson and Unwin (2007: 21), state that ‘the problem with the community of practice approach is in drawing boundaries for the purpose of analysing the learning process.’ This is particularly relevant in the present study where the YA programme as a community of practice is nested within a network of other communities of practice, all with a specific focus upon education and learning; the institution within which it is situated, the SSC in which the YA programme is based, the YA programme as a whole and the English education system. Establishing the boundaries between the YA community of practice in each of the different institutional settings and their surrounding, overlapping communities in order to identify where learning can be attributed is incredibly complex.

Duguid (2008) refers to this as ‘networks of practice’, identifying a phenomenon that has previously been highlighted when considering the similarities between the different YA programmes and institutions involved in this study. He describes a network of practice as the collective of all practitioners of a particular practice, most of whom may never come into contact with each other.

Common practices and common tools allow distant members to exchange global know *that* and to re-embed it in effective, coherent ways through the mediation of their locally acquired know *how*. (Duguid, 2008: 78)

Thus, in relation to the present research, in taking the requirements of the programme specification and the aims of the YA programme, the know *that*, the providers then locate it within the sector and institutional context within which they are operating, the know *how*, and continue to build on the community of practice that is the YA.

Jewson (2007: 68) argues that the concept of ‘community’ itself fails to address processes of disagreement and conflict, boundaries, processes of exclusion, power differentials, historical and cultural contexts. The word ‘community’ connotes harmony, co-operation and altruistic care for others, overwhelmingly ‘positive’

associations which are unrealistic in genuine social situations where conflict is inevitable (Jewson, 2007: 70; Duguid, 2008). Wenger acknowledges the possibilities for conflict, competition and rivalry, but does not incorporate conceptual mechanisms for analysing or interpreting them. In relation to the YA community of practice, this harmonious, consensus based approach does not allow for the inevitable disagreements that are going to arise between groups of teenage students and their educators at its most simplistic level to the conflict between provider partnerships at the organisational level. James (2007) concludes that while the framework offers an opportunity to understand how individuals engage in multiple communities of practice, the assumption of consensus and straightforward continuity means that issues of power and control are overlooked (James, 2007).

Beck (2007) and James (2007) also acknowledge that in paying too little attention to the power relations both within and between communities the framework fails to address how involuntary withdrawal or forced removal from communities takes effect, for example through redundancy. In relation to the YA community of practice, some consideration has to be given for the cyclical process of students continually starting and completing the programme and the impact upon the community of established members leaving *en masse* at the end of every academic calendar year.

Hughes (2007: 30) warns that, through Wenger's work in transforming the concept into a managerial tool, suggesting that effective communities of practice can be 'created' within workplaces, the model has become transformed in some important aspects such that it may be in danger of losing its analytical and critical purpose. Duguid (2008: 7) explains that Lave and Wenger's focus was from the perspective of work practice rather than managerial perspective. As a result of a different reading interpretation, instead of a challenge to managerial theory and practice, the community of practice became seen as a management tool. 'Successfully install a community of practice, the theory seems to say, and you will advance organisational goals.' Lave and Wenger's primary aim was not to construct a treatise on how learning ought to be but rather, to develop an approach which

could help reveal learning as it actually is (Hughes, 2007: 32). By artificially creating communities of practice to help serve management purposes, their very nature is distorted. The notion that communities of practice constitute a ‘managerial option’ stands in stark contrast to Lave and Wenger’s discussion of what a community of practice actually is. Duguid (2008: 81) emphasises that the element of ‘practice’ is critical in this respect. In attempting to move best practice from one community to another by codifying and circulating the explicit knowledge, the crucial point is the knowing *how* embedded in the practice, knowledge that can only be gained from the social contextual setting of the community.

This relates well to the current research in that the aim is to reveal the learning processes that have taken place through participation in the YA programme as opposed to recreating them in another institutional setting. For example, assuming that it would be possible to simply recreate the positive conditions and practices found in Oak View School and produce the same outcome in Stanton School would be to oversimplify the processes involved. The nature of a community of practice is the societal context within which it operates and crucial to this YA community of practice as with any other, are the individuals within, aspects that cannot simply be recreated elsewhere to produce the same outcome. This does not exclude the intelligent use of best practice as a means by which to minimise some of the variations that exist between programmes, institutions and sectors.

Hughes, Jewson and Unwin (2007: 172) conclude that as societies become more structurally differentiated, communities of practice change because their context has changed. They refer to a phenomenon of ‘constellation’, which relates to multiple communities of practice that are interlinked, overlapping or nested in some way as has previously been described of the YA programme. One individual may simultaneously belong to several, all generated in and by their role. In response to this phenomenon, Jewson (2007: 79) proposes a process of ‘network analysis’ as a means by which to develop the concept of community of practice, turning the generalities of what Wenger refers to as ‘mutual engagement’, ‘joint enterprise’ and ‘shared repertoire’ into specific, measurable indices. Recognising that in societies

of high structural differentiation, indicated by their scale and complexity, as in the modern western world, members participate in many relatively insulated social contexts, participating, by choice, as long as their interests are served. For example, individuals become involved in a wider range of types of social networks, each with a narrower focus. Jewson suggests that network analysis enables the researcher to specify and analyse structural aspects of small group relationships, rather than simply describe them, and build greater complexity into theories without losing analytical purchase. It is possible to see where this could be relevant to future research in relation to groups of students within different educational settings such as the YA programme, where the community of practice of that particular programme is nested within the community of practice of the institution, the geographic location, the education system and so forth.

Duguid (2008: 70) concludes that the features of community of practice theory that make it insightful both limit the areas where it can be useful and restrict its compatibility with other theoretical viewpoints. It involves wrestling to situate cultural signals of one sort or another in the context of local practice and collective identity formation. In terms of educational research, this process becomes ever more complex as recognising the cultural signals within their local contexts requires an intimate knowledge of the research setting.

This chapter has discussed the research findings from the present study in relation to previous research and the research questions posed at the beginning of the project. Where the findings of the present study have supported that of published research has been highlighted in addition to areas where the evidence has added to the body of knowledge, such as in comparing the institutions involved in the programme. The use of a community of practice framework as a means by which to analyse the YA programme has been considered. A critical reflection of the concept, from the perspective of researchers who have utilised the framework within empirical research settings has been presented, with the affordances and limitations of the concept in relation to the YA programme highlighted. Opportunities for further research have been identified throughout. Had the YA

programme been permitted to become embedded within the Key Stage 4 curriculum, it is possible to see where the development of the community of practice framework as a means by which to analyse and understand the learning processes involved would have had significant potential, even taking into account the critiques presented here. Application to other programmes of study within the education system may well prove to be equally insightful. The final chapter draws the present study to a conclusion, assesses the implications for policy and practice and makes suggestions for the future.

Chapter Eight – The Legacy of the YA

The aims of this research were to raise awareness of the hidden population of students participating in the YA programme and to begin to bridge a gap in the research literature with respect to vocational education through investigating how one particular programme is experienced by the students in different contextual settings. Situated learning theory and the use of the communities of practice concept as an analytical tool were proposed as methods by which this understanding could be achieved. The purpose of this chapter is to bring the study to a conclusion. In doing so, the research questions posed at the beginning of the study will be revisited, the legacy of the YA programme discussed in relation to policy change, the implications of the research on practice highlighted and suggestions for further research made.

Research Questions

The first of the research questions established at the beginning of the study asked ‘How are the practices of the YA programme experienced by the students and adults involved in it?’ The results of the study indicate that the YA programme is experienced as a positive, enjoyable, satisfying, valuable and personal process of development regardless of the institution or sector within which it has been experienced. The students have demonstrated particularly positive associations with the different pedagogical practices employed by the providers, ones which are far more commonly witnessed within FE colleges and training providers at post-16 level but which are new to the 14-16 year olds.

As evidenced through the data, no two YA programmes or experiences are identical. There are significant variations in delivery practices and qualification outcomes between institutions and sectors which does raise concerns over quality assurance processes. Despite this, there are significant features that unite the programmes, creating a common identity and ethos, as recognised in the classification of the YA as a community of practice in Chapter Six.

The second research question asked about how the institutional context within which each YA programme is situated impacts on the students' experience as described above. The evidence demonstrates that there are significant differences between institutions in the way that the programme is funded, structured, organised and delivered. For the YA students, the personal time commitment differs if the required work experience hours are to be fulfilled in their own time. The qualifications gained at different institutions vary, with better funded programmes being able to offer more of the additional governing body awards than others, thus altering the currency of the YA package in terms of its market value to the students on completion. The role of the YA students within their institution varies, depending upon whether it is delivered within their school environment or in a local FE College or training provider. Those students remaining in their home schools enjoy the privilege of being established as role models for the younger students and are considered as holding a position of importance within the school community. Those students following their YA off-site obtain a different kind of privilege, in that they enter into the more adult world of the FE college or training provider where the majority of the people around them are over the age of 16 and where relationships with peers and teachers changes.

The final research question asked whether the YA programme could be considered a 'lived experience'. This is in relation to the way that the students involved positively associate themselves with the programme and begin to identify themselves as 'YAs' in ways that they do not for other curriculum subjects. There is a collective identity and affinity with the programme that is much more to do with the process of participation than the qualifications gained during the programme. The significant proportion of curriculum time allocated to the programme results in the students and their teachers spending more time together than in other subject fields, typically consisting of a whole day at a time, rather than discreet lessons at different times during the school week. This, allied with the nature of the work being undertaken, allows for closer relationships between the students and their teachers to develop, expressed as significant by YAs from all institutions and all sectors. In utilising the concept of the YA as a community of practice, the notion of

the lived experience has become more central and visible through the reflections of the YAs relative to their particular YA programme.

The next section of this chapter examines how changes to policy making have impacted on both the students and the institutions involved in the YA programme.

Policy Change

In this country, vocational qualifications appear to start and end with their relationship to academic qualifications, judged through the prism of GCSE or A Level criteria rather than rated on their own merits. The track record for vocational education in the English education system is fragmented and inconsistent, as documented in Chapters One and Two.

Evidence for this stems from the abrupt closure of the YA programme in March 2011 following the publication of the Wolf Report. The report recommended, and was accepted by the DfE, the closure of the YA programme on several counts. Firstly, that the age of 14 was too young for students to be specialising in particular sectors of vocational education, secondly, that it was not cost effective and thirdly, that it was not having a positive impact on the students' performance in their other curriculum subjects. In May 2012, the DfE announced the addition of 15 more University Technical Colleges to be added to the existing 19, bringing the total nationally to 34. University Technical Colleges (UTC's), developed in association with the Baker Dearing Trust are sponsored by a local university and part of the Free Schools Programme. Students from the age of 14 experience a full-time combined vocational and academic curriculum very similar to that which the YA students were following. If, as Professor Wolf claimed, 14 is too young to specialise and the YA programme had a negative impact on the students results in other subjects such as English and Maths, the logic of developing entire schools at vast expense where the students follow the same path appears questionable.

In developing a coherent and respected vocational education curriculum for 14-19 years olds, there has to be some consideration of the current cavalier attitude

towards the qualifications and programmes on offer. Particular cohorts of students have become the ‘guinea pigs’ for policy experiments with little regard for the fact that they do not have the luxury of turning back time if the programmes are not successful. Within a few years of completing Key Stage 4, many young people, employers, colleges and universities are unable to compare results against other cohorts as they have studied for different qualifications.

Whilst the research questions posed by the present study relate to the differences in the experiences of the students and teachers based on the institutional context, it is also worth considering the impact of the programme on the institutions themselves in relation to policy change. The impact of the qualifications gained as part of the YA programme on the overall results of the school can be significant, particularly if, as acknowledged by the YAs, their grades in other subjects such as English and Maths have improved as a result of a more positive attitude to learning. Ofsted reports, where they have reported on the delivery of a YA programme, have been very positive for the institutions involved, some gaining recognition as Outstanding within that particular area (Ofsted, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d).

The implications of the programme closing will vary in each of the institutions involved, but for all there is a gap where it once existed. As can be seen from the providers involved in this study, the YA programme carries with it a significant staffing commitment. In the current economic climate, it is possible that teachers will have concerns over potential redundancies as a result of it being discontinued. For the FE college and training provider, the loss of a significant percentage of their younger students means that they have to reconsider methods by which to attract those students to them for post-16 courses. In a positive respect, institutions may take on some of the qualifications delivered as part of the YA programme and continue to deliver them to other groups of students. Relations with local schools may remain stronger as a result of having worked together more closely, events that the YAs have been involved with may remain on the annual calendar. The experiences of TVEI suggest that this is not likely to be the case

though, the legacy of that programme being that the teachers had become more involved and skilled in developing innovative curricular and relationships with local employers.

The following section considers the implications of the research findings on practice, both within empirical research settings and in relation to vocational education.

Implications for Practice

This section reflects on two aspects of ‘practice’. Firstly, research practice and the lessons that can be taken from the methodological approaches utilised in the current study, with a particular focus on researching youth and practitioner research. The second aspect to be considered is in relation to the practice of vocational education in schools and colleges, drawing upon the successes highlighted in this research as examples of best practice upon which to base teaching pedagogies in the future.

In reflecting on the methodological decisions made in the present study, there are inevitably limitations in the evidence gathered and subsequent interpretations made. Every effort has been made to express and interpret the contributions made by the students and teachers in the context within which they were made. It has been my intention throughout that my position within the research be as open as possible, recognising the impact of my own biography in relation to the research topic.

Researching young people is becoming an increasingly popular aspect of social science research. The group interview technique is recognised as particularly effective in giving voice to this relatively powerless section of society, being well understood within teen culture. Whilst it is not possible to compare this with other methods of data collection within the confines of the present research, the interview process was a positive experience for me as a researcher. The fact that all of the YA students continued to remain involved through to the second round of

interviews suggests that it was for them too. The YA students and their teachers appeared relaxed, were very willing to talk and engaged with the topics of conversation. The interview transcripts suggest that interviewees made approximately the same amount of contribution. It is perhaps indicative of my own background as a practising teacher that made me more conscious of including everyone in the group and making sure that each had the opportunity to answer questions and were encouraged to do so.

Another particular success within the data collection was that nobody failed to complete the interview process. All of the students and teachers who were interviewed in the first year of the programme were willing and available to be interviewed again in their second year. This could be due in part to the fact that there were no intrusions upon their own free time. All of the interviews were conducted during the normal timetabled day at the institution in which they were situated. Their openness and willingness to give detailed accounts of their progress throughout the programme is not something that is so easy to assess, although their positive connection with the programme was very evident in the interview transcripts. Without direct comparison with their experiences of other subjects on the curriculum, it is not possible to claim that this is specific and unique to the YA programme.

I do feel that my position as practitioner researcher had a significant impact upon the research processes and the willingness of both the students and teachers to be involved, privileging me in a way that another researcher with a different biography might not. Being introduced to the YA students as someone who had insider knowledge of their YA programme and acknowledging that I had my own group of YA students meant that they were able to use familiar terminology without explaining themselves, were able to give examples of the activities that they were involved in and even asked questions about the students on my programme. In reflecting on the conversations within the interviews, it is possible to see the advantages of having inside and specific knowledge of the situation. There would have been a requirement for considerable explanation of the programme and its

constituent parts in order for an outsider to make sense of what the students were saying.

As a practising teacher, access to the different institutions was also problem-free, little time was spent negotiating with gatekeepers and my presence within the institutions was accepted and welcomed. Letters sent to the gatekeepers in each of the institutions were on headed paper from the institution that I was working in, potentially changing the way in which they were attended to and interpreted. As a fellow YA provider, teachers were happy to openly discuss how programmes ran and contact has been maintained with two of the teachers since the research project in sharing resources, ideas and success stories.

Had the YA programme continued to be operational, the successful aspects of this research methodology could have been developed across more programmes, sectors and cohorts to gain an even greater insight into the functioning of the programme within the Key Stage 4 curriculum. The final section of this chapter examines further the potential for future research.

Further Research

Following the success of the interview process with the YA students and their general interest in the research project, involving them as researchers themselves would appear to be a natural progression route. Given their positive associations with the programme and their privileged positions as insider researchers, the opportunity to actively involve them in the research project could have the potential to gain an even greater insight into the experiences of the YA on a wider scale. Utilising the social and cultural phenomenon that is social networking within youth based research projects has the potential to yield data previously limited by physical and geographical constraints.

The richness of the data gained from each of the institutions involved in this study and the fact that they each had a story to tell suggests that there is scope for in depth case study research of the different institutional settings, particularly in

relation to vocational education. Longitudinal case study research over the duration of a programme such as the YA would further develop the notion of the lived experience.

Taking into account the varying critiques of the community of practice framework, further development of the concept as an analytical tool in empirical vocational education research is worthy of attention. The opportunity to build on the possibilities highlighted here in examining the characteristics of successful communities of practice within vocational education and to understand more fully the functioning of the overlapping communities of practice within educational settings in general would be welcomed.

Communities have emergent properties that, while they are no doubt the outcome of individual actions, amount to more than the sum of those actions. (Duguid, 2008: 81)

In considering the YA programme as a community of practice, this statement by Paul Duguid is particularly apt. It suggests that the experience that is the YA programme can be conceived as more than its constituent, measurable parts. The unquantifiable aspects of the programme such as the skills, qualities, relationships, behavioural attributes and attitudes; the value added aspects of work experience and enrichment activities add up to a programme that meant more to the teachers and students involved in it than can be printed onto a certificate or added to a schools league table results. Sometimes the lasting impact of a ‘lived experience’ simply cannot be measured or quantified, but that does not prohibit it from being any less valuable.

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Appendix i – Letters relating to the Wolf Review and closure of the YA programme.



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

Secretary of State

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tel: 0870 0012345 ministers@education.gsi.gov.uk

Alison Wolf
Professor of Public Sector Management
King's College London
150 Stamford Street
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SE1 9NH

9th September 2010

Dear Alison,

REVIEW OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

I am announcing today that I have asked you to conduct an independent review into vocational education. You are extremely well placed to conduct this review, given your extensive research experience in education and the labour force, and I am very grateful to you for agreeing to take this work forward.

As you know, for many years our education system has failed to value practical education, choosing to give far greater emphasis to purely academic achievements. This has left a gap in the country's skills base and, as a result, a shortage of appropriately trained and educated young people to fulfil the needs of our employers. To help support our economic recovery, we need to ensure that this position does not continue and in future we are able to meet the needs of our employers.

We have agreed that you will consider how we can improve vocational education for 14 – 19 year olds and thereby promote successful progression into the labour market and into higher level education and training routes, and that you will specifically consider:

- How can we improve the organisation of vocational education for 14-19 year olds? This would include funding mechanisms; institutional suitability, accountability and incentives; and the role of the third sector, private training providers, employers and awarding bodies. It would also include arrangements for developing qualifications, including who bears the cost, and whether there is a need for an official quality benchmark for vocational education and awards.

- What is the appropriate target audience for a vocational education offer, and in particular from what age is it appropriate for young people to be engaging in vocational education?
- What principles should underpin content, structure and teaching methods? Specifically, how can vocational education best respond to the current and expected future labour market? How can it provide a positive incentive to full and committed participation by young people, in particular those who are at risk of disengaging from learning?
- How can we improve progression from vocational education to positive destinations (work, Apprenticeships, FE, HE)?

You will also want to take explicit account of good practice in a selection of developed economies.

I look forward to receiving an interim report by the end of 2010, and a final report by Spring 2011, which will include practical recommendations which when delivered will effect real change while having regard to current financial constraints.

With every good wish
Michael Gove

MICHAEL GOVE

28th March 2011

Young Apprenticeships (YA) - No New Starts

The Department for Education (DfE) has today confirmed that the Secretary of State has decided to close the Young Apprenticeship (YA) programme to new entrants. As confirmed in February, funding will continue for existing YA students. We will be in contact with Local Authorities shortly to start the contract variations process to include the June YA payments in this academic years contract.

The decision has been made in the context of the DfE spending review settlement. The high cost of the programme could not be maintained in the current economic climate. It was also felt that that the programme would need to be significantly re-designed to fit with the English Baccalaureate and the recommendations of Professor Alison Wolf's Review of Vocational Education.

The Wolf Review has proposed a framework to deliver high quality, age appropriate, 14-19 vocational education locally, in a flexible and affordable way. Whilst DfE will respond to Professor Wolf's recommendations in due course, the Department will support vocational education which ensures progression to Apprenticeships or Further and Higher Education.

I'm aware that some areas would like to offer vocational programmes for schools. Whilst there is nothing to stop schools adopting vocational programmes to meet the needs of their students, the Department's response to the Review remains to be published, and this may be helpful in informing the choices schools make.

Finally I'd like to thank you for all of your hard work supporting the YA programme and ask that you encourage those already taking part to continueon the programme to support their overall KS4 outcomes.

John Wilson

Senior Policy Manager

Young People's Learning Agency

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YPLA - Championing Young People's Learning



2011/0014475POGibb

Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for Schools

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tel: 0370 0012345 ministers@education.gsi.gov.uk

Mr Stephen Studd
SkillsActive
Castlewood House
77-79 New Oxford Street
LONDON
WC1A 1DG

19 April 2011

Dear Mr Studd,

Thank you for your letter of 31 January regarding the future of the Young Apprenticeship programme. I must apologise for the delay in replying due to a large amount of correspondence.

The Department confirmed on the 28 March that there will be no further entrants to the national Young Apprenticeship pilot. This does not affect the earlier decision to maintain funding in financial years 2011-12 and 2012-13 to ensure current young apprentices can complete their programme.

We have made the decision because the high programme costs of young apprenticeships are not justified in the current economic climate. Professor Wolf's Review of Vocational Education, published on the 3rd March, proposes a framework for locally delivered high quality, age appropriate, 14-16 vocational education, within current budgets. Professor Wolf sets out her view that general, rather than sector or occupationally specific, vocational routes are more appropriate to the 14-16 age group: and such vocational education should normally be confined to around 20% of a pupil's timetable at Key Stage 4.

Whilst the Department's full response to the Review will be published in the spring, we have already agreed to the recommendations to allow FE college lecturers with Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status to teach vocational courses in schools and to clarify the rules governing other professionals teaching in schools. These flexibilities will help strong, locally driven and funded alternatives to a Young Apprenticeship to develop.

I was encouraged to read of the value that SkillsActive places on the contribution vocational education makes to the sports and leisure sector. As you note, education which leads young people to take a more active role in school, volunteering or community based activity, contributes positively to our Big Society ideals. We will wish to build upon this as we consider our response to professor Wolf's Review.

Department for
Education

I am aware that many Sector Skills Councils and employers have supported the Young Apprenticeship programme. I would like to thank you, and the sector's employers, for significantly contributing to the development and outcomes of the programme. I hope that SkillsActive will encourage employers to maintain their links with local schools, academies and colleges so that all vocational programmes can gain from the knowledge and experience of local employers.

I appreciate the offer to discuss the future of the Young Apprenticeship programme. Unfortunately diary pressures mean that I am unable to accept your kind invitation at this current time.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Gibb".

Nick Gibb MP

Appendix ii – Research Information Sheets & Consent Forms

Research Project Information

The Lived Experience of doing a Young Apprenticeship

Researcher: Frances Lansley
Version: 0909T

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

I am conducting this research project as the final part of an Education Doctorate at the University of Southampton. I am a secondary school teacher myself and have been involved in the planning and delivery of a Young Apprenticeship programme over the past two years. As a result, I am interested in finding out more about how both Young Apprentices themselves and teachers/tutors involved in its delivery are experiencing the various aspects of the programme.

The project intends to investigate what it is like to be involved with the Young Apprenticeship programme from your perspective as a teacher/tutor. This will include finding out what you feel it offers the students in comparison to other Key Stage 4 courses, the success of the work experience placements and the development of the students, both academically and personally, as Young Apprentices through the course. Young Apprentices from two different programmes, Sport and (to be confirmed), will also be involved in the project in order to find out their experiences of the programme.

The intended outcome of the research is to contribute towards existing knowledge about Apprenticeship programmes and to better inform those involved in the Young Apprenticeship programme about how it is received and experienced by the Young Apprentices themselves.

What will it involve?

- You will be interviewed, on two occasions during the next academic year. These will take place at a mutually convenient time towards the beginning and end of the academic year.
- During the first interview you will be asked about your experience of delivering aspects of the Young Apprenticeship programme to date and what you feel the programme has to offer the students that are engaged in it. As I will be comparing Young Apprenticeship programmes from more than one setting, there will also be questions about how the particular programme that you are involved in is structured.

- The second interview, to be conducted towards the end of the academic year will be more of an evaluative process, looking back on the progress of the apprentices that you are involved with and how successful aspects such as the work experience placement have been. You will not be asked to give specific details of individual students.
- Before each interview, you will be given a more specific outline of the questions you will be asked.
- Each interview will take around 45 minutes of your time.

All the data collected during the research, including that information gathered from individual apprentices or teachers/tutors, will be kept strictly confidential. As required by the Data Protection Act, no person-identifiable data will be passed on to any external agency, including your schools/colleges/ (employers). Interview data will be recorded, transcribed and analysed by the person who interviews you and stored in accordance with the University of Southampton guidance. Data will be coded and stored on a password protected computer. Any references to interviews in reports and articles will be anonymised to ensure confidentiality. You will be offered a copy of the final report if you wish.

Please note the following:

- Your involvement in this project and any information that you provide has no direct impact upon the successful completion of the Young Apprenticeship programme for any student that you may be responsible for.
- You will be offered a small token of appreciation for your participation in the project
- You are completely free to withdraw from the research at any point.

If you have any questions at this stage or do not understand any of the information provided here, please feel free to ask for further details.

If you are happy to participate in the project, you will now be asked to sign a consent form.

Many thanks for your time

Frances Lansley

Contact details:

Frances Lansley
 Henry Cort Community College
 Hillson Drive
 Fareham, PO15 6PH
 Tel: 01329 843127
frances.lansley@ntlworld.com

Dr Martina Prude
 Research Governance
 University of Southampton
 Southampton, SO17 1BJ
 Tel: 02380 595058
mad@soton.ac.uk

Research Project Information

Researcher: Frances Lansley

The Lived Experience of doing a Young Apprenticeship

Version: 0909A

What is the research about?

I am conducting this research project as the final part of an Education Doctorate at the University of Southampton. I am a secondary school teacher myself and have been involved in the planning and delivery of a Young Apprenticeship programme over the past two years. As a result, I am interested in finding out more about how both Young Apprentices themselves and teachers/tutors involved in its delivery are experiencing the various aspects of the programme.

The project intends to investigate what it is like to complete a Young Apprenticeship at Key Stage 4 from your perspective as an apprentice. This will include finding out why you chose to apply for the programme and how you experience aspects of it that are different to the rest of your Key Stage 4 courses, such as going to college during the school week (if that applies to you), or going out on Work Experience placements. Your teacher/college tutor will also be asked their thoughts on the programme and how they have experienced teaching it. Apprentices from two different programmes, Sport and (to be confirmed), will be involved in order to examine the similarities and differences between them.

The intended outcome of the research is to contribute towards existing knowledge about Apprenticeship programmes and to better inform those involved in the Young Apprenticeship programme about how it is received and experienced by you, the Young Apprentices.

What will it involve?

- You will be interviewed, either on your own or as part of a group, on 2 occasions during the next academic year.
- During the first interview I will be asking about why you chose a Young Apprenticeship programme as part of your Key Stage 4 studies, your first impressions of the course that you are on and what you expect the rest of the year to be like. I will be talking to Young Apprentices from different schools/colleges so I will also ask about how your particular programme is structured, for example, how many hours you do each week, what is involved in a general day and when your work experience placement starts.
- During the second interview, towards the end of the year, I will be asking you to look back on the year and think about what you have been doing. I will ask about how well you think you are getting on, what you have enjoyed, what has been challenging, how your work experience is going and what you have learnt during the year.

- Before each interview, you will be given more specific details about the questions so that you have time to think and do not feel on the spot.
- Each interview will take around 30 minutes of your time.

All the information which is collected during the research, including that information gathered from individual apprentices or teachers/tutors, will be kept strictly confidential. As required by the Data Protection Act, no person-identifiable data will be passed on to any external agency, including your schools/colleges. Interview data will be recorded, transcribed and analysed by the person who interviews you and stored in accordance with the University of Southampton guidance. Data will be stored on a password protected computer. Any references to interviews in reports and articles will be anonymised to ensure confidentiality. You will be offered a copy of the final report if you wish.

Please note the following:

- Your involvement in this project and any information that you provide has no direct impact upon your successful completion of the Young Apprenticeship programme.
- As a token of appreciation for your participation in the project you will be given a gift voucher to the value of £15.
- You are completely free to withdraw from the research at any point.

If you have any questions at this stage or do not understand any of the information provided here, please feel free to ask for further details.

If you are happy to participate in the project, you and a parent/guardian will now be asked to sign a consent form.

Many thanks for your time

Frances Lansley

Contact details:

Frances Lansley
 Henry ort Community College
 Hillson Drive
 Fareham, PO15 6PH
 Tel: 01329 843127
frances.lansley@ntlworld.com

Dr Martina Prude
 Research Governance
 University of Southampton
 Southampton, SO17 1BJ
 Tel: 02382 595058
mad@soton.ac.uk

Dear Parents,

Your son/daughter has been asked to participate in a research project as part of an Education Doctorate at the University of Southampton. The project is about their experiences of the Young Apprenticeship programme that they have recently embarked on.

Their involvement has been explained to them by myself, the researcher, and they have been given a Participant Information Sheet (Version 0909A) and a consent form. May I ask you to read the information and sign the attached consent form if you are happy for your son/daughter to participate. If you have any questions regarding the research please do not hesitate to contact either myself or the University using the details provided on the forms.

Many thanks for your support,

Yours sincerely,

Frances Lansley

The Lived Experience of doing a Young Apprenticeship at Key Stage 4

Researcher: Frances Lansley

Research Participants' Consent Form - Apprentices

This form aims to ensure that you consent to take part in the research and that you agree with the ways in which the information that you give will be recorded and used. Please read this information carefully, asking for clarification if there is anything you are unsure about, and if you agree with all the points, print and sign your name overleaf. If you are a Young Apprentice, please ask a parent/guardian to also read the information and to print and sign their name as well.

I understand and agree that:

- My participation in this project is voluntary and that if I wish to withdraw from it or stop an interview, I may do so at any time, without giving reasons
- Information given during interviews will be treated confidentially and anonymously and data will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. All data will be managed in accordance with the University of Southampton data protection policies.
- Interviews will be recorded to make it easier for the researcher to transcribe the content of the interview with accuracy
- Anonymous information given during interviews, including quotes, may be used in the final report as well as in other publications that may arise from the project
- I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions that I have about the research project and what I may expect to do. These have been answered by the person who will be interviewing me.
- I may be contacted during the project to clarify points raised in interviews. I will also be given the opportunity to read interview transcripts to check that I am comfortable with the content.
- At the end of the project I will be sent a copy of the findings if I wish.

I have read and understood the attached information (Research Project Information Sheet Version 0909A) and agree to participate in the project about the experience

of doing a Young Apprenticeship that is being conducted by Frances Lansley as part of her Education Doctorate at the University of Southampton.

Name of participant _____

Signature of participant _____

Date _____

I, parent/guardian of the Young Apprentice named above, have read and understood the attached information and agree to them participating in this research project.

Name of parent/guardian _____

Signature of parent/guardian _____

Date _____

Name of researcher _____

Signature of researcher _____

Date _____

The Lived Experience of doing a Young Apprenticeship at Key Stage 4

Researcher : Frances Lansley

Research Participants' Consent Form - Adults

This form aims to ensure that you consent to take part in the research and that you agree with the ways in which the information that you give will be recorded and used. Please read this information carefully, asking for clarification if there is anything you are unsure about, and if you agree with all the points, print and sign your name overleaf.

I understand and agree that:

- My participation in this project is voluntary and that if I wish to withdraw from it or stop an interview, I may do so at any time, without giving reasons
- Information given during interviews will be treated confidentially and anonymously and data will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. All data will be managed in accordance with the University of Southampton data protection policies.
- Interviews will be recorded to make it easier for the researcher to transcribe the content of the interview with accuracy
- Anonymous information given during interviews, including quotes, may be used in the final report as well as in other publications that may arise from the project
- I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions that I have about the research project and what I may expect to do. These have been answered by the person who will be interviewing me.
- I may be contacted during the project to clarify points raised in interviews. I will also be given the opportunity to read interview transcripts to check that I am comfortable with the content.
- At the end of the project I will be sent a copy of the findings if I wish.

I have read and understood the above information (Research Project Information Sheet Version 0909T) and agree to participate in the project about the experience

of doing a Young Apprenticeship that is being conducted by Frances Lansley as part of her Education Doctorate at the University of Southampton.

Name of participant _____

Signature of participant _____

Date _____

Name of Researcher _____

Signature of researcher _____

Date _____

Appendix iii – Research Governance Confirmation



Mrs Frances Lansley
School of Education
University of Southampton
University Road
Highfield
Southampton
SO17 1BJ

RGO Ref: 6663

10 September 2009

Dear Mrs Lansley

Project Title: The Lived Experience of a Young Apprenticeship at Key Stage 4

This is to confirm the University of Southampton is prepared to act as Research Sponsor for this study, and the work detailed in the protocol/study outline will be covered by the University of Southampton insurance programme.

As the sponsor's representative for the University this office is tasked with:

1. Ensuring the researcher has obtained the necessary approvals for the study
2. Monitoring the conduct of the study
3. Registering and resolving any complaints arising from the study

As the researcher you are responsible for the conduct of the study and you are expected to:

1. Ensure the study is conducted as described in the protocol/study outline approved by this office
2. Advise this office of any change to the protocol, methodology, study documents, research team, participant numbers or start/end date of the study
3. Report to this office as soon as possible any concern, complaint or adverse event arising from the study

Failure to do any of the above may invalidate the insurance agreement and/or affect sponsorship of your study i.e. suspension or even withdrawal.

On receipt of this letter you may commence your research but please be aware other approvals may be required by the host organisation if your research takes place outside the University. It is your responsibility to check with the host organisation and obtain the appropriate approvals before recruitment is underway in that location.

May I take this opportunity to wish you every success for your research.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that appears to read "Lindy Daleen".

Dr Lindy Daleen
Research Governance Manager

Tel: 023 8059 5058
email: rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk

Appendix iv – Interview Schedules

Interview Themes – Year 1 Apprentices

First Interview – Oct 2009

Choosing the Young Apprenticeship programme:

- Why? Comparison with other courses and other YA's.
- Who/what influenced the decision?
- IAG provided by school and/or college?
- Application process?
- What did friends/family think?
- Expectations?

Logistics/Practicalities:

- A typical day?
- Impact on timetable and other subjects?
- Getting to/from college (if relevant)?
- How the programme is structured? –Comparison with other GCSE courses. Is it similar/different? Enrichment activities

First Impressions:

- Initial thoughts?
- Compare with other subjects – teaching style, relationships, impact on you as a person and life in/out of school
- Being at college? (if relevant)
- Being an apprentice at school? (if relevant)
- What do friends/family think now?
- Uniform/Specialist equipment?

The Future:

- Thoughts on work experience?
- What are you looking forward to?
- Any thoughts about where you think this will lead?

Interview Themes – Year 2 Apprentices

First Interview – Oct 2009

Choosing the Young Apprenticeship programme:

- Why? Comparison with other courses and other YA's
- If you had the choice again, what would you do?
- Who/what influenced the decision?
- IAG provided by school and/or college?
- Application process?
- What did friends/family think?
- Expectations?

Logistics/Practicalities:

- A typical day?
- Impact on timetable and other subjects?
- Getting to/from college (if relevant)?
- How the course is structured? – Recognition of success?

The First Year:

- Reflections of the first year? Best/worst things
- How would you describe it if you were telling a younger friend/sibling about it?
- Work experience?
- Relationships with peers?
- Settling in at college?
- Successes/achievements/fears/challenges?

The Future:

- Expectations of the second year?
- What next – Post 16 choices?
- IAG from school/college?

Year 12 – Reflections of the YA programme and what it led you onto. How easy was progression? Would you do it again given the choice? Why? Good/bad bits? What would you change? What are you doing now?

Interview Themes – Teachers/Tutors

First Interview – Oct 2009

School background – Charters school

The YA Programme:

- How long have they been involved?
- How did they first get involved?
- Which aspects of the programme are they involved in?
- Time allocation? Why?
- Thoughts/feelings on the programme?
- Are there other apprenticeships running at the school or do other students go to a local college? Details?
- Comparison with other courses on offer? Why the YA?

Work experience:

- Structure/organisation?
- Monitoring?
- Strengths/weaknesses?
- How the YA's cope/manage/adapt/learn?

The Apprentices:

- Application process/targeting/IAG?
- “Getting the right students”?
- 14 year olds at college?
- Uniform/image/identity?
- Successes/challenges?
- Personal development? (of apprentices)
- Progression – where have the students gone on to from here?

The future:

- Is the school offering the Diploma?
- What will happen when YA funding runs out?
- Would you do it all again at another school?!

Interview Themes – Year 2 Apprentices

Second Interview – Oct 2010

The YA Programme/Experience

Structure – changes from last year, how the course has developed.

Best/Worst experiences – any surprises, disappointments?

Comparison with school based subjects – success, predicted grades, impact of YA on those.

What impact has it had on you as a person? What skills have you developed.

Pleased with the choice?

How have you settled in to the college?

Have you had the chance to share any of your experiences with others at school – as part of options programmes etc?

Enrichment activities?

Work Experience

Good/bad experiences

Logistics of – how did it work? Relationships with employer and other employees?

What was learned?

How were you inducted into the workplace?

Jobs/roles during an average day? Development/progression within the workplace.

The Future

What are the plans for the future? Are they different to what they thought at the beginning of the course? Has it made them want to pursue a career in their subject area?

Would you recommend the YA to younger students? Why? What do they gain from it that they can't get with school based courses?

Do you feel equal to/advantaged/disadvantaged in relation to your peers? College applications/Job applications?

First Interviews

Common themes from first interviews identified with each group. Are they still relevant/important? Why/Why not?

Appendix v – Vignettes

Engineering YA at Newtown – Steph

Steph is the only student from her home school on the Engineering YA at Newtown. Currently in Year 11 she casually attributes her opting for the programme because ‘I thought some cute boys would be here and I wanted to get out of school really’. She completed a ‘Girls into Engineering’ taster day and in wanting to follow her father into the army, thought it would be an interesting career to follow in that setting. In contrast to her initial flippant comments, Stephs reasons for choosing the YA programme are actually more genuine and have her planned future at their heart. ‘I’ve never stayed in one place for more than two years because of my Dad being in the army so I’m kind of used to having to get to know new people’. In considering the advantages of following the YA programme against losing other subject options, Steph comments about her lack of confidence in her ability to pass her French GCSE ‘I think to have this on my Record of Achievement rather than a possible C in French is much more helpful to me in the future’. Steph found her work placement a hugely positive experience, having been made to feel very welcome by her employers. ‘I never made a cup of tea or coffee the whole time I was there. They had me doing practical work and got me really involved in what they were doing.’ Steph is going to college to study Chemistry, Physics and Maths at A level following her YA but acknowledges that she is lucky because ‘I got told that my employers would have a place for me after college which was nice. If I can get into Sandhurst, I’ll join up as an officer and should be able to specialise in engineering’. On reflecting about the differences between being a YA at Newtown and being at school, Steph has clear views about what she has gained. ‘The teachers have taught us in such a different way that we know that can learn by ourselves so we should be able to choose a career in whatever we want. We can just get on with things. They tell you what you have to do and then you have to figure it out for yourself. I suppose it’s different at school and they have to treat us differently because there are more people and some are silly and it’s not as easy to be like they are here. It just wouldn’t work.’ Steph summarises what the engineering YA means to her and her peers. ‘It’s changing people’s minds about what engineering is all about, especially for girls’.

Sport YA at Stanton – Ashley

Ashley is a Year 10 student on the newly established YA in Sports Coaching, Leadership and Management course at Stanton School. When asked about the process of selection and recruitment, Ashley explains that the whole cohort was told about the different options they had within PE and Sport at Key Stage 4. ‘My parents thought it sounded a lot better than what they had when they were at school’. His first impressions of the YA group were that it was bigger than he had expected, at 22 students. ‘I was a bit nervous on the first day.’ With a new programme becoming established, the logistics of the school day were significant to Ashley as being different from his normal timetable. ‘Usually we are in the computer room for the first couple of lessons doing theory work and then we doing something different in the afternoon, it depends how much work we have to have done. We have spent a lot of time in the primary schools already too’. Ashley explains further that they spent the first half-term working with Year 2 and then the next half term with Year 3. When asked how he felt the first time that they went to work with the primary school children, he says ‘I felt a bit nervous because they were only little kids, but it was ok, some of the YA group are quite confident and I think that helps everyone else.’ Ashley also explains how, in order to make up their work experience hours, some of the group are doing Saturday morning coaching sessions as well. ‘I am doing soccer coaching at the moment. I wasn’t confident when I first started, I hated talking in front of people but I’m slowly getting better at it.’ On reflecting about the knowledge that other students around the school have of the work of the YA students, Ashley felt that ‘the younger students don’t because they don’t really know anything about it. We don’t really do any work with them, it’s mostly the primary schools. We helped with a cross-country event but that’s it.’ On looking toward the future, Ashley is positive about what he wants to do when after his YA programme. ‘I want to do Sports Physiotherapy at college when I’ve finished this.’ Whilst enjoying what he is doing, he reflects that the amount of work and time commitment outside of school hours is greater than he had anticipated. ‘We stay after school on a Friday sometimes as well and the study centre is open for people to catch up with their coursework.’ When asked if he would recommend the course to future year groups, he replies with a very definite ‘yes, but they need to know what they are letting themselves in for.’

Hospitality & Catering YA at Meadowside – Tim

'From my school, there were about 10 people from my year who got selected for YA programmes, they told us that it would be a good opportunity and look good on our CV and that we would have a better chance of a job and that's basically why I did it. It felt a bit special because everyone was given the option of doing the Diploma but only a few of us were offered this one which you get more out of because you get to go and work at different places. My mum thought it would be a good one to do even if I wasn't going to do cooking in the future because it is kind of multi-skilled because we do hospitality as well and that would help in the future'. Coming to the local FE college at the start of year 10 was significant to Tim. 'It was a bit scary because you didn't know anyone else, almost like going to a new school really, but after a couple of weeks it was alright because we got to know each other.' On asking how he felt about wearing the chefs whites, which he was in during the interview, 'I did think I was going to look like a bit of an idiot when I first put them on but then when I saw everyone else in them as well I thought they looked ok. My mum was quite impressed because they have our names on and everything and that we didn't have to pay for them.' Now that he is used to wearing them, he acknowledges that he wouldn't be without them any more. 'It wouldn't feel like proper cooking. This is what you would wear if you were in a proper kitchen so it's more like the real experience.' Tim started building up his work experience early on in the programme, gaining a placement in a local establishment. 'I work in a pub restaurant on a Saturday, from 11 till 5 and I can work weekdays after school if I want to. In our second year, we'll be cooking food for the restaurant and serving people and that. We get the opportunity to go down into the Mall (college refectory) and work in the coffee shop and stuff like that. I'm looking forward to being able to do some waiting on people at our work placements as well so that you start to get some customer contact and things like that. That'll be good fun.' On comparing studying at the college compared to being back at school, Tim explained that

'It's different from being at school, they treat you more as adults. It's hard to explain but it does feel different. I think it helps that we're working with people who are doing a day release course, adults who have a day out of work to do a catering course. They are in the same kitchens as us and doing the same work so it almost feels like we're adults because we're working alongside them.' When asked if that was better than the situation at school, Tim responded 'Yeah, when we go into classes at school you can't help thinking that it's not like they would do it at college and you have to remember that we're not fully at college yet. You have to try and adjust to fit in with the environment and the type of teaching that's going on'.

During the second interview when Tim was in Year 11, he explains how he is actually finishing the course early to enlist in the army, being already 16 years of age.

'I'm finishing at Easter, finishing early and joining the army – so I've nearly finished everything now. I've done all my work and done extra hours of work experience to get it all done.' The difference between the first and second year of the course is described in terms of the amount of practical, hands on catering during the

allocated time. ‘To start with we were just doing skills and now we spend most of our time doing service in the restaurant. We’ve got all our skills and now we’re using them in real life situations, like, they’ve taught us how to do all the correct cuts and food preparation and that and now we cook for the members of the public in the restaurant.’ On summing up what they YA experience had meant to him, Tim explained ‘Meeting new people and making new friends, I go out with a lot of the people on our course now. Oh, and I can cook!'

Sport YA at Oak View – Charlotte

Charlotte is in her second year of the YA in Sports Coaching, Leadership and Management at Oak View School. On talking about why she had decided to apply to get onto the programme, she says ‘It was a good experience, I think the main thing was actually being able to get through into university. You get loads of qualifications and that’s what I went in for it for. You get loads out of it. I knew quite a few of last years YA’s and they all said it was really good and that kind of helped.’ The recruitment and selection process is a significant topic of conversation for the YA’s at Oak View and Charlotte was able to explain about the letter of application that they were asked to write. ‘We had to explain why we wanted to do it, what our qualities were, why we would be good as a young apprentice and what we hoped to get out of it. Oh, and about our time management, that was quite a big one. It was the first time I had applied for anything. They cut down the applicants before the interview stage and then decided on the rest from there Seeing other people coming out of their interviews made my nerves even worse because they looked terrified!.’ Charlotte was keen to talk about the uniform that the YA students at Oak View are given to wear. ‘That was good, I like getting new stuff. When we are wearing it we feel as though we are bigger than everyone else. I think people actually look up to us when we are wearing it. Teachers talk to you differently when you’re in your kit too, I don’t know what it is but they do.’ Following on from this reference to the teachers, Charlotte spoke about the different relationship that is perceived by the YA students and the teachers that deliver the course. ‘It’s really relaxed and It’s a smaller class too so it’s kind of easier to get focused. Teachers normally spoon feed you in other lessons but in this one we have to get on with it by ourselves, we’re given more responsibility.’

Charlotte has already started on her applications for Post-16 courses, with her first choice being staying on in the sixth for at Oak View. ‘I will probably continue with a sports course at A level but with something else too. I’ve done so much sport already it would be nice to do something else. I’m quite good at art as well and I’d like to do law and psychology too.’ When asked to pick out the quality that she felt she had developed most during the YA programme, Charlottes response was ‘confidence’.

Health & Social Care YA at Meadowside – Poppy

Poppy is in her first year of a Health & Social Care YA at Meadowside College. She is the only student from her home school on the programme but as she explains herself, everyone else on the programme was from a different school too. ‘I wanted a qualification that would get me something after school, like, instead of just relying on my GCSE’s. Something that would lead me into a job. My mum was really supportive. She wanted me to do it because it was something different, an opportunity to do something different that you don’t get very much in school.’ When asked about leaving the familiarity of school to attend a new college, Poppy said, ‘I was really nervous! But it was ok, because in our group, there are only seven of us and we’re all from different schools, so everyone was the same and it was nice to mingle and get to know other people. We’d already been in for a little interview where we met the teacher and got shown around the parts of the college that we would be working in, so we knew a little bit about where to go.’ As the provision of a uniform is a significant aspect of the other YA programmes and in the interview, Poppy didn’t appear to be wearing one, I asked her about this aspect. ‘We have got polo shirts that we can wear when we’re out working or here at college but we don’t have to. We feel like we fit into the college more because we haven’t got a uniform, we don’t stand out from the older full-time students like the others do. Also, there isn’t really a set uniform that people working in social care wear really so it would be a bit pointless.’ Poppy refers to the changes in herself as a person and in her position as a student both at the college and back at her home school. ‘We don’t call our teachers here like, Miss or Sir or whatever, we call them by their first names. It seems they’re more like friends, you feel much more grown up. When I’m back at school in my tutor group I feel like, more mature than the others, especially as I’m not there for a couple of days, it makes me seem more important in the group, I don’t know, its hard to explain. Perhaps it’s because I’ve had the experience of going to college and I know exactly what I’m going onto when I finish school. So when I leave school I don’t think I’ll be as nervous because I’ve already been to college and I know what its like. I’ll just be able to carry on. It’s made me realise what I need to do and I don’t really muck around any more. I just get things done without making a fuss.’ She reflects back on her approach to lessons in previous years. ‘We’ve had more responsibility in the second year as well. It has affected that way that I behave back at school and at home as well. Last year I wasn’t too good behaviour wise and this year I have settled down a lot more and I think that’s mostly to do with being in the college environment and learning to grow up a bit more because I’m surrounded by people who are older and who don’t behave like that. At school, most people are younger than you so you learn to act more maturely here where people are older.’ When asked about her future plans, Poppy explained that she was staying on at Meadowside College to do A levels in History, English Language, Sociology and Psychology. In summing up her YA experience, she explained that ‘I’ve enjoyed it. It’s been a different experience and I’ve learnt loads. I’ve enjoyed the responsibility and feeling older than you normally do. It’s nice to be trusted.’ Her advice to potential YA students of the future is to ‘be sure it is actually something you want to

do because once you're in it, it's hard to back out. You need to be one hundred per cent sure it's what you want to do. I would do it again.

Hair & Beauty YA at Meadowside – Nicola

Nicola is in her first year of a Hair & Beauty YA at Meadowside College. She has come to the college alongside another student from her home school whom she acknowledges that she didn't really speak to before starting the YA together but that is now really good friends with. On talking about why she chose to follow the YA programme, Nicola explains that 'because when I leave school, I want to do hair so this gives me something to do when I've left. I actually sat down with my mum and talked about what I wanted to do in the future, it took things much further than I had thought before. It really forced me to think about what I wanted to do. My mum and dad were really pleased. There are some people back at school who say that they wanted to do it just to get out of school but that would be doing it for all the wrong reasons.' As one of the students who leaves her home school to attend the FE college during the week, Nicola was asked to reflect how she has found that experience. 'Really nerve-wracking at first. All the older lot were there and then it was us and we were like, oh my god. It's not until you get into it a bit and start doing proper stuff that you start really enjoying it.' In addition to the uniform that is provided to the Hair & Beauty YA's, Nicola explained that they also get given a 'kit' which referred to a hairdryer, straightening irons, rollers, scissors etc that is needed for each of their sessions. On the day that she had arrived home with, Nicola explains her mothers reaction. 'My mum was like, how much do I have to pay for all of this then?! And I was like, nothing, it's all been paid for for us! My sister came to college to do hair & beauty and for her uniform and all if her stuff it cost my mum and dad an absolute fortune so they were really surprised that the college were willing to pay for it all. I feel really grown up in my uniform. I love it, it's brilliant.' On focusing on the learning style of the YA programme, Nicola feels that it suits her well. 'I think it's because I am a more hands on person. I've got to like, just get on and do it and you get to do that here. Literally, you're hands on and on your feet all day. Our teacher here is really fun and makes our work fun and we get on and do it, but at school and it's just sit down and do your work. Here it's bubbly and fun as well.' She also acknowledges that her work back at school is improving due to the new found confidence and ambition she ha gained from following the YA programme. 'At school, I need little things to boost me and seeing my grades get better makes me want to do even more. Like, yesterday I got told I could even get a B in English and I then went home and did loads more work. It just motivated me to do more. We know that if we pass this, we can fast track next year onto a higher level course and so we feel as if we're gaining something out of all of this.' On being asked if she would change her decision about doing the YA if she was back in Year 9 again. 'No way! There's no way I'd be sitting in school all the time now. We're more trusted here. It gave us a chance to be different and be more responsible and I love it.'

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1. The pseudonyms assigned to each of the providers within the study have also been used within this section to retain their anonymity.