On-the-job training in apprenticeship

in England

Michaela Brockmann

Ian Laurie

Southampton Education School

Contents

Executive Summary

1. Given the focus on off-the-job training both in terms of apprenticeship regulation and academic research, this small-scale study set out to enhance our understanding of on-the-job training provided by employers in five sectors (Engineering, Construction, IT, Retail, and Social Care). The research was based on interviews with two employers in each of the five sectors (one large employer, one SME), as well as with representatives of national stakeholders and sector-level bodies.

2. The new apprenticeship regulations (ESFA, 2019a) and, in particular, the stipulation that all funded training must be off-the-job, was designed to address past abuses of the system, whereby on-the-job training amounted to no more than assessment of (existing) skills without necessarily constituting any learning or training. Instead, these regulations focus on off-the-job training as the only fundable (and thus regulated) element, whilst on-the-job training is defined as 'practising' in the work environment the knowledge and skills acquired through the off-the-job element. There is no requirement on employers to provide on-the-job training.

3. All employers provided (and focused first and foremost) on their own in-house training programmes, which was the training designed to prepare staff for certain job roles, regardless of any apprenticeship training. This included off-the-job training for all staff, through both, initial induction and staff development, in the form of in-house training events and/or access to external provision. As a result, there was little difference in the training provided for apprenticed and non-apprenticed new recruits. Indeed, the main difference was the underpinning knowledge gained through the off-the-job element of apprenticeship.

4. Drawing on Fuller and Unwin's (2003) Expansive-Restrictive Framework, the ten employers in our sample fell into two groups: those adopting an expansive approach to apprenticeship and on-the-job training (Engineering, Construction and IT); and those whose approach was more restrictive (Retail and Social Care).

5. Employers utilising an expansive approach provided their own comprehensive training programmes. Whilst these included off-the-job provision (both internal, and access to external training) the focus was on extensive on-the-job training. This was carefully planned and part of a strategy of workforce development. It was designed to develop occupational competence of

rounded employees, who had an understanding of the organisations as a whole and their positions within them. Many employers had developed their own in-house training plans against which they monitored the apprentices' progress in a range of skill areas. Whilst the apprenticeship criteria were covered by the companies' on-the-job training, the latter was commonly far broader and in-depth than what was required by the frameworks or standards.

6. Nevertheless, these employers valued apprenticeship as a model of learning. The off-the-job element provided vital theoretical knowledge and understanding to underpin occupational practice. The frameworks or standards also constituted a useful structure, and employers sought to organise the apprentices' on-the-job training in line with the off-the-job element of the apprenticeship (delivered in day-release classroom education) so as to facilitate the integration of theory and practice.

7. In these organisations, mentoring and shadowing were crucial elements of on-the-job training, the aim of which was to develop apprentices' expertise and to gradually initiate them into a community of practice. Apprentices would be working alongside a senior worker or trainer for much of the entire duration of the apprenticeship, whilst gradually taking on more responsibility. They therefore held the dual status of learner and employee throughout the apprenticeship.

8. In the case of the employers under the restrictive approach (Retail and Social Care), the main focus was also on the in-house training for specific job roles. However, these were relatively narrow when compared with the occupational roles in the companies adopting an expansive approach. The training was delivered predominantly off-the-job and, whilst staff development programmes were in place, much training was front-loaded (delivered through an induction). This was particularly critical in social care, where all staff attended training based on the Care Certificate *before* they started working with vulnerable adults. The apprenticeship closely matched this training.

9. In sharp contrast to employers in the expansive approach, apprentices in the retail and social care organisations of our sample were first and foremost productive workers (rather than learners), who completed an apprenticeship within the designated 20% of their working time. What is more, this time allocation was not always protected. Indeed, all four employers indicated that they perceived the 20% off-the-job rule as the greatest challenge they were facing, arguing they could scarcely afford 'losing' a member of staff from the production process.

10. The apprenticeship was therefore quite separate from, rather than an integral part of, the apprentices' workplace practice (i.e. the job roles they carried out). In these organisations, responsibility for the apprenticeship was firmly with the training provider, while employers were generally passive. The employer role was primarily to 'line-manage' apprentices, for example, by ensuring apprentices were given time to complete the off-the-job element, and to provide a point of contact for general support and feedback.

11. During the apprentices' time on the shop floor (80% of their working time), there was little or no on-the-job training provided by the employer (beyond the initial training for all staff, which in any case was limited). Indeed, when asked about on-the-job training, managers and trainers of all four organisations highlighted the importance of *workplace learning* as occurring naturally as a result of day-to-day practice. Apprentices were encouraged to apply the knowledge and skills they had gained through the off-the-job element, but they did not receive any structured support.

12. The apprenticeships in the retail and social care organisations were broader in scope than the apprentices' jobs (which is why the employers valued the programmes for developing leadership roles). However, and importantly, this breadth in scope was delivered largely through the off-the-job element of apprenticeship. To this end, apprentices had to complete workbooks or tasks which required them to find relevant information through their organisations. It was striking to find that, from the employers' perspective, the responsibility for creating learning opportunities in the workplace was entirely with the apprentices themselves. Moreover, the potential barriers to achieving such opportunities were all too evident, despite managers' and trainers' active encouragement.

13. Where apprentices succeeded in spending time with senior staff in order to help them complete the off-the-job element, this could at times result in on- and off-the-job mentoring and shadowing. However, these incidents seemed ad-hoc and haphazard. Training provided by the employer clearly needs to be far more structured, better supported and provided as a matter of course, rather than putting the onus on the apprentices and leaving it to the goodwill of senior staff.

14. Apprenticeships delivered by the engineering, construction and IT employers epitomised many of the elements of a high-quality apprenticeship. Clearly, this should include: understanding apprentices as learners for the full duration of the apprenticeship and for 100% of the apprentices' contracted hours; providing a supportive learning environment and comprehensive

on-the-job training, including mentoring and shadowing, to develop apprentices' occupational competence; careful planning and monitoring of apprentices' progress, including the close alignment and integration of the on- and off-the-job elements, working in partnership with training providers and apprentices.

15. The apprenticeships in the retail and social care organisations lacked many of these elements. Most notably, there appeared to be a lack of awareness and understanding of apprenticeship as a model of learning. These employers positioned themselves as supportive of apprenticeships, yet apprentices were expected to be regular employees during 80% of their working time, with no training in place, whilst they completed the apprenticeship within the 20% off-the-job element. Clearly, this practice is incommensurate with apprenticeship as a model of learning (Fuller and Unwin, 2003, 2009).

16. One of the key factors was the retail and social care employers' reluctance to release their employees from their day jobs. It is therefore unlikely that any additional regulations (such as statutory requirements for on-the-job training) would be successful. As has been argued, whilst the employer is critical in achieving the government's aim of quality apprenticeships, not all employers are equally suited to providing these, relevant factors including low skills demands (particularly in the service sector), and a lack of resources in terms of experience and qualified staff (Keep and James Relly, 2016; Fuller and Unwin, 2017).

17. These organisations were keen to develop employees as future leaders, but they did so in the main through off-the-job provision (which, in the case of social care, was also largely front-loaded). Apprenticeship, centring on situated learning, cannot therefore be an appropriate model for workforce planning in these organisations, which would be met more appropriately through internal staff development programmes. Alternatively, policy-makers should consider funding these programmes under the new National Skills Fund to be introduced in 2021.

Section 1: Introduction

Background

Apprenticeship has long been a major vehicle for the UK government to improve the UK skills. At the same time, there have been longstanding concerns about the variable quality of apprenticeships in England, which are generally of a lower level and duration than apprenticeship programmes in many other European countries (McNally, 2018; Field, 2018; Brockmann et al., 2010). Whilst highly reputable and good quality programmes exist (particularly in traditional sectors such as Engineering), until recently the steepest rise had been in Level 2 (Intermediate) apprenticeships (constituting 65% of all apprenticeships in 2013/14 (Foley, 2020)) and in 'non-traditional' sectors such as retail and hospitality. The poor-quality training content and short duration of many apprenticeships have led commentators to question the purpose and viability of programmes in these sectors (Fuller and Unwin, 2003; Lewis et al., 2008; Pegg and Ball, 2014).).

The number of apprenticeships had been rising steadily since the introduction of Modern Apprenticeships in 1994, and, following increased government funding since 2011/12, stood at a level of around 500,000 starts a year until 2016/17 (Foley, 2020). The introduction of the apprenticeship levy in May 2017 (see below) led to a significant drop in the number of starts, particularly at Level 2. Of 393,000 apprenticeship starts in 2018/19, 36% were at Level 2, 44% at Level 3 and 19% at Levels 4 to 7 (ibid.).

A particular prominent issue in the debate has been the lack of employer engagement in apprenticeships. Reasons have included a reluctance to invest in training for fear of 'poaching', the perceived amount of 'red tape', and a pervasive view amongst employers that the content of apprenticeship programmes is not in line with workplace demands (Grollmann et al., 2017; Wolf, 2015; Brockmann et al., 2010).

Over the past decade, the government has launched a series of reforms aimed at improving the quality (as well as quantity) of apprenticeships, enhancing employer engagement and ensuring adequate funding (Field, 2018).

From frameworks to standards

Following the Richard Review of Apprenticeships (Richard, 2012), apprenticeship standards were introduced in 2014. They constitute a key plank of the reforms aimed at strengthening employer

engagement and improving quality of provision. Apprenticeship frameworks are driven by the assessment of a series of qualifications, consisting of technical qualifications and competences (issued and administered by awarding bodies) that employers feel did not reflect their workplace needs. By contrast, employers (through groups of employers, known as Trailblazers) take the lead in developing standards, which centre on the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices are required to achieve over the duration of the apprenticeship and that are then assessed at end point. Standards are being phased in progressively to replace apprenticeship frameworks (in 2018/19, 63% of apprenticeship starts were based on standards) (Foley, 2020). Overall responsibility for quality and assessment of the standards lies with the newly established Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). Apprenticeships are available in 15 technical routes at levels 2 to 7 (IfATE, 2020). There are currently 739 standards available.

The apprenticeship levy and new funding rules

In order to reverse the decline in employer investment in training, the apprenticeship levy came into force in May 2017 (Powell, 2018). All employers with an annual pay bill of over £3 million are subject to the levy. At the same time, new funding guidelines aimed at enhancing the quality of apprenticeships apply to all employers, regardless of whether or not they pay the levy (Education and Skills Funding Agency, 2018). Crucially, apprentices must now spend 20% of their paid working time in off-the-job training (funded by the levy).

Field (2018) finds that this still compares unfavourably with other apprenticeship systems in Europe and argues that the 20% should be treated as a minimum. As found in two independent surveys by OFSTED (2015) and the Department for Education (2017), around 40% of Level 2 and Level 3 apprenticeships provide less than the minimum statutory requirement of off-the-job training, posing a major challenge as regards enforcement of regulations (Field, 2018). Interestingly, the figure rises to 50% amongst apprentices over the age of 25. Given the rise in adult apprenticeships (Powell, 2018), this is alarming, although perhaps unsurprising, as these are often existing staff members who embark on an apprenticeship after having been with their employer for a period of time (so-called 'conversions') (Fuller and Unwin, 2017).

On-the-job training in apprenticeships in England

In contrast with other apprenticeship systems in Europe, employers in England historically have had limited involvement in the provision of training, as a result of apprenticeship being driven by funded training, and responsibility lying with third-party training providers (Kuczera and Field, 2018).

It is interesting then that the guidance for employers issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA, 2019a), which sets out the responsibilities for employers providing apprenticeships under the new funding rules, focuses on the (funded) off-the-job element (defining it and specifying the statutory minimum), while being noticeably vague on on-the-job training. Indeed, there is no separate section on on-the-job training as there is for its off-the-job equivalent. The document merely states that the apprenticeship must be a new or existing job role, involving sufficient weekly hours so that the apprentice 'can undertake sufficient, regular training and on-the-job activity; and that 'the apprentice must be involved in active learning or monitored workplace practice throughout an apprenticeship' (ibid.: 12).

Thus, while new rules have come into force to address the quality of off-the-job training, little attention has so far been paid to regulate and enhance on-the-job learning. Here, the ongoing role of the IfATE in enforcing standards may be crucial. Their quality statement (which forms the basis for their new Quality Strategy for apprenticeship) emphasises the role of on-the-job (as well as off-the-job) training in apprenticeship (IfATE, 2018). Thus, the statement highlights the importance of 'a challenging and stretching training and learning programme developed and delivered with the active involvement of the employer(s), which uses a range of effective on- and off-the-job training methods as well as work itself' to cover 'the full occupational profile' (ibid.: 3). It is notable also that the statement makes a clear distinction between, on the one hand, apprenticeships and other forms of training (such as for employees already working in the occupation) and work experience, on the other (ibid.: 2).

The past few decades have of course seen a clear shift in debate towards the benefits of on-the-job (as opposed to classroom) learning, a central driver in the increased prevalence of apprenticeship as a model of learning, and there has been a growing body of literature on workplace and 'situated' learning (e.g. Evans et al, 2006). Fuller and Unwin (2003), in their influential paper on expansive and restrictive participation in apprenticeship, illustrate the importance of comprehensive provision for learner development and identity. The authors' Expansive-Restrictive Continuum (Figure 1.1), based on the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) on communities of practice, serves as a framework for evaluating the nature of participation as developed through apprenticeship. Expansive participation is thus founded on a range of factors, including an occupational approach, based on planned learning opportunities both on and off the job; apprentices' status as learners as well as employees; appropriate support by a dedicated person; and a gradual transition to productive worker. In this study, we have used Fuller and Unwin's (2003) continuum as an analytical framework.

Fuller and Unwin's (2003) analysis highlights the variability in provision, and, importantly, the different aims employers may be pursuing in offering apprenticeships. While for some, it is about developing young people into 'rounded 'experts'', others may primarily be addressing contingencies, such as recruitment difficulties, aiming for staff to become fully-fledged workers in narrow skill areas within the minimum amount of time (ibid.: 416). Other research has indicated that employers may be guided by government funding, thus making it beneficial to rebrand their existing staff training as apprenticeship (Brockmann, 2012).

Given the interest in work-based learning and the concern with providing quality apprenticeships, it seems surprising that there is so little in the new regulations to address the on-the-job element of apprenticeship. In addition, there is very little data concerning actual workplace practice. The present study will address this gap. By investigating the content and nature of on-the-job training of apprenticeships at Levels 2 and 3, it enhances our understanding of current practice and perspectives of stakeholders in order to inform the future development of relevant regulation.

Figure 1.1: The expansive-restrictive continuum (adapted from Fuller and Unwin, 2003: 411; 2017: 33)

Expansive	Restrictive
Apprentice develops occupational expertise to standard recognised by the occupational field.	Apprentice develops skills for a limited job role without improving on their existing level of competence.
Employer and provider understand that apprenticeship is a platform for career progression.	Apprenticeship does not build the capacity to progress beyond present job role.
Individual has dual status as learner and employee: explicit recognition of, and support for individual as learner.	Status as employee dominates: limited recognition of, and support for, individual as learner
Individual makes a gradual transition to productive worker and is stretched to develop expertise in their occupational field.	Fast transition to productive worker with limited knowledge of the occupational field.
Individual is treated as a member of an occupational community with access to the community's rules, history, occupational knowledge and practical expertise.	Individual treated as extra pair of hands who only needs access to limited knowledge and skills to perform job.
Individual participates in different communities of practice inside and outside the workplace.	Training restricted to narrowly defined job role and workstation.
Individual's work tasks and training closely mapped against recognised occupational standards and assessment requirements to ensure they become fully competent.	Weak relationship between workplace tasks, occupational standards and assessment requirements.
Off-the-job training includes time for reflection and stretches individual to reach their full potential.	Supporting individual to fulfil their potential is not seen as a priority
Named individual acts as dedicated support to apprentices	No dedicated individual; ad-hoc support
Individual's progress closely monitored and involves regular feedback from a range of employer and provider personnel who take a holistic approach.	Individual's progress monitored for job performance with limited developmental feedback.

Section 2: Research aims and design

The aim of the study was to gain an insight into the extent, content and nature of the on-the-job training received by apprentices at Levels 2 and 3, compared with entry-level employees going for the same job. In particular, we sought to identify the elements that are distinctive about on-the-job training in apprenticeships and about those delivering this training. The findings would also contribute to the development of a strengthened workplace training element of the new apprenticeship standards, for example by providing work-based curricula.

The research questions were:

- What is the content and structure of the on-the-job training apprentices receive (i.e. the form in which training is delivered and the way it is distributed over the working week/month/year)? How does this compare to the training of entry-level employees in the same jobs?

- What is distinctive about those responsible for training apprentices, compared with those who train entry-level employees (is any specialised training received by those who are training apprentices)?

- Are entry-level employees required/allowed to pursue any 'off-the-job' training or CPD while they are new in post? If so, how does their allowance for this compare with the 20% required for apprentices?

- How does the on-the-job training provided to apprentices on apprenticeship standards compare to those on apprenticeship frameworks?

- What are the views and perspectives of organisational stakeholders, such as managers, trainers and supervisors, on the training provided by their organisation (including the form of training, its purpose, and any constraints they may be facing)?

- What are the experiences of apprentices of their workplace learning?

In order to address these questions, the study adopted a multiple case study approach. In view of the variation in the quality of apprenticeships across different sectors and employer organisations (particularly in terms of size and resources/economic constraints) the research was conducted across five contrasting sectors: Engineering and Construction (sectors that have traditionally provided apprenticeships and where high quality provision is found), Retail and Social Care (where apprenticeships are a relatively new phenomenon and training provision is often poor) (Fuller and

Unwin, 2017), and Digital (also a new sector for apprenticeship but generally at the higher end of quality provision). Social Care was thought to be of particular interest as it is part of the sector (Health, Public Services and Care) that provided the highest number of apprenticeships in 2016/17 (Powell, 2018).

Data collection took place in three phases:

In Phase 1, we carried out documentary research in order to gain detailed knowledge of current regulation, both at national and at sector level. The study required substantial preliminary research because of the complexity of policy regulation, which was still in the process of being implemented, and the current transition from apprenticeship frameworks to the new standards (currently existing side-by-side, even within the same sector). In addition, we conducted a review of the literature, as we needed to take account of the large body of research on on-the-job learning in apprenticeship.

In Phase 2, we conducted interviews with national and sector-level stakeholder bodies. Again, this phase of the research was crucial for a comprehensive understanding of regulation and the perspectives of different stakeholders. The interviews were semi-structured interviews and lasted up to 60 minutes.

Table 1.1: National stakeholders and sector-level organisations interviewed

National stakeholder organisations	Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) Trade Union Congress (TUC) Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) National Society of Apprentices (NSoA)
Sector-level organisations	Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (SEMTA)[1] (Engineering) Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) (Construction) BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT (Digital) Skills for Care (Social Care) Retail Quality and Skills Board (Retail)

---

[1] SEMTA changed its name to Enginuity in 2020 (Enginuity, 2020).

In Phase 3, we conducted interviews with employers in each of the 5 sectors (1 large employer and 1 small to medium-sized (SME) employer in each sector). Recruiting employers proved challenging at times, particularly in the case of SMEs. Due to the difficulties in identifying a retail SME willing to take part in the study, we recruited an independent regional retail store. Although technically classified as a 'large' employer (with 1,200 staff), we felt that the differences terms of size and organisation still constituted an interesting contrast.

We planned to carry out up to 4 interviews per employer (up to 3 individual interviews with managers, trainers and/or supervisors; and 1 (group) interview with 1 or more apprentices), amounting to a maximum of 40 interviews. The interviews were designed to enable us to investigate the actual practice of workplace training (as opposed to regulation), including the constraints employers might face, paying attention to the individual perspectives of managers and trainers involved. We also wanted to include the perspectives and experiences of apprentices themselves, offering an additional layer of analysis. The interviews were semi-structured. The interview guides were informed by our findings in Phases 1 and 2 of the research.

Table 2.2 provides a summary of the interviews conducted with employers, trainers and apprentices in Phase 3 of the research. Between May and August 2019, 21 interviews with a total of 38 participants were conducted. As can be seen, some of these were joint or group interviews. Most interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. The analysis was conducted through an analytical framework, guided by the research questions and Fuller and Unwin's (2003) Expansive-Restrictive Continuum.

Table 2.2: Summary of employer interviews

Employers by sector	Number of interviews	Participants
Engineering		
Large	3	1 Director of Skills, 1 Apprenticeship Manager (joint interview)
		2 Trainers (joint)
		3 Apprentices (joint)
SME	2	2 Managers (joint)
		1 Technician/Trainer, 1 Apprentice (joint)
Construction		
Large	2	1 Manager, 1 Project Manager/Trainer (joint)
		1 Apprentice
SME	2	1 Resource & Development Manager, 1 Surveyor/trainer (joint)
		1 Apprentice
Digital		
Large	1	1 Manager, 1 Trainer, 1 apprentice (joint)
SME	2	1 Manager, 1 Trainer (joint)
		1 Apprentice
Social Care		
Large	2	1 Learning & Development Manager
		1 Care Home Manager/Trainer
SME	2	1 Director, 2 Managers/Trainers (joint)
		3 Apprentices (joint)
Retail		
National Retailer (large)	3	1 Apprenticeship Manager
		1 Area Manager, 1 Store Manager) (joint)
		2 Apprentices (joint)
Regional Retailer (large)	2	1 Learning and Development Manager
		1 Apprentice

Section 3: Macro-level context: findings from documentary research and interviews with national and sector-level stakeholders

On- and off-the-job training in English apprenticeship

The IfATE, in their Quality Statement (2018), defines apprenticeship as follows (emphasis added):

> *An apprenticeship is a job with training to industry standards. It should be about entry to a recognised occupation, involve **a substantial programme of on and off-the-job training** and the apprentice's competence should be tested by an independent, end point assessment.*

There is therefore recognition that apprenticeship should provide comprehensive on and off-the-job training. The current focus on off-the-job activity as the only fundable element has to be understood within the recent historical context of apprenticeship.

As indicated earlier, there is considerable variability in the quality of apprenticeships in England. In particular, concerns have been raised about the suitability of certain sectors that may lack a tradition of providing apprenticeships or that may not have the demand for skills in order to provide quality programmes (Fuller and Unwin, 2017; Keep 2015; Keep and James Relly, 2016). It is now recognised that previous legislation facilitated the upsurge of apprenticeships at lower levels and of adult apprentices (so-called 'conversions' of existing employees) (Fuller and Unwin, 2017). Previous statutory requirements for training were extremely flexible, and the required 280 Guided Learning Hours could be delivered entirely on-the-job. What is more, as apprenticeship centred on achieving a set of assessment-led qualifications, this often amounted to no more than observation of competence in the workplace, which commonly constituted an accreditation of existing skills rather than learning new ones (Brockmann et al., 2010). This light-touch regulation reflects the voluntarist tradition in England, and a recognition of employer concern with productivity and reluctance to invest in training (Unwin, 2019).

The current legislation has to be understood against this background of potential abuse in the past, when all funded training could be on-the-job, but in practice often did not entail any actual training or learning. In the Apprenticeship Regulations (DfE, 2017a), Paragraph 3 (3) the concern with clearly setting apart off-the-job from on-the-job training is apparent (emphasis added):

*"[O]ff-the-job training" means **training which is not on-the-job training** and is received by the apprentice, during the apprentice's normal working hours, for the purpose of achieving the approved apprenticeship standard to which the agreement or arrangement relates;*

"[O]n-the-job training" means training which is received by the apprentice during the apprentice's normal working hours for the sole purpose of enabling the apprentice to perform the work to which the agreement relates.

It is therefore the overriding concern of English employers with productivity and past abuses of the system that have led to the specification that fundable training must be off-the-job and cannot be part of the productive process. Whilst the 20% rule was criticised by several commentators as a crude approach, it was nonetheless seen as critical by policy-makers:

The 20% off-the-job was in direct response to behaviours in the past where learners didn't get the learning they were entitled to and all they did was get on-the-job training. (ESFA representative)

As we will see below, with only the off-the-job element being funded and regulated, little attention is being paid to on-the-job training. This is in stark contrast to most continental apprenticeships, notably the dual apprenticeship system in Germany, where workplace training as part of the productive process is the central feature of apprenticeship. Here, while off-the-job training in vocational schools is funded by the state, employers pay for on-the-job training. It is recognised that apprentices' productivity will be low initially but will increase gradually over time. In this occupational labour market model (Clarke et al., 2013), this loss of productivity is therefore absorbed by employers.

Distinction between 'job' and apprenticeship

The specification in the above extract from the apprenticeship legislation (DfE, 2017a) that any funded training needs to relate to the approved apprenticeship programme points to a related feature of English apprenticeship, namely that apprentices may be recruited first and foremost for a job that is distinct from the apprenticeship. The distinction between the job role and the apprenticeship is reflected throughout the ESFA (2019a) regulations, including the definition of apprenticeship as 'a job with training'. As we will see below, it is this distinction that necessitates the requirement that the job role must be such as to provide the apprentice with the opportunity 'to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to achieve their apprenticeship', and that training must relate to the apprenticeship (rather than 'the job').

This distinguishes it from other systems such as the dual apprenticeship in Germany. Here, an apprenticeship also presupposes an employment contract, but this is for the sole purpose of the apprenticeship for a specified training occupation. There is no 'job' that is distinct from the apprenticeship as a training occupation designed to cover a clearly defined range of activities and tasks.

Centrality of the provider

In the same vein, it is against the background of a lack of employer engagement, with the government taking a top-down approach towards implementing ambitious apprenticeship targets, that apprenticeship in England is largely driven by funded (off-the-job) training, most commonly delivered by a third-party training provider, although employers can also register as employer-providers. It is a feature that marks out English apprenticeship from most continental systems and has led Kuczera and Field (2018: 7) to state that

> *[i]n England, the historic responsibility of employers to deliver work-based learning to apprentices has been largely eclipsed by a focus on training delivered by a third-party training provider. This is unfortunate, as the key advantage of apprenticeship over other forms of vocational training is work-based learning, delivered by experienced workplace practitioners.*

It is the training provider's responsibility to ensure that the mandatory requirements for funding are fulfilled. The central document here is the Commitment Statement (ESFA, 2019b), which lists the responsibilities of the provider and the employer (in a checklist format). Whilst the employer is required to ensure the conditions necessary for the apprenticeship to be achieved (such as allowing the apprentice to complete their off-the-job training during working hours), responsibility for training lies with the training provider. This includes the development of a training plan, the managing and provision of off-the-job training (albeit that some of it can be delivered by the employer or a third-party subcontractor), and to 'ensure the quality of delivery through regular observations of teaching and learning'. The training plan calculates the minimum off-the-job training hours and sets out any off-the-job training components, such as modules.

There is also complete flexibility in terms of the nature and content of training as long as it is lined up with the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for the apprenticeship (as listed in the standard). These then serve as the (only) basis for training providers to develop the training plan, which can be delivered in many different ways and both off-site and in the workplace. Indeed, the

AELP representative insisted that a great deal of training can be delivered in the workplace, something that may be preferable to employers reluctant to release their apprentices to off-site provision. The new requirement for off-the-job training as a minimum of 20% of the apprentice's working time has been singled out as the biggest challenge in providing apprenticeships, particularly by small employers (FBS, 2019).

Kuczera and Field (2018) argue that apprenticeship regulation in England has almost absolved employers of their involvement in training, which is in stark contrast with other (notably dual) apprenticeship systems, such as in Germany, where employers take a central role. Here, the workplace element, in particular, is generally much more tightly regulated, with nationally specific workplace curricula governing the content of skills to be covered (see also Brockmann et al., 2011). Also, unlike in those systems, there is no requirement for English employers wanting to recruit an apprentice to have qualified instructors or trainers (in Germany, for example, the qualification of master craftsperson is a pre-condition). Indeed, as long as certain criteria are met, any company in England may provide apprenticeships, regardless of experience of doing so, or of having the necessary resources (e.g. in terms of trained staff) (e.g. Fuller and Unwin, 2017). Also, whereas training providers are subject to inspection by OFSTED, there is no such quality assurance system in place for on-the-job training provided by the employer, other than the training provider monitoring the apprentice's progress.

Limited employer regulation

Crucially, therefore, there is little in the regulations in terms of employer responsibility for the apprenticeship in general and for workplace training in particular. Only the funded (off-the-job) element is regulated and this is the responsibility of the training provider. The main requirement for an employer wanting to offer an apprenticeship as stipulated in the ESFA's Apprenticeship Funding Rules and Guidance for Employers (2019a) is that an apprenticeship must be based on a 'genuine job', meaning that the apprentice must have a 'contract of service' with the employer, who is responsible for paying the apprentice's wages. Further it is stated that the apprentice must have a job role 'that provides the opportunity for them to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to achieve their apprenticeship' and that the employer must provide 'appropriate support and supervision on the job'. It is interesting, however, that these last two requirements are not specified in any detail in the guidelines. Indeed, it is the training provider's responsibility to ensure that they are met, as indicated in the Commitment Statement (ESFA, 2019b).

In the ESFA's (2019a) definition of apprenticeship it is further stated that:

*Through their apprenticeship, apprentices will gain the technical knowledge, practical experience and wider skills they need for their immediate job and future career. The apprentice gains this through a wide mix of learning in the workplace, formal off-the-job training and **the opportunity to practise these new skills** in a real work environment.*

Interestingly, the requirement to enable the apprentice to practise new skills in the work environment appears to be the main reference to workplace learning and is specified in the Commitment Statement as the employer's responsibility (ESFA, 2019b). However, again this is not further specified in the guidance. Thus, whilst there is clearly an emphasis on the desirability of comprehensive on- (and off-the-job) training, there is no obligation on the employer to provide this. Indeed, rather than opting for regulation, the government's approach is to promote 'best practice', as stated by the ESFA representative:

*…if we compare our system in England to what we tend to see in other countries, the structure of the apprenticeship is very different. In England the employer usually contracts with a training provider to deliver the training. It's the training provider we therefore regulate and the employer should be supporting and embedding the training in the workplace. We try to **celebrate best practice** of that delivery and relationship. (ESFA representative) (Emphasis added)*

The ESFA representative went on to outline what 'best practice' should entail, echoing the above guidelines with regards to practising new skills in the workplace:

*An apprentice should have people around them that they can learn from and these should be competent individuals that understand that they are an apprentice and that they will be learning new skills. While it will normally be the training provider teaching new knowledge, skills and behaviours to reach occupational competency, the employer should be providing support in the workplace **to consolidate those new skills and practise them** and just have people, e.g. line manager, colleagues, mentor or coach to ask for help. (ESFA representative) (Emphasis added)*

Whilst this extract denotes an expectation of employers to provide a supportive learning environment and supervision, as we have seen, this does not constitute a legally enforceable obligation (see also Field, 2018). The ESFA representative expressed incredulity at the level of employer resistance to the minimum 20% off-the-job training policy, with employers complaining about losing a productive member of staff:

Our expectation had always been that apprenticeships have a significant amount of dedicated training – that's what makes an apprenticeship distinct from other programmes, and without it, I'm not sure I would recognise it as being an apprenticeship. From my point of view, it has been a bit of an eye-opener, how much resistance there has been to something which we had thought was already implicit in the system. (ESFA representative)

As outlined earlier, the focus of the new funding rules on off-the-job training and how this is defined is crucial and has to be understood within the recent historical context, specifically employers' reluctance to invest in training, and the poor quality or lack of training of many programmes. According to the IfATE representative, the focus on assessment in previous legislation (SASE, 2018) encouraged the widespread practice of recruiting apprentices whilst providing little or no training, leading to 'a high volume of low-quality apprenticeships' (particularly with large employers in certain non-traditional sectors). Referring to a highly publicised scandal involving a large food retailer, the IfATE representative explained:

…the basic business model was, you would sign up workers as apprentices, and then instead of training them, they would […] be observed working, so there'd be this kind of on-programme assessment, which is the basic model of an NVQ qualification. (IfATE representative)

The IfATE representative highlighted that the 20% requirement for off-the-job training sought to stem the expectation and practice (peddled by training providers) that employers can provide apprenticeships without access to training:

…the training provider would say, 'We can sign up your apprentices, we can sign up some of your workers as apprentices, we can do X, Y, they'll get a [qualification] at the end of it, you don't have to worry about releasing them,' all of those kind of things. So the requirement for the 20% off-the-job training was to try and stop that behaviour to try and get apprentices. If you're going to have an apprentice it has to be something really worthwhile. (IfATE representative)

IfATE insisted that the definitions of on- and off-the-job training in the funding rules were crucial:

*…because training providers can get money for off-the-job training, whereas they can't for on-the-job training […] if you are doing productive work […] **you may still be learning while you're doing that productive work, but that's on-the-job training.**' (IfATE representative)*

Many stakeholders referred to the distinction between off-the-job training as away from productive work and on-the-job training as part of the productive process, as illustrated in the examples below:

So car manufacturers […] you are at the place of work using the same equipment, spray-painting vehicle doors but they are test doors, they're not for vehicles for sale. So that is off-the-job training but […] in a kind of classical sense, whereas if you are spray-painting vehicles for sale, even if you're being overseen by somebody, then you're actually, you're working, that's on-the-job training. (IfATE representative)

The representative from the AELP agreed, using the example of a fishmonger apprenticeship:

…so a good example we use is filleting fish [..] off-the-job might be you might take somebody away from the fish counter and you show them how to fillet fish [..] the on-the-job is go back to the fish counter and fillet some fish, you know, you're being productive because actually you're producing a product that they can sell [..] putting it into practice is the sort of recognised thing about what on-the-job is. (AELP representative)

Here, on-the-job training is defined as being productive and also as 'practising' skills learnt off the job, again reflecting government regulation.

It is therefore interesting (if confusing) that the ESFA (2019a) definition of off-the-job training includes activities that would commonly be described as on-the-job, notably 'shadowing' and 'mentoring'. Reflecting the usual distinction between the apprentice's job ('the work for which they have been employed') and the apprenticeship, the regulations specify that off-the-job training needs to be 'directly relevant to the apprenticeship framework or standard. Thus, 'eligible costs' include: 'Time spent by employees/managers supporting or mentoring apprentices […] in addition to generic line management responsibilities', as long as this is 'directly linked to the apprenticeship training and assessment'.

This was also reflected in the interview with the IfATE representatives, who pointed out that the definition of fundable off-the-job training

…includes a lot of activity that stakeholders would describe as on-the-job training […] and the stuff that isn't included is basically work. (IfATE representative)

When we described to them the model in German apprenticeship, whereby an apprentice is attached to a senior employee, watching and assisting them for much of the time, they explained that in England this would be legally defined as a fundable off-the-job training activity (mentoring). If

it is undertaken by the employer, the training provider will reimburse the costs. However, and crucially, it also became clear that IfATE felt that the day-to-day workplace training and mentoring should be funded by the employer, accepting that 'this depends on the culture of the sector'. Whilst recognising that workplace training is beneficial or even critical, it should not be funded as it would be open to abuse. In this sense, the new guidance was seen as a weakening of the rules:

> *…we are concerned from a quality point of view, where the definition of off-the-job training is being eroded or weakened, or by the idea that on-the-job training should be fundable […] we're sensitive to this, reverting back to the [food retailer] model where training providers would be funded to observe apprentices working, and I think we are seeing […] stakeholder pressure, [for example] the funding rules have this provision around employer mentoring, being not only off-the-job training but of fundable activity, which creates a risk of diverting funding away from training. (IfATE representative)*

As will be apparent in this report, this model was however still reflected in our findings.

Section 4: Apprenticeship and on-the-job training: findings from employer interviews

In this section, we will discuss the findings from our interviews with managers, trainers and apprentices in the 10 employing organisations in our sample. The findings will be presented under a number of themes identified through our analysis. As we will see, the employers fall into two groups: Engineering, Construction and IT employers, who exemplify an expansive approach to apprenticeship and to on-the-job training; and Retail and Social Care employers, who represent more restrictive learning environments. A summary of the themes is presented in Figure 4.1. The themes will be discussed in turn.

Figure 4.1: Interviews with employers: Themes

Quality on-the-job training as part of an expansive approach to apprenticeship
    Comprehensive company training to develop own workforce and improve retention
    Close alignment of apprenticeship with expansive on-the-job training
    Company training for broad occupational roles
    An expansive in-house training plan
    Going beyond apprenticeship requirements
    Mentoring as the central part of comprehensive training
    Apprentices as 'learners'

A restrictive approach to apprenticeship and on-the-job training
    Apprentices as fully productive employees: Apprenticeship as the off-the-job element delivered by the training provider
    On-the-job as 'off-the-job' training: The role of the employer
    On-the-job training as 'practising'
    Social care: Focus on internal (off-the-job) training for all staff

---

Apprenticed versus non-apprenticed staff
    Engineering, Construction and IT employers
    Retail and Social Care employers

Qualification of trainers

Quality on-the-job training as part of an expansive approach to apprenticeship

All our employers in the engineering, construction and IT sectors provided quality on-the-job training as part of a comprehensive approach to apprenticeship that was over and above the programmes they were delivering. In what follows, this quality approach will be discussed in terms of the themes as listed in Figure 4.1. These employers took a central role in co-ordinating, delivering and monitoring the apprenticeships that went far beyond the official requirements of the frameworks or standards, which they made sure were covered within the training provided. All of the workplaces constituted expansive learning environments, demonstrating many or all of the elements in Fuller and Unwin's (2003) expansive-restrictive continuum. The employers and apprenticeship programmes in this group are detailed in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Employers and apprenticeships (expansive approach)

Employer	Number of employees	Standard or Framework	Apprenticeship and duration
Engineering Large	90,000 globally 34,000 UK	Standard	Level 3 Advanced Electrical Engineering (4 years)
Engineering SME	176	Standard	Level 3 Motorcycle Technician (3 years)
Construction Large	3,000	Framework	Level 3 Construction and Built Environment (2 years)
Construction SME	165	Framework	Level 3 Construction and Built Environment (2 years)
IT Large	4,500	Standard	Level 3 Infrastructure Technician (18 months)
IT SME	70	Standard	Level 3 Infrastructure Technician (18 months)

Comprehensive company training to develop own workforce and improve retention

For these employers, the main considerations in quality training were the importance of developing their own workforce and promoting retention in the face of skill shortages and an ageing workforce in the sectors. This approach is exemplified in the following quote by the manager of the IT SME:

The whole purpose of the apprenticeship programme was to develop the future full-time employees that are able to thrive in our environment. So we very much tailored it to the apprentice completing the apprenticeship and then working for us rather than "well, we're going to do a variety of them and then send them on their way" […] we still look at this primarily as an old-school apprenticeship… (Manager, IT SME)

Similarly, the manager of the engineering SME highlighted the importance of training, pointing to the difficulty of finding technicians:

Every dealer you talk to they will say they cannot get technicians. […] I've always had somebody on Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 and when Level 3 finishes I'll put another one on Level 1 because that is our future […] The only way we're going to get technicians is to train them ourselves. (Manager, Engineering SME)

Both construction companies pointed to skills shortages in the industry and the importance of bringing in young people to develop the future workforce. Representatives of both the Construction and IT SMEs explained that training was essential to making staff feel valued, thereby enhancing retention:

[the construction SME] spent a lot of money on upskilling their workforce as part of the philosophy to make sure that the staff we have are retained, and the way that they do that is by providing them with the qualifications they need to be better […] Construction is a really volatile environment in terms of staff movement and churn rates because when the going gets tough, construction is a stressful job, it is very easy to walk away… (Surveyor/Trainer, Construction SME)

And that's why we're doing it, because it breeds loyalty, they're more enthusiastic, they bring the average age group of the company down. (Manager, IT SME)

Similarly, the Apprenticeship Manager at the Large Engineering employer emphasised the importance of 'refreshing the workforce' by putting in place a 'talent pipeline':

we know that we've got an ageing workforce […] like in the next ten years 40% of our workforce are due for retirement age so it makes absolute sense to have a talent pipeline that comes through […] refresh our workforce. (Apprenticeship Manager, Large Engineering Employer)

Crucially, these employers all provided comprehensive training *independently* of the apprenticeship. Nevertheless, as will be shown in the following sections, employers deemed apprenticeship a valuable model of learning and the frameworks or standards provided a structure for on-the-job training.

Close alignment of apprenticeship with expansive on-the-job training

All employers in these sectors valued the off-the-job element as an important part of the training, providing the theoretical underpinning to the work-based element. The off- and on-the-job elements were commonly closely aligned, allowing the apprentice to apply in the workplace the knowledge gained off the job. This was illustrated by the IT SME, where the hardware and software qualifications gained in day release with the training provider were complemented by placements in the relevant work areas within the company, 'so they're practising what they're studying at the same time'. For example, while the apprentices were studying for the hardware qualification, at work they were placed in the company's workshop (the so-called 'build room'), provisioning new computers, and diagnosing and resolving hardware faults:

> …we tailor their time [in the workplace] with the key stages that are required in the standard […] they start with Comptier [a hardware qualification] […] while they're studying for that one academically, they are working in part of our organisation that that is applicable to. Once they've completed that certification, we then move them into the helpdesk environment, […] which then complements them studying the Microsoft Windows 10 certification. (Trainer, IT SME)

Similarly, for the construction employers, on-the-job training was guided by the off-the-job element, provided by the local FE college. The employers ensured that on- and off-the-job training were aligned to facilitate the integration of theory and practice. The following quotes are reflective of a carefully planned approach:

> Usually through the college we are given their subject matters for the term or the year, so what we try to do is base what they are doing [on site] around what they are doing on their day release at college. If they are looking at brickwork for example, I will make sure that [the apprentice] is helping on the brickwork package… (Manager, Large Construction Employer)

We work out where to put them, who to put them with, assign them a mentor, enrol them into college and give them a training plan that works alongside that, so that they focus on their training plan when they are with us four days. (Manager, Construction SME)

As will be shown below, the goal of the training was to develop apprentices for particular job roles, that were far broader than the scope of the apprenticeships, whilst ensuring that the apprenticeship requirements were addressed *within this training*. Nevertheless, employers felt that the apprenticeship provided a model of learning that benefited their organisation. It provided an important structure for the training and the off-the-job element ensured a theoretical underpinning:

We want someone who can do the job, our job, the job we need them to do […] [The apprenticeship] is an enabler for what we want to achieve. (Trainer, IT SME)

Apprenticeship was valued as initiation into a community of practice, enabling apprentices to gain an understanding of the work environment:

So that's one of the reasons why the apprenticeship is so good, because you literally come in at the entry-entry level, understand the way we process things from the beginning […] [the training provider] provides a schedule throughout the whole of their apprenticeship and then we […] plan their year basically around it, to make sure that they can fulfil the course as well as the job. (Manager, IT SME)

Nevertheless, the main focus for the employer was on the apprentice's ability to fulfil their job role:

…we will not progress you to the next stage of our internal training until you have hit these key milestones on the academia. And if you don't hit them, at the end of your apprenticeship, you will pass the apprenticeship, but fail with us effectively, because you won't have gained enough real-world skills to move to the next level. That is the only way we found to keep them motivated to fulfil both sides of the apprenticeship. (Trainer, IT SME)

Company training for occupational competence

Notably, it was clear that employers took an occupational approach to training, the aim of which was to ensure apprentices became full members of a community of practice. They were trained in job roles characterised by occupational breadth and based on an understanding of the organisation as a whole, different work processes, and their position within it, rather than a set of (fragmented)

skills. All employers referred to the complexity of the work and the variety of skills involved. The manager of the Construction SME explained that they arranged for apprentices to work on entire projects, rather than isolated tasks, so that they would experience all the different processes involved from beginning to end:

> *…because then they will be exposed to a wide range of what happens from start to finish of a project […] we try and expose them to as many things as possible across everything we do – our site managers don't tend to focus on a specific type, they can be moved across the business. (Manager, Construction SME)*

The manager went on to explain that it was vital for apprentices to gain an understanding of the business as a whole to enable collaboration and team work between different parts. Company training involved placing the apprentice with diverse areas of work for a matter of months at a time, as in the following examples of the two construction employers:

> *… [the apprentice] would need to learn the commercial side of things, because our commercial and operational teams need to understand each other, so you would spend something like three months on that side. You would also learn all the other elements, so the estimating, the planning and that is the way that he gets an overall arching theory behind the whole business, how everything he does impacts on them, and how everything they do impacts on him (Manager, Construction SME)*

Rotation to different skills areas was deemed important to promote an understanding of the organisation as a whole. At the same time, for several employers it was part of their workforce development, allowing apprentices to explore particular preferences and talents:

> *…[the apprentice's] main focus is project management […] but he will spend time with the quantity surveyors, the planners, the estimators, design management. The goal is that he will get to have a taste of each of the departments, either to see if he has more of an inkling to move into something else, or for him to just have a better understanding of how other job roles influence his job role, or how his job role influences others […] rather than complaining about something […] they can understand it. (Manager, Large Construction Employer)*

An expansive in-house training plan

Most employers were using their own in-house (on-the-job) training plan in order to prepare the apprentices for broad occupational roles. The plans covered extensive on-the-job training which

integrated the apprenticeship criteria so as to ensure that apprentices met the requirements of the job role *as well as* that of the apprenticeship. It guided day-to-day on-the-job training and progression:

> *…there will be a whole load of different criteria that [the apprentice] will cover over the course of 24 months, he will need to be able to tick off and demonstrate to me […] that he can do that, so that he can progress, so that is what the on-the-job training looks like, it is running your day to day job, but also making sure that these criteria within the training plan are met. (Surveyor/Trainer, Construction SME)*

> *…we have a basic training handbook that we would expect them to complete as well, and we try to link their modules with the activities that they will be completing onsite, so that they can actually be doing what they need to do to complete it… (Manager, Large Construction Employer)*

All employers would use mentoring as the main way of ensuring that the requirements of the training plans were met:

> *[The apprentice] would work alongside me and we would work through his training plan together, to make sure that he is making the progress that he needs to make, to demonstrate to the business that he is achieving what he needs in the apprenticeship. (Surveyor/Trainer, Construction SME)*

The training plan enabled employers to carefully plan on-the-job training and monitor apprentices' progress:

> *…our trainee booklet [lists] the things that they would need to learn in a build management role, the things they need to learn in a quantity surveying role, and it assesses their knowledge just at the beginning of the project. And, we wouldn't expect them to understand anything [at the start], and then they will be sitting in … if they get through the quantity surveying element, then the lead quantity surveyors who are line managing them will then assess them throughout, and at the end will just say […] that is where they have got to in terms of being ready to become an assistant quantity surveyor or a build manager. (Manager, Large Construction Employer)*

The large construction employer would also monitor and develop their own training:

you can have a bit of a spider gram at the end, you can measure impact, understand the training, what is effective and what is not, and slowly remove the ineffective and slowly increase the effective learning. (Manager, Large Construction Employer)

The training plan of the Construction SME also entailed a progression route from trainee to assistant. The plan served as a basis for comprehensive training for what were broad occupational roles, as the manager explained, using the example of the training for site manager:

…the site management element of it is anything between about 18 months to 24 months, where you would learn all the skills that are listed [in the in-house training plan]. We broke it down into trainee and assistant, so we try and work it so that you came on as an apprentice, you would complete all the elements in a certain section and then you could be made a trainee. Once you have completed all those elements, you are made an assistant and then when your plan is complete, you could be a fully-fledged site manager. (Manager, Construction SME)

Not all employers in this group had a structured training plan or workplace curriculum in place. Representatives of the Engineering SME and the IT department of the large public sector employer explained that the type of activities covered was driven by the day-to-day work at hand and by customer orders and demands, and, as a result included a large variety of skills and areas of work:

…it's whatever is booked in. It could be services, it could be clutch problems, brake problems and it's given to the most suitable person, the person who's – it's skill picked. The apprentices […] we're not going to give them something out of their depth but we could very well give it to the technician next to them so that they can oversee it or they can help that technician do it. (Manager, Engineering SME)

The challenge here was to be able to deal with often unpredictable situations, which was part of the skill sets required:

The interesting thing about our job is it's permanently on the job learning really for everyone because it's so varied all the time that you don't necessarily know what's going to be thrown at you each week and we visit so many different [clients] with different requirements it's constantly getting new stuff to learn; it's just part of the job really. (Trainer, IT department of large non-IT employer)

For all employers, it was apparent that the company training went far beyond what was required by the standards or frameworks. Many participants commented that the skills element could be achieved in a much shorter period of time and through a narrower scope of activities. At the large Engineering employer, apprentices were put on a series of placements on the shop floor:

> *…the idea of having different rotational placements we know that that gives people a broad exposure and it puts them into different sort of environments as opposed to just drilled into one because you could arguably cover your NVQ or your development competence qualifications in maybe one or two placements but we've deliberately done it in a variety to give them a broader exposure. (Trainer, Large Engineering Employer)*

The apprentice at the large Construction company was training to become a build manager which would take two years to complete. He commented that the NVQ (Construction and Built Environment) could be completed within a much shorter space of time:

> *The NVQ's very basic […] you've got two years to do the NVQ, if you were to wait a year and a half and then start the NVQ, you could probably just completely crash it out within a couple of days just off your head because you know it all. (Apprentice, Construction SME)*

It was apparent that a much deeper understanding of knowledge and skills was developed as part of the on-the-job training provided by the employer rather than through the apprenticeship:

> *So, say, drawings, [the NVQ will] just be asking you about how you file drawings and how you keep them up-to-date, and stuff like that, whereas [in the workplace] you'd be at a level of understanding how to read the drawing, you'd be able to do take-offs of drawings, material take-offs, to work out, I don't know, how much plasterboard you need. (Apprentice, Construction SME)*

Thus, whilst employers made sure that the apprenticeship criteria were covered within their in-house training, their primary concern was with occupational breadth and that the apprentice was becoming a full member of the community of practice:

> *…we will try and make sure that during the course of those two years, we have ticked each box. But, generally in terms of general learning, it is trying to make him be part of the team, so he is being seen as a valuable team member, and just being involved in all*

elements throughout the day-to-day running of the site. (Manager, Large Construction Employer)

Mentoring as the central part of comprehensive on-the-job training

The main elements of on-the-job training in the comprehensive approach were mentoring and shadowing. These terms were often used interchangeably and commonly involved working alongside a trainer or senior worker, observing and/or assisting them with the tasks at hand, with the mentor explaining tasks or processes, and the apprentice being able to ask for advice and guidance. Mentoring and shadowing took place throughout the apprenticeship, and were deemed critical in the process of gradually 'bringing on' apprentices: introducing them into a community of practice, training them in a wide range of skills, and ensuring they became proficient in what were broad occupational roles. Enabling the apprentice to gradually take on more responsibility was a crucial part of the process.

In the IT SME, apprentices were placed with a mentor over months at a time in each of the different work areas, starting with the hardware workshop:

…we bring in a school leaver and on day one, we teach them the very basics of IT […] we do that by installing them in our workshop for between six to eight months on average. Their initial exposure to IT is done by shadowing a full-time employee who does that job today. (Manager, IT SME)

Following this, apprentices moved up to the Helpdesk, again starting with a period of shadowing ('listening into calls, they're actually seeing what happens in the real world with IT support'). The process often involved shadowing and being shadowed, as a way of monitoring apprentices' competence development, as in the following examples of the IT and Construction SMEs:

so they sit passively and then they begin the active supporting customers. Initially […] that doesn't necessarily require interacting with the customer over the phone. So they can kind of control the experience themselves. And they will […] have a buddy and that buddy will then start shadowing them, just to make sure… (Manager, IT SME)

[The apprentice] would sit with me as new sub-contractors come to site, and I would go through the [task] with him and I would explain to him what we are looking for here […] how we are making sure it is safe on site, how we are making sure the quality is there. He would see me do it and then I would watch him do it, and it would be a process until he is

comfortable just doing it himself autonomously, without my support. But, it wouldn't be until I am ready to let him do that on his own… (Surveyor/Trainer, Construction SME)

The manager of the Construction SME summed up the importance of shadowing in ensuring apprentices became fully proficient in what constituted broad occupational roles:

…they would spend [their time on site] when they are with their line manager basically shadowing them, so everything that they are doing on site they are observing, they are learning, they are picking up and at the same time they are referring back to their training plan to make sure that they are completing all the elements that will one day make them a fully-fledged site manager or surveyor. (Manager, Construction SME)

Initiating novices into the community of practice was a gradual process, reflecting the complexity of the areas of work and the skills needed. Apprentices at the engineering SME were assigned to a master technician, working alongside them for at least the first year of the apprenticeship, before being given jobs in their own right, albeit still under the close supervision of the technician:

[The apprentice] will spend the first 12 months, maybe slightly longer than that, working on that bench with that technician. Dependent on how they progress and how quick they come on, I tend to give them their own bench next to the master technician [so they can] carry out certain elements, whether it be replace brake pads or change sprockets or whatever it is; [the master technician] would oversee it and check it afterwards (Manager, Engineering SME)

In the Engineering SME, mentoring continued to be an important element beyond the apprenticeship, as part of the progression (of all apprentices) to technician:

…once he's finished his apprenticeship he'll always be mentored. He's got two master techs either side of him where he can always ask advice […] they'll still be a trainee technician for up to two years. (Manager, Engineering SME)

Through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) apprentices gained an overview of the organisation, and their position within it. They were learning about entire processes and relationships between them (rather than fragmented tasks), as illustrated by the following examples:

And that's where the working together at the first stages come into play… like I'm not only learning about components and the mechanical side of things; I'm learning a process, a

thought process, a way to work to teach you to be clean, good housekeeping and do this this way and then you can't forget that, or step-by-step rather than if you were to do things your own way you might be all over the place but no-one's ever told you different… (Technician/Trainer, Engineering SME)

… it does take a while to understand how a site works for a brand-new person, how building systems work, how our internal systems work […] so it takes more than a few weeks just to get that embedded, and during that time they will be put with a build manager who will look after them, so get them involved. And, as they get more experience, as they get more confident, that is when we will start giving them their own things to look after. (Manager, Large Construction Employer)

… the other thing we do is make sure they are in all the necessary meetings, so they hear and learn what is going on throughout, so we have a daily briefing here with all the supervisors, to talk about what is going on on the site […] what is important for that day or that week […] so just keeping them involved during that early stage. (Manager, Large Construction Employer)

Mentoring was deemed critical in ensuring that apprentices became fully proficient in what were highly technical skill areas. The gradual transition from novice to expert was essential, and employers stressed that it was vital apprentices had achieved a certain level of knowledge and skills before they could be expected to work independently. Mistakes could have grave consequences – the considerable employer investment in training was outweighed by the potential consequences of leaving them to work unsupervised.

I think they need to get themselves to a certain level before they can be let loose to work on stuff on their own […] I do a lot of engine rebuilds, diagnostic work and servicing as well […] if I give something to [the apprentice] I need to be 100% sure that he's capable so I haven't got to go back to it and rectify issues. (Technician/Trainer, Engineering SME)

 The apprentice at the Construction SME related that during his first job with the company he was 'just following the site manager'. Since then he had gradually taken on more responsibility, all the while working alongside a senior person, and he was looking forward to being assigned jobs of his own, as he was coming to the end of his 2-year apprenticeship:

I've just grown in my knowledge and still working with somebody, but I don't think they'd put me alone up until now that I'm towards the end of it […] they wouldn't throw me in the

deep end because there's so much that could go wrong […] I've got to the point where I can take tasks […] we just divide the workload up. And I think soon I'll be going on and just having my own job completely, which will be a nice step. (Apprentice, Construction SME)

The trainer at the large engineering employer explained that mentoring was crucial in ensuring that the work was carried out safely. Once an apprentice started working on the shop floor they would be allocated a mentor who was 'a fully skilled person' who would 'teach them their trade':

*…they will teach them exactly how to do it and that's when they start learning […] within six months the business will see a skill in them where they are confident enough for them to say, "we are building this [component] but I am going to give you this one bit to build yourself safely", and that's the key, it's **safely** so they have an approved operator who is the mentor who's signing for the apprentice's work […] they will never be given anything less than 100% inspection until they come out of their apprenticeship. (Trainer, Large Engineering Employer)*

This was echoed by one of the apprentices, who described the advantages of close supervision to gradually build up his skills through a series of placements, avoiding 'expensive mistakes':

… they want to gauge your competence, this is now my third placement and I felt they could tell I was more relaxed and my skillset was better than maybe if it was my first placement […] they won't let you do anything unsupervised, they'll sort of watch over your shoulder. (Apprentice, Large Engineering Employer)

Mentoring was based on the close relationship between apprentice and senior worker/trainer and the monitoring of progress of the former by the latter. Depending on their progress, the apprentices were then gradually entrusted with greater responsibility:

For the early stages, [the supervisor] will be with them a lot of the time […] so we can be sure that nothing is going to happen, but when you get to know these guys well, they become one of the team and you know what their strengths and weaknesses are, you learn them as people and you can judge […] what they are comfortable doing, what they are not comfortable doing. (Project Manager/Trainer, Large Construction Employer)

…my job is to monitor how his level's progressing and then I can decide what further things to give him. I can trust him to go and do that to that bike, knowing that he's more than capable of doing that on his own because of what we've been building up to that point […]

On day one it would just literally be, stand there and watch till I get a feeling of his technical knowledge. (Technician/Trainer, Engineering SME)

It was also considered important to involve the apprentice in the actual work early on by giving them their own area of responsibility ('they learn much more if you give them something to be responsible for and they see it through from start to finish'):

…they can start with things like taking care of daily diaries and looking after the signage, making sure that it is in place, so it is very … And, that is from day one, that they can start maintaining that, so it is not thrown in at the deep end, they have someone with them, there is someone quality checking what is going on, but it is just to give them something to be doing hands-on straightaway. (Manager, Large Construction Employer)

The manager of the large construction employer explained that they would give the apprentices 'small elements of a bigger package' in order to develop different sets of technical and soft skills:

...for example we gave [the apprentice] a screed package to look after here […] with our help and supervision […] so following that package through from start to finish […] they learnt a lot more, they got a look into the design detail, the materials, the spec, how you deal with people. (Manager, Large Construction Employer)

Apprentices as 'learners'

The comprehensive approach to apprenticeship, including practices of mentoring and shadowing, was founded on a particular culture of workplace training, in which apprentices' status as learners rather than workers was fully acknowledged. This type of learning culture necessitates the availability of relevant resources, such as time set aside for mentoring, as illustrated by the technician of the Engineering SME:

You are under pressure to get the job done but it's still a relaxed enough atmosphere, you can still take a few minutes to discuss things (Technician/Trainer, Engineering SME)

In these workplaces, creating learning opportunities and sharing knowledge were critical elements in everyday practice:

If there's ever something quirky or interesting going on, most people come over and have a look… (Technician/Trainer, Engineering SME)

Crucially, apprentices in these workplaces were not expected to be fully productive during the apprenticeship. Instead, it was acknowledged that productivity during the apprenticeship was lower, particularly during the initial period:

The first two years I don't…maybe the latter part of the second year I look at their productivity and how efficient they are, but […] they're apprentices, so I might look at it but it's for my benefit just to see they're progressing (Manager, Engineering SME)

…in the first year we make an assumption effectively they are not economically productive we need to get to a place where they are safe and have the basic understanding… (Director of Skills, Large Engineering Employer)

…in the second year they're becoming productive because they're actually now away from the protected environment and they're now more into the placements that they're going to make an impact in. But the productivity of the apprentice clearly will increase from year 2, year 3, year 4, it's almost like by year 4 they're pairing. They're 80% odd productive and then once they've completed then they're joining the rest of the workforce… (Trainer, Large Engineering Employer)

For the Engineering SME, where all apprenticeship graduates trained to become technicians, productivity was still expected to be lower even at the end of the apprenticeship:

…we don't expect them to actually be fully productive at the end of an apprenticeship either. There's quite a lot to take in. (Training, IT SME)

Employers explained that they fully accepted that they were absorbing the costs of on-the-job training:

…what we do every day on the job is just their on the job learning, that doesn't contribute to the 20%, even though [the line manager] is sat there training them, it isn't classed as that. (Manager, Construction SME)

Similarly, the manager of the IT SME stressed that their on-the-job training was in addition to the 20% off-the-job training required, adding that the apprenticeship did not oblige them to provide any training at all ('we could do nothing'). The trainer at the Construction SME insisted that it was a worthwhile investment:

…because it is time spent making sure that our site is run safely and accidents aren't happening and we are meeting our programme [requirements]. That is time that I am actually taking from running my site to make sure that [the apprentice] learns how to do his RAMS (Surveyor/Trainer, Construction SME)

A restrictive approach to apprenticeship and on-the-job training

Compared with the employers in the engineering, construction and IT sectors, the retail and social care organisations in our sample took a restrictive approach to apprenticeship and on-the-job training. This approach will be discussed in terms of the themes as outlined in Figure 4.1. The employers and apprenticeship programmes in this group are detailed in Figure 4.3. Please note that all the apprentices interviewed where on Level 3 programmes. They were employed in leadership roles.

Figure 4.3: Employers and apprenticeships (restrictive approach)

Employer	Number of employees	Standard or Framework	Apprenticeship and duration
Retail (national)	60,000	Standard	Level 2 Retailer (12 months) Level 3 Retail Team Leader (18 months)
Retail (regional)	1,200	Standard	Level 2 Retailer (12 months) Level 3 Retail Team Leader (18 months)
Social Care Large	3,000	Mixture	Level 2 Adult Care Worker (12 months) Level 3 Lead Adult Care Worker (18 months)
Social Care SME	42	Standard	Level 3 Lead Adult Care Worker (18 months)

Apprentices as fully productive employees: 'Apprenticeship' as the off-the-job element delivered by the training provider

The most striking aspect in the organisation of apprenticeship delivered by the social care and retail employers was that apprentices were first and foremost fully productive workers rather than learners. As a result, they received comparatively little on-the-job training through their employers. Notably, for the managers, trainers and apprentices in these organisations, the 'apprenticeship'

referred solely to the training employees received *in addition* to their job for which they had in employed, i.e. during the 20% of their contracted working hours:

> *…both of my guys work four days a week and the other day it's purely about their apprentice work (Store Manager, National Retailer)*

> *…we agree to spend so much time on the apprenticeship, and we tend to do it on a weekly basis […] so they can plan it better. (Manager, Home Care Provider SME)*

The following quote from the Apprenticeship Manager at the National Retailer also illustrates that the apprenticeship was seen as separate from the young people's job and, just as regular employees, they were not deemed to require mentoring whilst at work:

> *…they're on a normal full contract with a full salary and therefore they operate in those four days as a full employee. The difference is that they've got the opportunity of having that learning on the fifth day, and then putting that learning into practice so, yes, they would be supervised in some way but not, I don't mean closely supervised, they would be working as an employee. (Apprenticeship Manager, National Retailer)*

This was confirmed by the apprentices in both retail organisations. Asked whether they received any training on the shop floor, they responded:

> *No, it's like, four days you're here […] and then one day it's your apprenticeship (Apprentice, National Retailer)*

As employees, there was no expectation that they would receive training whilst on the shop floor, although they felt they were able to approach their manager or colleagues. Asked whether they would work alongside or shadow a more experienced employee, the apprentices at the retail organisations responded:

> *No. I mean, at work, apart from my tutor, if I've got any queries regarding my work, I just go to my manager (Apprentice, National Retailer)*

> *…day-to-day is just "go downstairs [onto the shop floor] and do it" and ask colleagues for help when I'm not sure (Apprentice, Regional Retailer)*

Thus, apprentices were seen as employees, who completed an apprenticeship during designated time. Similarly, 'the apprenticeship' was regarded as something delivered by the training provider rather than the employer:

… we went through all sorts of paperwork with the company, because obviously it's an outside company that do the apprenticeship […] I signed forms [which included] everything that would be in it. We had six or seven workbooks, so we had all the titles of those and what would be included. (Apprentice, Regional Retailer)

The training was initially agreed between the training provider, the employer and the apprentice. What was classed as 'off-the-job' training was delivered through a set of modules or units, supported by a mixture of e-learning and face-to-face sessions. Apprentices were required to complete a series of workbooks or tasks. It was the responsibility of the training provider to ensure that the apprenticeship criteria were met. A designated person from the training provider (variously referred to as 'tutor', 'trainer' or 'coach') visited the apprentices at monthly or two-monthly intervals to review their progress through observations and reviews:

…the knowledge tends to be eLearning and then the trainer goes in to see how they've got on with their eLearning and observes them in work and does the eLearning and coaching with them in their store (Apprenticeship Manager, National Retailer)

I've had an observation where [the training provider] has come into store and she's watched me work and she's taken notes of what I've done so that she can then write up or do whatever she has to do to mark off the criteria that I've expressed and she's seen. Or another time she's come in and we'll sit and we'll be at the computer and she'll go through work with me that I need help with. (Apprentice, National Retailer)

The following quote captures the split between the training provider, the employer and the apprentice typical for the employers in this group. It is notable that managers from all four organisation emphasised the responsibility of the apprentices in achieving the apprenticeship:

…the apprentice is responsible for their learning and their completion of work and the onus is very much on them. They've got a coach which is fantastic […] because the store manager's not solely responsible for them in terms of their development, you've got a coach who keeps them on track and they meet up with […] [the store manager's] responsibility is to make sure that they get their learning hours so they're planned in and that's absolutely key to make sure that happens and obviously [the store manager] will provide as much support as he can... (Area Manager, National Retailer)

Thus, employers saw their responsibility mainly in terms of managing the apprentices from an employer's perspective, such as ensuring that they were given sufficient time 'to work on their

apprenticeship', and monitoring overall progress. Asked whether they had a training plan in place, the store manager of the national retailer referred to the off-the-job element and the responsibility of the training provider:

> *That's set by the trainers really, we just we're aware of what they're doing at what stage…*
> *(Store Manager, National Retailer)*

On-the-job as 'off-the-job' training: The role of employers

The apprenticeships in the retail and social care organisations of our sample were thus clearly focused on the off-the-job element. This was designed to provide the skills and underpinning knowledge and also required apprentices to complete tasks and do research in the workplace. The role of employers was to a) work with the training provider in agreeing the content of the apprenticeships and in the monitoring of progress and b) act as a point of contact for the apprentice for advice and guidance. These roles were carried out by dedicated persons, typically a manager, trainer or training co-ordinator. An example was the store manager of the national retailer, who explained that he always took time to support apprentices with their off-the-job tasks:

> *…I just ask to see what they're getting up to, how they're getting along. They quite often*
> *have questions for me so […] I'll make time with them and say, right, let's plan that into*
> *there and we'll have discussions about what they're doing… (Store Manager, National*
> *Retailer)*

He went on explaining that the apprentices may be spending the off-the-job time (one day per week) either at home, in the store 'completing various tasks' or in off-the-job training organised by the employer and that

> *…they've always got me if they need some help with any of those experiences and I've*
> *helped both of them a fair bit with, a little bit of the intricacies around the policies and how*
> *that applies to what they're trying to do. (Store Manager, National Retailer)*

A similar arrangement was in place at the regional retailer, as conveyed by the apprentice:

> *I often run to [the training manager] and I'm just like, 'I've got this situation, how can I deal*
> *with this?' I think [retail employer] in general are pretty supportive, but I think even more*
> *so having been on that apprenticeship. It has given me almost that extra bit of support,*
> *because my store manager will always say, 'How is that going? How is this going?'…*
> *(Apprentice, Regional Retailer)*

Managers in these organisations insisted that they supported apprentices with the off-the-job element ('the apprenticeship') and, in particular, the research they had to conduct to complete set tasks. At the home care provider SME, the apprenticeship was structured around a number of units as part of which apprentices had to do observations in the workplace and write reflective accounts. The manager praised the off-the-job tasks as a good learning opportunity which would encourage the apprentices to

> …think outside the box, and how they could promote a healthy lifestyle, improve their health or maintain a good level of health, so they have had to look into things in more depth, and research and communicate with the team that is supporting [the client], and share information and get feedback on their views. (Manager/Trainer, Home Care Provider SME)

Employer support with the off-the-job element would often result in off-the-job mentoring by more senior staff, for example in the form of feedback as in the example above. Interestingly, however, it could also lead to on-the-job mentoring and shadowing, as part of apprentices' productive work. However, as will be shown, the training commonly took place in an ad-hoc manner rather than as part of a planned approach. Crucially, the onus on making it happen was firmly on the apprentices who were encouraged to approach colleagues and departments. It appears that employer support for on- and off-the-job training was thus fragile, depending on the availability and goodwill of relevant staff, as well as the resources of the individual apprentice in terms of both confidence and available time.

In these organisations, the responsibility for seeking out learning opportunities was firmly with the apprentices. At the regional retailer, apprentices were required to complete a workbook for each of their modules, as part of which they were expected to approach relevant departments in order to research aspects of their work. For the Learning & Development Manager, it was about 'empowering apprentices to understand that the apprenticeship was very much a self-driven thing':

> …everything that they do in store is a learning experience. And we get them to self-manage and really manage their expectations, […] there's a store manager there who's very experienced, that's a fountain of knowledge, but they're very busy. Don't wait for them to say, "Right a couple of hours, come sit with me". Actually, you go and demand their time and you tell them what you need from them […] [for example] if you're struggling with the finance module say to them, "Can I spend a day with you when you're going through the

management account figures?". And no store manager is going to turn that opportunity down. (Learning & Development Manager, Regional Retailer)

This quote also reflects the likely time constraints and thus potential barriers to apprenticeship training. The same manager then conceded that supporting apprentices presented a challenge due to high workloads and 'the seasonal calendar in retail working against us':

…the off-the-job training time is a challenge for us. As I think it is in most sectors but it's particularly tough [in retail]. And we have to be quite creative with looking at opportunities […] So if they're working on a particular workbook […] they are going away and exploring things from the context of an organisation but also then coming back and finding somebody within the organisation… […] But it is a challenge. (Learning & Development Manager, Regional Retailer)

There is no doubt that this employer had an overall positive approach to apprenticeship and was keen for their apprentices to have the support that allowed them to gain in-depth understanding of a broad range of different areas. However, it also became apparent that the apprentice felt pretty much left to her own devices, with little support in place, leaving her unsure whether it was acceptable to ask for support:

I had a tutor who came every six weeks-ish, but other than that it was pretty much, 'Here's your workbooks, off you go'. It was very much: you need to find out about this? Go and talk to them. You want to find something about head office? Go and talk to them. Which to start with was a bit like, 'Really, can I just do that?'… (Apprentice, Regional Retailer)

 In the case of the regional retailer, the apprentice was able to obtain the support from different departments she approached ('because I had to fill in the workbook I had to go and talk to the store manager, I had to talk to the buyers'). Managers or team leaders would 'sit down with her', explaining relevant aspects and processes. It appears that, most often, this would be away from productive work in the form of off-the-job mentoring. In the following example, the apprentice had visited the purchasing department, where the buyer took time to go through the catalogue and explain the budget:

She showed me on the computer how to find what we had taken on those brands the year before to then predict what we would do next year […] Then when I receive deliveries on the shop floor, if I'm then questioning, 'Why have we got this?', I know that there has been a whole thought process behind it […] I can say to [my team] 'This is why we've only got

five of these, because they're this much and last year we only sold this many,' whereas
before it would have just been, 'I don't know, this is just what we've been sent'. That was a
good day to understand a lot more. (Apprentice, Regional Retailer)

Importantly, there also clearly were occasions when the apprentice became involved in the work itself, thus constituting examples of on-the-job mentoring. This was the case after she had contacted the buyer in the beauty department to assist her with a workbook on buying:

[The buyer] came in, she brought loads of stuff with her, and I helped her place some of the
Christmas orders for beauty. On a normal job I wouldn't have ever been able to get
involved in that, whereas because I can say I'm doing the apprenticeship, I need to.
(Apprentice, regional retailer)

It is evident from these examples that the exposure to different areas of retail was greatly beneficial to the apprentice, helping her to gain vital underpinning knowledge and an understanding of the work processes involved. However, it stands to reason that this should be part of a planned approach rather than leaving it to the goodwill of individual staff. Also, while this apprentice was a confident young woman with a university degree, others may feel less able to persuade their colleagues to support them.

Similarly, whilst the manager of the national retailer encouraged apprentices to seek opportunities for shadowing, by his own admission there was little time in practice. He also implied that apprentices, if they spent the off-the-job element in the workplace, risked being called up for work:

What we think is best is if they don't spend that time [for off-the-job training] in their own
store so let's say they need to learn how to operate the bakery […] we would recommend
that they went and shadowed a baker in another store and that way then they aren't
going to be dragged into normal work, they can properly shadow them and learn their
skills there […] But to be honest with you, typically […] that one day a week off the job is
really more about research and eLearning and meeting their coach so that's quite well
taken up with that sort of supported learning (Apprenticeship manager, national retailer)

Equally, it was clear that, whilst the manager promoted the idea of shadowing in a different store, again it would be up to the apprentice to make it happen. Not only would it require the apprentice to feel confident organising these activities against the likely workplace pressure experienced by the baker, the apprentice also has to negotiate competing demands in the absence of meaningful

support. The apprentice for her part revealed that she struggled to find time to complete her work for the apprenticeship:

> I'm supposed to have my 20% of the working week doing it, but when I went up to being assistant manager there's a lot to do on the shop floor. I found that I didn't quite have as much time to get it done at work, so I was spending a bit more time at home than I would like to have done. (Apprentice, National Retailer)

On-the-job 'training' as 'practising'

In all four social care and retail organisations there was thus little on-the-job training for apprentices. Indeed, when asked about on-the-job training, most interviewees interpreted this to mean on-the-job *learning* rather than *training*, i.e. without any structure or support. This was first and foremost about applying new knowledge and skills in their day-to-day work (their job!), as illustrated in the account of the Apprenticeship Manager at the National Retailer:

> …the four days [in the store] they're actually doing their normal job but they're applying those new skills that they've learnt on their off-the-job or their new knowledge that they've gained… (Apprenticeship Manager, National Retailer)

She gave the example of apprentices covering a unit on merchandising as part of their off-the-job element and then applying this knowledge on the shop floor:

> …they've just learnt all the background of merchandising, how you display things, how your stock comes in…, what they'll be doing in the other four days is perhaps filling the shelves using those new skills, recognising the importance of date rotation, helping put away the deliveries, literally they're working but they're able to build their level of knowledge. (Apprenticeship Manager, National Retailer)

She added that apprentices would then obtain feedback on their progress from their tutor and/or store manager. While the national retailer was keen for the apprentices to integrate the knowledge from the off-the-job element with their practice, the onus was again on the apprentices:

> I strongly advise them to kind of amalgamate the two into each other, don't just think, "I'm on an apprentice day I've got this work to vacate, put that to bed, now I've got this, you know, day job", I definitely encourage them to cross over between all of it because that will help not only their apprentice work, but it will help them at work with things they're learning. (Store Manager, National Retailer)

Similarly, the Managing Director of the home care provider SME explained that apprentices were taught all the aspects of caring through their in-house training and they were then expected to apply the knowledge in their daily work:

Care certificates, and it has got like understanding your role, personal development, duty of care, equality and diversity, working in a person-centred way, communication, privacy and dignity, fluids and nutrition, mental health, dementia and learning disability, safeguarding adults, safeguarding children, basic life support, health and safety, handling information, standards, infection prevention. Now, that is all the stuff that you actually teach here. And, then they are expected then to apply that. (Director, Home Care Provider SME)

This was confirmed by the apprentices:

I think when you're doing like the workshops and you're gaining knowledge when you're out there actually doing the work you're able to put that knowledge into practice (Apprentice, home care provider SME)

… we can take what we've learnt into the job straight away like onto our next call, […] so for example if we had training this morning with the tutor and I was working on the night I could take that training straight into that call and put it into practice. (Apprentice, home care provider SME)

None of the employers had a workplace curriculum in place, arguing that apprentices were exposed to different areas through their day-to-day work:

…obviously working in this environment you're exposed to everything. (Care Home Manager, Large Residential Care Provider)

On-the-job learning was commonly viewed as unproblematic and not something that needed particular support or structure, as learning would happen naturally, as part of the day-to-day (productive) processes and working as part of the team – for any member of staff, apprenticed or non-apprenticed. Apprentices were expected to 'pick things up' as part of their day job:

I think that's just the natural process of how care works. If you're working with someone in a caring environment you learn from people around you. (Learning & Development Manager, Large Residential Care Provider)

Apprentices with both social care employers were left to their own devices fairly quickly. One apprentice referred to learning by 'trial and error', adding that 'there's always management to phone':

…sometimes we don't even know we're gaining the information, one day I'll be working with a service user, the next thing you know [their] health condition changes, we start learning about that condition and it doesn't even mean that we've had to learn it from a tutor, the office or even online, we just kind of pick up the knowledge of what we need to do and how to approach the situation. Working, well, learning on the job basically you seem to soak up the information more. (Apprentice, Home Care Provider SME)

Most apprentices with the large residential care provider were 'conversions', i.e. existing staff who had been with the employer for a while, and who were therefore expected to work independently. Similarly, new recruits with prior experience as care workers were often not deemed to require any learning or training but simply needed their existing skills assessed:

…when you have an apprentice who is coming on who has already worked for a number of years in that industry, some of it is not necessarily new learning to them, so it's not necessarily a case of having to teach them, it's a case of assessing them… (Learning & Development Manager, Large Residential Care Provider)

This of course reflects the previous apprenticeship specifications in England, when apprenticeship all too often was about assessing existing skills, something that the new regulations seek to redress (with the requirement that all learning has to be new learning). It was evident from our interview with the large residential care provider that this model may still shape employers' understanding of apprenticeship. Indeed, the Learning & Development Manager saw apprenticeship solely in terms of assessment, as evident in the following quote:

…the quality of the apprenticeship is often only as good as the quality of the assessor (Learning & Development Manager, residential care provider large)

Social Care: Focus on internal (off-the-job) training for all staff

On the other hand, it is important to note that the central focus of training for both social care organisations was their own (largely off-the-job) in-house training provision, based on the Care Certificate that all staff were required to complete ('the expectation is that they have the Care Certificate'). The Care Certificate is a set of standards, together with learning outcomes and assessment criteria, designed to develop the UK's health and social care workforce. The award also

had to be revalidated at regular intervals ('every area of training we have has a lifespan on it'), and the large residential care provider used a matrix to ensure that all staff were up-to-date with training. It is interesting that, when asked about on-the-job training, both social care providers initially referred to their in-house provision (which was predominantly off the job). Their concern clearly reflected the importance of training required in preparing new staff for working with vulnerable adults and there was no doubt that both organisations took training seriously.

The in-house training was front-loaded and run as a comprehensive induction. Much of this was delivered off-the-job, including through e-learning and in the classroom. However, it also contained some on-the-job elements, such as shadowing and mentoring. At the large residential care provider, the 12-week induction was followed by a brief period of shadowing. Once staff started in their caring roles, they worked with a 'buddy':

> *We have huge amounts of training that we have to achieve 100% on […] everybody that works here has to achieve it. And there is an extensive amount of courses. Some will be face-to-face training and some will be e-learning […] and then they have one to two weeks where they're just shadowing. Once they start to work on the floor they have a buddy who will work with them… (Care Home Manager, Large Residential Care Provider)*

The Care Home Manager explained that 'buddies' would work with new staff during the initial period and their role was to 'look out' for them:

> *…buddies are staff that have been here for sort of ten years, more, and they've already gained all their qualifications, and they're kind of nice people that will help people settle into a new role […] they'll work with them until they're deemed sort of competent to work alongside other people […] and they've kind of built up a relationship with them so that they kind of have oversight, it's kind of looking out for them really (Care Home Manager, Large Residential Care Provider)*

However, opportunities for on-the-job training in social care work appear to be restricted, certainly whilst working with service uses. Representatives of both social care organisations explained that it was not acceptable practice to train staff in the presence of vulnerable people:

> *Train somebody [in front of service users], it's not very dignified for the person […] you can't do that because for them to be able to do the job well they need to have the training [before they start working]. And it's not suitable to do the training and work at the same time, you just can't (Care Home Manager, Large Residential Care Provider)*

Like all employees new to care, apprentices worked alongside a senior care worker until they were deemed competent to work on their own. However, they would usually receive feedback *after* completing the particular tasks or visits, rather than *during* the work (i.e. off-the-job). The apprentice with the home care provider SME related that a trainer or manager would initially accompany them on home visits, but that they would receive feedback afterwards rather than within the service user's home environment:

> *… we could be on a shift with [the trainer] and she's always like assessing us as well when she's working with us, observing us […] so there's that advice there for afterwards for the next time rather than on the spot (Apprentice, home care provider SME)*

A brief period of shadowing and being shadowed (or 'assessing') in the initial stages therefore seemed an integral element of staff training with both social care employers:

> *when we first started we'd have management out with us, just to assess how we're doing with supporting other people but now as obviously our role has progressed we go out there independently and we actually we assess other people now with the new staff that are shadowing (Apprentice, home care provider SME)*

Crucially, both the in-house training and the apprenticeship were governed by the requirements of the Care Certificate so that there was considerable overlap between the two ('they kind of cross-reference quite a lot'), leading the Care Home Manager of the Large Residential Care Provider to assert that there was no difference in training for apprenticed and non-apprenticed staff:

> *Yeah, [the training is] exactly the same. It has to be. There has to be a system in place so people are supported through those 12 weeks. (Care Home Manager, Large Residential Care Provider)*

The Learning & Development Manager explained that the only difference may be in the optional off-the-job modules that apprentices could choose:

> *I think all the core modules that are there – because, obviously, our induction process matches the care certificate […]. I think it's where they choose specific modules within their qualification, that's where it starts to get a little bit different, because some of the areas might not be something that we would supply as standard for everyone (Learning & Development Manager, Large Residential Care Provider)*

Thus, for both social care providers, the apprenticeship seemed largely subsumed by the training delivered to all staff, and there was little extra learning or support for apprentices.

Apprenticed versus non-apprenticed staff

Engineering, Construction and IT employers

As we saw earlier, all employers in this group had in place their own expansive training programmes designed first and foremost to prepare employees for a particular job role or roles. Hence, with the focus on training for job roles, all employers insisted that the company (on- and off-the-job) training programme was either the same or similar for apprenticed and non-apprenticed new recruits. The difference for apprentices was the specific off-the-job element of the apprenticeship framework or standard (delivered by a third-party provider, or, in the case of the skills element at the large engineering employer, the company itself), notably the underpinning theoretical knowledge and the work apprentices were required to complete in order to satisfy the apprenticeship criteria (e.g., by collecting a portfolio of evidence). At the same time, it was also apparent that any new employee tended to be put on some form of (external) training course, including apprenticeships, FE, HE or other professional training, depending on their qualifications and the roles they were being prepared for.

Thus, at the Engineering SME, whilst new entry-level staff tended to be apprenticed, we were told that when they had non-apprenticed staff in the past, these would follow the same in-house on-the-job training as apprentices, working alongside a senior technician. Similarly, at the Construction SME, all entry-level recruits were placed on the same on-the-job training programme. Most were apprenticed and/or doing relevant off-the-job courses, such as BTECs or HNCs, depending on their prior educational qualifications:

> *If someone comes in already qualified but without the experience, we would still put them through the training plan route, so I don't think as a company we would treat them any differently. I think it all depends what kind of level of education you come with, if [the apprentice] had come on board and he had had A-levels, then he would have gone straight onto an HNC, instead of having to start at a level 3 BTEC… (Manager, Construction SME)*

In terms of on-the-job training, the main difference with apprentices was that employers had to be careful making sure that the criteria were covered, perhaps requiring a more planned approach, as in the following example:

They're not really any different in our approach to be honest. The only difference is with [the apprentice] it's the evidence; you've got to do it a bit more formally. I'm working with other fairly new staff as well and I'm kind of training them on the job but we're just a bit more casual about it. (Trainer, IT department of large non-IT employer)

At the large engineering employer, any newly recruited staff were put on either apprenticeships or the company's graduate training programme (the main difference being that they were being prepared for different roles – technical or management and design).

The IT SME recruited all their staff through their training provider. The company made sure that those not apprenticed had already achieved the same qualifications that apprentices would gain through the apprenticeship. The company would then put them on the same on-the-job training and progression route as apprentices and indeed all their staff (starting at first line support on the Helpdesk). The manager emphasised the importance of this approach for developing their workforce:

…[non-apprenticed staff] are managed in the same way that an apprentice would on the desk, we expect a certain degree of experience, we provide them with that experience, we then provide them with further training, as we do with apprentices who come on board full-time. We've got a training plan for all of our staff all the way up to the most senior technical roles, because the idea is that we don't have to recruit from outside first line. […] everybody in our projects team [has to go] through first line… (Manager, IT SME)

Whilst employers in this group tended to recruit apprentices (often school leavers), the IT department of the large employer was the only organisation in this group whose apprentices were existing staff (conversions) as well as new recruits. These differed only in the extent of on-the-job training (usually in the form of mentoring) they received. Newly recruited apprentices worked alongside a senior technician. Existing staff members were expected to work with a larger degree of autonomy, whilst still being supervised by a senior member of staff.

Retail and Social Care employers

Managers and trainers of all retail and social care employers insisted that apprenticeship enabled them to develop future leaders and to improve staff retention. By selecting staff who appeared particularly able, these organisations used apprenticeship as part of their workforce development. Employers valued the off-the-job element so that apprentices gained the broader knowledge and understanding to underpin their leadership roles.

The retail employers in our sample explained that training received by apprentices was both broader and more in-depth than that for non-apprenticed new recruits. Apprentices would have exposure to a wider range of skill areas (although, as we have seen, the latter was largely driven through the off-the-job element, with limited support in place, and thus highly problematic). The Apprenticeship Manager of the National Retailer gave the following example:

> *… if we were bringing in two customer team members, colleague B may only ever sort of work on the tills or may only ever work on the shop floor, whereas the apprentice actually learns how to work on the tills, on the shop floor, in the bakery, booking in deliveries, doing some of the admin that happens in stores, understanding how the competitors operate, it's a much wider broader programme. (Apprenticeship Manager, National Retailer)*

Apprentices were seen to gain the theoretical underpinning and broader understanding of work processes:

> *Our apprentices would definitely learn more. [For example] legal and governance – with somebody that we'd just recruit into the business […] we wouldn't necessarily educate them on the ins and outs of [for example] trading standards. Because that's just not necessarily in their role […]. Whereas, somebody that we're investing in, that we want to be a future store manager, we would want to expose them to as much of that that is relevant and at some point in their life they might need that information. (Learning & Development Manager, Regional Retailer)*

Managers and trainers at the two social care providers similarly insisted that they were training apprentices with a view to developing them to become senior carers and 'develop that leadership at the front line'. The Care Home Manager took pride in their 'high retention rates' and 'home-grown staff'.

With the large residential care provider, the apprenticeship appeared to be secondary to the in-house training and was largely subsumed by it. New staff could opt to embark on an apprenticeship once they had completed the induction. However, interestingly, whilst a training provider was responsible for the apprenticeship, this responsibility only amounted to assessing apprentices' (existing) skills (it was revealing that the Care Home Manager referred to the apprenticeship as 'the NVQ'), as all training was run or organised by the organisation itself.

Apprentices in these organisations were employed for a particular job role and were expected to work in this role for 80% of their contracted working hours with little or no extra support. Any

apprenticeship training was driven by the off-the-job element, which was the responsibility of the training provider and, notably, the apprentices themselves, and there was evidence that at least some of them were struggling to find time for this work. The difference between apprenticed and non-apprenticed staff in on-the-job training was therefore minimal (and would only arise from the off-the-job element and the tasks they were required to complete).

Qualification of trainers

For the vast majority of our employers there was no expectation that staff responsible for the on-the-job training of apprentices had any formal qualifications in order to enable them to carry out this role. The one exception was the large engineering company who was however an employer-provider and as such they delivered skills-specific workshop-based training to apprentices. The trainers employed for this purpose were required to complete a teaching qualification (Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS)), which both trainers interviewed held at Level 3. In addition, trainers took regular occupation-specific courses to keep their knowledge up-to-date with technical developments and regulations (e.g. electrical standards).

For all other engineering, construction and IT employers in our sample, rather than requiring specific teacher training, staff were deemed suitable trainers on the basis of their technical competence and experience:

> *They're fully equipped engineers, we'd only pair [the apprentices] with someone who can fully do the job here. (Trainer, IT SME)*

> *…the majority of people that do look after the trainees have been through [the company training] at some point, […] basically if we have someone capable of doing their job properly and running a site, then they are capable for imparting their knowledge (Manager, Construction SME)*

It was also deemed important to be familiar with the in-house training and requirements. At the construction SME, the trainer in charge of apprentices training to become surveyors summed up his own experience and thus suitability as trainer:

> *I have been working for the company for four years now, as … I came on as an assistant quantity surveyor and I am now quantity surveyor. So, my role involves commercial management of construction projects, and I have been working alongside trainees and assistants for about a year and a half now, bringing them on and mentoring them, tutoring*

them and trying to get them to be qualified surveyors like me. (Surveyor/Trainer,

Construction SME)

Similarly, at the Engineering SME, mentors needed to be trained to as least technician level.
Interestingly, this employer added that 'the right personal attitude' was equally important (some
people just haven't got the ability to train somebody, they're very good but they just can't do it).
Indeed, there was consensus amongst employers that qualifications and experience alone were not
sufficient, and that not everyone was suited to be a trainer or mentor. The manager at the IT SME
insisted that trainers needed to

demonstrate the ability to transfer that knowledge to somebody else […] are they amiable,
are they articulate, do they do the job well, are they thorough […] We have some great
employees we would never use as a buddy […] They can do the job, but they wouldn't be
able to articulate or pass the information over to somebody else. (Manager, IT SME)

The lack of training qualifications for staff responsible for apprentices was similar for our retail and
social care employers. As we saw earlier, the two care providers both ran their own internal staff
training in line with the standards of the care industry. Staff delivering this training were all qualified,
experienced employees (the award of Care Certificate constituting the minimum). Many of them
were also qualified assessors. The large residential care provider also ran a two-day training course
for staff acting as 'buddies' whose role, as we saw, was to look after apprentices (and new staff
generally), once they had completed Induction. This training was however rather generic, enabling
staff to provide a level of basic support:

…it was I think just basically how to support people, how to get the best out of people, it
was more kind of guided around that, what the expectation is, what they can [and cannot]
do. (Care Home Manager, Large Residential Care Provider)

As discussed earlier, for the retail employers, training (or rather supporting) apprentices typically
was the responsibility of (store or departmental) managers who again were not in possession of any
training or teaching qualification (and in any case were more involved in 'managing' apprentices
rather than on-the-job training). To this end, the large retail employer's one-day line manager
training included guidance on how to support apprentices, including understanding of
apprenticeship.

Section 5: Conclusions

The engineering, construction and IT employers in our sample provided comprehensive training programmes, including extensive on-the-job training, as part of a strategy of workforce development. It was designed to develop occupational competence of rounded employees, who had an understanding of the organisations as a whole and their positions within them. Many employers had developed their own in-house training plans. Whilst the training covered the apprenticeship criteria, it was commonly far broader and in-depth than what was required by the frameworks or standards.

These employers valued apprenticeship as a model of learning. The off-the-job element provided vital theoretical knowledge to underpin occupational practice. The frameworks or standards constituted a useful structure, and employers sought to organise the apprentices' on-the-job training in line with the off-the-job element to facilitate the integration of theory and practice. To this end, the close collaboration with training providers was vital.

In these organisations, mentoring and shadowing were crucial elements of on-the-job training, the aim of which was to gradually develop apprentices' expertise. Apprentices worked alongside a senior worker or trainer for much of the entire duration of the apprenticeship, whilst gradually taking on more responsibility. They held the dual status of learner and employee throughout the apprenticeship.

This approach contrasted sharply with that adopted by our retail and social care employers, where apprentices were fully productive workers for 80% of their contracted hours, with little or no on-the-job training. They were completing their apprenticeship within the remaining 20% (the funded off-the-job element), separately from their day-to-day jobs. This was delivered by a training provider, whilst the employer role focused largely on line-managing the apprentices. In social care, front-loaded training according to the standards of the Care Certificate was mandatory for all new staff to prepare them for work with vulnerable service users. The apprenticeship standard was developed according to the same criteria and closely matched training for all staff.

All four employers valued apprenticeship as a way of developing 'future leaders', although exposure to areas beyond apprentices' jobs was often largely through off-the-job activities. Whilst the employers positioned themselves as highly supportive, it was clear that the onus for creating learning opportunities was firmly on the apprentices. High workloads, time pressures and low levels of visibility and awareness of apprenticeship within the companies were potential barriers to achieving this. Employers highlighted the importance of learning as occurring naturally as a result of

day-to-day practice. Whilst apprentices were encouraged to apply the knowledge and skills they had gained through the off-the-job element, this was without structured support (conflicting with the approach promoted by the ESFA representative as outlined earlier).

While apprenticeships delivered by the first group epitomised many of the elements of a high-quality apprenticeship, there appeared to be a lack of awareness and understanding of apprenticeship as a model of learning within the retail and social care employers. Whilst an apprenticeship should clearly cover 100% of an apprentice's contracted hours, in these organisations it functioned rather as a staff development programme, separate from the apprentices' day jobs. The question needs to be asked whether this kind of training should indeed be running under the apprenticeship brand. There is an opportunity here for the government to consider whether these programmes could be more appropriately funded under the new National Skills Fund to be introduced in 2021.

References

BIS (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) (2015) *English Apprenticeships: Our 2020 Vision*, available online https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-in-england-visionfor-2020 (accessed 12/09/18).

Brockmann, M., Clarke, L. and Winch, C. (2010) 'The Apprenticeship Framework in England: a new beginning or a continuing sham?', *Journal of Education and Work*, 23 (2): 111-127.

Brockmann, M., Clarke, L. and Winch, C. (2011) *Knowledge, Skills and Competence in the European Labour Market: What's in a vocational qualification?,* London and New York: Routledge.

Brockmann, M. (2012) *Learner Biographies and Learning Cultures: Identity and apprenticeship in England and Germany,* London: the Tufnell Press.

Clarke, L., Winch, C. and Brockmann, M. (2013) 'Trade-based skills versus occupational capacity: the example of bricklaying in Europe', *Work, Employment and Society,* 27 (6): 932 –951.

DfE (Department for Education) (2018) *Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE),* London: DfE, available online https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/734414/Specification_of_apprenticeship_standards_for_England.pdf (accessed 02/12/19).

DfE (Department for Education) (2017a) *The Apprenticeships (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2017, Statutory Instruments, 2017 No. 1310 Employment and Training, England,* London: The Stationery Office Limited, available online http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1310/contents/made (accessed 17/09/19).

DfE (Department for Education) (2017b) *Apprenticeships Evaluation 2017 – Learners,* A report by IFF Research, available online https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/659709/Apprenticeships_evaluation_2017-learners.pdf (accessed 17/09/18).

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) (2018) *Apprenticeship Funding: Rules and Guidance for employers - May 2017 to July 2018,* Version 3, March 2018, available online: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733034/1819_Employer_Rules_v1.0.pdf (accessed 13/09/18).

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) (2019) *Apprenticeship Funding Rules and Guidance for employers - August 2018 to July 2019,* Version 2, March 2019, available online: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786464/apprenticeship_funding_rules_and_guidance_for_employers_August_2018_to_July_2019_version_2.pdf

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) (2019) *Guidance: Apprenticeship Commitment Statement Template,* ESFA August 2019, available online https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-commitment-statement-template (accessed 19/9/19).

Evans, K., Hodkinson, P., Rainbird, H. and Unwin, L. (2006) *Improving Workplace Learning.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Enginuity (2020) *What is Enginuity?,* available online: https://enginuity.org/what-is-enginuity/ (accessed 20 May 2020).

FBS (Federation of Small Businesses) (2019) *Fit for the Future: Making the Apprenticeship System Work for Small Businesses,* FSB, available online file://filestore.soton.ac.uk/users/mb10g12/mydocuments/Gatsby%202019/Literature,%20policy%20docs/fsb-apprenticeships-report.pdf (accessed 18/06/19).

Field, S. (2018) *Taking Training Seriously: Lessons from an international Comparison of Off-the-Job Training for Apprenticeships in England,* The Gatsby Foundation, available online http://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/final-apprenticeships-and-off-the-job-training-may-2018.pdf (accessed 19/07/18).

Foley, N. (2020) *Apprenticeship Statistics: England*, House of Commons Library Briefing Paper Number 06113, 9 April 2020, available online https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06113/SN06113.pdf (accessed 22/05/20).

Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2003) Learning as Apprentices in the Contemporary UK Workplace: creating and managing expansive and restrictive participation, *Journal of Education and Work,* 16 (4): 407-426.

Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2009) 'Change and continuity in apprenticeship: the resilience of a model of learning', *Journal of Education and Work* 22(5): 405-416.

Fuller, A. and L. Unwin (2017) *Apprenticeship Quality and Social Mobility*, London: Sutton Trust.

Grollmann, P., Steedman, H., Jansen, A. and Gray, R. (2017) *Building Apprentices' skills in the workplace: Car Service in Germany, the UK and Spain,* Centre for Vocational Education Research, Research Discussion Paper 011, December 2017, available online http://cver.lse.ac.uk/textonly/cver/pubs/cverdp011.pdf (accessed 12/09/18).

IfA (Institute for Apprenticeships) (2018) *Institute for Apprenticeships Statement: Quality Apprenticesips,* available online: https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/quality/what-is-a-quality-apprenticeship (accessed 26/09/18).

IfA (Institute for Apprenticeships) (2020) *Apprenticeship standards,* available online: https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/ (accessed 20/05/20).

Keep, E. (2015) 'Thinking about where to go and what next to do in the reform of vocational qualifications', *Journal of Education and Work,* 28 (2): 117-125.

Keep, E. and James Relly, S. (2016) 'Employers and meeting the government's target – What could possibly go wrong?', in: *Where next for Apprenticeships?, CIPD Report August 2016*, available online: https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/where-next-for-apprenticeships_2016_tcm18-14292.pdf (accessed 13/12/19).

Kuczera, M. and Field, S. (2018) *Apprenticeship in England, United Kingdom,* Paris: OECD Publishing.

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning - Legitimate Peripheral Participation.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lewis, P., P. Ryan, and H. Gospel (2008) 'A Hard Sell? The Prospects for Apprenticeship in British Retailing', *Human Resource Management Journal* 18 (1): 3–19.

McNally, S. (2018) *Apprenticeships in England: What does research tell us?,* Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) Industrial Strategy, Paper IS02, London: CEP.

Pegg, D., and J. Ball. (2014) "Government Accused of Playing Numbers Game." *The Guardian*, available online http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/nov/30/hundredsthousands-apprentices-in-uk-paid-little-2-73 (accessed 3/12/14).

Powell, A. (2018) *Apprenticeship Statistics: England*, House of Commons Library Briefing Paper Number 06113, 25 July 2018, available online http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06113/SN06113.pdf (accessed 12/09/18).

Richard, D. (2012) The Richard Review of Apprenticeships, available online https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/34708/richard-review-full.pdf (accessed 12/09/18).

Unwin, L. (2019) 'Nurturing the critical role of the workplace in VET: reflections from England, past and present' in: M. Pilz, K. Breuing, and S. Schumann, S. (Eds) *Berufsbildung zwischen Tradition und Moderne,* Dordrecht: Springer.

Wolf, A. (2015), *Fixing a Broken Training System: The case for an apprenticeship levy*, Social Market Foundation, July 2015, available online http://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Social-Market-Foundation-Publication-Alison-Wolf-Fixing-ABroken-Training-System-The-Case-For-An-Apprenticeship-Levy.pdf (accessed 17/09/18).