

2014-11-02

Experiencing the transition from an apprenticeship to higher education

Dismore, Harriet

<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/10299>

10.1080/13639080.2013.802831

Journal of Education and Work

Informa UK Limited

All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.



Experiencing the Transition from an Apprenticeship to Higher Education

Journal:	<i>Journal of Education and Work</i>
Manuscript ID:	CJEW-2012-0007.R1
Manuscript Type:	Research Article
Keywords:	apprenticeship, higher education, transition, learning

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Experiencing the Transition from an Apprenticeship to Higher Education

Words: 7,393

For Peer Review Only

ABSTRACT

It is the intention of the UK government to enhance progression routes for apprentices to higher education. However, little research has been carried out into why former apprentices pursue higher education or the experiences of this transition. This paper seeks to redress this gap by reporting three case studies of former apprentices who had completed or were completing a higher education in England. Each case study represents a different route to higher education: progressing to a full time higher education course; pursuing a part time route to sustain full time employment; and undertaking a career change during the transition to higher education. The paper addresses their experiences of the apprenticeship, the decision-making to progress and the perceived outcomes of their transition so far. Analysis draws on Fuller and Unwin's expansive-restrictive framework and conceptual lenses for understanding learning. The findings revealed that although their apprenticeships were restrictive in different ways, progression was pursued for a number of reasons involving the context in which apprenticeships were completed, the relationship to their employer and their understanding of learning. Experiences of boundary crossing were particularly associated with more complex descriptions of personal transformation and learning as becoming.

Keywords: Apprenticeship, higher education, transition, learning

INTRODUCTION

The apprenticeship as a model of learning has a long and complex history. Since the late 1970s, apprenticeships in the UK have been used increasingly as an instrument of government policy, firstly to control young people and secondly as part of new legislation to keep them in some form of education or training until the age of 18 (Fuller and Unwin 2009). For example, the social benefits of apprenticeships emphasised in one government paper included that people between the ages of 16-18 were less likely to behave anti-socially, be involved in crime or go to prison (DfES 2007). The post-1979 period witnessed the introduction of ‘youth training schemes’, a state-run version of apprenticeship. Then, in 1993, the Modern Apprenticeship scheme was launched, which gave the state a direct role in funding apprenticeships (Fuller and Unwin 1998) and in 2004 the Modern Apprenticeship was rebranded Apprenticeships (Brockmann, Clarke and Winch 2010).

This paper refers to ‘apprenticeship’ in the way that it is used to describe programmes supported by the government. The government-funded programmes including Intermediate Apprenticeships (formally ‘Foundation Apprenticeships’) leading to level 2 qualifications, Advanced Apprenticeships (formally ‘Advanced Modern Apprenticeships’) leading to level 3 qualifications and ‘Higher Apprenticeships’ at level 4 and 5 (Brockmann, Clarke and Winch 2010). Apprenticeships are configured as frameworks designed by Sector Skills Councils rather than qualifications. This research was conducted in 2010 when it was specified that all apprenticeships must include a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) (competency-based), a

1
2
3 Technical Certificate (knowledge-based), functional skills (numeracy and literacy) and a module
4 on employment rights and responsibilities (Skills Commission 2009)¹.
5
6
7
8
9

10 Research into apprenticeships has related particularly to learning and participation (Fuller and
11 Unwin 2009; Fuller et al. 2005), learner identities (Brockmann 2010), socialisation (Vickerstaff
12 2007) and support (Spielhofer and Sims 2004). This has drawn attention to the many different
13 approaches to UK apprenticeships which shape learning. Fuller and Unwin (2003) developed the
14 expansive – restrictive framework to help categorise apprenticeships. Presented as a continuum,
15 Fuller and Unwin (2003) argue that apprenticeships with expansive features, such as access to a
16 range of qualifications including knowledge-based vocational qualifications, create a richer
17 environment leading to ‘deep’ learning. Restrictive features, such as completing transition as
18 quickly as possible, curtail the opportunities that an apprenticeship can offer resulting in ‘surface’
19 learning. In other words, the features of an apprenticeship shed light on the conditions of
20 learning. While ‘surface’ learning involves learning facts and acquiring information, ‘deep’
21 learning is a means to understanding reality and abstract meaning (Lemanski 2011).
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40

41 Indeed, the ‘quality’ of the more restricted apprenticeships has been a concern to those seeking
42 high-quality learning in apprenticeship (Fuller and Unwin 2003; Brockmann 2012). Whilst
43 apprentices might be involved in various activities such as residential courses, visits from an
44 external training provider and moving around company departments, for many the apprenticeship
45
46
47
48
49
50

51
52 ¹In 2011 standards stated that frameworks must specify the total number of credits which an apprentice must attain
53 on the Qualifications and Credits Framework (QCF) and the number of Guided Learning Hours (GLH) that an
54 apprentice must receive to complete the framework. An integrated qualification could also be offered combining
55 competence and technical knowledge elements (BIS 2011a).
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 has involved only narrow sets of activities providing the minimum of underpinning knowledge
4
5 (Brockmann, Clarke and Winch 2010). In particular, debates about apprenticeship models in
6
7 England have often been linked to discussion about the NVQ. Described as the most heavily
8
9 criticised vocational qualifications framework in the world (Young 2011), the NVQ is one
10
11 qualification delivered as part of an apprenticeship but denigrated mainly because it separates
12
13 outcomes and assessment from knowledge of the learning process (Brockmann et al. 2010). In
14
15 worst cases, so-called apprentices were found to be existing employees that gained an NVQ for
16
17 work they were already doing (Fuller and Unwin 2009). The level at which apprentices
18
19 complete their training has also been called into question. For example, Ryan and Unwin (2001)
20
21 commented on the fact that only 50% of those leaving apprenticeships acquire level 3 or above,
22
23 which compares poorly to apprentices in Germany, where a 76% level 3 qualification acquisition
24
25 is reported. More recently, a government research paper suggested that many adult apprentices
26
27 enrolled on level 2 and 3 learning have already attained level 2 before starting their
28
29 apprenticeship (BIS 2011b).
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38

39 The announcement by government in 2010 to invest over 600 million pounds a year into
40
41 apprenticeships came at a time of economic downturn in England (BIS 2010). Nevertheless, the
42
43 government expressed a wish to continue its focus upon progression within and beyond the
44
45 programme. As the strategy document *Skills for Sustainable Growth* pledged:
46
47

48 ‘We will not only increase numbers, but we will also improve the programme. As an
49
50 advanced economy needs advanced skills, we will reshape Apprenticeships so that
51
52 technician level – Level 3 – becomes the level to which learners and employers aspire. To
53
54 widen access, there will be clear progression routes into Level 3. Apprenticeships, and
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 routes from Level 3 Apprenticeships to higher level skills, including Level 4
4
5 Apprenticeships or Higher Education.’ (BIS 2010, 7)
6
7

8 However, despite a considerable increase in the number of people starting an apprenticeship in
9
10 England (Leitch 2006, 97), only low numbers have progressed from non-academic routes to
11
12 higher education (FDF/UVAC 2008; Skills Commission 2009; Milburn 2012). One reason for
13
14 this may be the lack of research into apprenticeship progression generally because the term
15
16 ‘apprenticeship’ is not a qualification in its own right and therefore tracking students is difficult.
17
18
19

20
21
22 Carter (2009) acknowledged that progression between level 3 vocational qualifications and
23
24 higher education in England is diverse and complex. For the purpose of this study, higher
25
26 education is the term adopted to encompass all accredited learning beyond level 3, so that it
27
28 includes not only full-time bachelor degrees but other higher level qualifications such as
29
30 Foundation degrees (level 5), NVQ levels 4 and 5, Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) / Higher
31
32 National Certificates (HNCs) and recognised professional qualifications that are not awarded by
33
34 higher education institutions. Table 1 shows levels 3 to 7 of the Framework for Higher
35
36 Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) / National
37
38 Qualifications Framework (NQF).
39
40
41
42
43
44
45

46 INSERT TABLE 1 HERE
47
48
49

50
51 Higher education is regarded as important not just for the individuals who receive it but for the
52
53 economy (DIUS 2008). Consequently, considerable sums of Government funding in England
54
55 have supported agencies such as Aimhigher (a national programme set up to widen participation
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 in higher education) to help raise the aspirations of individual vocational learners considering
4 higher education. Lifelong Learning Networks (LLN) also invested much of their resources into
5 mapping existing provision and forging progression agreements between further education (FE)
6 colleges and higher education institutions (HEIs) (Carter 2009). Discussions about the impact of
7 these initiatives continue despite the fact that they are now no longer funded (Harrison 2011).
8 Yet some of the work completed has informed reports specifically addressing apprenticeship
9 progression to higher education (Fuller and Unwin 2012; Fuller, Turbin and Wintrup 2010; Skills
10 Commission 2009; Carter 2009). However, these have tended to explore the structural
11 conditions for progression (e.g. pathways and access) rather than the lived experiences of those
12 who have chosen this route. Furthermore, no study to the author's knowledge has investigated
13 the perceived outcomes of progressing to higher education following an apprenticeship.
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31

32 Attention to transition in higher education has attracted increasing interest in recent years (Guile
33 and Young, 2003; Hultberg et al. 2008; Palmer, O'Kane and Owens 2009; Tobbell, O'Donnell
34 and Zammit 2010). However, few studies have taken a critical approach to transition which has
35 led to assumptions of fixed turning points. For example, concerns about the consequences of
36 student attrition and failure upon university reputations and finances have led to studies
37 exploring the first year experience of higher education (Palmer, O'Kane and Owens 2009), a
38 period when students are said to be most vulnerable (McInnis 2001). There have also been
39 noticeable changes in student engagement with higher education and an increase in more diverse
40 backgrounds of first year students, so much so that calls have been made that the student learning
41 environment and support should be reorganised (Hultberg et al. 2008). This paper adopts a
42 flexible 'transition as becoming' account described by Gale and Parker (2012), which they argue,
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 has the most potential for new thinking in socially inclusive ways. Transition is defined broadly
4 as ‘the capability to navigate change’ referring to students’ capabilities and resources to engage
5 with change conditions but also to the capabilities of mobility, aspiration and voice.
6
7
8
9

10
11
12 How people make sense of their learning is complex. Hager and Hodkinson (2009) suggest that
13 researchers and policymakers, in particular, employ particular lenses to explain learning. For
14 example, the ‘propositional lens’ and the ‘skills lens’ regard what is learnt as a product that can
15 be ‘moved’ from place to place so that it is independent of the context in which it is learnt. The
16 difference is that whereas propositions enter the learner’s mind, ‘skills are things that somehow
17 lodge in the learner’s body’ (Hager and Hodkinson 2009, 624). Another lens is ‘learning
18 through participation’ which, rather than treating learning as a list of items to be acquired by all,
19 views learning as a social activity significantly shaped by the context in which learning is
20 experienced. The learning as transformation lens emphasises individual change and finally,
21 ‘learning as becoming’ describes not only a change in the learner but in their environment. This
22 takes into account that knowledge and skill can become changed within the person who has gone
23 through and is going through a learning process. Furthermore, there is no end point to learning
24 but rather it consists of a changing relational web in a process of ongoing change. This view,
25 rather than treating the learner and what is learnt as separate, ‘connects the learner to the
26 surrounding world in an evolving way’ (Hager and Hodkinson 2009, 631).
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49

50 The ‘learning as becoming’ lens complements the ‘transition as becoming’ account because of its
51 focus on ‘boundary crossing’, described more specifically as, ‘entering into territory in which we
52 are unfamiliar and, to some significant extent therefore, unqualified’ (Tuomi-Gröhn and
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 Engeström 2003, 4). Importantly, this focus also shifts the emphasis from the transfer of
4 educational knowledge to people moving between different contexts (e.g. formal learning
5 environments and work places). It is argued in this paper that this combination of lenses is
6 important for understanding how individual learners experience transition from an apprenticeship
7 to higher education.
8
9

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 **METHODOLOGY**

19
20 The project reported here was part of a qualitative study consisting of seven in depth interviews
21 with former apprentices who had undertaken or were undertaking a higher level qualification.
22

23
24 As data on apprentices who have progressed to HE is not easily available, the researcher worked
25 with Aimhigher to invite individuals to participate in this study. The seven individuals contacted
26 were those known to Aimhigher and who represented a variety of pathways. It was therefore a
27 purposive sample chosen to satisfy the specific needs of the project (Robson 2011). The small
28 sample enabled a detailed examination of the learning journeys of three men and four women of
29 different ages working in different employment sectors. Semi-structured interviews took
30 between one and a half to two hours and were held at locations convenient for the participant (e.g.
31 workplace, college). The interviews with former apprentices aimed to (a) explore their
32 experiences of an apprenticeship, (b) determine their reasons for progressing to higher education
33 courses and (c) investigate the perceived outcomes of their transition. Specific questions
34 included ‘what were your reasons for choosing your higher education course?’, ‘how do you
35 think the course has benefitted you so far?’, ‘how does learning for a higher education course
36 compare to learning during your apprenticeship?’ and ‘how do you feel about learning now?’
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54

55 Ethical approval of this study was provided by the University ethics committee and all necessary
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 procedures were followed to ensure that participants were fully briefed about the purpose and
4
5 intention of the study and that they were aware of their right to withdraw at any time.
6
7
8
9

10 For the purpose of this paper, specific cases of three former apprentices in the South West of
11
12 England are drawn on to clearly illustrate how transition was experienced by individuals. The
13
14 cases were selected to represent distinct transitions from an apprenticeship to higher education:
15
16 Amber, after completing her apprenticeship progressed to higher education full time; Dave chose
17
18 a part time route enabling him to sustain full time employment; and Jo undertook a career change
19
20 during the transition to higher education. These represent the transition journeys experienced by
21
22 the original sample of seven interviewees and, it is suggested, are likely to represent journeys
23
24 experienced by other former apprentices who enter higher education.
25
26
27
28
29
30
31

32 The intention of the data analysis was not to make generalisations but to highlight and explore
33
34 the emerging themes and patterns. Initial analysis was carried out according to three broad
35
36 themes – ‘apprenticeship learning’, ‘motives to progress’ and ‘perceived outcomes’ whilst
37
38 remaining open to the discovery of new themes and categories as the process continued (Smith
39
40 and Osborn 2003). A second cycle of analysis was conducted making links to restrictive and
41
42 expansive features of apprenticeships as illustrated by Fuller and Unwin (2003) and to the
43
44 conceptual lenses for understanding learning described by Hager and Hodkinson (2009).
45
46
47
48
49

50 **FINDINGS**

51 **THE APPRENTICESHIP**

52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 During the interviews, the learners described what led them to embark on an apprenticeship and
4 their experiences. Many of these descriptions, when compared to restrictive and expansive
5 characteristics indicated many restrictive features. This is perhaps surprising given that these
6 learners went on to higher education and there is a negative association between restrictive
7 approaches to apprenticeship and the creation of opportunity for personal development and
8 enhancing participation (Fuller and Unwin 2003). However, as the findings highlight, the
9 contexts in which the apprenticeships operated also played an important part in facilitating
10 transition.
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23

24 *Case study 1: Amber*

25
26 As reported in other studies of apprentices (Brockmann 2010), Amber started her apprenticeship
27 after experiencing some disappointment at school. At 16 years old Amber dropped out of 6th
28 form because, ‘the teachers were too laid back, weren’t there enough, my timetable wasn’t very
29 good so I just got bored so dropped out.’ She then worked full time at a restaurant managed by a
30 husband and wife team and as she described, ‘we are all really close’. Despite her experiences
31 at school, she did not reject formal learning altogether and instead sought to continue learning in
32 other ways: ‘But I knew I had to learn, I cannot not learn anything, I have to – it was driving me
33 nuts not doing work.’ This generally positive attitude towards learning was an important
34 contributor to Amber’s decision making. Her original goal was to embark upon a course to gain
35 some qualifications to support a career as a Restaurant Manager.
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52

53 The notions of expansive and restrictive approaches can be useful for indicating conditions for
54 learning. Amber’s apprenticeship was restrictive in the sense that she mentioned that she only
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 had access to competence-based qualifications, the NVQ levels 2 and 3 in hospitality. As
4
5 Brockmann and colleagues (2010, 117) note, to restrict in this way is, ‘neglecting the educational
6
7 development of the apprentice which is integral to continental programmes’. For example, the
8
9 first part of the apprenticeship was to complete an NVQ level 2 which she found, ‘I didn’t
10
11 actually need to do. Well, I didn’t educationally need to do the level 2 because I’ve got full
12
13 GCSEs – I’ve got a-c but because I’d never done an apprenticeship before you have to...’
14
15 Amber’s apprenticeship was also restricted in that learning was entirely on the job and assessors
16
17 visited her at work: ‘I’d be in my work placement I’d feel comfortable and like, my assessor
18
19 Nicky would just in the table in the corner and just observe me. So she’d see how I’d interact
20
21 with the customers and things like that.’ So there was no opportunity to move beyond her
22
23 existing parameters to encounter new learning possibilities and extend her learning horizon
24
25 (Fuller and Unwin 2003). Amber then progressed through Level 2 very quickly: ‘I did my level
26
27 2 in 6 months and it’s meant to take 12’. This is also regarded a restrictive feature limiting as it
28
29 does the amount of time for reflection and development. However, completing the NVQ level 3
30
31 of her apprenticeship appeared to have been a more expansive experience:
32
33
34
35
36
37

38 I found level 3 far more interesting than level 2. It was just more for my, I guess it was
39
40 learning new things whereas level 2 was just convincing the assessor that I knew things
41
42 already.
43
44

45 Rather than a continuous process, Amber regarded her apprenticeship as two parts, preferring the
46
47 new learning demanded by level 3. This is important as it suggests that Amber viewed learning
48
49 as more than a product independent of the learner and more an evolving process leading to
50
51 personal change (Hager and Hodkinson 2009).
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 *Case study 2: Dave*
4

5 Dave joined the Navy at 16 years old because, 'I didn't want to spend years studying at
6 university etc'. He too achieved good GCSEs. Dave never indicated that he rejected learning
7 particularly, just that he had not wanted to go to university and had not been 'keen on the idea of
8 spending another three or four years in a classroom'. After one year he made the decision to
9 leave the Navy and considered an apprenticeship because in his words, 'I was getting a
10 qualification, I was being paid whilst I was doing it and I was also gaining experience'. In other
11 words the apprenticeship attracted Dave by 'being attached to a real employer and doing some
12 learning on the job' (McIntosh 2005, 252). After he approached the local college for information,
13 he was put forward for an interview with the local city council where he began an apprenticeship
14 in business administration.
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31

32 Dave's apprenticeship had many similarities when compared to that of Amber. All learning took
33 place at work and like Amber, he only referred to competence-based qualifications, both features
34 of a restrictive apprenticeship. He also did not appear to have been particularly challenged by
35 NVQ level 2. His description of the apprenticeship as 'the basic core skills that you need to be
36 able to work in that environment' suggests using the skill learning lens, taking the view of
37 learning as independent of the learner. Treating the environment as separate from skill
38 development is also a popular assumption among those who adopt a skill learning lens. However,
39 Dave also adopted the learning through participation lens, as illustrated by the ways in which he
40 regarded his role within the council.
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 Dave's role at work whilst he completed the apprenticeship played an important part in his
4 motivation to continue to higher education. Although there was no planned rotation, his
5 administrative role at the council varied, consisting as it did of, 'general admin and business
6 support, financial budget management and a fair bit of IT work'. This, he explained, 'was great
7 and helped me when I finished the apprenticeship and I was looking to move on to the next
8 step...' In other words, whilst Dave did not have access to multiple communities of practice
9 outside the workplace, he appreciated that the role itself could give him the opportunity to extend
10 his participation within the organisation. The potential to do so and become a full participant, as
11 described by Fuller and Unwin (2003), was at the heart of his decision to undertake his
12 apprenticeship.
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

29 *Case study 3: Jo*

30
31 Jo embarked on her apprenticeship in administration when she was 16 years old whilst working
32 as an office junior in a training department of a local construction company. Although she had
33 planned to do her A levels, after two days she left 'to earn money'. As she explained when
34 looking for her first job she had already decided, 'I want one with training because I want to
35 progress. I don't want to go into a dead end job'. The apprenticeship consisted of one day a
36 month out of the workplace. This one day a month was important for providing off-the-job
37 provision, where participants have opportunities to discuss their work and have access to peer
38 group interaction (Fuller and Unwin 2003). Unlike Amber and Dave, Jo worked in a department
39 that encouraged training 'to lead by example'. Therefore, in addition to her NVQ level 2 and 3
40 in administration, she obtained an NVQ level 3 in team leading, an assessor's award and
41 undertook an award in preparing to teach in the lifelong sector (Pttls) course. As she stated:
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 I did so many short courses it was unbelievable and working for a training company, if
4
5 no-one turned up for the training course that day they'd quite often put you on just to fill
6
7 the spaces, so I've always quite liked my training, it keeps me busy in between other
8
9 things that I'm doing.
10
11

12 In this way, Jo experienced a more expansive apprenticeship that enabled her to 'travel' outside
13
14 the immediate community of practice...to engage in the sort of multiple membership which
15
16 facilitates deeper learning, reflection and identity development' (Fuller and Unwin 2003, 422). In
17
18 doing so she had the opportunities to extend her identity through boundary crossing between her
19
20 workplace and her local training provider.
21
22
23

24
25
26 However, Jo was very clear that the NVQ levels 2 and 3 in administration were the
27
28 apprenticeship and the other qualifications and training were additional. With regards to her
29
30 NVQ level 2 in administration, she explained: 'I flew through it and then my admin 3 was about
31
32 a year, my admin 2 was about eight months I think I did it in'. On its own, this may suggest a
33
34 restrictive apprenticeship. However, the institutional emphasis on wider training provided Jo
35
36 with an enhanced learning profile, benefitting from a combination of learning across different
37
38 communities of practice and additional certification that she might not otherwise have accessed.
39
40 Interestingly Jo appeared to describe learning initially in terms of qualifications acquired, more
41
42 in relation to the simplistic propositional learning lens. This was epitomised by her answer to
43
44 how she felt about learning: 'getting a bit more to put on your CV, it's all worth having if you
45
46 can get it'. This treats learning as a tool for furthering career prospects and neglects any wider
47
48 impact on Jo personally.
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 One of the reasons for Jo's quick transition was the opportunity to claim exemption from certain
4 aspects of her apprenticeship. Receiving exemption or accreditation of prior learning (APL) is
5 common among work-based learning students accessing higher education (Boud, Solomon and
6 Symes 2001) and often positively associated with recognising 'worth'. However, it has also
7 been connected to concerns about confidence in academic study (Houlbrook 2012). Indeed, later
8 Jo admitted that receiving exemptions for certain parts of her course did cause anxiety later:
9 'teaching the key skills was something I was a little bit concerned about, because I'd never had
10 to do them when I was on the apprenticeships because I'd kept on having exemptions.' In this
11 way, APL appeared to limit rather than enable new learning.
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26

27 All three of these case studies highlight the importance of context when discussing restrictive
28 and expansive features of an apprenticeship. For Amber, the positive experiences of new
29 learning and her desire to extend her learning horizon encouraged her to pursue higher education
30 for her personal development. Dave was more interested in exploring the opportunities to
31 improve his participation within his organisation and instead viewed learning as a means to this
32 end. Jo's role within a training department meant she had access to wider institutional support
33 for her learning taking her beyond the boundaries of her immediate workplace, enabling her to
34 extend her learning horizon alongside her apprenticeship.
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

48 DECISION MAKING

49 The following section discusses the process of decision making according to each learner.
50 Building on the findings above, details about their motives help to illustrate their capabilities to
51 navigate change and the mutuality of agency and structure that influenced this.
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3
4
5
6 Amber, already presented as someone with a passion for learning, provided three additional
7
8 reasons for choosing to progress to a Foundation degree full time. Firstly, it was important for
9
10 her to feel confident about taking the next step. Concerns about ability to succeed in higher
11
12 education are common among students from vocational backgrounds, particularly in relation to
13
14 what it is to be academic (Houlbrook 2012). Amber's apprenticeship assessor was instrumental
15
16 in instilling in her the confidence to progress. She suggested that Amber attended the Open Day
17
18 where she met the programme leader who reassured her about the course requirements.
19
20
21
22
23

24
25 Secondly, Amber held an underlying belief that, 'degrees seem to be the way forward with
26
27 things'. She went on to say that, 'With my apprenticeship level 3 it would have been ok but it is
28
29 just not. It's not as solid as saying that you've got a full degree in Hospitality Management'.
30
31 Comparing qualifications in this way may signal what Reay (2001, 337) describes as 'confusions
32
33 and ambiguities about the sort of self they are seeking'. In other words, although these students
34
35 were engaging in higher education, Amber continued to demonstrate concern about how her
36
37 course related to others. This 'otherness' reflects the notions of deficit that remain, unchallenged
38
39 by the widening participation agenda (Burke 2012).
40
41
42
43
44
45

46 Finally, Amber had been frustrated to find that she wasn't able to put her learning into practice.
47
48 Although she had wanted opportunities to demonstrate the knowledge and understanding she had
49
50 gained from the apprenticeship in the restaurant, she was expected to continue with her duties,
51
52 including cleaning the restaurant. As she explained:
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 if I'd wanted to be cleaner that's what I'd do my degree in. but I'm doing it in hospitality
4
5 and I'm not learning anything from doing this so it was actually a massive release when I
6
7 knew I was going to do it full time and I knew I could drop all those rubbish hours and
8
9 the cleaning and stuff...
10
11

12 In other words, her practice was not changing to reflect her new learning and thus there seemed
13
14 to be limited reification of apprenticeship in her workplace. In other words, there was no attempt
15
16 to give Amber access to 'learning objects' and symbols which fell outside the mandatory
17
18 requirements of the apprenticeship (Fuller and Unwin 2003). This most probably stemmed
19
20 from the fact that Amber's workplace was a small, family-run restaurant with no history of
21
22 supporting apprentices. There was therefore only a very weak institutional infrastructure with no
23
24 commitment to a model.
25
26
27
28
29
30
31

32 Transition for Amber was triggered by a perceived imbalance between her individual needs and
33
34 those of her employer. Higher education offered her a way to break free from the confines of her
35
36 employment and to embark on a personal journey to broaden her learning horizons. This was
37
38 supported by her belief of wider recognition of higher education that could provide a stronger
39
40 platform for future employment.
41
42
43
44
45

46 Rather than progressing straight to NVQ level 3, Dave immediately considered embarking on a
47
48 Foundation degree. His reason to do this was simply because, 'I knew if I want to progress
49
50 seriously in any workplace then I need some higher level qualifications behind me.' Dave was
51
52 also looking to progress as quickly as possible and like Jo, was able to accredit his prior
53
54 experience in the Navy in order to do so. In other words, 'the college said because of my
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 experience they were happy to take me straight onto the Foundation degree'. Despite tensions in
4
5 academia around 'what counts as credentialised learning', it is argued that APL should be
6
7 recognised as a developmental tool (Houlbrook 2012). However, it was developmental only in
8
9 the sense of time saved. Accreditation for Dave was, 'good because that saved me sort of
10
11 another year or so's work'. On the one hand, APL was useful for progressing quickly and
12
13 moving on to more challenging learning opportunities. On the other hand, it restricted the
14
15 opportunities that might have been gained as part of the apprenticeship.
16
17
18
19

20
21
22 In keeping with Dave's commitment to his employer, consideration of further study centred on
23
24 how it would fit around his work:
25

26
27 the Foundation degree seemed to be win-win because I could fit it in around work
28
29 because they offered it as evening sessions, it was a very flexible option they offered
30
31 there, because you could do either an afternoon, evening, a full day or two evenings so it
32
33 was very flexible, so I could fit it in around work.
34
35

36
37 The importance of fitting around work continued after he completed the Foundation degree. The
38
39 lack of a part time pathway to progress to a Bachelor's degree meant that he later chose to
40
41 complete a level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management recognised by the Chartered Management
42
43 Institute.
44

45
46
47
48 Whilst Dave, like Amber, considered higher education to provide a strong platform for future
49
50 employment, he had to demonstrate different capabilities to sustain full time employment. In
51
52 order to progress Dave had to become adept at using whatever processes existed to meet the
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 demands of his employment, particularly in relation to time. This involved being successful at
4
5 APL as well as seeking out and pursuing flexible higher education courses.
6
7
8
9

10 By the time Jo completed her apprenticeship she was looking to change employment. Indeed, it
11 was during her training at the construction company that Jo became interested in joining the
12 training provider as an employee. As she explained, ‘I wanted a bit of a career change, this is
13 only ten minutes down the road from where I used to work so it was quite convenient, so I went
14 for the interview and got it and that was July nearly two years ago.’ As a result of moving to a
15 new job, Jo taught for the training provider and as part of this, completed a certificate in teaching
16 in lifelong learning sector (Ctlls), as well as a management course. Her successes appeared to
17 perpetuate a wish to continue to accrue qualifications. As she later went on to say: ‘I think I’m a
18 bit of a glory hunter. So if I’ve got – like if I can go look at me, look at me I’ve done something
19 else, I don’t know, I think I just like to be better. It sounds really big headed.’ As before, this
20 description emphasises her regard for formal learning as the accumulation of products.
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38

39 In order to undertake a career change during the transition to higher education, Jo relied on her
40 capability to network. This was made possible by her experiences of ‘boundary crossing’ as
41 described by Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström (2003). Unlike Amber or Dave, Jo experienced a
42 form of horizontal development involves crossing social and cultural borders between different
43 activity systems during her apprenticeship. This is distinct from the vertical development of
44 mastering a skill or a body of knowledge (Guile and Young 2003). These particular
45 circumstances helped her build on the social links made during her apprenticeship to pursue her
46 career and higher education simultaneously. This also meant that she was able to develop a
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 learning identity that fitted with her role as an educator of work-based learning. Interestingly,
4 this learning identity did not seem at odds with the propositional learning lens (Hager and
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

learning identity that fitted with her role as an educator of work-based learning. Interestingly, this learning identity did not seem at odds with the propositional learning lens (Hager and Hodkinson 2009) that she used to describe gaining qualifications.

PERCEIVED OUTCOMES

So far this paper has explored the learner's experiences of the apprenticeship and the transition to higher education. To fully understand how learning was understood, it was important to ascertain what learners considered they had gained from transition. The findings demonstrate not only the perceived impact of higher education and their hopes and expectations for the future, but what part, if any, learning would play in their future.

Amber described how progression to higher education contributed to her personal transformation. One way in which this manifested itself was a broader understanding and knowledge of her industry, signalling a change of mind about her future. When asked how the Foundation degree was benefitting her, she stated:

...I think doing the degree has opened me up to know there's so much more to hospitality than what I thought there was. Because, after being dead cert [sic] I was just going to run a restaurant actually and now I think maybe I should do sales for a while.

As this shows, Amber now wanted to spend more time exploring the different roles within her industry before deciding on one. Indeed, she went on to say that it was not until her Foundation degree that she had the opportunity to cross boundaries in a way that improved her confidence:

we've been to other hotels, restaurants, looked around and been on like visits and work-shadowing which is all part of the course and without doing the course I never would

1
2
3 done that. I wouldn't have felt confident enough just to call a company and say, 'hiya,
4 I'm a FD student, could I come and work-shadow for a day?' because it's just the fear of
5 rejection isn't it?
6
7
8
9

10
11
12 However, her view of personal transformation was extended by regarding transition as a vehicle
13 for future learning. This was highlighted when asked what she wanted to do next. She explained:

14
15 I don't like being comfortable if that makes sense, I like pushing the boundaries and
16 making sure that I'm still learning again. So obviously staying in the same place I'm not
17 learning anything new. So I need to be moving around and learning new skills.
18
19
20
21
22
23

24
25 In other words, the experience she gained of higher education instilled in her an even deeper
26 belief in 'pushing boundaries'. This suggests a view of learning as an ongoing process (Hager
27 and Hodkinson 2009) and in this way, Amber epitomises the vision suggested by Säljö (2003,
28 317), who wishes to focus on organising learning so that, 'students appreciate being in a position
29 of acting as learners'.
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38

39 In the case of Dave, completion of his Level 7 Diploma signalled a clear endpoint to that phase
40 of his learning. He demonstrated this when he compared his progress to others who had chosen
41 alternative routes:
42
43
44

45 ...it's been five years now so I think I've sort of caught up with myself academically. I
46 was always mindful of the time in the Navy. I'd sort of dropped behind other people of
47 my age and I think I've sort of caught up with that now...
48
49
50
51
52

53 From his response there appears to be a clear separation of academic learning and himself,
54 similar to that of Jo when describing the benefits of qualifications to her CV. One explanation
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 for their understanding of learning in this way is the implicit messages contained within policy
4 materials and public discourse about the importance of higher education (Wolf 2002). As it has
5 been argued by Burke (2012), by providing different courses with particular aims (e.g. work-
6 focused), the widening participation student is constituted as 'Other' which can lead to a strong
7 sense of division and difference. At the same time, everyone is presented as having the
8 opportunity to go to higher education so that if they do not attend, it can be claimed that it is
9 because they choose not to (Ball 1990; Williams 1997). From this extract it appeared that Dave
10 too was responding to this discourse by comparing his progress to 'other people of my age'.
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23

24 For Dave the outcome of his transition to higher education related to what he could do at work.
25 Indeed, he had adopted a certain loyalty to the company: 'the Council have put a lot in me over
26 five years and I feel sort of indebted to them and want to return that.' If as Boden and Nedeva
27 (2010) have noted, employability is now a performative function of universities, it is perhaps
28 understandable that students pay so much attention to the transfer of learning to the workplace.
29 This issue is increasingly addressed in government documentation about higher education. For
30 example, as the recent HE white paper, *Students at the Heart of the System* (BIS 2011c),
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39

40 Graduates are more likely to be equipped with the skills that employers want if there is
41 genuine collaboration between institutions and employers in the design and delivery of
42 courses. (p.39)
43
44
45
46
47

48 There is an absence here too of any perception of learning as personal or ongoing. Rather it is
49 about skills as independent of the learner and something that can simply be acquired and
50 transferred on demand.
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 Jo, like Amber, was encouraged to consider undertaking more higher education qualifications
4
5 simply because she had proved to herself that she was capable:
6

7
8 that was the first time I've ever had to do research or anything and then writing and
9
10 Harvard referencing and all the rest of it. So now I've got that under my belt and
11
12 understand it, it wouldn't scare me to do any more higher education.
13

14
15 She later stated: 'I've got my Cert Ed as well that now gives me the opportunities to go to quite
16
17 a few different places.' In this way Jo was demonstrating her capability to use academic learning
18
19 to experience ongoing personal transformation and to continue broadening her learning horizons.
20
21

22
23
24 Despite earlier references to learning as acquisition, Jo did provide examples of ways in which
25
26 learning changed her behaviour. This is an important aspect of learning as becoming but can be
27
28 difficult to evidence. When asked to describe how she thought she had changed she said, 'my
29
30 own teaching improved...' However, she went on to provide a more specific example:
31
32

33
34 it took me a little while to get my head around the theories but then after a while the more
35
36 you start hearing them and the principles you actually start rolling them off without even
37
38 knowing...I didn't think I'd taken on much knowledge but the more you get asked, the
39
40 more you remember, so that was quite good as well.
41
42

43
44 This is what Hager and Hodkinson (2009) describe as embedding learning, although as they
45
46 point out, if this happens completely it can remain a mystery how individuals are reshaped.
47
48

49
50 Work by Engeström (2001) focuses on the impact that a changing context has on individual
51
52 learners but less on how individual learners can shape contexts. Jo was the only learner who
53
54 described how individual learning could influence the work place. As she explained,
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 our Powerpoints used to be really wordy, like ridiculously and every time I got an
4
5 observation this is what was said and after about a year it was taken on board.
6
7

8 In other words, the feedback she had received from her higher education course accredited by a
9
10 local university was passed on to her working environment. This example demonstrates how
11
12 learning is a process that cannot always be encapsulated by metaphors of acquisition or transfer
13
14 but as a relational web that can make very subtle but important differences to existing
15
16 communities of practice. This is also more in keeping with 'learning as becoming' because it
17
18 acknowledges how learning can shape different contexts (Hager and Hodkinson 2009).
19
20 Arguably, opportunities to examine both aspects of change are important to fully understand
21
22 learning transition.
23
24
25
26
27

28 29 **CONCLUSION**

30
31 Whilst the sole aim of apprenticeships is not to lead to higher education, there is an increasing
32
33 expectation that apprentices should have the opportunity to do so (BIS 2010). Yet there has been
34
35 little attempt to understand how existing pathways have been experienced and outcomes
36
37 perceived. This paper seeks to address this gap by exploring the transition from an
38
39 apprenticeship to higher education from the perspective of three individuals. The three case
40
41 studies presented here were selected according to distinct pathways for which each individual
42
43 demonstrated particular capabilities to navigate change. These capabilities were shaped by their
44
45 experiences of apprenticeship, the relationship to their employer and their understanding of
46
47 learning.
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 The process of learning during the apprenticeship was most commonly explained by learners in
4 relation to NVQ qualifications with little reference to features of an expansive apprenticeship
5 such as knowledge-based qualifications or participation in multiple communities of practice.
6
7
8 Furthermore, evidence suggested that both Dave and Amber were pursuing apprenticeships that
9 involved qualifications at a level that they had already completed, as found by Winterbotham and
10 Godwin (BIS 2011b). This was especially true in relation to the NVQ level 2. The case studies
11 therefore call into question, as for others (Young 2011; Brockmann et al. 2010), the adequacy of
12 the NVQ for the apprenticeship framework and whether time and energy would be better spent
13 'providing a sufficient platform for progression' as recommended by Fuller and Unwin (2012,
14 41). Policy makers and employers must ensure that apprenticeship frameworks develop skills
15 and knowledge over and above the levels of expertise already reached prior to starting the
16 apprenticeship.
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33

34 Each transition was shaped by a particular relationship to an employer which influenced the
35 capabilities needed to negotiate the transition to higher education. In particular, the availability
36 of part time higher education courses was essential for those needing to sustain full time
37 employment. However, the recent changes in higher education such as the cap on numbers and
38 rise in tuition fees in England now means that routes from vocational pathways and Foundation
39 degrees are under threat (Milburn 2012).
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50

51 The option to accredit prior learning was also a feature of transition for two of the case studies.
52 Whilst Dave and Jo were able to progress through their apprenticeship quickly on account of the
53 option to accredit their prior learning, APL might also encourage learners to employ a
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 propositional view of academic learning as well as limiting the opportunity for new and ‘deeper’
4
5 learning to occur. As the case of Jo illustrated, the risk is that important learning is missed which
6
7 can cause anxiety later. Arguably, taking a more developmental approach to APL is important if
8
9 learners are to get the most out of their learning opportunities (Houlbrook 2012).
10
11

12
13
14 As Hager and Hodkinson (2009, 621) stated, ‘to rely exclusively on one particular lens and its
15
16 associated metaphors for understanding learning is to limit understanding in advance’. The
17
18 experiences described here suggest that learners do not tend to view learning using a particular
19
20 lens. Indeed, how they understood learning was continually shaping and being shaped as they
21
22 navigated change. For example Jo was able to describe examples of individual change as well as
23
24 changes to work practices, but at times continued to discuss formal education using the
25
26 propositional lens. This in itself suggests that transition and learning should not be treated as
27
28 entailing an end point. These experiences are only part of these learners’ lifelong transitions. It
29
30 is likely that aspects of these capabilities were in place before their apprenticeship began. As
31
32 Hager and Hodkinson (2009, 633) argue, ‘the ways in which a person (re)constructs themselves
33
34 and that which they are taught are influenced by the person they had already become when a
35
36 course started’.
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45

46 Notions of boundary crossing (Tuomi-Gröhn and Engestrom 2003) are particularly important if
47
48 we are to fully understand how, ‘...dispositions towards learning change over time and in
49
50 relation to changing circumstances in different life domains’ (Brockmann 2010, 64). This was
51
52 particularly pertinent for Jo, whose boundary crossing during her apprenticeship enabled her to
53
54 progress quickly in her career and Amber whose experiences of other areas of hospitality during
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 her Foundation degree improved her confidence and encouraged her to change her future plans.
4
5 From the findings it appears that this was key to the ways in which Jo and Amber were able to
6
7 articulate understandings of learning most closely associated to personal transformation
8
9 described by Hager and Hodkinson (2009).
10
11

12
13
14
15 In order to explore experiences of transition from an apprenticeship to higher education more
16
17 fully, longitudinal in depth data from a larger sample is needed. As Bloomer and Hodkinson
18
19 (2000) have argued, a longitudinal perspective of learning is important if we are to understand
20
21 learning development. Far too often, models of learning are based on notions of fixed personal
22
23 styles (Bloomer and Hodkinson 2000) and as this paper highlights, personal styles can be
24
25 influenced by a range of factors shaped by both agency and structure.
26
27

28
29
30
31 At the very heart of this issue of progression lies an assumption from government that
32
33 encouraging apprentices to pursue higher education qualifications will aid social mobility and
34
35 help the economy. The three routes represented here show some of the perceived outcomes that
36
37 progression to higher education can provide. The detailed responses also highlight the potential
38
39 challenges of this particular group of learners, not only negotiating the different modes of study
40
41 and access to them, but the meanings that underpin their learning (Tobbell, et al. 2010). This
42
43 seems particularly pertinent for learners engaging in progression routes already acknowledged as
44
45 diverse and complex (Carter 2009).
46
47
48
49

50 51 52 53 **REFERENCES**

54
55 Ball, S. J. 1990. *Politics and policy making in education*. London: Routledge.
56
57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 Bloomer, M. and P. Hodkinson. 2000. Learning careers: continuity and change in young people's
4
5 dispositions to learning. *British Educational Research Journal* 26(5): 583-597.
6
7
- 8 Boden, R. and M. Nedeva. 2010. Employing discourse: universities and graduate 'employability'.
9
10 *Journal of Education Policy* 25(1): 37-54.
11
- 12 Boud, D., N. Solomon, and C. Symes. 2001. New practices for new times. In *Work based*
13
14 *learning: a new higher education?* Ed. D. Boud and N. Solomon, 3-17. Buckingham:
15
16 SRHE/Open University Press.
17
18
- 19 Brockmann, M. 2012. Learning cultures in retail: apprenticeship, identity and emotional work in
20
21 England and Germany. *Journal of Education and Work*. iFirst.
22
23
- 24 Brockmann, M. 2010. Identity and apprenticeship: the case of English motor vehicle
25
26 maintenance apprentices. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training* 62(1): 63-73.
27
28
- 29 Brockmann, M., M. Clarke and C. Winch. 2010. The apprenticeship framework in England: a
30
31 new beginning or a continuing sham? *Journal of Education and Work* 23(2): 111-127.
32
33
- 34 Burke, P-J. 2012. *The Right to Higher Education: beyond widening participation*. London:
35
36 Routledge.
37
38
- 39 Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) 2011a *Specification for Apprenticeship Standards in*
40
41 *England*. Prepared for the Skills Funding Agency, Department for Business, Innovation
42
43 and Skills, the National Apprenticeship Service and the Department for Education. BIS:
44
45 London.
46
47
- 48 Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) 2011b *Prior qualifications of adult apprentices*. Research
49
50 paper number 33. Prepared for the Skills Funding Agency & Department for Business,
51
52 Innovation and Skills. IFF: London.
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) 2011c. *Students at the Heart of the System*
4
5 <http://www.bis.gov.uk/news/topstories/2011/Jun/he-white-paper-students-at-the-heart-of->
6
7 [the-system](http://www.bis.gov.uk/news/topstories/2011/Jun/he-white-paper-students-at-the-heart-of-). Accessed 15th July 2011.
8
9

10 Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) 2010. *Skills for Sustainable Growth*
11
12 <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/further-education-skills/skills-for-sustainable-growth>
13
14
15 Accessed 27th May 2011.
16

17 Carter, P. 2009. *Progression from Vocational and Applied Learning to Higher Education in*
18
19 *England*. Bolton: UVAC.
20
21

22 Department for Education and Skills (DfES) 2007. *Raising expectations: staying in education or*
23
24 *training post-16*. Cm7065. London: HMSO.
25
26

27 Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) 2008. *Higher education at work, high*
28
29 *skills: high value*, London: The Stationery Office.
30

31 Engestrom, Y. 2001. Expansive learning at work: towards an activity-theoretical
32
33 reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work* 14(1): 133-156.
34
35

36 Foundation Degree Forward (FDF) / University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) 2008.
37
38 Features of apprenticeship: programmes that support progression to higher education.
39
40 Summary of a project carried out by UVAC on behalf of FDF.
41
42

43 Fuller, A. and L. Unwin. 2012. *Banging on the door of the university: the complexities of*
44
45 *progression from apprenticeship and other vocational programmes in England*.
46
47 Monograph No. 14. Cardiff: SKOPE.
48
49

50 Fuller, A., J. Turbin and J. Wintrup. 2010. *Finding their way? Advanced apprenticeship as a*
51
52 *route to HE*. Southampton: University of Southampton.
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 Fuller, A. and L. Unwin. 2009. Change and continuity in apprenticeship: the resilience of a
4 model of learning, *Journal of Education and Work* 22(5): 405-416.
5
6
7
8 Fuller, A. and L. Unwin. 2003. Learning as Apprentices in the Contemporary UK Workplace:
9 creating and managing expansive and restrictive participation, *Journal of Education and*
10 *Work*, 16(4): 407-426.
11
12
13
14 Fuller, A., H. Hodkinson., P. Hodkinson and L. Unwin. 2005. Learning as peripheral
15 participation in communities of practice: a reassessment of key concepts in workplace
16 learning. *British Educational Research Journal* 31(1): 49-68.
17
18
19
20 Fuller, A. and L. Unwin, 1998. Reconceptualising apprenticeship: exploring the relationship
21 between work and learning. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training* 50(2): 153-173.
22
23
24
25
26 Gale, T. and S. Parker. 2012. Navigating change: a typology of student transition in higher
27 education. *Studies in Higher Education*. iFirst.
28
29
30
31
32 Guile, D. and M. Young. 2003. Transfer and transition in vocational education: some theoretical
33 considerations. In *Between School and Work: new perspectives on transfer and boundary-*
34 *crossing. Advances in Learning and Instruction Series* T. eds. Tuomi-Gröhn and Y.
35 Engeström, 63-85. Bingley: Emerald.
36
37
38
39
40
41 Hager, P. and P. Hodkinson. 2009. Moving beyond the transfer of learning, *British Educational*
42 *Research Journal* 35(4): 619-638.
43
44
45
46 Harrison, N. 2011. *The mismeasure of participation: how choosing the 'wrong' statistic helped*
47 *seal the fate of Aimhigher*. Paper presented at the Society for Research into Higher
48 Education Annual Conference. Celtic Manor Resort: Newport.
49
50
51
52
53 Houlbrook, M. 2012. RPL practice and student disposition – insights from the lifeworld. *Journal*
54 *of Education and Work* 25(5): 555-570.
55
56
57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 Hultberg, J., K. Plos., G. Hendry and K. Kjellgren. 2008. Scaffolding students' transition
4 to higher education: Parallel introductory courses for students and teachers.
5
6
7
8 *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 32(1): 47–57.
9
- 10 Lemanski, C. 2011. Access and assessment? Incentives for independent study. *Assessment &*
11
12 *Evaluation in Higher Education*, 36(5): 565-581.
13
- 14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
- McInnis, C. 2001. Researching the first year experience: Where to from here? *Higher Education Research and Development* 20 (2): 105–14.
- McIntosh, S. 2005. The returns to apprenticeship training. *Journal of Education and Work* 18(3): 251-282.
- Milburn, A. 2012. *University challenge: how higher education can advance social mobility. A progress report by the independent reviewer on social mobility and child poverty.* The Cabinet Office: London.
- Palmer, M., P. O’Kane and M. Owens. 2009. Betwixt spaces: Student accounts of turning point experiences in the first-year transition. *Studies in Higher Education* 34 (1): 37–54.
- Reay, D. 2001. Finding or losing yourself? Working-class relationships to education, *Journal of Education Policy*, 16:4, 333-346
- Robson, C. 2011. *Real World Research*. 3rd edition. Chichester: Wiley.
- Ryan, P. and L. Unwin. 2001. Apprenticeship in the British ‘training market’ *National Institute Economic Review*, 178, October.
- Saljö, R. 2003. From transfer to boundary-crossing. In *Between school and work: new perspectives on transfer and boundary-crossing* eds. T. Tuomi-Gröhn and Y. Engeström, 311–321. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science.
- Skills Commission. 2009. *Progression through Apprenticeships*. London: Policy Connect.

- 1
2
3 Smith, J.A., and M. Osborn. 2003. Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In *Qualitative*
4
5 *psychology: A practical guide to research methods*, ed. J.A. Smith, 51–80. London: Sage.
6
7
8 Spielhofer, T. and D. Sims. 2004. Modern apprenticeships in the retail sector: stresses, strains
9
10 and support. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 56(4): 539-558.
11
12
13 Tobbell, J., V. O'Donnell and M. Zammit. 2010. Exploring transition to postgraduate study:
14
15 shifting identities in interaction with communities, practice and participation. *British*
16
17 *Educational Research Journal* 36(2): 261-278.
18
19
20 Tuomi-Gröhn, T. and Y. Engeström. eds. 2003. *Between school and work: new perspectives on*
21
22 *transfer and boundary-crossing*. Bingley: Emerald.
23
24
25 Vickerstaff, S. 2007. 'I was just the boy around the place': what made apprenticeships successful?
26
27 *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 59(3): 331-347.
28
29
30 Williams, J. 1997. The discourse of access: the legitimation of selectivity, In *Negotiating access*
31
32 *to higher education. The discourse of selectivity and equity* ed. J. Williams.
33
34 Buckingham: UK.
35
36
37 Wolf, A. 2002. *Does Education Matter?* London: Penguin.
38
39
40 Young. M. 2011 National vocational qualifications in the United Kingdom: their origins and
41
42 legacy. *Journal of Education and Work*, 24 (3-4): 259-282.
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Table1: Levels 3 to 7 qualifications

Level	FHEQ	QCF/NQF
3		BTEC Awards, Certificates, and Diplomas at level 3; BTEC Nationals; OCR Nationals; NVQs at level 3; A levels; GCE in applied subjects; International Baccalaureate; Key Skills level 3
4	Higher national certificates (HNC); Certificates of HE	BTEC Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards; HNCs; NVQs at level 4
5	Diplomas of higher education; Foundation degrees; Higher national diplomas	HNCs and HNDs; BTEC Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards; NVQs at level 5
6	Bachelor's degrees; Bachelor's degrees with honours; Graduate certificates and diplomas; Professional graduate certificate in Education	National diploma in professional production skills; BTEC advanced professional diplomas, certificates and awards; BTEC advanced professional diplomas, certificates and awards
7	Masters degrees; Integrated masters degrees; Postgraduate certificates; Postgraduate diplomas	Diploma in translation; BTEC advanced professional diplomas, certificates and awards; BTEC advanced professional diplomas, certificates and awards