

# **(Re)Searching for ‘Quality’ in English Apprenticeship: Reflections on the Past, Present and Future of a Vulnerable Model of Learning**

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## **Abstract**

In England, apprenticeship and vocational education and training (VET) policies more generally have been driven at different times by three overlapping logics: ‘employment logic’; ‘education logic’; and ‘social logic’. As a consequence of the tense relationship between these logics, considerable variability in the way they are organized and experienced remains a key feature of the English approach. Drawing on policy-history and social theories of learning, this chapter explores the impact this has had on the way apprenticeship in particular has evolved and the interventions of successive governments. It asks how quality in apprenticeship might be interpreted and analysed in a policy climate that suggests competing logics are failing to achieve greater consistency across apprenticeship programmes. Philipp Gonon has highlighted the importance of quality as a rhetorical device for maintaining a focus on the aspects of VET provision, which ensure that it is genuinely ‘significant and successful’. In that spirit, the chapter proposes a conceptual framework for evaluating apprenticeship quality to generate an approach that better meets the needs of apprentices, employers and society.

## **Introduction**

“Quality as a rhetorical point in the context of the educational discourse serves for convincing yourself and others that the domain one maintains is actually significant and successful.” (Gonon, 2017, p.344)

Since 1994 when the United Kingdom (UK) government decided, for the first time, to attempt to intervene in the structure, funding and provision of apprenticeships, there has been a debate about whether sufficient attention was being paid to the quality of apprentices’ experiences. Initially, the debate was largely conducted among academics interested in vocational education and training (VET), but, in the 2000s as

the number of apprenticeships grew rapidly due to the widening of the funding to cover people over the age of 24, successive government ministers were challenged about whether they were focusing too much on quantity at the expense of quality.

The research literature tends to portray a nation in which the experience and practice of apprenticeship and VET more generally are of lower quality in comparison with many other European countries. As this chapter will argue, considerable variability in the way apprenticeship is organized and experienced has always been a key feature of the English approach. This is due to apprenticeship, and vocational education and training (VET) policies more generally, being driven at different times by three overlapping ‘logics’. These are: a) what Iannelli and Raffe (2007) have called the ‘employment logic’ and the ‘education logic’; and b) what Jacinto (2019) has called a ‘social logic’. In some sectors, English apprenticeship has commanded respect both in the past and the present. For example, in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, between 1716 and 1718, the Russian Tsar, Peter the Great sent Russian apprentices to England to learn new techniques in shipbuilding in London and Surrey. In 1719 ironmongers and smiths in Birmingham petitioned parliament about their concerns that these apprentices would steal their secrets. Today, English and German aerospace engineering apprentices follow very similar training programmes as their employers are governed by the same international industry standards (Lahiff et. al. 2019). Yet, in some other sectors, notably business administration and retail, quality of training would be far less consistent.

In this chapter, we explore the concept of quality as applied to apprenticeship in England. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have similar structures for apprenticeship, but their devolved status means they have been able to adapt the UK-wide arrangements to suit their own purposes. We examine the shifting characteristics of and policy aims for English apprenticeship to show how what we have referred to as a resilient occupationally rooted ‘model of learning’ (Fuller and Unwin 2010) has continued to play a significant role in a nation where economic change over the past fifty years has been profound. In England, just as in many European countries and in Australia and Canada, apprenticeship is also an instrument of state policy, forming part of their national systems of education and training. This means we cannot solely regard apprenticeship as a model of learning because it is also

a programme or institution via which a nation state aims to achieve certain goals. Questions then arise about the content of apprenticeships and associated issues such as, for example, where learning should take place and how it is to be assessed, who should be involved in the design of the programmes, and how they should be funded. The range of actors involved in determining what is meant by ‘quality’ is, therefore, quite broad, extending beyond the members of the specific occupational community.

We also discuss the current ways in which apprenticeship is being promoted and practiced in England. In doing so, we present an analytical tool (the ‘Expansive-Restrictive Framework’), which we have developed with employers and education and training organisations to evaluate and further improve the quality of their apprenticeship provision (Fuller and Unwin 2019). This dynamic framework offers the means to interrogate how the meaning of ‘quality’ is interpreted according to: a) the different contexts in which apprenticeship takes place – workplaces, training workshops, and educational institutions; and b) the understanding of the key actors about the purpose of apprenticeship – policymakers, employers, VET teachers and trainers, apprentices, and the general public.

Drawing on our own research on apprenticeship over the past twenty years and on the insights of comparative social scientists such as Philipp Gonon, we consider how far the English interpretation of the apprenticeship model of learning has distinctive characteristics that shed light on its singular nature. The chapter is divided into 4 sections.

### **Formation of English apprenticeship**

In similarity to some other European countries, the origins of formalized apprenticeships can be traced back to the medieval craft guilds (see, inter alia, Lane 1996). Apprentices, who lodged with their Masters, signed (with their parents or other sponsors) indentures setting out what was expected by the parties to the agreement. In London, records from 1230 onwards show that indentured apprentices were ‘enrolled’

by the City of London<sup>1</sup> and their indentures were legally binding (Gadd and Wilson 2002). The City authorities and the guilds (known as Livery Companies) administered the system, and Mayors and Justices of the Peace were given powers of enforcement. Only householders could be Masters (including women). Householders with a minimum amount of arable land were obliged to take in apprentices aged between 10 and 18 until they were at least 21 or 24. These practices, referred to as the ‘custom of London’ were followed in other parts of the country and became the basis of the 1563 Statute of Artificers. However, no provision was made for the registration of apprentices outside London, though some boroughs did keep records. The craft guilds in towns and cities organized and controlled apprenticeship. In Sheffield, for example, where cutlery has been made for at least 700 years, the Company of Cutlers was established in 1624 to organize the local craftsmen, including the hiring and training of apprentices (Binfield and Hey 1997).

Despite its fragmented coverage outside London, the Statute is important because it gave the state control over apprenticeship, rather than the individual guilds. In 1597 and 1601 (Poor Law Act), parish officers were given the power to bind poor children as apprentices. This increased the number of female apprentices, although the ‘pauper’ apprentices were not regarded as proper apprentices and so not always given much training or access to skilled work. For the pauper apprentices, the emphasis was on social control and supplying the emerging factories and mills with young workers.

Apprenticeship offered something for the children of all social classes. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, apprentices from families who could afford to pay high premiums dominated the luxury goods trades. The sons of the gentry and clergy who couldn’t rely on private incomes also needed apprenticeships to acquire the skills to support themselves. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, apprentices were paying a premium to their Master to secure their apprenticeship. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the residential expectation declined as the first industrial revolution started to change the nature of employment.

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<sup>1</sup> The ‘City of London’ refers to the area of the capital that from medieval times became a centre for trade and finance. It is governed by a corporation of Aldermen (elected by the Livery Companies), who also elect a Lord Mayor.

The classic image of the apprentice in historical images is a young man learning the ‘mysteries’ (a Latin term used by the medieval guilds) of a craft from a master. Yet, as well as having an economic and employment logic, apprenticeship has long been associated with social control of young people, particularly those in danger of being under-employed (Humphries 2003). From 1747 to 1768, further statutes were introduced to control the way apprentices were being treated, reflecting concerns about abuses. The following extract from the indenture papers for a bookbinding apprentice in 1822 reflects the importance that was placed on the ‘moral’ dimension of apprenticeship:

...his Master faithfully shall serve, his secrets keep, his lawful commands everywhere gladly do. He shall do no damage to his said Master nor see to be done of others ... He shall not waste goods of his said Master, nor lend them unlawfully to any. He shall not commit fornication nor contract Matrimony within the said term. He shall not pay cards or Dice tables or any unlawful games whereby his said Master may have any loss with his own goods ... he shall not haunt taverns or playhouses, nor absent himself from his said Master’s service day or night unlawfully (Extract from the Apprenticeship Indenture Collection, Derby Local History Library).

By taking a young person as an apprentice, an employer would relieve the government of the burden of thinking about this section of its population. Snell (1996, 303) reminds us that the ‘moral, social and extra-economic expectations placed on apprenticeship were once key elements of an integrated system’. He adds that the curriculum of an apprenticeship (for both males and females) often went way beyond the immediate job-specific skills and knowledge and could include: ‘religious doctrine, personal morality, literacy, numeracy and account keeping, needlework, knitting, sewing, ‘housewifery’, many household management capabilities and so on’ (ibid, 305). It is clear, therefore, that apprentices were engaging to a greater or lesser degree in forms of general and vocational education, but the state was happy to treat this as a private matter for employers.

In 1802, the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act was introduced to regulate the conditions in factories and mills, including reducing working time to 12 hours a day

(from 6am to 9pm). Apprentices were to be taught reading, writing and arithmetic by a 'discrete and proper person', to be given one hour of Christian teaching on Sundays and to be confirmed in the Church of England. This was the first attempt to insert an 'education logic' into statutory apprenticeship arrangements but this was short-lived. Twelve years later in 1814, the Statute of Artificers was repealed. Derry (1931: 68) argues that by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Statute had become 'largely inoperable' and connects this to the development of a concern to limit what was being seen as the danger of 'combinations' (forerunners of trade unions) of workmen. Despite these concerns, the governance of apprenticeship reverted back to the days of the guilds and was regarded as a matter for employers alone. It would not be until nearly two hundred years later, in 2009 that a UK government decided to again place apprenticeship on a statutory basis.

As the first and second industrial revolutions took hold, the UK economy and society saw extensive changes. Apprenticeships became available in a much wider range of occupations and new work processes meant that some employers needed to ensure their apprentices had access to technical and scientific knowledge. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, evening and daytime classes began to expand, provided by the emerging colleges of further and technical education (for detailed histories see Bailey 1983; Bailey and Unwin 2014). By the 1950s, the colleges were full of apprentices and other young employees who were released from work for a day a week or on a 'block release' basis by their employers. In the 1960s, the establishment of Industrial Training Boards did result in greater standardization of the on and off-the-job content and requirements of some apprenticeship programmes, particularly in engineering and construction. Yet despite many national campaigns for the education and training of young workers to be formalized in the same way as in some other European countries, the employment logic remained the dominant policy approach.

### **Apprenticeship as an instrument of government policy**

The use of apprenticeship and other forms of youth training as a means of social control was much in evidence when unemployed young people were rioting on the streets of London, Bristol and Liverpool in 1981. For the Conservative government of the day, training was seen as the silver bullet. Policymakers announced that young

people needed to acquire job-related and ‘personal effectiveness skills’, the latter now being called ‘employability’ skills. Yet, as many commentators have argued, the problem lay in the collapse of the youth labour market due to economic downturns and restructuring (see *inter alia*, Finn 1987). What young people really needed were jobs and, more importantly, jobs with training, but apprenticeship places had been shrinking since the late 1960s (Ryan and Unwin 2001). In 1981, the national youth unemployment rate for young people under the age of 25 was 21.4 per cent compared with 2.4 per cent in 1960 (Ashton 1986). The government of the day responded by launching a one-year Youth Training Scheme (YTS) in 1983. This was extended to two years in 1986. Trainees were paid a weekly training allowance by the state, which employers could add to if they wished, and were required to participate in off-the-job training.

YTS gave equal weight to four outcomes: competence in job skills; competence in a range of transferable core skills including literacy, numeracy and information technology); ability to transfer skills to new situations; and personal effectiveness. Trainees were expected to achieve nationally recognized competence-based vocational qualifications, the training for which was funded by the state and provided by colleges of further education and the newly established private training providers who were allowed to enter what was now referred to as the ‘training market’. Many employers with residual apprenticeship training converted this into YTS provision in order to receive government support.

As we have previously argued, the major impact of YTS was to establish the state as the purchaser and driver of vocational training rather than employers, a shift which has had a profound impact on the way apprenticeship policy and practice developed since the 1990s (Fuller and Unwin 2010). YTS attacked the central pillars of apprenticeship by: (a) making the State the real employer, thus separating the recruitment of young people from long-term business need; (b) reducing the time for maturation to enable ‘trainees’ (the term replaced that of ‘apprentice’) to make a much swifter journey to becoming a productive worker, thus diluting the concept of apprenticeship to mean little more than work experience; and (c) by encouraging many employers to become passive players happy to allow the new army of training providers to deal with the training and assessment requirements prescribed by

government. In so doing it undermined the historically strong employment logic that had characterised apprenticeship, without augmenting or replacing it with a coherent or substantial education logic.

Despite the fact that YTS provision was highly variable in terms of quality of training and employment outcomes, it quickly became a catchphrase for low quality training and exploitation, partly because some employers treated it as a ‘revolving door’ whereby they recruited young people as cheap labour with no prospect of permanent employment (see *inter alia* Roberts 1995). In 1990, as a result of pressure from some employers, the off-the-job training requirement and the focus on personal and transferable skills was dropped, allowing trainees to be assessed against checklists of competences in the workplace (see Brockmann et al, 2011 for a comparative critique of the UK’s approach to ‘competence’) and YTS was renamed YT (Youth Training). However, not all employers demanded and went along with this diluted form of youth training. As Raggatt and Unwin (1991, xiv) argue, these changes “flew in the face of the demands employers have been making since the dawn of time for employees to possess both occupational competences and transferable skills”.

Following a demographic downturn, and the introduction of a new form of examination at the end of compulsory schooling for 16 year-olds in 1988, which enabled many more young people to continue in full-time education, YT saw a reduction in numbers. However, from 1993 onwards, the numbers of young people remaining in education plateaued at just below 70 percent and data showed that many of the 16 year-olds who did remain in full-time education only did so for one year. Yet again, the government of the day debated what should be done to ensure school leavers who could not find jobs and did not want to continue in full-time education had access to alternative provision. This debate was set against the backdrop of a country that was trying to rebalance its economy and the acknowledgement that, for too long, the UK had ignored the need to grow the numbers of people with technician level skills in order to compete with other countries in the wake of technological change.

In 1993, to reboot the UK’s approach to youth training, the then Conservative Prime Minister, John Major, announced that a new scheme for 16-25 year-olds, the Modern

Apprenticeship, would be launched the following year. The decision to use the term 'apprenticeship' signaled the government's intention to create a pathway that would be different to previous youth training schemes. Furthermore, there was a strong cultural attachment to apprenticeship. The general public associated apprenticeship with quality – in relation to training, the production of goods and services, and employer commitment. Moreover, apprenticeship was regarded as a route to 'good' jobs and to transferable occupationally relevant skills. The term 'Modern' was also important because government wanted to also signal that the new scheme would be more accessible than traditional apprenticeships by virtue of being available in a wider range of sectors and to women as well as men. The new apprentices would also have employed-status with their wages paid by employers. Crucially, too, apprentices would be trained to a minimum of NVQ (national vocational qualification) Level 3 as opposed to the Level 2 minimum under YTS and YT.

Given its problematic relationship with trade unions, and their historic role in the setting and guarding of the lengths of apprenticeships, Major's government was also keen to insist that there would not be a mandatory length set for the new apprenticeships. Instead the length would depend on progress towards achievement of the mandatory qualification-based outcomes. This flexibility in terms of how long an apprentice would be expected to be in formal training coupled with the continued use of competence-based and assessment-led vocational qualifications created a faultline in the design of the new apprenticeships, which is still causing problems today (see Fuller and Unwin 2010; Gospel and Fuller 1998).

The Modern Apprenticeship was initially launched as a 'pilot' scheme in 14 'prototype' sectors during 1994/95. National Training Organisations (NTOs) were responsible for designing an apprenticeship 'framework' for their sector. Each framework, regardless of sector, had to include the commitment that apprentices would train to a minimum of Level 3 and cover Key (now called Functional) Skills (literacy, numeracy, information technology). NTOs could, if they wished, include additional qualifications and single certificates covering specific techniques if these were thought to be necessary.

YT continued alongside Modern Apprenticeship, but in 1997, the new Labour government introduced National Traineeships to act as a progression route to apprenticeship. In 2000, further changes were announced: National Traineeships were to be renamed Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (at Level 2) and existing Modern Apprenticeships were to become Advanced Modern Apprenticeships (at Level 3). In 2004, the term ‘modern’ was dropped and in 2005, after lobbying from employer organisations and also as a result of concerns that the government would not meet its targets for apprenticeship numbers, the funding for apprenticeships was expanded to include people aged 25 and over (for a detailed study of the ‘adult apprenticeship’ in England and a study of the concept of apprenticeship in relation to age, see: Fuller et.al. 2015; Leonard et.al. 2018). For the government of the day, apprenticeship was now seen as the key policy for improving the national skills’ profile and the passing of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act in 2009 cemented its importance by placing apprenticeship back on a statutory basis.

The election of a Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010 brought yet more change. Following the government-commissioned Richard Review of apprenticeship in 2012, a major change in policy was announced to phase out the existing apprenticeship frameworks and replace them with Apprenticeship Standards designed by ‘Trailblazer Groups’ comprised of employers and sector-based organisations. Controversially, the new Standards were to: a) only include qualifications as an outcome if a strong case could be made that their inclusion was vital for the industry and/or sector; and b) include a detailed plan for an end-point assessment process to be overseen by an organisation that was independent of the employer and training provider. The first Standards began operation in 2014 and existing frameworks will be phased out in 2020. Their development and approval is the responsibility of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, a government agency established in 2016. The Standards cover apprenticeships taking between one and four years to complete and are currently available in 1,500 occupations across more than 170 industries.

The Richard Review also led to the reintroduction of a mandatory minimum length for apprenticeships, albeit only of 12 months, and a requirement that all apprentices should spend 20% of their week training ‘away from their work station’. Whilst at

least ensuring that apprentices do receive some form of ‘off-the-job’ training, this latter requirement is open to considerable interpretation as to where and to what extent the training takes place. It should be noted, however, that apprenticeships in some sectors, such as engineering manufacture, are typically three years in length.

Today, government-supported apprenticeships are available at the following levels:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Educational Level</b>
Intermediate	2	5 GCSE passes
Advanced	3	2 A Level passes
Higher	4,5,6	Sub-bachelor or bachelor degree level
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor or Master’s

A further major policy shift occurred in 2017 when an apprenticeship levy was introduced payable by all UK employers with an employee salary bill of over £3 million per year. The levy is set at 0.5% of the value of the employer’s salary bill, minus an apprenticeship levy allowance of £15,000 per year. The amount in an employer’s levy ‘pot’ expires 24 months after it is first entered and any residual money is returned to the government. From April 2019, levy-paying employers have been allowed to transfer 25% of their annual apprenticeship funds to other employers (e.g. small and medium-sized employers in their supply chains) who can spend it on the training and assessment of their own apprentices.

As this account shows, England has embarked on a period of frenzied policy ‘reforms’ over the past decade as it has sought to address continued concerns about the quality of apprenticeships as well as chasing numerical targets and appeasing certain employers and providers who want more freedom to relax some of the mandatory requirements. Despite the introduction of apprenticeships at Levels 4-7, which suggest the emergence of a stronger education logic, the employment and social logics continue to be dominant. The requirement for those apprentices to develop ‘key’ skills remains the only official version of an education logic. In the next

section, we consider how, in the light of these tensions, the question of apprenticeship quality can be assessed.

### **How can we assess quality in apprenticeship in England?**

As we outlined in the historical review earlier in this paper, apprenticeship in England (and the wider UK) has always been regarded as serving both economic and social goals. The social dimension has increasingly been conceived in terms of social inclusion and social mobility. Today, as the expansion of apprenticeship levels shows, policymakers are keen to make stronger connections between apprenticeship and the further and higher sections of the national education system. The demands on apprenticeship are, therefore, considerable and possibly contradictory. We argue that successive government's decisions to extend the parameters of what "counts" as apprenticeship and who can be counted as an apprentice, are an important part of the explanation why the desire to achieve participation targets has come to be the dominant goal.

Far from being confined to school leavers, the majority of apprentices in England are people who were already employees when they were 'converted' to becoming apprentices. This is usually as a result of a training provider persuading an employer to become involved in the State-funded scheme. Such apprentices may receive some training (usually on-the-job) to broaden their skills so they can complete their end-point assessment and gain, what for some individuals will be their first qualification or form of national accreditation. In the best cases, converted apprenticeships can be highly beneficial to both employers and individuals but overall there is limited evidence that participants are learning substantial new skills (see Fuller et.al. 2015). Whilst the facility to convert existing employees to apprentices makes a significant contribution towards the State's goals of increasing the number of apprentices and helps improve the proportion of the population with qualifications, there is limited evidence to show that conversion-style apprenticeships contribute to business growth. Crucially, experiences of this kind should not be analogous with apprenticeship, rather they could be seen as a platform for moving on to an apprenticeship.

In our research, and through our engagement with social scientists in other countries (Fuller and Unwin 2013), we have sought to examine how far the shared understanding of the concept of apprenticeship can inform the way in which we approach the notion of quality. In this endeavour, it is important to recognize apprenticeship's role as both an instrument of government policy and an institution within the VET system of nation states. It follows that there are different ways of thinking about quality, including whether it is apprenticeship as a 'scheme' or the idea of apprenticeship as a model of learning for occupational expertise that is foregrounded.

From the perspective of policymakers, the onus is on accountability and the identification of quantitative indicators that effectively stand as proxies for quality in relation to how the scheme is meeting policy goals and criteria. Official administrative data is collected quarterly on the number of starts and completions including, by the characteristics of apprentices in terms of gender, age, black and minority ethnic groups, disability as well as by occupation, region and locality, and level of apprenticeship being undertaken. These are augmented by government-sponsored surveys on apprentice and employer satisfaction with the scheme, as well as data on apprentice pay. With regard to pay, the government has introduced age-related national minimum apprenticeship wage rates. The availability of numerical data enables policymakers and auditors to track the extent to which the scheme is addressing equalities issues, patterns of participation across regions and sectors, complying with apprenticeship legislation and may be judged as providing value for (public) money. Whilst the policy assumption is that apprenticeship should contribute to improving economic and business productivity, there has been little attempt as yet to track and evidence the amount of 'deadweight' and 'additionality' generated, as quality indicators for the scheme.

Whilst it is of course hard to generalize, the idea of apprenticeship as a model of learning has resonance for individual apprentices, employers and vocational teachers and trainers. Research in to apprenticeship in different countries and kinds of settings indicates that there are shared principles that are characteristic of 'good quality' experiences. Drawing on the research literature, we have concluded that

apprenticeship quality is linked to four inter-connected dimensions (Fuller and Unwin 2013: 3):

1. Pedagogical - a social theory of learning involving varying forms of teaching, instruction, and feedback, leading to the development of an appropriate level of vocational knowledge, practice and expertise
2. Occupational - the extent to which apprenticeship functions to initiate the individual in to a specific or broader occupational community, defined by the solidarity formed around shared knowledge, skills, values, customs and habits as well as, often, formal certification
3. Locational - the relationship between the employing organisations that offer apprenticeships and the communities in which they are located, thus enabling apprenticeship to become part of the (learning) life of the wider community
4. Social - the extent to which the perceived success or reputation of the employer influences the community's perception of apprenticeships as an important element of its economic and social relations. In addition, how the local community sees apprenticeships as an important element in its repertoire of mechanisms for facilitating the transition of young people from economic dependence to independence and from childhood to adulthood (or for adults to achieve their occupational aspirations).

These dimensions or principles help shine a light on how the model is contributing, for example, to the evolution of occupational communities of practice, apprentice maturation and development of occupational identity, to the teaching and learning processes enabling skill formation and occupational expertise, and to facilitation of apprentices' understanding of occupational and organizational 'rules' and habits. They also include, but go beyond, the needs of a particular organisation to grow a skilled and productive workforce. The dimensions recognize the importance of 'inputs', process and resources (not just outcomes) to ensuring that apprenticeship provides a platform for educational and career progression. They remind us that apprenticeship takes on a tangible existence when it forms part of people's lives, of their work, and of their communities (however conceived).

Building on these insights, we have developed the ‘Expansive-Restrictive Framework’ as a tool for analyzing the ways in which apprenticeship is configured and experienced. The framework is based on a set of characteristics that define the extent to which an apprenticeship programme and its associated learning environments (workplace, workshop and vocational college or other form of training provider) can be defined as being ‘expansive’ or restrictive’ in nature. Expansive programmes and environments create learning opportunities that make full use of individuals’ capabilities and the chance to demonstrate their potential. In a workplace, this will mean that everyone, including managers, believes that all employees should be fully involved in as much of the work process as possible. Employees will be well-informed about the goals and values of the organisation and so will tend to take pride in what is being produced. A crucial tenet of these environments is that apprentices have a dual identity as workers and learners for the duration of their apprenticeship. In these environments, other workers are also given opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge. This means they are more likely to feel comfortable about passing on their expertise to apprentices.

In restrictive environments, the focus is on trying to move apprentices as quickly as possible from being learners to being productive workers. Of course, all workplaces must be productive and their primary goal is to produce goods and services. However, if the goal is to use apprenticeship as a vehicle for quickly inducting an individual into the skills necessary to perform a job, then the likelihood is that the job has also been designed in a restrictive way. In this scenario, apprentices lose the chance to fulfil their potential and the organisation loses the chance to make the most of their abilities.

The strength of the expansive – restrictive framework is that it adds up to a set of institutional conditions involving the workplace and relevant partners to underpin apprenticeship provision and the apprentice’s experience. The key feature of a set of good quality conditions is that the stakeholders are committed to and bound into them.

**Figure 1: The expansive/restrictive framework**



EXPANSIVE	RESTRICTIVE
Apprenticeship is used as a vehicle for aligning the goals of developing the individual and organisational capability	Apprenticeship is used to tailor individual capability to organisational need
Workplace and provider share a post-apprenticeship vision: progression for career	Post-apprenticeship vision: static for job
Apprentice has dual status as learner and employee: explicit recognition of, and support for, apprentice's status as learner	Status as employee dominates: status as learner restricted to minimum required to meet programme requirements.
Apprentice makes a gradual transition to productive worker and expertise in occupational field	Fast transition to productive worker with limited knowledge of occupational field; or existing, already productive, workers as apprentices with minimal development
Apprentice is treated as a member of an occupational and workplace community with access to the community's rules, history, knowledge and practical expertise	Apprentice treated as extra pair of hands who only needs access to limited knowledge and skills to perform job
Apprentice participates in different communities of practice inside and outside the workplace	Participation restricted to narrowly-defined job role and work station
Workplace maps everyday work tasks against qualification requirements – qualification valued as adds extra skills and knowledge to immediate job requirements	Weak relationship between workplace tasks and qualifications –no recognition for skills and knowledge acquired beyond immediate work tasks.

Training develops knowledge for progression to next level and platform for further education	Training limited to meeting immediate assessment requirements.
Apprentice has planned time off-the-job for study and to gain wider perspective	Off-the-job simply a limited extension of on-the-job
Apprentice's existing skills and knowledge recognised and valued and used as platform for new learning	Apprentices regarded as 'blank sheets' or 'empty vessels'
Apprentice's progress closely monitored and involves regular constructive feedback from range of employer and provider personnel who take a holistic approach	Apprentice's progress monitored for job performance with limited feedback – provider involvement restricted to formal assessments for qualifications unrelated to job performance

The 'Expansive-Restrictive Framework' deliberately presents its characteristics as two ends of a continuum. It doesn't condemn restrictive apprenticeships. At best, they will give apprentices the opportunity to enter employment, develop the skills, knowledge and experience that their employers need along with nationally recognised qualifications. The point here is to ask whether these apprenticeships are making the most of their apprentices' potential and, importantly, whether the employing organisation could use the apprenticeship to expand its own horizons. Asked to name an 'expansive' apprenticeship programme, the government and the general public would probably say engineering at a company such as Rolls Royce or Siemens. This is partly because of the long-standing reputation of the company and also because engineering expertise represents the ideal combination of theoretical (codified body of knowledge) and practical skills. Yet 'expansive' apprenticeships can be found in other sectors and occupations. For example, 'dental technician' is a registered occupation with the General Dental Council. Dental technicians have the accredited knowledge and skills to make bespoke devices and items such as bridges, crowns and dentures and to 'sign off' the quality of the work. Their apprenticeship involves a structured programme of on and off-the-job- education and training that has to comply with an approved curriculum and requirements, including for workplace and vocational education experience. Apprentices are taught theoretical and vocational knowledge as

well as practical and craft skills during the course of their programme. The qualifications they attain not only enable them to enter the occupational register with a ‘licence to practise’, but also provide the level of educational attainment that will allow entry to higher or degree level programmes.

What expansive apprenticeships share is a commitment to the nurturing of expertise over time so that as organisations they can continue to deliver high quality goods and services, and to ensuring the apprentices have a platform of skills and knowledge to progress.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The quotation from Philipp Gonon cited at the start of this chapter highlighted the importance of quality as a rhetorical device for maintaining a focus on the aspects of provision which ensure that it is genuinely ‘significant and successful’. We have used his insight to explore and unpack what quality actually means through the lens of apprenticeship, arguing that it comprises far more than quantitative indicators can demonstrate. The history described above serves to illustrate that achieving apprenticeship quality in practice has always been a challenge. The ideas and analytical tools that we have outlined provide ways of supporting employers and providers to be not only inspired by the rhetoric of quality, but to also take practical steps to create the capacity and approach to offer and sustain more expansive apprenticeships. We suggest that this can have a positive impact on individual and organizational development as well as for the benefit of apprentices. We recognize the helpfulness of the notion of different ‘logics’ for characterising apprenticeship models and the different ways in which their quality can be understood and evaluated. Our research suggests the relevance of an integrative logic for analyzing the quality of apprenticeships. The availability and integration of employment, education and social logics underpins our concept of expansive apprenticeship.

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