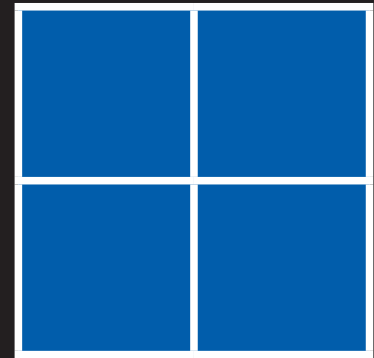


# Questioning the Simplistic Link between Qualifications and Labour Market Entry: New Forms of Expertise and Learning in the Creative and Cultural Sector

David Guile

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# **Questioning the Simplistic Link between Qualifications and Labour Market Entry: New Forms of Expertise and Learning in the Creative and Cultural Sector**

**David Guile**

## **Abstract**

The paper questions the link that policymakers assume exists between qualifications and access to employment in the creative and cultural (C&C) sector. It identifies how labour market conditions in the C&C sector undermine this assumption and how the UK's policy formation process inhibits education and training (E&T) actors from countering these labour market conditions. It demonstrates how non-government agencies ('intermediary organisations') are creating new spaces to assist aspiring entrants to develop the requisite forms of 'vocational practice', 'social capital' and 'moebius-strip' (i.e. entrepreneurial) expertise to enter and succeed in the sector. It concludes by identifying a number of: (i) new principles for the governance of E&T at a national level; (ii) pedagogic strategies to facilitate 'horizontal' transitions into and within the C&C sector; and (iii) skill formation issues for all E&T stakeholders to address.

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## **Introduction**

The profile of the creative and cultural (C&C) sector has risen dramatically since New Labour came to power in 1997, for a combination of economic, social and educational reasons (Bilton 2007; Garnham 2005; Hesmonhalgh 2005). Economically, the sector has presented itself and been perceived by ministers as a paradigmatic example of the ‘information/knowledge-based’ industries which economic gurus assume will be the basis of nation states’ prosperity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Porter and Ketas 2003). Socially, the sector symbolizes the type of cultural diversity that New Labour’s quasi social democratic project aspired to foster because it generates new cultural products and services and new culturally diverse audiences for those products and services (Guile 2006). An increasing number of young people aspire to enter the sector (DCMS, 2001). Taken in combination, these developments have led the government to accept that all young people should be offered an opportunity to ‘express and channel their creativity through a wide range of activities’ in primary, secondary and tertiary education to both support their creative aspirations (DCMS 2001, foreword), and to maintain that higher-level qualifications are the vehicle to assist them to gain access to the C&C sector.

This paper questions the link that policymakers assume exists between qualifications and access to employment in the C&C sector. It first identifies how labour market conditions in the C&C sector do not reflect the prevailing conventional wisdom that qualifications are the ‘magic bullet’ (Keep 1999) for securing employment. Secondly, it demonstrates how the dynamics of policy formation in the UK impose a straightjacket on the education and training (E&T) system thereby denying E&T agencies the autonomy to intervene to assist people post-qualification to gain access to the sector. Thirdly, it identifies the way that non-government agencies (‘intermediary organisations’) address this problem by providing new spaces and pedagogies to assist aspiring entrants to develop the requisite form of

‘vocational practice’ and ‘social capital’ to enter the sector (Guile & Okumoto 2008). The paper concludes by outlining a number of new principles for E&T that it maintains would position all E&T stakeholders to address the above problems more effectively.

## **The Creative and Cultural Industrial Sector**

### *The Distinctive Features of the Sector*

The C&C sector is sometimes defined in terms of the outputs achieved by the following thirteen industries: Crafts, Design, Fashion, Film, Music, Performing Arts, Publishing, Research and Development, Software, Toys, TV and Radio and Video Games (Howkins 2002). On other occasions it is defined in terms of the occupations that generate the new ideas that enable those industrial segments to flourish (Florida 2002). Irrespective of which view of the C&C sector is adopted, it is generally agreed that it is now worth about \$2.2 trillion worldwide and, according to the World Bank’s estimation, is growing at 5 per cent per year (Florida 2002). The largest market is America which is now worth in excess of \$1 trillion while Britain is ranked third in the creative economy behind Japan. The UK’s creative and cultural sector generates revenues of around £115 billion and employs 1.3 million people. They contribute over £10 billion in exports and account for over five per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and, moreover, output from these industries grew by more than twice that of the economy as a whole in the late 1990s (DCMS, 2001).

Despite the predicated growth rate in the C&C sector, there are differing views about the sector’s long-term contribution to the UK economy. Some writers stress that the sector is the engine of growth in the post-industrial era in the UK (Bilton 2007), while other writers assert that this claim is over-blown (Elliott and Atkinson 2007). Both writers accept though that,

trans-nationally, the profile of the clusters and industries that comprise the C&C sector are rather different from the historical profile of conventional economic sectors such as the automobile and pharmaceutical industries. These latter industries are characterised by strong national identities and vibrant corporate sector with strong 'strategies', 'structures', and 'systems' which facilitate the manufacture of standardized products and services (Bartlett and Ghoshal 1997). Whilst globalization has transformed competitive strategies and work organization in those industries significantly, they still tend to be involved with large-scale production. In contrast, the profile and structure of the C&C is characterised by a mix of a small number of global corporations and national organizations and a very large number of small and medium size (SME) organizations and freelance work, which are concentrated in specific regions, and who continually form value chains and networks, often for a short duration, to develop a continual flow of new products or services (Hesmondhalgh 2002).

Furthermore, unlike industrial sectors such as the automobile, engineering and medical sectors, which have historically been characterized by very strong 'occupational labour markets' (OLMs) and firm-specific 'internal labour markets' (ILMs) (Ashton 1995), the creative and cultural sector is characterised predominantly by 'external labour markets' (ELMs). These labour markets function in rather different ways from one another. OLMs enable new entrants to be trained in a range of skills which provide competence in specific occupations, and recognized qualifications including for registration and membership of professionals bodies. This process of occupational socialization results in the development of an identification with an occupation (for example, engineer, nurse, mechanic), as well as a 'skill base' that can be enhanced through further training within firms. While ILMs provide a series of job or career ladders which, following further training, enable young employees to be promoted and to progress within an organisation.

These labour market conditions are only really found in those segments of the C&C sector which have developed equivalent professional identities and education and training traditions, (for example, broadcasting and printing), although even here OLMs are no longer as entrenched a feature of these industries as they were in the 1960s,70s and80s (Sutton Trust 2006). In the main, large swathes of the C&C sector such as design, music, games and so on,are characterized by ELMs. These markets are formed where the buying and selling of labour is not linked to jobs which form part of a ILM or a long standing and clearly defined OLM. Movement of labour in ELMs is determined by the price attached to the job and/or contract on offer. The requirements of the individual concerned and such jobs/contracts in the creative and cultural industries tend to run the gamut from high to low skill. Traditionally, ELMs were seen as constituting the ‘secondary labour market’ and labour market economists tended to treat them as less desirable work contexts for young people than OLMs and ILMs because they did not offer the same form of employment protection and structured opportunities for development (Ashton 1995, p.15).

The impact of globalization, new forms of work and out-sourcing have, however, profoundly increased the prevalence of ELMs within the UK economy in general (Ashton 1995) and in the creative and cultural sector in particular (Bilton 2007), with the result that even organizations such as the BBC, which in the past offered its employees permanent contracts, is now inclined to place new recruits on short-term and temporary contracts. The net effect has been the emergence of less structured careers and greater economic uncertainty. Marsden (2008) has characterized this shift from occupational and internal to external labour markets as the introduction of a ‘tournament’ culture in the C&C sector. By this, he means that aspiring entrants are prepared to seek out a mix of unpaid internships and/ or work experience

and tolerate the un-certainties of low-paid freelance work, in the hope that it will enable them to develop the appropriate mix of vocational practice and social capital to secure either a permanent position or longer contracts and better pay as a freelance worker.

## **Government Policy for Education and Training**

### *The National Policy Cycle and its Implications for E&T Policy*

The UK's national policy cycle has been predicated on a 'cycle of state intervention' since the late 1980s (Keep 2006). Both the previous Conservative and New Labour administrations have ascribed a centrality to upskilling that is not shared by other actors, particularly employers, and which position assumed stakeholders in the upskilling process, for example, educational institutions and Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs)<sup>1</sup>, merely as delivery agents for national policy, rather than active contributors to the formulation of public policy. To realise this upskilling agenda, successive governments have engulfed the E&T system within an escalating series of policy dictums which they are obligated to address. These supply-side measures and levers, which reflect the well-established belief amongst policy makers in the efficacy of centrally imposed planning regimes, specify targets, explicitly interface funding with targets, and severely restrict the scope for any discussion of the direction of policy (Keep 2006).

The net effect has been to produce a crippling paradox. On the one hand, the UK

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<sup>1</sup> LLSCs currently exist in England to administer the funding of post-16 education and training (apart from higher education) at a local level on behalf of the national Learning and Skills Council (LSC). From April 2010, the LSC and LLSCs will be replaced by a new structure, within which Local Authorities will be responsible for funding and organising E&T up to age 18, and the Skills Funding Agency for 19+ E&T (apart from higher education). Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each have their own structures for the funding and organisation of post-16 E&T, but the general argument of this paper is applicable to all parts of the UK.,

government's commitment to free-market neo-liberal policies renders unavailable the potential policy interventions used in other countries – for example, training levies, strong trade unions and statutory rights to collective bargaining on skills, strong forms of social partnership – or a targeted industrial policy to support high skill sectors. On the other hand, the government's concern to micro-manage all aspects of E&T policy predisposes bodies with a remit for identifying skill needs, such as Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)<sup>2</sup>, and bodies responsible for delivering programmes to enhance skills, such as LLSCs, to work with the relevant government departments<sup>3</sup> to realize national E&T targets by allocating funding in line with those targets, thereby denying them the opportunity to sponsor initiatives which might offer an alternative vision and set of practical measures to facilitate access to the labour market.

This mismatch between the demand for and supply of E&T has a number of unintended consequences. At present, although the national policy affirms 'choice' and 'flexibility' as a central feature of the UK's response to the demands of the knowledge economy, it is underpinned by an assumption that there are clear and functioning occupational and internal labour markets in all areas of the UK economy whose needs can be met through the creation of sector skills agreements and qualification blueprints. As a consequence, all that the government's rhetoric of choice and flexibility amounts to is an opportunity for the demand-side to tailor pre-given blueprints to reflect their needs. Moreover, when the government encounters opposition to or a reluctance to go along with its E&T agenda, it rarely pauses to consider whether policy is correct for all industrial sectors. Instead, the government tries to realize its goals by offering a limited number of financial inducements, in

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<sup>2</sup> SSCs have a UK-wide remit.

<sup>3</sup> Currently, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS).

the form of a public subsidy for E&T programmes such as the Advanced Apprenticeships and task-specific adult training, to employers in an attempt to secure greater employer investment in training (Keep 2006). Consequently, the above labour market assumptions and ideological no-go-zones mean that UK policy severely restricts stakeholders' scope to experiment or innovate in relation to their perception of their needs.

Operating within this framework, New Labour's rallying cry to E&T stakeholders has been that policy must intertwine competitiveness and social inclusion on the grounds that education is the best policy to support employability in and growth of the knowledge economy (Lauder 2004). The emphasis in the first decade of educational policy from 1997 to 2007 fell upon making the supply-side more responsive to government priorities. Firstly, universities were encouraged to address social exclusion by widening participation so as to attract non-traditional learners, (for example, learners whose families have little or no previous experience of university study into HE), rather than to target measures to facilitate access into specific subjects or occupational sectors. Broadly speaking, the widening participation initiatives have had mixed results as regards these goals partly because non-traditional access tends to have been skewed towards 'new' rather than 'Russell Group' universities (Burke 2000). Moreover, new vocational qualifications such as the Foundation Degree (FD) were introduced to address a perceived skill deficit at intermediate (associate professional and technical) level and also as a strategy to help the Government to meet its target of ensuring that at least 50 per cent of those aged 18-30 entered higher education (DfES 2003). FDs have proved to be an effective strategy for 'credentialising' high volumes of experienced workers' knowledge and skill in the public sector (Gallagher & Reeves 2006), and a flexible framework for employers to use to align degrees more closely to niche needs in the private sector (Evans et al forthcoming).

Secondly, the government forces delivery bodies such as the LLSCs to present Advanced Apprenticeship as a vehicle to attract those young people not proceeding into further and higher education, whom the government perceives to be vulnerable to social and economic exclusion. In this respect, the Apprenticeship Programme has become a strategy to secure volumes, in terms of apprentice numbers and participating sectors, rather than on skill formation in those sectors committed to securing economic growth (Fuller & Unwin 2003a). In the past, ‘apprenticeships were demand rather than supply-led. Employers decided when and if they needed apprentices’ (Fuller & Unwin 2003a). Thus, apprenticeship was very responsive to labour market demand. In contrast, at the present time, the prevailing orthodoxy of centrally imposed planning regimes and national targets for E&T, coupled with a nexus of quangos such as SSCs and LLSCs, whose livelihood depends on meeting their target quotas, serves to underpin a decidedly supply-side conception of E&T. This has a number of pernicious effects as regards apprenticeship: many employers do not feel any particular ownership of apprenticeships (Fuller & Unwin 2003b; Hutton 2006); and the hands of the SSCs and LLSCs are tied as regards financially supporting any new initiatives for learning and development that do not directly support government targets for education and training or their own financial position.

The publication of the Leitch Report (2006), however, inaugurated a shift away from a concern for, on the one hand, incentivising and pressurising the supply-side to respond to government targets, and, on the other hand, encouraging individuals to invest in their own training and development. These foci were replaced by a concern to put employers in the driving seat through the *Train to Gain* initiative and by enhancing the role of the SSCs in order to make the E&T system more demand rather than supply-led (Delorenzi 2007).

Specifically, adult learning policy is focused on two short-term Public Service Agreements (PSAs) targets: i) to reduce the number of people with poor basic skills; and ii) to increase the number with level 2 qualifications. To this must be added one longer-term PSA target to ensure that 40 per cent of the working population are qualified to Level 4 by 2020. Whilst the equity and social justice arguments that underpin a concern for ensuring the majority of the population has the required basic skills and hold Level 2 qualifications are unquestionable, the Leitch Report perpetuates the straightjacket that the government has imposed on the E&T system. It fails to acknowledge that the most effective strategy for enhancing regional and national competitiveness is to support adults who already hold Level 3 qualifications to broaden the base of their expertise (Delorenzi 2007) and that this frequently requires access to short un-accredited provision (Mason 2008).

#### *The 'Cycle of Intervention' and its Implications for the C&C Sector*

Despite the shift to demand-led E&T that Leitch purportedly inaugurated, the direction of educational policy for the C&C sector continues to remain firmly under the hand of the government. This is in part because SSCs and LLSCs perceive that their primary purpose is to function as a delivery agent for government policy, rather than an institutional tier capable of mediating between central government and other groups in the E&T system, or even as a bulwark against the arms of Whitehall. It is also in part because both types of organisation are subject to the constantly changing direction and priorities of national E&T policy. This state of affairs is clearly evident from the way that *Skillset*, the SSC which represents broadcasting, film, video and multimedia, and *Creative and Cultural Skills (C&CS)*, the SSC which represents advertising, crafts, cultural heritage, design, music, performing, literary and visual arts, have responded to their remits to develop skills in HE and 14-19 education for the C&C

sector<sup>4</sup>.

In the case of higher education, C&C-related degrees have been growing annually since 1994 resulting in a 55 per cent increase in enrolments in creative and art and design subject areas by 2005 (Universities UK 2005). Moreover, this growth continues independent of any action on behalf of either *Skillset* or *C&CS*. This is partly because universities have established strong links with the C&C sector and therefore have been able to identify/respond to emerging demands. Nevertheless, despite universities close links with this sector, studying for a C&C-related degree rarely provides an expectation or understanding of what is required in vocational contexts (Raffo *et al.* 2000). Hence many graduates with C&C degrees have a post-graduation ‘vocational need’: to acquire the ‘vocational practice’, that is the mix of knowledge, skill and judgement, employers are looking for, via a mix of unpaid internships and work placements (Guile 2009).

The one limited area of influence SSCs have in relation to higher education is with respect to the design of FDs. Here some very successful, albeit very low volume FDs have been designed. A good example is *Skillset* and the London College of Communication’s FD in Media Practice). This FD has a strong track record of assisting new entrants and ‘career switchers’ to gain access to their desired niche in the C&C sector (Evans *et al* forthcoming). The FD’s success is due to its ability to offer learners work placements in the heart of the UK’s C&C sector. This assists them to develop not only their vocational practice, but also the social capital in the form of a network of contacts who might offer them or recommend them for contract/project-based employment.

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<sup>4</sup> The diversity of the C&C sector, coupled with the longstanding links between media, film and radio, led the Government to split responsibility for the sector between two Sector Skills Councils.

In the case of apprenticeship, *Skillset* and *C&CS* are struggling to persuade employers to participate in the Advanced Apprenticeship Programme (AAP). The C&C sector lags significantly behind traditional sectors associated with apprenticeship such as Engineering and Construction as well as other non-traditional sectors such as Customer Service. There is not one C&C industry in the list of the ‘top ten’ participants in the AAP (Fuller & Unwin 2003 and 2008) and this situation has not subsequently improved. Moreover, even in the list of the ‘top forty’ sectors where apprentices begin at age 18 and over, the C&C sector is only represented by industries which have either historically been characterized by a combination of strong occupational and internal labour markets, for example, broadcasting and newspapers or recent high growth sectors such as IT where certain segments have developed occupational labour markets over the last two decades.

This low uptake of apprenticeship in the C&C sector has occurred partly because the government’s ‘blueprint’ for apprenticeship and the provision of a public subsidy has failed to encourage employers in industries that are characterized by a high proportion of SMEs, external labour markets, and little history of involvement in nationally accredited apprenticeship programmes such as Art and Design, Film, Fashion, Film, Music, New Media, Performing Arts and so on to participate in the AAP. SMEs are reluctant to participate for a number of reasons. Firstly, they lack the financial and human resources to meet all the administrative requirements associated with the AAP (Hutton 2006). Secondly, the mandatory qualification outcomes in the blueprint for AAP – NVQs and Key Skills – are perceived as serving ‘educational’ goals because they are promoted by the government to enhance academic progression, rather than attempts to develop industry-relevant vocational knowledge and skill (Guile & Okumoto, 2007). Thirdly, the onus from central government on SSCs and LLSCs to secure high volumes and to roll out apprenticeship frameworks nationally severely

inhibits them from supporting employers' demands for bespoke apprenticeships. The net effect is that SSCs are reluctant to invest in such schemes because they are not guaranteed to offer a sufficient return on the investment when it comes to achieving AAP targets. As a consequence, it took over four years, for example, for the first ever Advanced Apprenticeship in Media Production, which was developed by *Skillset* in collaboration with the BBC, North West Vision and Media and the LSC, to be launched (Damners 2008).

In the case of 14-19 year old students in England, *Skillset* and *C&CS* have both supported the development of the first creative and cultural Diploma. The Diploma is a new qualification that was launched in September 2008. Its aim is to promote diversity, opportunity and inclusion by offering pathways to support 14-19 learners to enter occupational sectors or progress into higher education, including work-related learning opportunities (Huddleston, 2008). The Diploma in Creative and Media has, therefore, to square the government's circle of developing vocationally relevant skills and positioning learners to progress at some point in the future into higher education. Although it is too soon to judge the performance of the Diploma on the basis of any empirical evidence, the exigencies of the C&C labour market described in the previous section suggest that achieving this goal is a tall order. The Diploma in Creative and Media promotes the impression that intermediate-level qualifications are the stepping-stone to employment in the C&C sector. Yet, it is clear that not only is access to the C&C sector difficult for people who hold a degree, but it is also difficult to sustain a career in the sector (Galloway et al 2006; Lindley and Galloway, 2005; Guile & Okumoto 2006). For these reasons, graduates and recent entrants often resort to 'multiple job holding' to supplement their income stream whilst they break in or establish themselves in their chosen niche (Baines & Robson 1999; Creigh-Tyte & Thomas 1999). Thus, *Skillset* and *C&CS* run the risk of inadvertently increasing social frustration rather than assisting young people to

achieve their social aspirations, as young people discover that Diploma they have gained does not necessarily constitute a qualification to secure their employment in the C&C sector.

The root of the problem that *Skillset* and *C&CS* jointly face is the assumed link that the government believes exists between qualifications and access to the labour market. This is predicated on three notions: (i) that there are functioning occupational and internal labour markets in the C&C sector; (ii) that these labour markets will channel the flow of highly qualified students towards their preferred occupational destinations; and (iii) that employers will use qualifications as a proxy measure for vocational practice in the recruitment process (Guile 2009). These assumptions are, as we have seen, wide of the mark and, as a consequence, the efforts of *Skillset* and *C&CSs* to support aspiring entrants to gain access to the C&C sector are floundering.

### **New Spaces, Pedagogies and Expertise**

Given this difficulty, aspiring entrants have recourse to two main strategies to gain access to the sector: to exercise their own agency and identify and negotiate internships and work placements to develop their vocational practice and social capital, or to participate in the development activities that ‘intermediary agencies’ offer (Guile & Okumoto, forthcoming). These agencies have grown in number over the last decade as it has become apparent that aspiring entrants require help post-qualification to realise their ambitions (Guile & Okumoto, forthcoming). The term intermediary agencies encompass a diverse range of organisations. Some are found in: (i) the formal education sector, for example, education–industry liaison units in universities; (ii) the not–for–profit sector, private companies with a sectoral specialization, and possibly some industry funding, providing a

range of learning and development programmes for aspiring entrants and longstanding members of their field; (iii) the non-formal sector, colleges that do not receive statutory funding; and (iv) the public sector, for example, local government funded community–liaison agencies.

Intermediary agencies are rather different from the traditional forms of community education that are usually delivered by cohorts of trained educators employed by local authorities (Tett 2002). In contrast, intermediary agencies attempt to co–ordinate segments of the labour market by acting as catalysts to bring conglomerates, SMEs, freelancers and networks together to forge partnerships. The aim of these partnerships is two–fold: to assist aspiring entrants to supplement their qualifications or prior experience to develop the forms of vocational practice and social capital that will help them enter the creative industries; and to increase the flow of experienced people into the sector. Over the last decade, they have achieved this goal by securing funds from sources such as the European Union, UK government departments, charitable foundations and the private sector to provide new spaces for learning. These can include:

- (i) the provision of short courses that usually do not result in a recognized qualification
- (ii) offering bursaries/access to master classes
- (iii) negotiating internships/work placements with companies; employing experienced professionals as tutors/mentors to support aspiring entrants in ways that are appropriate to the needs of the sector
- (iv) working closely with employers and educational institutions to design innovative forms of education and training that address pressing skill needs.

The next section of the paper illustrates the vital contributions that intermediary organisations make by summarising research from four case studies undertaken as part of *The Last Mile* Project (Guile 2006). This was a three-year project, funded via the EU's EQUAL Programme, to identify learning strategies that assist people to move into the C&C sector. These strategies, following the ideas of Lave and Wenger (1991), consist of a mix of a 'teaching' curriculum (i.e. formally designed sessions) and a 'learning' (i.e. opportunities to participate in routine and stretching activities) curriculum.

#### *Jewellery Industry Innovation Centre (JIIC).*

One example of the work of an industry-education funded intermediary agency is the Jewellery Industry Innovation Centre (JIIC). The JIIC is attached to the University of Central England, Birmingham and has a remit to provide support in research and development in the UK jewellery industry. The jewellery industry presents aspiring entrants with a very specific kind of challenge. Much of this sector depends upon what might be seen as a value network of 'horizontal' collaboration between SMEs and freelancers who create new products and services, and 'vertical' collaboration between large firms who act as suppliers and distributors (Bilton, 2007). This generates a pattern of economic activity based on local ties where SMEs and freelancers are committed to the creation of new jewellery products and the larger firms are concerned with their manufacture and distribution.

Working in partnership with the Innovation Unit (IU), part of Birmingham City Council's Economic and Development Department, and with funds secured from the European Social Fund, the JIIC designed a new un-accredited initiative- the Design Work Placement Project (DWP). This project ran for six months and was based on a three-way partnership: (a) participating manufacturers gave recently qualified jewellers an opportunity to develop a new

range of commercial products based on their research because they had faith in the JIIC's track record in identifying new talent; (b) recently qualified jewellers worked for a small bursary in order to learn how to incubate (i.e. create, cost, and monitor the fabrication of their designs) because they appreciated that this would provide an invaluable opportunity to develop their vocational practice and their social capital within the sector; and (c) the JIIC acted as project managers and mentors for the participant jewellers (Guile & Okumoto 2008).

The scheme involved an iterative mix of a 'teaching' and 'learning' curriculum to develop participants' vocational practice. The JIIC ran workshops to support the recently qualified jewellers to develop an industry-relevant approach to designing new jewellery collections. It introduced them to more commercially-orientated methods of working, encouraging them to attune themselves more to the way in which cultural trends influence how people incorporate jewellery into their fashion style; supported the process through one-to-one mentoring, and ran showcasing events with industry representatives for the participants at the end of the project. The jewellery companies provided the participating jewellers with, on the one hand, very demanding commercial projects. For example, graduates enrolled on jewellery degrees usually have a whole term to produce the final design for their degree, whereas the company expected forty new designs to be produced within twelve weeks, which the companies expected to be manufactured within the next twelve weeks. On the other hand, the jewellers were presented with opportunities to become familiar with up-to-date techniques of production that they had never encountered in college and to participate in production planning meetings. The aspiring jewellers used the JIIC's teaching curriculum and the employers' learning curriculum to formulate and instantiate the new designs they created.

In addition to achieving its stipulated goal of assisting the participating companies to enhance their product ranges and the participating jewellers to develop their vocational practice, the DWP also achieved another goal – the development of vocational identity. It did so by assisting the participating jewellers to decide whether to remain a jewellery designer and, as a consequence become a freelance worker, or to enter management within a jewellery company and, therefore, be in a better position to secure a full-time position. Moreover, the jewellers who took the former decision recognised that life as a freelancer required them to develop, what has been referred to as ‘moebius-strip’ expertise (Guile 2007). This means the entrepreneurial expertise to demonstrate to national and international jewellery companies and journalists that they are sufficiently versatile to turn their expertise to meet the requirements of any contract.

#### *Slough’s Creative Academy (CA)*

The work of Slough Borough Council’s Arts Development Team (ADT), which is a regional arts partnership receiving some core funding from the local council to ensure that the arts in Slough have the best grounding, resources and connections, is an excellent example of how the networking undertaken by intermediary agencies can result in innovative strategies to facilitate access into the C&C sector. Because the UK’s four largest film studios are located within fifteen minutes of Slough, Creative Academy (CA), one of ADT’s partners, prioritized film as an industrial sector where they were keen to secure employer support to assist young people from the Slough area to gain access to the industry. This led George Kirkham, Director of CA, to meet Carlo Dusi, Director Aria Films, and negotiate work placements for ten aspiring entrants on Carlo’s forthcoming production.

Carlo was responsive to George’s pitch for work placements because he was aware that “the

film production community is not a nurturing one” and that it is difficult “to establish a career in the industry unless one can find an opportunity to work within the industry” (Guile & Okumoto forthcoming). The aim of the partnership between Aria and CA was to enable people with a degree in a film-related field, for example, Special Effects, Make-up Design or Television and Production, or people who did not have a degree but who had experience of working in television and/or on the production of advertisements, to move into the film industry. To realize this goal, Carlo offered them a two-week work placement on either the ‘shoot’ or the post-production for the film he was producing, *Kill Kill Faster Faster*. The film was shot in Rotterdam over six weeks in June/July 2006 with a budget of £3.7 million. Seven participants undertook technical positions in Rotterdam, while three were involved in post-production work in London once the filming was complete.

Given that Carlos’s film crew had no previous experience of supporting interns on a film shoot and the participants equally lacked any experience of such work, George and Carlo devised a multi-faceted teaching and learning curriculum to support both parties. Prior to the Rotterdam shoot, the CA ran a series of workshops to support the participants to understand the aims of the scheme and to prepare for their roles through one-to-one meetings with experienced professionals in the fields of lighting, filming, sound. During the shooting, the CA offered on-site mentoring support by visiting the participants and helping to iron-out any misunderstandings and/or difficulties that arose. After the placement, the CA arranged for information on seminars, events and job vacancies to be sent to the interns. Prior to the participants arriving in Rotterdam, Carlo briefed the experienced technical staff that he had recruited for the film as regards his rationale for agreeing to provide work placements. He also explained his expectations of the interns’ ‘role as ‘legitimate peripheral participants’ (Lave and Wenger 1991), that is, working alongside highly qualified staff, and the technical

staff's coaching and modeling role. Subsequently, he split his time between overseeing the production process and acting as the participants' mentor throughout the shoot and post-production phases.

This work placement supported the participants to develop their vocational practice and social capital in order to be in a position for an employer to offer them a contract for their services. In the case of vocational practice, the placement demonstrated that, although film-related qualifications can provide a conceptual understanding and orientate aspirant entrants towards key issues about the history and social conventions that inform film-making, such knowledge has to be supplemented by experience of practice. This is because much of the knowledge that is an integral feature of forms of vocational practice, such as sound, lighting, and direction, is invested in action, and involves developing the forms of judgement that arise when engaging in professional activity. In the case of social capital, the opportunity to hear experienced professionals 'war stories' about which film events to attend and which networks to join, enabled participants to grasp the iterative link between vocational practice, social capital and moebius-strip expertise: membership of networks is a pre-condition for generating a demand for their services providing they are perceived as someone who can creatively deploy their expertise in a range of situations.

## *WAC*

One example of the work of a non-formal intermediary agency is WAC – a non-formal Performing Arts and Media College. WAC specialises in the field of performing arts and raises its income from a mix of EU, LLSC, and industry sources of funding. In recognition that many of its graduates, who were active in the field of world arts, were unable to supplement their freelance income streams through securing employment as a

teacher/teaching assistant because they lacked a recognized qualification, WAC decided to create a degree in world art forms. To do so, WAC turned to the framework provided by FDs. WAC drew on its accumulated experience in running non-accredited courses to design the FD around an 'integrated learning-teaching curriculum' (Guile & Okumoto 2009). The hallmark of this curriculum was the way in which WAC mobilised its accumulated social capital (i.e. the number of ex-WAC graduates who were experienced professionals in the field of world arts forms) to work as teachers. Their involvement enabled participants to develop their vocational practice to industry-standards as well as to expand their network of contacts and thus position them to gain access to the performing arts' external labour markets. WAC achieve these two goals by using the expertise of its staff and ex-graduates to: (i) explain the discipline-based knowledge and skill that underpins different world art forms in ways that extended their existing vocational practice and developed their professional identity and confidence; and (ii) provide opportunities for learners to plan and then perform in a wide range of contexts and for culturally diverse audiences. This opportunity to participate legitimately, albeit peripherally, within a range of different world art forms in authentic settings enabled participants to develop the forms of judgement that are integral to the development of their practice. In addition, (iii) it provided opportunities for learners to bridge and link their existing fledgling network to other existing and successful networks.

The wide variety of learning opportunities in the college and in the field of Performing Arts enabled FD participants, firstly, to develop new forms of vocational practice and bridge and link their existing and new social capital in ways that could potentially result in them being invited to contribute their specific vocational expertise to a contract that others had secured. Secondly, the diverse learning opportunities also positioned participants to develop entrepreneurial expertise. This enabled them to start looking at themselves as not just

performers searching for contracts for their specific world art expertise, but also as arts' practitioners who have developed broader-based capabilities that could assist them to secure employment in art-based project management and/or community education.

### *Birmingham's Innovation Unit*

Finally, the partnership between Birmingham's Innovation Unit and the city's Repertory Theatre (Rep) provides an excellent example of how to devise an innovative project to assist aspiring entrants enter the C&C labour market. Using ESF funding, the IU and Rep developed a 'Technical Apprenticeship' (TA) that offered eight apprentices, none of whom held a qualification above Level 3, to successfully enter the C&C sector. The Rep devised the TA outside the national blueprint for apprenticeship for two main reasons. First, it felt that the AAP had been designed to serve 'educational' goals because it is promoted by government departments to enhance academic progression, rather than as a genuine attempt to develop the sector-specific vocational knowledge and skill that they feel it is important for apprentices to develop (Guile & Okumoto 2007). Second, work in the theatre (and for that matter live events in general) is characterised by a 'project culture'. This work context means that the AAP with its attendant baggage of NVQ assessment, coupled with Further Education Colleges' term-based and day-based mechanisms for the delivery of courses, caused particular problems. The Rep felt that it was impracticable to release apprentices to attend courses or to stop and assess apprentices' competence in the middle of a production. To do so would deny the apprentices the opportunity to develop key aspects of vocational practice which are unlikely to surface again within the life span of a production.

To realize its vision of creating a modern, culturally diverse and inclusive traditional craft apprenticeship which reflects the realities of the new work context in which it operates, the

Rep appointed a Project Coordinator, John Pitt, who had worked as Production Manager previously in the Rep as well as having extensive knowledge and experience in training and development. Working with the Technical Heads of Department (THDs), for example, Lighting, Costume, Wigs, Sound and so on, John designed an apprenticeship that immersed apprentices in the 'work flow' of the Rep's life so they were involved in every stage of mounting a production. John negotiated with the THDs for the apprentices to have the opportunity to be: (i) 'legitimate peripheral participants' within their department, that is, activity engaged with the production process and supported *in situ* by modeling and demonstration activities in order to develop their technical expertise, and (ii) 'boundary crossers' (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2003) between departments, that is, provided with opportunities to grasp the connections between different forms of vocational practice that exist within the Rep and how they all contribute to the success of a performance.

John also arranged for the apprentices to enhance their on-the-job learning in the down-time between productions by offering them access to a bespoke teaching curriculum consisting of a mix of generic knowledge and skill about the process of production, and occupationally-specific knowledge and skill relating to their technical specialism. Furthermore a programme of limited work rotation and visits were arranged to other theatres and events across the country. These experiences enabled the apprentices to locate their understanding of vocational practice in a wider industry context and lay the foundation for them to transfer their knowledge and skill into other theatrical settings.

The Rep's model of apprenticeship supported the apprentices' skill formation and transfer because it not only developed distinctive forms of occupationally-specific knowledge and skill which are in short supply and hence for which there is a high demand in the global

C&C economy, but it also developed their social capital and entrepreneurial ability. Recognising that the UK's national system of repertory theatres is characterised by the type of strong, mutually self-supporting networks, characterised by high levels of trust amongst all levels of specialism and seniority, the Rep bridged and linked their apprentices into as many of these networks as possible. They did so in the knowledge that, on the one hand, these networks would accept that an apprentice 'trained' at Birmingham Rep was well-trained and sufficiently experienced to be offered a contract for their services, and, on the other hand, that the apprentices had acquired the ability to demonstrate to prospective employers that they were sufficiently versatile to operate effectively in a range of settings, for example, theatres, television studios and live events.

Coda to the Case Studies: all the participants are now active in the C&C sector with contracts for their services.

## **Learning to Work in the C&C Sector: Future Challenges**

*The Future Context* The trend away from occupational and internal and towards external labour markets and 'tournament' competitions is likely to continue rather than diminish, for a number of reasons, over the next ten years. Firstly, this trend, although not necessarily as pronounced and entrenched in other parts of Europe, is nevertheless occurring globally throughout the C&C sector. The net effect is to position aspiring entrants to the C&C sector, as the EU commissioned report from KEA (2006) observes, as "new workers" / "new entrepreneurs", between capital and labour because:

The traditional categories of the “full-time job society” (“here the worker, there the employer”) no longer apply; the cultural content worker is suddenly also a (cultural) entrepreneur (without capital). In academic literature the “new worker” is described as multi-skilled, multifunctional and flexible in working time as well as often being self-employed. (KEA 2006: 91)

Secondly, policymakers continue to affirm the importance of expanding these industries without paying any attention to labour market conditions and the ways in which they inhibit people from learning to work in the C&C sector (Hesmondhalgh, forthcoming). Even the KEA (2006:9) report that has, as we have seen above, very presciently identified the new conditions in which aspirant workers find themselves, falls back on the current EU version of the UK conventional wisdom by arguing that workers will require higher levels of knowledge and skill. Thus the report ends up perpetuating, rather than offering any fresh thinking on how to overcome, the dilemma described in this paper.

The above labour market conditions suggest that the transition of any young people into the labour market, which many researchers had noted even before the impact of the ‘credit crunch’ had become more extended during the 1990s than in the 1970s and 1980s (Evans 2000; Chisholm 1999), is likely to become even more extended in the future. Moreover, given the opacity of the C&C labour market and the fact that access is dependent on the development of the forms of social capital that provide people with access to the networks that gate-keep and facilitate employment in the C&C sector, it also suggests that access is likely to become even more competitive as the C&C sector gradually comes to terms with the implications of the ‘credit crunch’.

Assuming that the depiction of the above trends is correct and that the mismatch between the UK's national policy cycle and the government's assumptions about the role of qualifications as a proxy measure for vocational practice continues, then access to the labour market is likely to be exacerbated rather than diminished in any great respect. In the case of graduates, this is partly because the massification of higher education has generated a continual flow of graduates who are prepared, because they are financially cushioned by their families or are prepared to engage in multiple job-holding, to accept fairly insecure and temporary positions in an attempt to develop the forms of vocational practice and social capital to gain access to the C&C labour market (Oakley, 2007). In the case of individuals holding Level 3 qualifications, the combination of the flexible conditions of the UK labour market, coupled with employers' preference to recruit graduates in non-graduate roles (Mason 2004), is exerting considerable 'down-ward' pressure on such students. In combination, they have the effect of denying aspiring entrants access to the port-of-entry positions that would otherwise be commensurable with their qualifications and experience. Taken in combination, these developments suggest that there is likely to be an increased demand for the forms of intervention activity and provision of learning and development opportunities that intermediary agencies have been providing.

### *New Principles for E&T*

In light of these circumstances and irrespective of any change of government, there will have to be a new direction in E&T policy if policymakers are to support aspiring entrants and career switchers to realize their ambitions to work in the C&C sector and support the sector to continue to serve as the engine of post-industrial growth in the UK. Based on the argument presented in this paper, this new direction presupposes a series of new principles for UK E&T policy. The principles are as follows:

1. The rebalancing of the tension between market (i.e. 'demand-led) and state (i.e. supply-led) provision through the introduction of 'heterarchical' (Jessop, 1998) modes of E&T planning and delivery.

The problem generated by the state–market dichotomy in governance strategies has been widely recognized for some time. Jessop (1998; 2000) has argued that this has resulted at the macro government level in the constant substitution of one with another. He argues that rather than trying to manage the relative change between states, markets and globalization within one overall structure, what is required is the introduction of 'new balancing points' that enable policymakers to involve stakeholders more directly in the coordination process. Jessop offers the principle of self-organisation (in his term 'heterarchy') as an alternative mode of governance. From Jessop's perspective, heterarchical governance, coupled with the autonomy at the regional level to determine how to deploy national funding streams, offers a potential key to unlock the totality of the state–market interface at the macro–level.

There is not sufficient space here to do justice to the complexity of Jessop's argument. I want to suggest, however, that his notion of heterarchical governance can be usefully extended to the way in which E&T policy and provision could be addressed in future in the C&C sector. This claim can be illustrated by returning to the example of Birmingham Repertory Theatre's Technical Apprenticeship.

It was argued earlier that in its desire to make apprenticeship part of a vocational ladder within the education and training (E&T) system, the government firstly, overlooked that: (i) the primary purpose of apprenticeship is to develop vocational practice; and (ii) the

project-based nature of work in much of the C&C sector requires a 'project-based' and therefore a bespoke approach to education and training. This clashes with the requirement placed on SSCs and LLSCs to secure models of apprenticeship that can be 'rolled-out' nationally. Secondly, government imposed a policy making cycle, funding constraints and targets that totally limited the scope of regional stakeholders to respond in innovative ways to their pressing needs.

If the principle of heterarchy was used to rebalance the current E&T system, this broadening of the principles of governance would offer E&T stakeholders the opportunity to 'co-configure' (Engeström, 2008) innovative solutions to the issue of access. In the case of the reservations expressed in the C&C sector about the AAP Blueprint, this new space could be used to enable employers, working in conjunction with intermediary agencies and Further Education colleges, to design models of apprenticeship that actually reflect their needs. Such a development would introduce a slightly different twist to the notion of 'employer leadership' advocated by the Leitch Report. Instead of assuming that qualification blueprints are the definitive solution to employability in the knowledge economy and arguing that employers should take the lead over FE colleges/training providers implementing the AAP Blueprint, this broader system of E&T governance would create the conditions for employers to develop bespoke models of apprenticeship based on a clear articulation and specification of the principles of occupational skill formation and skill transfer. To ensure that employers do not interpret this new freedom as a license to create a host of new 'restrictive' apprenticeships (Fuller & Unwin 2003b), LLSCs (and their equivalents outside England) could be required by central government to devise regional 'kite marking' systems for such alternative models of apprenticeship. These systems would be based on clearly defined criteria for skill formation, skill transfer and employability so that apprentices developed the requisite form of vocational

practice and social capital, thereby reassuring policymakers that the new schemes are educationally robust and offer value-for-money.

The introduction of these new principles of governance would also mean that E&T funding regimes for apprenticeship and other programmes would have to be re-thought. At present policymakers operate with 'Welfarist' notions of labour markets, (i.e. that all employers will or can be persuaded to recruit regular numbers on an annually recurring basis), and 'Fordist' mechanisms to control the E&T system (i.e. funding FE Colleges and private training providers on the basis of enrolling 'training volumes' and achieving 'training completions'). These assumptions about the operation of the labour market and this accountability and funding model are completely at odds with the growth of ELMs and project-work in the C&C sector, let alone, elsewhere in the economy. Heterarchical principles of governance would involve a shift away from these centrally controlled auditing and funding mechanism. Instead they would require the devolution of budgetary oversight to regional E&T stakeholders and the provision of ring-fenced budgets to support E&T innovation. These conditions would provide E&T stakeholders with the relative autonomy to design bespoke E&T solutions that reflect the needs of the C&C sector at the regional level.

2. Reconceptualising the transition from education to work and work/unemployment to work transitions as the development of vocational practice, social capital and moebius strip expertise, rather than the acquisition of qualifications.

The recent debate about the role of qualifications and access to the labour market has forgotten that although qualifications are important because are they the longstanding way to certify the forms of knowledge and skill students acquired in education, they do not

necessarily constitute, despite policymakers' and some researchers' views to the contrary, proxy measures for vocational practice, social capital or entrepreneurial ability. Moreover, policymakers have also failed to detect that the growth of external labour markets means that more-and-more graduates have a post-degree vocational need – opportunities to supplement the forms of knowledge and skill certified by qualifications with opportunities for vocational enculturation and the development of social capital and entrepreneurial ability – an issue that does not currently figure in the post–Leitch E&T agenda.

It has long been recognized that vocational practice, social capital and entrepreneurial expertise cannot be broken down into discrete units of study and taught independent of any contact with workplaces. This is not to suggest that study and simulation cannot provide a grounding and inspiration for learners, rather it is an acknowledgement that vocational practice, social capital and entrepreneurial expertise have to be developed *in situ*, that is in conditions of work or through the provision of opportunities to gain access to networks and specialist advice, rather than through study or simulation.

Enacting this insight, however, presupposes a further shift in the government's E&T policy. It requires the introduction of a more multifaceted and differentiated strategy based on an explicit recognition of the different contribution that the following activities play in facilitating access to the C&C sector. They are:

- *accreditation activities* (i.e. academic or vocational qualifications)
- *industry-recognised* activities (i.e. knowledge and skill acquired from non-accredited activities such as work placements, internships, master classes)
- *network* activities (i.e. the development of a personal occupational labour market as the

basis of securing contracts and the forms of entrepreneurial expertise to promote oneself in ELMs)

The first step to implement this strategy is for the government to stop predetermining the type of output (i.e. qualifications), the type of provider (i.e. colleges of Further Education and accredited training providers), and the funding regime for all aspects of E&T. The second step is to relax the reins of policy and offer all E&T stakeholders the opportunity to broker bespoke E&T solutions; for example, identifying how to incorporate what this paper has referred to as access to industry-recognised and networked activities either as integral parts of accredited programmes (see the WAC Case Study) or as part of non-accredited programmes (see the CA and JIIC Case Studies). Because these activities develop vocational practice and social capital in a way that educational programmes in colleges and universities struggle to do, they need to become a supplement to the national E&T framework of provision rather than a marginal, albeit highly effective, way of supporting transition into the labour market.

3. A shift from conceiving learning as consisting of the accumulation of pre-specified outcomes to seeing it as the development of judgement.

In addition to the UK's tendency to conceive learning as consisting of the accumulation of pre-specified outcomes, the introduction of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) is resulting in pressure on educational institutions to standardise qualifications throughout Europe through the use of programme specifications and learning outcomes. This development is likely to re-affirm the idea (pan-Europe) that qualifications constitute a proxy measure for vocational practice and hence access to the C&C sector. This is deeply worrying because, as the case studies presented in the paper demonstrate, the knowledge associated with any field of vocational practice is always broader than any qualification. It requires

opportunities for people to ‘conduct inquiries’ and ‘rehearse procedures’ and, in the process, to develop the forms of judgement that are inimical to practice (Sennett, 2008).

What is required, therefore, is the formulation of a language of description for vocational practice that will offer researchers, policymakers and practitioners a resource to identify the different contributions that accredited, industry–recognised and network activities make to supporting vertical and horizontal transitions into the labour market. The first step towards such a language of description has already been taken (Guile 2009). It has resulted in the formulation of three conceptions of vocational practice. They are: *evolutionary* (i.e. the gradual development of a practice through individual and collective agentic activity); *laterally-branching* (i.e. the explicit use of professional/vocational field–specific forms of knowledge and skill (i.e. codified and non–codified) to develop a practice in ways that can be recognised in the field; and *envisioning* (i.e. inter–professional activity to envision a new form of practice).

These conceptions offer a way to capture the different modalities of practice and the forms of judgement associated with them. They could be used by E&T stakeholders to: (i) identify the forms of working and learning that has to occur outside of educational institutions to facilitate their development; (ii) consider how to build strategic partnerships at the regional level to provide people with access to these forms of working and learning; and (iii) press the case for the greater recognition for pedagogic activity within national and international E&T policy formation.

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