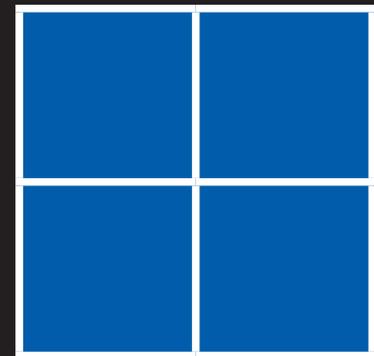


Apprenticeship and Freelance Work: a de-centred and distributed model of learning to develop Media Production apprentices' vocational practice and social capital

David Guile and Ann Lahiff



Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies

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Abstract

Media work is increasingly contract-based, de-centred and distributed across different sites. This development poses a problem for traditional novice-to-expert assumptions that underpin the design of most models of apprenticeship and post-Lave and Wenger conceptions of workplace learning. This paper outlines the creation of a apprenticeship – apprenticeship for liquid life – designed to prepare apprentices to become contract-based workers in the media industry. The key features of the apprenticeship are a new model of learning to support apprentices to develop vocational practice (knowledge, skill and judgment) and social capital (networks to secure future employment). The paper concludes by arguing that the model shows that: (i) the workplace learning community is too attached to researching stable and site-specific forms of working and learning; and, (ii) the post-Wolf and post-Richards debates about the future direction of apprenticeship in the UK needs to consider how to re-think the national framework for apprenticeship to prepare apprentices for freelance work.

Key words – apprenticeship, de-centred and distributed model of learning, vocational practice, social capital, freelance work

Introduction

The publication of Lave and Wenger's book, *Situated Learning*, in 1991 introduced a new conceptualization of learning as "changing participation in changing practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991 p. iv); and the authors pursued the implications of this new conceptualization through a discussion of empirical studies of apprenticeship in craft settings (e.g. tailors in Liberia), or in modern non-formal settings (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous in the USA). The cornerstone of their argument was that: (i) the notion of participation enabled them to reveal that apprenticeship has always constituted a model for how "newcomers" (i.e. apprentices) learnt the expertise and identity associated with an occupational "community of practice" as they moved from being a novice to becoming an expert (*ibid*); (ii) models of learning always reflected the organization of work and deployment of expertise within a community of practice; and, (iii) the emphasis on education in advanced industrial societies, or expressed in their terms 'teaching curricula' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 97), has deflected researchers' attention away from the merits of apprenticeship as a model of learning.

Over the next two decades, writers in Educational Studies such as: Ainley and Rainbird (1999); Barton and Tusting (2005), Kirshner and Whitson (1997); Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström (2003); and Hughes, Jewson and Unwin (2007) all responded positively, albeit in different ways, to Lave and Wenger's claim about the value of apprenticeship as a model of learning. Despite these endorsements of Lave and Wenger's argument, one recurring reservation expressed by writers was that Lave and Wenger's focus on examples from pre-industrial societies or from non-formal settings in industrial societies overlooked that apprenticeship in advanced industrial societies a) had an educational as well as a workplace component, and b) was overseen by the State and was therefore expected to serve economic and social goals (Fuller and Unwin, 2004). Consequently, researchers concluded that the challenge was to use Lave and Wenger's insights to re-think the process of learning in apprenticeship education, and in workplaces, and how both could support social goals.

In parallel, researchers in the field of Organizational Learning have voiced rather different criticisms about Lave and Wenger's work (see, *inter alia*, Contu and Willmott, 2003; Handley *et al* 2007; Lindkvist, 2005; Roberts, 2006). The one

criticism that has arisen from this field that we think is relevant to the argument we present in this paper comes from Fox (1997). He observes that Lave and Wenger's notion of a community of practice does not provide researchers with the conceptual resources to engage with the de-centred nature of work and expertise or the distributed nature of much of the learning, in many modern organizations (Fox, 1997, p. 755). We will return later to the implications of the move to de-centred and distributed work conditions for apprenticeship.

Returning to educational researchers, their interest in using Lave and Wenger's insights – to re-think the process of learning in apprenticeship education and in workplaces to support social goals – first surfaced in the UK not long after John Major's Conservative Government of the mid-1990s had introduced the Modern Apprenticeship (MA). Some writers have heralded the introduction of the MA (Brockmann, Clarke and Winch, 2010) as evidence that the government was making a concerted effort to resurrect apprenticeships (which had been in decline because of a lack of financial and legislative support from successive governments) to develop an intermediate skilled workforce in the UK.

In contrast, other writers have disputed this interpretation. Fuller and Unwin (2012, p. 261) have, for example, made a two-fold argument. Firstly, apprenticeship had always been a resilient model of learning because employers and craft institutes have always been able to modify the four principles on which it was based – pedagogy (the process of learning); occupational (enculturation into occupational expertise and identity); social (personal maturity based on extensive experience in the workplace); and, locational (close association between employers, apprentice and community) – to reflect changing conditions of work. Secondly, these principles were no longer evident in the Modern Apprenticeship because it was merely a continuation of the Youth Training Scheme. This scheme had, for example, in the case of the transition from novice to expert, replaced exposure to sustained experience of work with the accreditation of outcomes-based generic skills (Core/Key, now Functional) in work contexts.

Moreover, the election of New Labour in 1997 had, according to Fuller and Unwin (2010) continued rather than reversed this process. The MA – now the Advanced

Apprenticeship (AA) – became an integral part of post-14 education and training policies. This decision foisted new purposes upon the AA – to support social inclusion and progression into higher education – and underpinned these goals with a funding model predicated on high and annually recurring volumes of apprentices. The net effect was, as Fuller and Unwin (*ibid*) conclude, to consolidate the shift of apprenticeship from a “*demand*” to “*supply-led*” (italics in original text) vehicle of state policy. This has meant that the government sets targets for apprenticeship and, importantly, provides funding to pay for training leading to mandatory qualifications. In essence, every occupational sector – through its Sector Skills Council (SSC) – has to ensure that its apprenticeship frameworks conform to the national “blueprint”.

The focus of this paper is an examination of the legacy of the UK’s supply-led version of apprenticeship in relation to the emerging skill needs of the UK’s Broadcast Industry, specifically Media Production. What is interesting about this sector is that it exemplifies the tensions associated with the gradual introduction of Post-Fordist principles of production and flexibility over the last twenty years. These developments have transformed employment relations:

... from the structured and clearly bounded state of European public broadcasters’ internal labour markets into boundary-less external labour markets, where a growing group of skilled professionals and experts flexibly supplies an industry of a few big companies and many small producers (Deuze, 2007, p. 189).

This shift from permanent employment (internal labour markets) with their associated financial security to freelance work (external labour markets) with their associated financial insecurity has positioned people in the industry to live, what Deuze following Bauman (2005) described as a “liquid life”. In other words, many skilled professionals and experts continually search for, and then move to, the next contract for their services. The change in the organization of work in the broadcast industry has created multi-skilled teams where former boundaries between, what was defined as, professional and vocational work are being increasingly blurred. As a result, skill sets are transgressive, and employment is increasingly based on people’s membership of networks to help them to secure their next contract (Deuze, 2007).

In light of these developments, the UK's Broadcast Industry poses problems for the UK's AA, with its assumptions about stable and well-bounded expertise, and its requirement for annual recruitment of high and recurring volumes of apprentices. To illustrate why, we start by outlining the changes in the broadcast industry in England since the Thatcherite government set about radically restructuring the industry in the early 1980s. We then use this analysis to explain why apprenticeship as a model of learning has to be re-thought for, what we refer to as, the *project-based* work conditions that now characterize the broadcast industry in the UK. We make this argument by initially referring to a Level-3 Apprenticeship in Media Production, which was developed and implemented by Vision+Media, in conjunction with other stakeholders in the North West of England.

The paper continues by explaining how the move to the project-based organization of work in the UK's broadcast industry has ushered in a de-centred and distributed conception of expertise and identity. We then explain what is distinctive about learning through apprenticeship in these new work conditions by using a number of concepts from Socio-cultural and Activity Theory. We use, for example, the concept of "shared object of activity" (Engeström, 1999) to highlight the way in which stakeholders' formulated and instantiated the apprenticeship, and the concepts of "consequential transition" (Beach, 1999), "distributed cognition" (Hutchins, 1995); "figured worlds" (Holland *et al*, 1998); and "recontextualisation" (Guile, 2010), to clarify the features of the model of learning. Having done so, we contrast this new model of learning through apprenticeship, which we maintain reflects the typical features of apprenticeship in the project-based in any industry organized along these lines, with the model of apprenticeship associated with stable and well-bounded work conditions underpinned by full employment. In the final section of the paper, we discuss a number of a) conceptual issues about the future of apprenticeship as a model of learning, and b) policy issues associated with the new model of apprenticeship in relation to the current debate about the future development of apprenticeship in England following the Wolf Review of 14-19 Vocational Education (DfE, 2011).

The UK's Broadcast Industry

The post-1980s context

Up until the early 1980s, the broadcast industry in the UK consisted of the duopoly represented by the television license-funded British Broadcasting Company (BBC) and the single commercial broadcasting network Independent Television (ITV). The latter was a public service network of British commercial television broadcasters and set up under the Independent Television Authority (ITA). This duopoly operated in a relatively benign post-war environment underpinned by a broad political consensus about the value of the public service role of television and radio in the UK (Crisell, 2002). Furthermore, in this period work in the BBC and ITV was divided into specialist divisions, for example, drama, entertainment, news, sport, and allocated generous annual budgets for production and education and training (Crisell, *ibid*).

The election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in 1979 had a profound effect on the BBC and ITV's operating environment because the government was ideologically opposed to the concept of a subsidized and unaccountable public sector and, by extension, a private sector underpinned by a public service ethos (Milne, 1988). The Thatcher government therefore initiated a number of activities to break down the duopoly between the BBC and ITV. The first activity was to authorize the setting up of Channel 4 in 1982. Furthermore, the Conservative government stipulated in Channel 4's license to broadcast that it had to be a "publisher-broadcaster" which meant that Channel 4 had to commission or "buy" all of its programming from companies independent of itself. This made Channel 4 the first broadcaster in the United Kingdom to do so on any significant scale. This development created the momentum to transform the production landscape in the UK because production companies could now exist independently of television companies and "sell" their programmes to the highest bidder (Crisell, 2002).

This change to the production landscape received further momentum in 1986 with the publication of the Peacock Report (1986) and the enactment of the Broadcasting Act (1990). The Peacock Report reinforced the principle of outsourcing production that the creation of Channel 4 had introduced by recommending that no less than 40% of BBC and ITV's output should be sourced from independent producers, and that the

ITV franchises should be put out to competitive tender. Along with changing the bodies responsible for regulation and introducing a “light touch” to regulation (Collins, 2009, p. 10), the Broadcasting Act introduced external commissioning as a regular practice. The Act imposed a quota of 25% minimum of total output on the BBC and ITV, and made this a statutory requirement for any other television station that was launched after 1990. This development was further reinforced within the BBC when John Birt became Director General, BBC. Birt initiated a complete internal restructuring of the organization and funding of all production activities. The cornerstone of this restructuring, as Born (2005, p. 131) observes, was to introduce the principle of ‘producer choice’ (i.e. allow BBC producers the autonomy to decide who they commissioned to produce programmes) and, in the process, force the in-house production teams to compete with independent producers on an ‘equal footing’. The process of restructuring resulted in the BBC consisting of 481 business units or cost centres with their own budgets (Born, 2005, p. 107-8).

One effect of the emergence of independent production companies was the gradual drift away from permanent employment in the BBC, and ultimately ITV, and the enshrinement of, to borrow Caves’s (2000, p. 103) term, the “contract structure” of the feature film in the British broadcast industry. In other words, the BBC and ITV (along with independent production companies) issue contracts to directors, producers, and all professional and technical staff to work on specific projects, rather than retain this range of expertise in-house. The pace of this development can be gauged, as Ursell (2000, p. 807) citing statistics obtained from Skillset (1994) observes, in that between 1987 to 1997, ITV shed 44% and BBC 33% of their respective workforces and, as a corollary, there was a rise in freelance work in broadcast industry from 39% to 60%.

The above developments have contributed to the creation of a new version of what Piore and Sable (1984, p. 251) referred to as, a ‘core’ and ‘peripheral’ workforce. For them, the ‘core’ workforce was defined as the highly qualified personnel without whom companies could not operate effectively, and the ‘peripheral’ workforce was defined as the less highly qualified workforce that companies deemed were replaceable or substitutable. In contrast, the independent broadcast sector in the UK is characterised by a core workforce who issue and manage contracts for the production

of new programmes, and a peripheral ‘creative and technical’ workforce. This new pattern of the organization of work has been depicted by Langham (1997, p. 6), as a ‘roller coaster atmosphere’ where professionals have unpredictable income levels, have to negotiate complex networks of actors, directors, producers, writers, and all kinds of technical staffers, and move in and out of jobs as television seasons end.

As Bauman (A.) (2005, pp. 31-32) points out, this process of ‘relational contracting’ leads departmental heads who work for TV companies to take a specific group of employees under their wing as they move from project to project. At the same time, it leads regular staffers to function as ‘intermediaries’ and to recommend people from their own, or their media friends’ personal networks, for positions in new project teams. As one of Baumann’s (*ibid*) interviewees noted:

“...If you are a production assistant you look for an Assistant Director to latch onto. Then as you move up the ladder you become the person whose team people are looking to join.”

The cumulative effect of the above developments for production staff has been two-fold: they “coalesce into semi-permanent work groups who try to move from project-to-project as a ready made team” (Blair, 2001, p. 684) and they accumulate social capital, through participation in networks to extend the range of contracts that could be offered to them (McRobbie, forthcoming).

Access to the industry

The current pattern of the organization of work in the broadcast industry is, like work in any occupational field, based on, as we have described above, the pattern of production. Given that temporary projects are organised, as Deuze (2007, p. 192) observes, to take the form of:

“...loose fitting structures of individuals, teams and companies that are temporarily connected through a specific motion picture, television pilot or season. Such structures tend to be capable of flexible, experimental and customized production, as well as being able adapt to changing circumstances.”

Views vary as to whether this pattern of work facilitates creativity or fosters ‘precarité’ (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008, p. 161 and 228). Nevertheless, irrespective of which

view is adopted, both have similar implications for newcomers. Over the last twenty years, the most common route has been a learning-by-doing process based on securing a position as a “runner”¹, that is, a short-term relatively lowly paid or ‘work-for-free’ contract. Newcomers over the last twenty years have tended, however, to be graduates. This is partly due to the growth of media-related degrees in UK higher education in this period (Universities UK, 2005). In addition, the rising interest amongst students who have studied other degrees to enter the media industry has provided a continual flow of people who want to enter the industry (DCMS, 2001). Moreover, these graduates have either undertaken work placements in the industry as part of their degree or secured internships post-graduation and, as a result, have developed the forms vocational practice and social capital to secure starting positions as a runner (McRobbie, forthcoming).

The rise in graduate entry is, however, partly because there had not been an apprenticeship programme in the broadcast industry in the North West, and for that matter elsewhere in the UK, for nearly two decades. This was because firstly, the global economic crisis of the mid 1970s, in conjunction with the UK’s longstanding culture of voluntarism as regards employer involvement with training, resulted in considerable pressure from employers on the Conservative and Labour governments of the 1970s to abandon the then national system for subsidising training (Brockmann, Clarke & Winch, 2010). Without this mechanism, which symbolized government commitment, apprenticeship gradually unraveled in most industries in the UK. Secondly, the strong internal labour markets that existed in the BBC and ITV in the 1960/70s meant apprentices tended to remain with the company where they had undertaken their training, or choose a freelance career path and entered the UK film industry (Briggs, 1985). Television companies were therefore well staffed with technical expertise and were not overly concerned about protecting their apprenticeship programmes.

The resurrection of apprenticeship, which has occurred in other industries in the UK,

¹ In the freelance world of media production, the term runner denotes the starting position in a project team. Put simply, it means receiving a stipendiary payment and being asked to assist with all aspects of the work being undertaken by the project team. Although positions as runners are advertised via media websites, the process of selection is heavily dependent on recommendations from people who have worked with potential runners and the potential runners own entrepreneurial/self-promotional activity.

has been very slow to occur in the broadcast industry and the creative industry more generally. This is primarily because, as a recent report for Skillset notes, there are:

... few Creative Media employers who have the ability to “employ” an apprentice for a 15/18/24 month period as is the current norm in Government funded apprenticeships. Models for delivery of apprenticeship programmes therefore need to be looked at closely in partnership with employers’. (Skillset, 2010, p. 8)

The changes that have occurred in the organization of work in the broadcast industry, described above not only conflict with a number of the mandatory features of the AA programme, but also with the assumption that apprenticeship is based on making a journey from novice to expert in well-defined and stable occupational communities. We explore why this is the case in the next section.

Apprenticeship and the Broadcast Industry

Problems with the AA

The AA is predicated on a weak version of the principles that underpin the classic argument (see, for example, Dreyfuss and Dreyfuss (1986), Lave and Wenger (1991) and Sennett (2008)) about the development of expertise. That is, new entrants develop from novices to experts in stable and well-bounded vocational communities, and under the supervision of vocational experts. This assumption about the development of, what we referred to earlier as, vocational practice and identity rest, in turn, on Fordist and Taylorist principles about the organization and management of work: the existence of functionally different areas of work, a hierarchy of job roles, and managers who coordinate levels of work. Project teams and contract-based employment in general, as Barley and Kundra (2000) noted some time ago, and in the broadcast industry in particular, as we have seen, are predicated on rather different principles about the organization and management of work. The principles for work are, as Turner (2003, p. 138) observes, that products and services can veer from the standardized to the innovative, the membership of teams can fluctuate from project-to-project, and responsibility for coordination is shared amongst all team members.

The implementation of these principles in the broadcast industry has created, in turn, not only new conditions for the development of vocational practice amongst new entrants, but has also made the development of social capital a necessity (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008, p. 152-6).

One way to conceptualise the implications of these changes in the organization of work for apprentices is to borrow and extend Holland *et al*'s (1998, p. 125) terms and to argue that apprentices are “positioned” to work and learn in de-centred, distributed and contract-based “figured worlds”. The distinctive feature of these worlds is that: (i) they consist of an eclectic and constantly changing mix of more and less experienced managerial and technical personnel, rather than stable figures who are familiar with work processes and routines; (ii) work practices are based on a transgressive deployment of knowledge, skill and judgement. In other words, members of project teams use aesthetic, technical and managerial knowledge in varying combinations to facilitate different aspects of the production process. Hence, expertise is conceived and deployed in relational and multi-faceted ways, rather than in individual and occupationally-specific ways; (iii) working relationships continually cut across areas of specialization with the result that people develop multiple, rather than single, vocational identities that vary according to their contribution to a team; and, (iv) ongoing membership is based on participation in networks in which personnel are invited to move on to other opportunities for employment within a project team, rather than to remain rooted in the same location with the same personnel.

These features of work raise important questions for employers in the broadcast industry about how to support any new entrant, but in our case apprentices, to learn vocational practice and develop social capital, and for educational providers about how to design programmes of learning that prepare apprentices to work in a range of changing contexts and with a range of (changing) personnel. The issue of pedagogy, as we saw earlier, is, however, not automatically high on the AA's agenda. This is partly because one of the main requirements of the AA is that employers offer apprentices employed status, which is usually interpreted as a full-time and permanent position with the employer during and on completion of the apprenticeship.

This requirement, as the report from Skillset we referred to above noted, creates particular difficulties for the broadcast industry. The contract structure of employment in the industry militates against companies not only offering apprentices employed status, but also appointing apprentices to full-time employment in permanent positions on completion of their apprenticeship. Moreover, project work militates against the dominant practice of releasing apprentices for one day a week to attend a college of further education or training provider to study for their Technical Certificate or Key/Functional Skill qualification. Whilst use of “day release” for the educational component of apprenticeship was introduced to reflect the Fordist economic conditions of the 1950s to 1970s, project work is, as we have seen, characterized by intense followed by fallow periods of work. It is therefore difficult to insert day release into this pattern of work because it fractures the apprentices’ understanding of the work process and causes them to miss opportunities to develop skills that are only required at specific points in the production process (Guile, 2010).

Given the pattern of work in the broadcast industry, fresh thinking from all parties involved with the apprenticeship programme (employers, training provider and/or the college of further education (FE) and intermediary agencies) is therefore required. This is particularly important with regard to the design and delivery of the workplace and educational component of apprenticeship. We explore the implications of our claim through reference to an apprenticeship pilot that was designed to explicitly address the above challenge.

The apprenticeship in Media Production: a demand-led and distributed apprenticeship

In this section, we present a summary of the development of the apprenticeship in Media Production. We analyse the apprenticeship by drawing on the concepts we referred to earlier: “shared object of activity” (Engeström, 1999) to explore the way in which stakeholders agreed to run a pilot programme; “tournament contest” (Marsden, 2007) to explain how people were recruited to the apprenticeship; and, “figured worlds” (Holland *et al.*, 1998), “recontextualisation” (Guile, 2010) and “distributed cognition” (Hutchins, 1995) to elucidate the model of learning. Before doing so, we explain how we researched the apprenticeship.

Researching the Apprenticeship in Media Production: methodological considerations

We researched the apprenticeship in Media Production (MP) by creating a methodology to reflect the argument presented earlier, namely that we have conceptualised the apprenticeship as the formulation and instantiation of a new object of activity. By doing so, we hope we have captured stakeholders' intentions for the apprenticeships, and the distributed pattern of working and learning in media production into which the apprenticeship was designed to enculturate the apprentices. Cognisant of both the broader working practices in media production as well as stakeholders' aspirations for the apprenticeship, our approach to data generation reflects both an acknowledgement of the multiple learning contexts, i.e. the various MP work placements and college-block experiences, the range of practitioners with whom apprentices would learn, and also the stakeholders associated with the creation of the apprenticeship. The qualitative approach we adopted concurs with Field's (2011, p. 285) observation that:

people's own subjective understanding of their learning career may not be articulated or understood in ways that enable simple quantitative comparisons to be made.

We therefore chose to generate situated, qualitative data (Jenkins *et al*, 2010) through focus groups and interviews, conducted, where possible, in the settings in which the learning was taking place, and some retrospective interviews with key stakeholders. Given the multiple learning contexts, our sample participants therefore included apprentices, their workplace supervisors/co-workers, college tutors, and the work-based assessor. Personal knowledge of the evolution of the pilot by one of us secured access to the research participants through the intermediary agency, Vision+Media. As a key stakeholder in the apprenticeship, the person who initiated the apprenticeship at Vision+Media, and the apprenticeship's co-ordinator from were also interviewed. To place the research within a broader policy context, an interview was also conducted with representatives from Skillset.

Data was gathered in two blocks of time: the first between September 2005 and 2007 when the ideas for the apprenticeship were being formulated and support was being mobilised in the Media Industry in the North West; the second, which consisted of four phases, between May 2010 and March 2011, and included interviews with apprentices during three out of the four MP work placements and during one college block. In total we conducted 16 semi-structured, one-to-one interviews with apprentices and one focus group. With respect to workplace supervisors, 13 one-to-one interviews and 3 paired interviews were completed. One group interview was conducted with college tutors and the work-based assessor. A total of 8 interviews were conducted in the two time blocks with wider stakeholders. All interviews and focus group discussions were conducted by the authors and were recorded digitally and fully transcribed. For the purposes of this paper, with its focus on the creation of the apprenticeship, we have drawn explicitly upon data from the interviews with stakeholders and implicitly on data from the interviews and focus groups with apprentices and the apprenticeship's co-ordinator.

The apprenticeship as a 'shared object of activity'

The apprenticeship, which started in 2007, was organized around Vision+Media - an 'intermediate organisation' (Guile, 2010(b)) based in a specific industrial sector and funded through both public and private income streams (<http://www.visionandmedia.co.uk>). The apprenticeship had two-aims: to diversify entry routes into the broadcasting industry; and to assist apprentices to develop, to borrow Guile's (2010 (b), p. 139) terms, the 'vocational practice' (i.e. knowledge, skill and judgement) and 'social capital' (i.e. access to media networks), necessary to live a liquid life as freelancers in the UK's broadcast industry.

The key organisation involved in mobilizing support to resurrect apprenticeship in the UK's broadcast industry was Media Training North West, specifically through the actions of its then Chief Executive, Lynne McCadden. In the course of resurrecting an apprenticeship in the broadcast industry, Manchester-based Media Training North West, merged in 2007 with Liverpool-based North West Vision, to form Vision+Media (hence this name is used throughout the paper). The primary aim behind the creation of Vision+Media was to provide a single intermediary training and production support organization for the broadcast industry in the North West prior

to the opening in Salford of the BBC's new centre for the production of TV and radio programmes.

Vision+Media is a member of Screen England, a partner with UK Film Council and works closely with the North West's screen agency. Its aim is to use these sources of support and partnership to "help grow the digital and creative industry in England's Northwest", by "investing in and funding media businesses, projects and talent, by supporting individuals and companies to develop new skills, and by supporting production" (<http://www.visionandmedia.co.uk>). In the case of the development of vocational practice, Vision+Media regularly tenders for contracts to run publically-funded programmes on behalf of, for example, the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Film Council. It also responds to the demand from the industry for short course training to support continuing vocational formation by designing and delivering programmes for creative companies and individuals (at all levels) in TV, Radio, Publishing, Music, Games, Film and Digital and Creative services.

In the early 2000s, Lynne McCadden, and Margaret McClelland, Development Executive, BBC, jointly initiated a conversation to "do something different for training for Media City when it opened" (Interview, LM, 20. 9. 2007). This was in the context of the major directive from Greg Dyke, then Chief Executive, BBC, to "diversify" the profile of BBC employees (Dyke, 2002) and address the under representation of Black and Ethnic Minorities. His directive instigated a debate about diversification of the profile of personnel and programmes in the BBC and wider broadcast industry.

McCadden and McClelland's interest in resurrecting an apprenticeship in the broadcast industry pre-dated Dyke's directive as they were both concerned about the over representation of graduates, (irrespective of their ethnicity) in the broadcast industry (<http://www.gmsa.ac.uk/news/view/?id=784> 2008). More specifically, the constant recruitment of graduates, who were not from the North West, meant that the BBC were, by default, severely limiting opportunities for young people from this area (<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/NorthWest/nwr105BBCApprenticesNorthWest21September2007-pr.pdf>). McCadden and McClelland were determined to diversify this pattern of recruitment and thus used the post-Dyke debate on diversity to create a

critical mass of interest in resurrecting apprenticeship in the broadcast industry in the NW of England so that young people from the area could have greater access to opportunities.

McClelland initiated internal discussions at the BBC about the intrinsic value of resurrecting apprenticeship to diversify modes of access, levels of qualification and the socio-economic and ethnic background of personnel in the company². At the same time, McCadden held similar discussions externally with Granada, Shine and other independent television companies based in the North West, as well as a wide spectrum of Small and Medium Size (SMEs) that supported the industry in various ways in the region. The common response was an endorsement, albeit in stronger and weaker ways, of the idea of resurrecting apprenticeship, but also an insistence that it had to reflect the contract-culture of the industry, and should also start as a small-scale scheme (i.e. low numbers) to make it a manageable proposition http://www.skillset.org/skillset/press/releases/article_6353_1.asp.

The cumulative interest generated by McCadden and McClelland maybe described as a “shared object of activity” (Engeström, 1999, p 31.), that is, a common purpose, amongst the interviewees about the value of establishing an apprenticeship to prepare apprentices for a liquid life in the broadcast industry.

The bigger challenge that now faced McCadden and McClelland was to explore with the agencies responsible for the development and management of apprenticeship, whether they could support industrial partners to resurrect apprenticeship in the area. The two agencies responsible for the proposed apprenticeship were a) Skillset, the Sector Skill Council (SSC) for the media industry, and b) the then national Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The former had two responsibilities for apprenticeship: 1) the development of new frameworks that reflected the needs of industry and 2) custodianship of the standards of the AA. The latter also had two responsibilities: 1) oversight of management and 2) funding and achieving government-imposed targets for apprenticeship in the NW region.

² At this time, the BBC also developed partnerships with the following universities, Manchester Metropolitan, Salford, Leeds Metropolitan and Sunderland, and offered their undergraduates work placements. In contrast, the aim of the AA was to widen participation and draw on a pool of local non-graduate talent.

McCadden, as the representative of Vision+Media, the ‘intermediary agency’ that would ultimately want to secure the contract for running the apprenticeship, took the lead and brokered discussions with Liz Bennett, Head of Qualifications, Skillset and Linda Stokes, Regional Skills Manager, LSC. The focus of the initial conversations was to explain a) why a diverse range of organizations were not only keen to resurrect apprenticeship in the broadcast industry, but also prepared to contribute work placements for apprentices and b) whether Skillset and the LSC felt they could embrace this goal for their own, albeit related, concerns. Subsequent conversations covered the tensions between the idea that had surfaced from industry partners about the value of a small-scale, non-employed status apprenticeship, and the expectations that the government had placed on Skillset and the LSC – i.e. to maintain a *status quo*, rather than deviate from the mandatory features of the AA and the idea of annually recurring volumes of apprentices.

The tension between the State’s goals for apprenticeship and the needs of employers soon surfaced. This can be seen in two ways. Firstly, the New Labour government had positioned Skillset and the LSC to see themselves as “owning” apprenticeship and persuading industries and firms to operate within the framework of the AA. Secondly, it sought to achieve this goal by embedding accountability and financial, to borrow Edwards’ (2010, p. 14) term, “motives” into the activities for which both parties were responsible: respectively, custodianship of the AA and accountability for meeting government-imposed targets. The regimes of accountability and financial reward in which any SSC and/or LSC were enmeshed, predisposed them to be in conflict with one another from time-to-time. Put simply, it was in the interest of SSCs to facilitate the development of new frameworks for apprenticeship and, in the process, to consider a relaxation of some of the AA’s mandatory features. In contrast, it was in the interest of the LSCs to insist on the retention of the mandatory features and the high-volume targets they had been set because their funding was tied to the accomplishment of those goals.

For this reason, there were many months of protracted discussions before the ‘tipping point’ (Gladwin, 2000) arrived. It occurred when Skillset, at the national and regional level, and the LSC, at the regional level, accepted that the prevalence of the contract

culture in the broadcast industry could forever deter firms from engaging with the AA unless they both helped to provide a bridgehead into the industry. This softening of their respective positions led, firstly, to Skillset agreeing to a pilot an apprenticeship programme based on the relaxation of the employed status mandatory feature of the AA in 2007, and undertaking the development work on the framework for the apprenticeship. The perceived benefits of the pilot were that it would provide a ‘framework for apprenticeship that could serve the needs of other parts of the broadcast industry’ (Catherine Godward, Director of Research, Skillset, 2007, Meeting, 12th September, 2009). Secondly, it led the LSC to agree to fund a pilot project based on Vision+Media negotiating annually with employers recruitment figures which they (employers) felt the secondary labour market could bear. Moreover, the BBC, as part of their diversification agenda, agreed to make a six-figure contribution to support the pilot programme.

In parallel to the above discussions, McCadden approached Oldham College, the lead provider in a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) for Media in the North West, to discuss whether the college was interested in contributing to the realization of the emerging object of activity (i.e. apprenticeship in Media Production) by providing the educational component (i.e. Technical Certificate) for an apprenticeship in Media Production. Oldham exercised its prerogative as the CoVE lead provider to sign the contract with Vision+Media to provide the specialist educational inputs for the apprenticeship. Whilst Oldham’s CoVE partner, City College Manchester (later to become The Manchester College), was contracted to provide the specialist teaching inputs, given its expertise in the area, a member of Oldham college’s management team joined the steering group set up by Vision+Media.

Mary Blaunciak, the then Head of Design and Visual Arts, City College Manchester, agreed to provide these specialist teaching inputs and to liaise with the College’s Senior Management Team to overcome any resource problems that the mode of delivery – blocked teaching sessions – might generate. The apprenticeship started with a core course for one term. Thereafter, apprentices undertook ten-week work placements before returning to the college for three/four week blocks of teaching. This pattern of organisation therefore required the College to not only commit to the enterprise, but also to support it by introducing a new pattern of course delivery.

Access to the apprenticeship: the role of the “tournament contest”

All the contributing parties agreed that they were keen to attract the widest possible range of applicants to ensure that the apprenticeship recruited those who were best suited to work as a freelancer in the broadcast industry. The stakeholders recognized, however, that the conventional approach to recruitment (based on advertisement and interviews) would not necessarily assist them to realize their goal. This was partly because their accumulated experience in their own organizations led them to accept that interviews did not necessarily provide sufficient opportunities for applicants to demonstrate their potential to exercise agency – the quality which they felt was essential to surviving as a freelancer. For this reason, the College agreed to recruit a cohort of students for the both the apprenticeship, which included a level 3 Diploma in Media Techniques, and for a City and Guilds (C&G) level 2 Certificate in Audio Visual Industries Induction, which could be achieved during the first term of block attendance at the college. In this way, recruitment could exceed places to be offered on the apprenticeship, whilst still enabling all of those recruited to the first phase to achieve an initial media qualification with progression routes into the apprenticeship or onto a C&G level 3 Diploma in Media Techniques at the College.

The first phase of the recruitment processes involved advertisements for the apprenticeship and/or media-related courses targeted at 16 to 25 year olds in the local media in the North West. Connexions (North West), the organization charged by the government with providing careers advice, was contracted by McCadden to process the applications. Connexions therefore reviewed the application form, which had been jointly designed by Vision+Media and their staff, and held initial interviews with applicants qualified, at least, to Level 2 (General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or Vocational equivalents) and made recommendations on applicants. Successful applicants were told that the introductory course was core to both recruitment possibilities, and that they would all have opportunities on that course to demonstrate their suitability for the apprenticeship.

The second phase of the recruitment process occurred in the college. This process was based on an educational version of, what Marsden (2007, p. 965) described as a “tournament contest”, a term which referred to the growing tendency of large companies to offer internships to graduates and to use their observations of the graduates’ development to determine to whom they would offer employment. In contrast, Vision+Media, working in conjunction with the College and industry stakeholders, developed a slightly different conception of ‘contests’ to determine who was offered a place on the apprenticeship as opposed to the full time C&G Diploma course. They accomplished this goal through consideration of the outcomes of embedding a number of challenging learning activities as part of the common C&G certificate. For example, all were offered an opportunity to produce a short film about a local issue, and to ‘pitch’ an idea for a TV programme to a panel consisting of representatives from education and industry. These activities, modeled on working practices in the industry, enabled the recruits to demonstrate their capacity to exercise agency, to take on a leadership role and also to work collaboratively and imaginatively. Accompanied by representatives from Vision+Media and the industry and based on college tutors’ observations and assessment of the learning activities and presentations of the films and the pitch, final decisions were made about acceptances onto the apprenticeship.

The model of learning underpinning the apprenticeship

As with most apprenticeships in advanced industrial countries, the apprenticeship in Media Production has a model of learning that consists of an educational and workplace component. Whereas the aforementioned are based on a linear model of learning which supported apprentices to move from novices to experts in well-bounded vocational communities, the Media Production apprenticeship was based on a de-centred and distributed model of learning to support apprentices to learn in multiple vocational communities and localities.

Media production, as we have seen, consists of a multi-faceted and eclectic range of aesthetic, technical and managerial knowledge. Moreover, the balance between these types of knowledge and the way in which they are deployed varies according to their context of application, for example, in offices, on “set”, “on site”, post-production facility houses etc. For this reason, Vision+Media and its media and institutional

partners were keen to provide the apprentices with ample opportunities to identify and refine their preferred vocational specialism during the apprenticeship, rather than to force them to specialise prematurely at the outset.

To enshrine this principle at the heart of the apprenticeship, the apprentices were required to negotiate their work placements with Vision+Media to ensure the placements helped them to develop their preference of vocational practice. To facilitate this process, Vision+Media appointed a Placement Officer, who was responsible for liaising with the media companies to: (i) match the apprentices' request for a particular type of placement in relation to their knowledge of which project group was, at the time of the placement, best able to accommodate the apprentices' request; (ii) support the apprentices' learning in the workplace by ensuring they were allocated a line manager and mentor while they were undertaking their placement; and, (iii) act as a first port-of-call in case of any problems.

The distinctive feature of the work placements was that the apprentices joined a project team, which consisted of a range of specialists, and were immediately immersed in the 'work flow' (Guile, 2010 (a), p. 388) i.e. where work was executed in accordance with a production schedule. This not only provided the apprentices with various opportunities to develop their vocational practice and a network of contacts, but it also meant that their placement did not differ in any way from the work placements/internships that companies offered to graduates. By being immersed in project teams where responsibility for work was shared between all members of the team, rather than being allocated functionally and hierarchically, the apprentices had opportunities to work with a diverse number of people gradually to: (i) learn the knowledge and develop the skill that underpinned the complex and interrelated actions they were undertaking practically in production offices, on site and at the shoot or in post-production work; (ii) develop their judgement about how to accomplish those actions swiftly and effectively by asking for advice and/or acting independently; and, (iii) explore whether they would ultimately like to develop a production (i.e. arranging and overseeing the making of TV and radio programmes) or technical (i.e. focusing on specific aspects of the production process) identity.

In addition, working in these diverse contexts offered the apprentices ample opportunities to gradually develop their social capital over their ten-week placement as they gained the confidence to not only to ask members of project teams for their personal contacts, but also to attend networking events with other project groups. These activities enabled the apprentices to accumulate a ‘network of contacts’ (Guile, 2010a, p. 441) who they could, at a later stage in their apprenticeship and/or post-completion, ask for advice and/or promote themselves as a potential candidate to be offered a position. Hence, they were in exactly the same starting position as a graduate.

The model of learning was therefore predicated on the apprentices undertaking a series of “consequential transitions” (Beach, 1999) between a series of de-centred and distributed figured worlds. The apprentices’ transitions were based on the comingling of their preferences about which aspect of vocational practice they would like to develop, and the Vision+Media’s placement officer’s knowledge of project groups which could provide them with opportunities to develop such practice. The transitions between the College and work placements (four in total) meant that the apprentices were continually negotiating to join a new project team. This team could be involved with, for example, a longstanding production, such as, *Mastermind*, or provide special services, such as, in the Children’s Department, or be constituted for a new production. This presented the apprentices with the challenge of learning how to vary their participation in the practices of the new, differently figured worlds which they had entered in order to develop their expertise.

Learning to vary their participation placed a considerable emotional and cognitive burden on the apprentices. In the case of the former, they had to quickly develop the confidence to form a relationship with each line manager and the members of their project team. This was vital because there was little ‘down-time’ in project teams and, as a consequence, the process of enculturation was much faster as compared to more traditional work contexts. In the case of the cognitive burden, the apprentices had to learn how to “recontextualise” (Guile, 2010, p. 154), that is, use the aesthetic, technical and managerial knowledge they were gradually developing in accordance with the needs of the task-in-hand, rather than in accordance with the how such

knowledge had been taught to them or how they had deployed that knowledge in previous work placements.

Given that the apprentices' work sites³ (i.e. TV/Radio/Film production etc) were "distributed" (Hutchins, 1995), and that they rarely worked twice with the same team, the process of recontextualisation was very demanding. This pattern placed a tremendous responsibility on Vision+Media to ensure the apprentices were supported throughout their work placements. In the case of the project teams, Vision+Media's Placement Officer asked line managers to encourage their team members to take on, what Felstead *et al* (2009, p. 204) refer to as, a 'conjoined working and learning' role: in other words, to provide the apprentices with a mix of routine and stretching activities and to assist the apprentices to recontextualise the knowledge and skill they were gradually developing. To do so, line managers had to make time to listen to apprentices' concerns and/or problems, offer suggestions about how to address them as well as to provide on-going emotional support.

At first sight, the educational component of the apprenticeship in Media Production appears to be very similar to the way in education is organized in most apprenticeships, as which we mentioned earlier. It consists of a core introductory course, a Technical Certificate (TC), and accreditation in relation to a National Vocational Qualification (Level Three) in Media Production. Moreover, staff in the Media Department of the College, in common with staff in other colleges who are involved with teaching the mandatory elements of apprenticeship, converted the TC's specifications into a programme of study. This programme provided the apprentices with an: (i) understanding of the context of the broadcast industry; (ii) introduction to key features of work in the industry; and, (iii) an explanation about the specific aspects of vocational practice associated with pre-production (e.g. selection of scripts/stories); production (e.g. managing schedule of events); and, post-production (e.g. editing) and with the departments, such as, Children, Drama etc., that they might

³ Our use of the concept of "distributed" differs from Hutchins' original formulation. Hutchins invoked the term 'distributed cognition' to denote cognitive dimension of the vocational practices required to coordinate a specific activity, such as, the navigation of a vessel. We have retained Hutchins' claim that the coordination of a single, albeit, complex activity is usually distributed across sites, levels of expertise and artefacts, rather than the provenance of a single individual. We have, however, elaborated and extended his notion of distribution by highlighting the pedagogic challenge posed by overlaying the workplace component of the apprenticeship in Media Production onto the work of project teams.

encounter when undertaking their placements. (Interview with Tasmin Raynor, Programme Team Leader Media (Adult and Higher), Creative Industries Directorate 12th January, 2011).

The educational component differed, however, with respect to the sequencing of the TC and the pattern of apprentices' attendance at college. The TC was situated between the four 10 week placements. This allowed college staff to monitor the apprentices' development in a more sustained way as compared to day-release. This consequently enabled staff to modify the way in which they used lectures, group work and individual assignments in accordance with their perception of the needs of the apprentices (Interview with Rachel Heyes, Lecturer, Media (Adult and Higher), 12th January 2011). Another difference is that the role of the NVQ assessor, Mike Thornton, grew organically from one cohort of apprentices to the next. The apprentices were visited, at least once, while they were undertaking each of their placements. In addition to assisting the apprentices to gather the written and/or visual evidence to confirm that they had met the required standard for different NVQ units, Thornton, the sole assessor, performed a "mediator" role. For instance, he helped the apprentices to identify the pre-requisites for the NVQ (Interview, MT, 12th, Jan, 2011) and thus helped them to recognize how to translate aspects of work practice into NVQ "speak". This enabled the apprentices to negotiate work placements with their line managers with greater confidence. In addition, the college tutor team allocated apprentices one "open space" every week where they could work with Thornton and college staff. This space provided the apprentices with an opportunity to reflect on the knowledge, skill and judgements which they gradually developed as they undertook a multitude of transitions between education and work, and between different work contexts.

Apprenticeship for Liquid Life and modern apprenticeships

To clarify the difference between the apprenticeship in Media Production and most other modern apprenticeships, we have formulated an ideal typical presentation of their respective models of learning. The criteria for our typology are derived from the key issues about learning that have surfaced in our discussion of apprenticeship throughout the paper. The criteria are the: purpose (or object) of apprenticeship; mode of access and status of apprenticeship; context of apprenticeship; process of learning;

development of expertise and identity; and, outcome of learning. We have, however, also used the following concepts – vocational practice, social capital, tournament contests, recontextualisation – which we have utilised in this paper to explain what is distinctive about the apprenticeship in Media Production and to illustrate the differences between the two models of learning. At first sight, this may appear to compromise the integrity of the model of learning associated with modern apprenticeships. On closer inspection, it is apparent, however, that this is not the case. The concepts of, for example, recontextualisation and transition are ways of thinking about, respectively, the transfer of knowledge and skill from education to work and the movement between work contexts and, as such, are equally applicable to either model.

Table 1: Ideal typical presentation of the Model of Learning in the Apprenticeship in Media Production

Criteria for model of learning in apprenticeship	Model of learning in apprenticeship in business, services and technical industries	Model of learning in the apprenticeship in Media Production
Object of apprenticeship	To develop apprentices' vocational practice for occupationally-specific and permanent employment	To develop apprentices' vocational practice & social capital as freelancers for <i>liquid life</i>
Mode of access and status	Sole recruitment by firm following interview, & full-employed status	Multi-agency involvement in (i) recruitment to core course; & (ii) using "contest" to suitability for apprenticeship Employed status with training provider for two years
Context of apprenticeship	<i>Educational</i> context - day-release in vocational college, employer's training workshops or training provider <i>Work</i> context – firm	<i>Educational</i> context – block placements in FE college <i>Work</i> context – multiple project teams & distributed locations
Process of learning	Recontextualisation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · knowledge, skill & judgement · vocational identity in a single vocational community 	Ongoing recontextualisation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · knowledge, skill & judgement · vocational identity & ongoing development of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · networks of contacts in distributed multi-faceted vocational communities
Development of expertise and identity	Transition from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · periphery to core · novice to expert 	Multiple transitions from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · placement to placement · placement to runner · runner to contract-based employment
Outcome of apprenticeship	Vocationally-specific practice & identity	Vocationally-eclectic practice & social capital & vocational identity

Apprenticeship in Media Production: conceptual and policy issues

Conceptual issues

We have outlined above a new conception of apprenticeship commensurate to the challenge of supporting apprentices to develop the forms of vocational practice and social capital to live a liquid life. This conception is, like other conceptions of apprenticeship worldwide, underpinned by a model of learning. Historically, the model, as we noted earlier, has been based on the following four principles: pedagogy (the process of learning); occupational (enculturation into occupational expertise and identity); social (personal maturity based on intensive experience in one workplace); and, locational (close association between employers, apprentice and community). Moreover, we echo Fuller and Unwin's (2012, p. 261) observations that it is testament to the "resilience of apprenticeship" that these principles can and have been developed to take account of changing work conditions and/or policymakers' demands on apprenticeship.

By using the following criteria – purpose (or object) of apprenticeship; mode of access and status of apprenticeship; context of apprenticeship; process of learning; development of expertise and identity, and outcome of learning – we have been able to show the different manifestation of the above four principles in the "modern" and "liquid" models. Specifically, we have revealed that: (i) the pedagogic process in the contexts of work and education is based on supporting apprentices to make multiple recontextualisations, rather than occupationally-specific applications, of knowledge, skill and judgement; (ii) the process of occupational enculturation is based on a de-centred and distributed, rather than linear, conception of the development of expertise and identity; and, (iii) the process of maturation is based on developing the capability to make multiple transitions and to accumulate social capital to operate effectively in continually changing figured worlds, rather than intensive exposure to a particular workplace and group of workers. Since our focus has been on the process of learning in the workplace and in education, we have not been able to consider the implications of living a liquid life for the social bond between apprentices, their employer and the local community.

In making the above conceptual breakthroughs, we hope to provide other researchers with a way to re-think the near hegemony of the novice-to-expert/legitimate peripheral to full participant conceptions of learning that dominate most research into apprenticeship, irrespective of level (i.e. pre/post-degree), as well as many other studies of workplace learning (Malloch *et al*, 2010). This breakthrough has been possible because we took cognizance of the way in which new principles for the organization of work have introduced a de-centred and distributed conception of expertise, identity and learning and, in the process, positioned apprentices, and for that matter other workers, to develop vocational practice and social capital to ensure they can secure employment. In making this claim, we are not suggesting that other scholars on apprenticeship have failed to take account of the organization of work or operated un-reflexively with traditional conceptions of learning. Rather, it is suggested that they may have, in the case of the former, accepted un-problematically the universal continuation and/or desirability of certain conditions in workplaces for apprenticeship, for example, Sennett (2008); and, in the case of the latter, used the concept of participation in a way that did not take account of different principles for the organization of work when analyzing apprentices' learning in workplaces, for example, Nielsen (2006).

One feature of the liquid model of learning in apprenticeship presented here is the principle that has underpinned 'on-and-off-the-job' learning since the 1950s has to be re-visited. The current day release model was designed to reflect a pattern of organisation of work and demarcation of 'skill sets' based on the production of standardized products and services that were an, almost, universal feature of work from the 1950s to 2000s. Whilst it is true that some models of apprenticeship in that period were occasionally based on block release in FE colleges or in employers' training workshops, most apprenticeships were organized in accordance with the principle of day release (Fuller and Unwin, 2008). Project work is, as we have seen, based on the production of customised products and services and the transgressive deployment of knowledge and skill. This change in the organization of work means it is vitally important for apprentices to remain attached to project teams for the duration of their work, so they can develop their vocational practice by participating in all aspects of the work process. It is important therefore that policymakers and providers of the educational component of apprenticeship appreciate that the design of the

educational component of apprenticeship will, in future, have to reflect the continuing evolution of working conditions, rather than conform to a well-trying and tested mode of delivery.

Finally, given that a project-based organization of work and the incidence of freelance work has been, and looks set to remain, an accelerating trend in the global economy since the late 1990s (Ekstadt *et al*, 1999; Lundlin and Hartman, 2000), it is timely to have a model of learning in apprenticeship that other researchers can use as a starting point to investigate other manifestations of this under-researched issue in the field of Vocational Education and Training and Professional Learning. Specifically, researchers could modify our ‘liquid’ model to investigate the continuing formation of freelance workers’ expertise and identity in the Cultural & Creative and other sectors.

Policy issues

The first issue for policymakers to consider is that the genesis of the idea for the new model of apprenticeship arose within the organizational structures of the broadcast industry in the North West rather than as a result of a government-led initiative. Moreover, the momentum to sustain and realize the idea was provided through the involvement of an intermediary organization (i.e. Vision+Media) that brokered the discussions between all the interested media parties and the national (i.e. Skillset) and regional (i.e. Oldham/Manchester College, LLSC) bodies. Vision+Media’s great asset was their longstanding contacts with the media industry in the North West and their track record in running training and development programmes for the industry. This meant, as we have demonstrated, that Vision+Media were perceived by, in the case of the former, media organizations, which otherwise might be in competition with one another, to have the credibility and neutrality to broker discussions between them about the apprenticeship; and, in the case of the latter, Skillset and the LLSC, as having the capability to design and co-ordinate the apprenticeship.

This is a radically different conception of E&T innovation compared with the Coalition’s measures to increase the take-up of apprenticeship in the UK. That commitment is a continuation of the strategy New Labour adopted, namely treating apprenticeship as an instrument of policy and, in the process, struggling to persuade employers in hard-to-reach sectors, such as the Creative and Cultural sector, to take

up apprenticeship. In contrast, our case study reveals the difference that a demand-led conception of apprenticeship makes: strong employer involvement, strong arrangements for learning in the contexts of work and education and, as our forthcoming research reveals, strong outcomes for apprentices. The case study suggests that intermediary organizations should firstly, be viewed as a catalyst for, and during, the innovation process, rather than being presented by policymakers and local bodies, such as, FE/HE institutions, as a un-necessary ‘cost’. Secondly, be seen as integral to the work of Local Enterprise Partnerships because, they provide a bedrock of cultural (i.e. industry-specific knowledge) and social (i.e. network of industry contacts) capital that will be vital components for economic growth in the regions.

The second issue for policymakers to consider is the important contribution that a Sector Skill Council, in this case Skillset, made to the development of the new model of learning by agreeing to sponsor a pilot apprenticeship programme, and using this pilot to guide the design of frameworks for apprenticeship for the creative industry (Interview, Catherine Godward, 12th September 2007). This strategic decision provided an opportunity for interested parties in the North West to design the apprenticeship to reflect the conditions for skill formation in project-based work. In parallel, Skillset commissioned research (BoP, 2009) on future skill needs within all the sectors for which it has responsibility. Based on feedback from employers who contributed to the research and from partners involved with the apprenticeship in Media Production, Skillset broadened and renamed the framework (Interview, Liz Bennett, 14th, January, 2011). It is now entitled Creative and Digital Media to reflect the increasing use of digital resources in all parts of the Media.

Finally, our case study addresses head-on why policymakers should initiate a debate about the issue of ‘employed status’ in apprenticeship programmes. Successive governments in the UK have accepted that it a prerequisite within apprenticeship programmes, and it is one of the areas of accord between government and Trade Unions. Yet, employment in Media Production and other parts of the Creative and Cultural sector is increasingly offered on a contract-basis. This development introduces a new conception of full employment – securing full-time contracts. The evidence of our case study presented in this paper and our study of the apprentices’

‘learning journeys’ (Lahiff and Guile, forthcoming), demonstrates that new models of apprenticeship are required that: (i) respond to the growth of freelance and contract-based work; and, (ii) empower apprentices to enter industries characterized by these conditions.

We suggest that in the context of the post-Wolf Review (DfE, 2011) debates about the future design and provision of vocational education, all stakeholders should consider the following question. Given the growth of project- and contract-based work, and the importance of preparing young people to work in those new economic conditions, can our liquid model guide the design of other apprenticeships?

This is a very different starting point for the design of apprenticeship compared to the Apprenticeship Training Agency’s (ATA) current practice. The ATA is signing an employment contract with apprentices, and then negotiating with employers to ‘employ’ apprentices for sixteen hours: a practice designed to help the Coalition Government claim it has met its targets for apprenticeship. It does not, however, constitute a strategy to design new models of learning that reflect new work conditions and, in the process, to assist apprentices to make the transition to contract-based employment or, if available, a permanent position.

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