APPRENTICESHIP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

A Starter Guide to the Literature

Middlesex University Collaborative Project

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Contents

Mobilising provider insights for degree apprenticeship delivery: comparing theoretical models to deliver effective integration for on- and off-the-job learning/training.

Introduction

This 'Starter Guide to the Literature' is part of a collaborative project for the Apprenticeship Workforce Development (AWD) programme funded by the Department for Education (DfE) in partnership with the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), Association of Colleges (AoC), Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), the Strategic Development Network (SDN) and the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC). The project 'Mobilising provider insights for degree apprenticeships: comparing theoretical models to deliver effective integration for on- and off-the-job learning/training' aims to illustrate good practice by considering how practical and theoretical models can inform effective and sustainable degree apprenticeship delivery. The review of selected literature sets out to frame some of the emerging themes around 'integrated learning/training' to respond to the question: How do degree apprenticeships use theoretical models to deliver effective integration of on- and-off-the-job learning/training?

The starter guide reviews sources associated with work-based, work-integrated, and degree apprenticeship provision relevant to on- and off-the-job learning/training. While concepts involving the provision of standards-based degree apprenticeships in England are distinct, the review has been positioned to unpack concepts and models of practice that are of interest to training providers. We refer to literature that foregrounds practice for degree apprenticeships within higher education (HE) as this provides a platform for current thinking. The novelty of this starter guide is its focus on business and management degree apprenticeships that relate to the development of private-sector provision. The starter guide identifies relevant theories and practice underpinning recent developments and ways of working across the spectrum of degree apprenticeships, regardless of sector or profession.

Although on-the-job and off-the-job learning are often considered as separate elements within the regulations and policy requirements of degree apprenticeship delivery, one of the main findings of the project has been the importance of learning that strategically leads providers to integrate their provision for the delivery of successful learning outcomes and the achievement of professional competencies.

The starter guide to the literature has been written alongside an online senior practitioner resource presenting provider insights that showcase 'best practice' for degree apprenticeship delivery. The senior practitioners used the starter guide literature to think more deeply about how training providers achieve success through integrated learning while engaging with the requirements of on- and off-the-job learning/training within business-related programmes.

There are some inherent limitations within the approach taken as it focuses mainly on literature that unpacks and informs practice in a way that positions the project work undertaken. The review is a scholarly introduction rather than a systematic review. The bibliography has included sources to frame practice and policy and encourage further reading. Whilst the way in which key terms are presented in the literature differ dependent on context and source, this starter guide utilises the hyphenated term 'on- and off-the-job learning/training' to align with degree apprenticeship training providers. For the purposes of this guide, no distinction will be made between 'learning' and 'training' as, in the context of apprenticeships, both are intended to bring about the development of identified outcomes in the form of the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) required for occupational/professional competence.

The starter guide deliberately engages with the central notion that professional development within occupational job roles is a part of apprenticeship delivery, and introduces the review using five main areas of interest:

1. Policy and training provider context for on- and off-the-job learning/training for degree apprenticeships to determine how integrated learning/training might be achieved
2. Models/frameworks (discursive and visual) to identify which types of learning/training might be used to inform training providers
3. Limitations to establish potential issues with integrating the on- and off-the-job learning/training for degree apprenticeships
4. Current thinking to establish relevant themes and unresolved issues within the literature since the introduction of standards-based degree apprenticeships
5. Success factors to identify and understand what training providers are doing in line with policy and good practice that make degree apprenticeship delivery effective.

Policy and provider context for on-the-job and off-the-job learning/training for degree apprenticeships

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has provided policy guidance for work-related learning/training within the UK for some time, however the policies and practice for standards-based degree apprenticeships are distinctive as they are based on occupational KSBs with specific job-related outcomes. They have grown in popularity. "Degree Apprenticeships were launched in 2015 with approximately 1,000 students across a very small number of universities... and over 82,000 students started a higher-level apprenticeship in the UK in 2020-21" (QAA, 2023).

For apprentices and employers, the value of standards-based degree apprenticeships is derived from the integration of knowledge and competencies within an occupational role whether the apprentices receives their tuition in the classroom or the workplace. The integration of the learning/training delivery is an essential training provider contribution as they work with apprentices and employers to facilitate completion of the programme. Degree apprenticeships are considered a "crucial means of developing much needed skills in driving the UK economy forward" (BIS, 2015, p. 2). As the number of apprenticeship standards have grown and embedded, the government's commitment to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) is now to prioritise "the integration of End-Point Assessment (EPA) with the degree and (subject to the outcome of your current consultation) other mandated qualifications, so that more learners benefit from streamlined arrangements which promote apprenticeship achievement" (DfE, 2023a, p. 7). This movement toward integration and achievement is one that many training providers are working towards in practice according to the starter guide literature.

The term training provider in the policy literature is deliberately seen as encompassing a variety of institutions that deliver degree apprenticeships within higher and further education and independent training providers (ITPs). This includes the services of staff working as university tutors and lecturers as well as occupational partner providers who deliver degree apprenticeship programmes.

Advice and guidance about the practice and benefits of work-based learning/training can be seen within policy papers and reports that inform current degree apprenticeship training providers. "The significant potential benefits for work-based learning are best achieved where the opportunity exists to integrate all aspects, that is, subject and professional knowledge, skills and behaviours" (QAA, 2018, p. 5). In recent years, policy now includes more specific information about degree apprenticeships as in the 'Characteristics Statement: Higher Education in Apprenticeships' (QAA, 2022). The policy environment and assessment regime for degree apprenticeships is complex, so it is important for training providers to be aware of

and comply with the latest requirements from the Office for Students (OfS, 2022), Ofsted (DfE, 2023b), and Apprenticeship Funding Rules (DfE, 2023c).

Definitions and applications

On-the-job and off-the-job elements are discussed separately in a number of policy documents with the newest recommendations in the Characteristics Statement: Higher Education in Apprenticeships defined as:

> On-the-job learning is described as: "learning that emerges in the context of undertaking day-to-day work activities" (QAA, 2022, p.6).

> Off-the-job learning is described as: "through one or more of a range of modes of delivery such as day release, block study, online study, self-directed study or job shadowing" (QAA, 2022, p.6).

New policy guidance for practitioners includes information about accountability and local skills improvement plans to add to the value of the current provision. The new minimum off-the-job training requirement for a full-time apprentice is 20% of a 30-hour week (even where the apprentice works more than 30 hours per week for an employer); this equates to an average of 6 hours of off-the-job training per week (DfE, 2023d). For practitioners developing curriculum for on- and off-the-job learning/training the focus is on the practice elements which includes on-boarding (recruitment), retention, progression, and completion of the apprenticeship end point assessment (EPA). These have continued to be strong drivers for providers, employers, and apprentices.

Current policy continues to adapt to changing circumstances, and there have been yearly updates to mandated requirements. Whilst discussion in the policy documents is intended to make clear the minimum requirements, it nonetheless might also be a legal demarcation of on- and off-the-job learning/training in some instances due to the financial requirements for 'new' learning set out for employers and training providers that has compulsory elements. However, to reflect current needs, required practice would now necessarily involve how on- and off-the-job learning is integrated, how off-the-job learning supports practice in the workplace and the development of competence, and how self-directed learning can be used in apprenticeships. The failure to sufficiently consider how on-the-job training is supported and integrated with off-the-job learning is a substantial (and contradictory) policy omission. This, after all, is the central feature of any apprenticeship programme in England. Funding policy can sometimes reflect an out-of-date vision of apprenticeships in which providers deliver off-the-job learning/training that is then simply applied in the workplace (Lester, Bravenboer and Webb, 2016, p. 10). For this starter guide the focus has been on apprenticeships that promote employers and providers working in partnership to integrate on- and off-the-job learning and support on-the-job learning/training.

Models/frameworks for integrating learning/training

The ideas that shape training, provider planning and curriculum delivery for degree apprenticeships are key to understanding successful progression, retention, and completion. Degree apprenticeships are concerned with the "development and application of knowledge, understanding and skills that emerge from the context of work/practice" with the workplace being the "site of knowledge production" (Garnett, 2020, pp. 716-717). It is this application of knowledge from studies to work situations that adds value for employers and provides authentic experiences for apprentices (Quew-Jones, 2023). Integrating theory with practice is key to successful degree apprenticeships. Work-based and work-integrated learning/training refers to the strategies and practices that integrate theory with the practice of work, and both

approaches integrate theory with a broad spectrum of activities (Lester and Crawford-Lee, 2023).

As a starting point, Nottingham's (2016, p. 794) pedagogic perspectives model (Figure 1) conceptualises work-based practice across a range of work-based providers encompassing learning/training that is based in an occupational role (employer-centred) as well as developing skills and competencies that are seen as discipline-centred (accommodating academic categories), and learner-centred (individuals) that stress the autonomy needed for self-managed independent higher-level studies. The various elements that make up these perspectives can be tailored to match expectations from degree apprenticeship policy, suit specific practice needs and consider the needs of training providers, apprentices and employers as new curriculum is developed to meet the specifications of current policy.
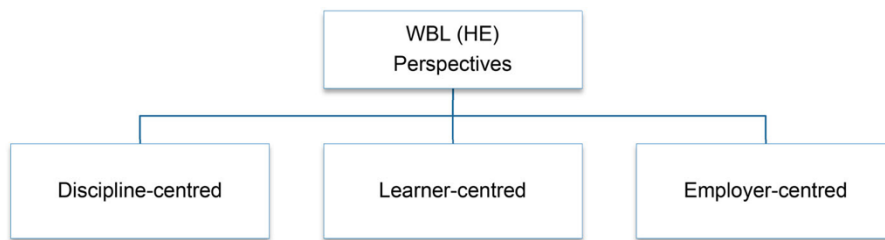

Figure 1: Typology of Work-based Learning (WBL) perspectives (Nottingham, 2016, p. 794, Figure 1)

Negotiation between apprentices, employers and training providers is central to degree apprenticeships, the distinguishing feature of work-based learning (Little and Brennan, 1996), and recognised in Lester's (2002, p. 6) "realisation paradigm" whereby providers and employers impart their expert advice and guidance in the form of a partnership. The move towards a more collaborative and facilitative way of working (Lester, 2002; Lester and Crawford-Lee, 2023) underpins the negotiated learning/training realised in the tripartite relationship of apprentices, workplace mentors and 'academic' tutors (Smith *et al.,* 2023). On that basis, the key to an effective tripartite and the successful apprenticeship is the "close co-operation and communication between the mentor (workplace based), the trainer/assessor (college [read provider] based) and the apprentice" (James Relly and Laczik, 2022, p. 9) as represented in Figure 2:
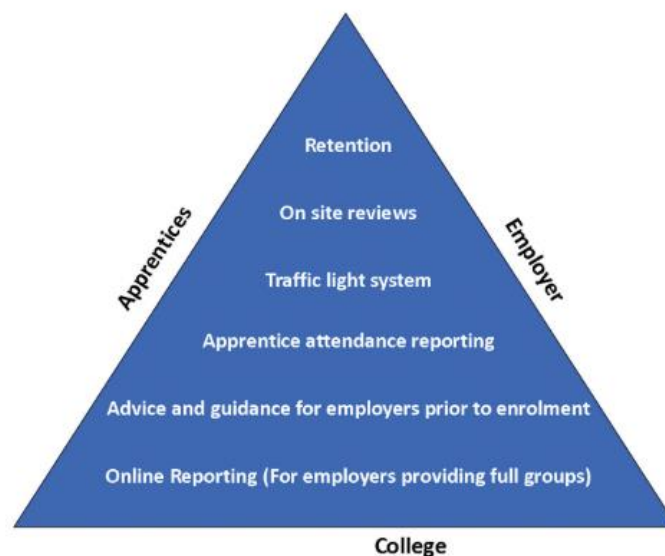
Figure 2: Co-operation necessary for a successful apprenticeship at College B (James Relly and Laczik, 2022, p. 9, Figure 1).

The collaborative nature of the tripartite relationship champions integrated work-based learning and harmonises with the flexible approach to learning, principles, and pedagogies that universities now adopt as progressive HE (Nottingham, 2016). The diverse nature of apprenticeships and work contexts within which they operate suggests there is a need for more 'hybrid pedagogies' (Nottingham, 2019). This is even more apparent after the Covid-19 pandemic as provision for degree apprenticeships moved online to accommodate remote working patterns for employers and HE institutions. Technology and digital learning, in the form of blended, hybrid and flexible models, now plays a more prominent part in degree apprenticeship tuition (Lester and Crawford-Lee, 2023).

Quew-Jones and Rowe (2022, p. 249) conceptualise that the primary aim of work-based learning facilitates opportunities to apply learning to work and "...this understanding offers a strong foundation for apprentices to learn experientially through facilitation to practice new skills and knowledge." Quew-Jones and Rowe's (2022) work-based managers and mentors (WBMM) interactive toolkit (Figure 3) also provides advice and guidance at different stages of the apprentice journey to offer tangible support for achieving educational goals and learning outcomes.

Development Phase
Integrating the learning

Coaching through work integrated learning
-Adapting to work context
-Negotiating work-based learning
-Reflecting on teaching related modules
-Additional: Adapting management style, apprentice wellbeing, time to manage

Mentoring to standard alignment
-Monitoring development against standard
-Conducting constructive progress reviews
-Additional: constructive feedforward, amplification of standards, empowering through reflection, ensuring inclusivity

Final Phase
Gateway and End Point Assessment
- Agreeing gateway
- Supporting EPA preparation

Initial/Foundation Phase
Supporting Apprentice prior to induction
- Awareness of learning journey
- Expectation of professional standard
- Demystifying the WBMM role
- Exploring tripartite discussion
- Analysing initial diagnostic development

Figure 3: [WBMM toolkit] (Quew-Jones and Rowe, 2022, p. 253, Figure 1).

Evans and Cloutier's (2023) research on the collective representations of stakeholders associated with an Executive MBA apprenticeship is of particular interest as it includes their concept mapping for apprentice professional development. A group concept mapping (GCM) approach collected apprentice participant data through group brainstorming sessions that identified eight significant clusters which relate to the central value proposition for professional development (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Stylised representation of the concept map (Evans and Cloutier, 2023, p. 290, Figure 3).

Further pattern matches undertaken reveal that both consensus and tensions exist between what is considered important as value propositions by the apprentice, employer, and HE provider stakeholders, and define what is considered unique within the eight identified clusters (Evans and Cloutier, 2023). The authors suggest that the clusters act to show more clearly what is missing from previous apprenticeship delivery and propose that HE providers are key drivers to improving the work-based curriculum (Evans and Cloutier, 2023).

Limitations for delivery

There were several key delivery points for degree apprenticeships that the literature indicates might assist or limit effective delivery and performance outcomes:

Importance for the educational process

Element of the integrated practice that providers need to support. However, Evans and Cloutier (2023) suggest that learning goals are sometimes viewed as being of secondary importance to work. Fjellström and Kristmansson (2019) identified that there could be a limited importance of engagement with the educational process within apprenticeships more generally. For apprentices having to negotiate study alongside work commitments, time is a critical factor and daily work pressures may affect an apprentice's ability to think critically about their work (Garnett, 2020).

Lillis and Bravenboer advise that to "integrate work and learning... programmes must be designed to recognise that most of an apprentice's learning will be derived from their work" (2020, p. 729). This approach is one that is recognised in work-based literature as deriving from a tradition of 'field of study' practice that has influenced the way that some HE training providers have conceived of the work-based educational process that is now used in degree apprenticeships (Nottingham, 2017). The effective integration of on- and off-the-job hinges on doing projects in the workplace and acts to "enable a blend of academic and employer-led learning opportunities, both relating to knowledge and skills" (Konstantinou and Miller, 2020, p. 777). Fletcher (2017, p. 3) observes that demonstrating learning taking place from work experience is not as straightforward as it may sound and suggests that "designing a curriculum

to accommodate the experiential learning needs careful planning in order to support work-based learning and supplement the knowledge and skills that will underpin the professional qualification".

Self-confidence

From the apprentice's perspective, ineffective integration of on- and off-the-job learning/training may stem from a straightforward lack of confidence. Fjellström and Kristmansson's (2019) general study about apprenticeships compares the experience of a 'confident' apprentice to that of the 'shy' apprentice and report that "a lack of social competence can impact reaching individual, workplace, and educational goals" (2019, p. 575). Self-confidence and the ability to learn in social groups or teams is therefore an important element of learning/training.

As new knowledge is assimilated and applied back in the workplace, the apprentice's improved ability to communicate and articulate their role supports the development of confidence, which in turn broadens their understanding of how they fit into the organisation.... (Evans and Cloutier, 2023, p. 293).

Autonomy

The independent studies that are an essential requisite for degree apprentices require the ability to balance the various factors that go into learning within a workplace role. Being neither student nor professional, apprentices may lack belonging (Evans and Cloutier, 2023), possibly due to the inherent difficulty in traversing the boundary between work and education on the basis that "once the work is over, the job is done" (Fjellström and Kristmansson, 2019, p. 578). Ryu and Moon (2019) say that in the workplace the need for autonomy, belongingness, and competence drives learner motivation. Limitations to achieving such 'success characteristics' can, however, be as a result of an "over-reliance on the work-based facilitator" (Minton and Lowe, 2019, p. 203) and should, therefore, be considered in the delivery of self-managed learning.

Workplace guidance and mentoring

Whilst employers within degree apprenticeships have an important part to play in developing a curriculum that is job specific, there is some concern in the literature about providing ongoing and sustainable support for apprentices in the workplace. Minton and Lowe (2019) suggest that employers could in some instances be prioritising productivity at the expense of adequate workplace guidance and support for apprentices. Additional costs related to apprentice support and time-impacted mentors with differing work attitudes are seen as predictable reasons for ineffective support structures (Minton and Lowe, 2019). Evans and Cloutier question "the sufficiency and facilitation of mentoring relationships" (2023, p. 294) that are at the heart of integrating learning outcomes for the degree apprenticeship KSBs within the workplace.

Policy advises that the use of a workplace mentor or coach is seen as good practice:

> ... apprentices must feel that the employer organisation supports the learning process by having supportive and encouraging learning structures in place. It is good practice to appoint a workplace mentor or coach, who can provide insight into the workplace, help to signpost learning opportunities and open doors for the apprentice, going on to support the apprentice to learn how to do this for themselves (QAA, 2022, p. 13).

Employer size and/or context are considerations as training provider input may have an impact on the ways the businesses plan to support delivery as training providers accommodate new policies for degree apprenticeships. The point is made in business-related apprenticeships that the work training providers undertake "across apprenticeships employer culture is multitudinous and wide-ranging" (Sutton, 2023, p. 95). Konstantinou and Miller (2020) found a significant difference in the experiences of public and private sector employees i.e., the link between the 'day job' and university/provider coursework being more of an 'abstract concept' in the public sector than in private sector organisations, where apprentices had more of an opportunity to be guided by their managers in how their projects aligned with the 'wider activity of the company'. The point is made that on-the-job learning is "not just the 'job' of the workplace" (Konstantinou and Miller, 2020, p. 777).

However, employers can argue that the inadequacies in support mechanisms derive from the limited guidance they themselves receive (Quew-Jones and Rowe, 2022). Lillis and Bravenboer (2020, p. 734) identify that "connectedness and interdependence were key to the strength of WIL pedagogical practices" and these attributes relied on collaborative work with employers.

> Apprenticeships require providers to assume responsibility in ensuring apprentices' work-based managers and mentors are equipped to provide effective support to individuals as they learn 'on-the-job' (Quew-Jones and Rowe, 2022, p. 242).

Academics and training providers "must be sufficiently aware of the job role and the opportunities within the apprentices' workplace to encourage them to share these examples with colleagues during 'off-the-job' discussion sessions" (Minton and Lowe, 2019, p. 202). This view confirms earlier work-based learning research that showed that 'employer-centred' training providers developed curriculum that was specific to workforce development needs (Nottingham, 2016) while considering the relevant factors for the individual learners. Looking toward newer integrated models of practice, Roberts, Storm, and Flynn (2019, p. 220) suggest that a new mentoring model presents learning as a social activity within the workplace context and centres on "proactively facilitating learning both within and outside of the workplace, alongside the development of an appropriate professional identity".

Current thinking and ongoing critical exchanges

The review of the literature found that current thinking about emerging issues regarding on-the-job and off-the-job learning/training was seen as one of the central issues challenging training providers today. Whilst a greater focus is being placed on employability and transferability of skills, standards-based degree apprenticeships are still relatively new provision within HE. Holmes (2001) identifies that employability is more than a set of skills as it encompass attributes, capabilities, and behaviours (Maxwell and Armellini, 2019). From an apprentice's perspective, the value of a degree apprenticeship is derived from their being able to make meaningful links between their studies and day-to-day work and receive active support from employers, pro-active mentors, and apprentice collaboration (Taylor-Smith et al., 2023). As Sutton also identifies, "knowing well and doing well is what apprenticeships stand for" (2023, p. 89).

A key emerging theme in the effective integration of on- and off-the-job learning is the importance of "embedding the on-the-job learning within the design of the academic programme, with explicit links between the theoretical learning (knowledge element of the apprenticeship standard) and practical application of learning (skills and behaviours within the apprenticeship standard)" (Minton and Lowe, 2019 p. 200). As integration

is fundamental for the delivery of high-quality apprenticeships, liaising with employers at the trailblazing stage can be beneficial (Hughes and Saieva, 2019). However, whilst employers

have a responsibility to provide a site of learning/training and knowledge production as well as knowledge application, training providers rely on "influence to ensure [employers] are providing 'learningful' work and relevant practitioner learning for their apprentices" (Sutton, 2023, p. 81).

Limitations identified in the literature indicate that there can be an extant tension between providers and employers, impacting on the needs of degree apprentices and the effective integration of on- and off-the-job learning/training. Evans and Cloutier (2023, p. 295) describe an "incomplete and inconsistent" tripartite relationship in terms of mentoring and reflection, intimating that some degree apprenticeships are still struggling to achieve collaborative goals. Stakeholder collaboration can be affected by differing understandings of engagement, roles and responsibilities making the relationship complex and time dependent (Quew-Jones, 2023).

Policy requires "comprehensive collaboration with employers at all stages" (QAA, 2022, p. 4) which training providers need to facilitate throughout the stages of the degree apprenticeship (on-boarding, progression, retention, and EPA) within the workplace environment. The workplace as a site of learning is one that is constantly changing and at times going through dynamic change, as with Covid-19. Given that work-integrated learning is less about delivering than facilitating, the onus is on training providers to motivate and engage employers, with online tripartite progress reviews seen as an effective tool to drive and support learning and develop the provider-employer relationship (Lester and Crawford-Lee, 2023).

Maintaining a good academic-employer relationship that is carefully considered and with full commitment on both sides is critical (Lester and Costley, 2010; Lester and Crawford-Lee, 2023). Likewise, effective collaboration could bring up issues about ownership with the need for collaboration between training providers and employers to effectively support managers and mentors working directly with apprentices (Quew-Jones and Rowe, 2022). Employers' involvement in recruitment and admissions is essential as successful degree apprenticeships use the workplace as the site for occupational learning/training in particular areas of expertise, such as business management or sales but equally applies to other job roles and sectors.

Success factors impacting the integration of on- and off-the-job learning/training

This final section will focus on five keys to success for degree apprenticeships that have emerged from this review of the literature. The five key success factors include:

1. Strong tripartite relationship of training provider, employer, and apprentice
2. Reflection to integrate on-the-job and off-the-job learning/training
3. Effective mentor support to instil apprentice self-confidence
4. Promoting inclusive communities of practice
5. Providing integrated learning/training opportunities as a way of developing new models

Strong tripartite relationship of training provider, employer, and apprentice

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE, 2022) identifies that for apprenticeship development it is "helpful if both employers and Higher Education Providers involved in your trailblazer group have in mind the need for effective integration of on- and off-the-job learning during this process". As with older models of practice within the UK, work-based learning is grounded in the notion of partnership and negotiation between apprentice, employer, and provider to ensure the close integration of learning and work (Little and Brennan, 1996; Lester, 2002). The same notion applies to apprenticeships in England.

Working in partnership and utilising each other's strengths, the emerging pedagogy of degree apprenticeships supports a symbiotic relationship between the academic and work-based, on-

the-job learning (Minton and Lowe, 2019). Extending to business, management and sales degrees, the partnership model needs to accommodate corporate businesses and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and other private organisations that range in experience in providing support to degree apprentices.

Additionally, it is recognised that public sector case studies have much to offer provider guidance. Bravenboer (2023) suggests collaboration between employers and HE providers supports more effective integration of on- and off-the-job learning/training and signals a clear need for integrated practice to be a central goal for planning. For example, the police constable degree apprenticeship (PCDA), developed by a consortium of four universities and delivered to three forces' recruits, and joined together as the Police Education Consortium (PEC), is considered an exemplar of good practice (IfATE, 2022). The PEC curriculum establishes a single point of assessment of validated modules associated with operational competence which is directly integrated with off-the-job learning from the HE provider (Lillis and Bravenboer, 2020).

Reflection to integrate on-the-job and off-the-job learning/training

Throughout the literature critical reflective practice has been suggested as a key way to integrate experiential elements of the learning/training. A training provider's role in degree apprenticeships is to "encourage lifelong learning by providing opportunities for self-directed learning and reflection, particularly from within the workplace" (QAA, 2022, p.13). Reflection acts to enhance situated operational knowledge and recall skills and behaviours. It is the encouragement and support for learner-managed reflective learning that ensures integrated academic and professional engagement by apprentices (Evans and Cloutier, 2023).

> One of the most important things that tutors of work-based learners can do is develop good listening skills. They need to listen and to respond appropriately. This response might include prompts and encouragement rather than instructions (Helyer, 2015, p. 19).

Reflection used as a developmental tool (Helyer, 2015) acts to draw meaning from experience (Little and Brennan, 1996) and the concept of self-reflection is fundamental to gaining a greater understanding of how the learning approach is conceived for degree apprenticeships (Evans and Cloutier, 2023). Using reflection relates to the design of work-based projects and personal and professional development (Garnett, 2020). It is the apprentice making sense of their context or role and utilising their knowledge to inform and renegotiate practice (Lester and Costley, 2010) that supports their ability to relate their reflective thoughts in applying their off-the-job learning to real life work issues (Costley and Critten, 2012).

Effective mentoring support to instil self-confidence

A key finding of the literature is that regular and consistent support for both apprentice and employer instils confidence and augments 'apprenticeship development' (Evans and Cloutier, 2023). Degree apprenticeships with strong support mechanisms in place drive apprentice motivation and competence establishing a high-quality exchange relationship between employee and employer (Hughes and Saieva, 2019). Mentors can encourage refection for both traditional and non-traditional student roles (Hughes and Saieva, 2019), but also encourage self-confidence in the ability to engage academically and professionally (Evans and Cloutier, 2023).

Minton and Lowe's (2019) research 'How are universities supporting employers to facilitate effective "on the job" learning for apprentices?' makes it clear that the role of the employer workplace facilitator/mentor is key. Workplace mentors can be managers, but they can also be learning development specialists, or senior staff within the organisation. Helyer (2015, p.

23) points out that for a work-based programme "a mentor may be appointed from the student's place of work, or sector. This could be a colleague, supervisor or line manager and does not need to be someone working directly with the student ...Mentors can become inspirational role models."

QAA (2022) guidance encourages support from a competent mentor or coach. Nonetheless, the onus is on the training provider in ensuring mentors are equipped in providing apprentices with effective on-the-job learning/training support (Quew-Jones and Rowe, 2022). This might involve verifying that mentors understand the content of degree apprenticeship modules and KSBs and how they fit with daily work. Mentors can be critical friends demonstrating how expertise, experience and knowledge can be combined for learning. Garnett also points out that for work-based degree apprenticeships "the tutor often acts as a facilitator and critical friend, rather than a subject expert" (2020, p. 717). In many instances in the starter guide literature, effective mentoring is said to draw on the combined efforts of the employer and the training provider.

Promoting inclusive communities of practice

Nottingham and Mao (2023) found that learning communities of practice (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020) include a wider range of participants that went beyond lecturers and students within HE to include managers and workplace peers. This community of practice became a site of value creation for the apprentice and the provider. The inclusive nature of the communities referred not only to specific provider and employer training on matters such as equality and diversity policies undertaken for on- and off-the-job learning, but in independent priorities set by apprentices who proactively define inclusivity using their own employee experience.

The literature advocates the formation of communities of practice as essential in developing successful and creative environments for apprentices and to instil a sense of professional identity (Sutton, 2023). Apprentices look to combine their expertise with fresh insights (Evans and Cloutier, 2023) across different business backgrounds. Apprentices naturally form groups and networks with their peers, university teaching/support staff, managers, colleagues, and customers (Nottingham and Mao, 2023). Online and digital methods are seen as an effective means of developing knowledge networks to support work-based and apprenticeship learning and there is evidence of "accelerated adoption" post Covid-19 (Lester and Crawford-Lee, 2023, p. 786).

Meaningful integration of work and studies not only stems from interest and support from employers but, more importantly, from collaboration (Taylor-Smith, et al., 2023). Guidance from more skilled workers is crucial in developing an apprentice's occupational skills (Fjellström and Kristmansson, 2019), and collaboration utilising knowledge networks are a central feature of integrated learning/training (Evans and Cloutier, 2023).

Providing integrated learning/training opportunities as new ways of working

One of the current aims of the Department for Education is to contribute to the development of high-quality apprenticeship delivery (DfE, 2023b) that provides the opportunity for training providers to engage with workforce development programmes (ETF, 2023). This includes training providers creating new ways of working the on- and off-the-job learning/training. As training providers work with stakeholders to address this important aspect of degree apprenticeship delivery, this aspect of practice is becoming more prominent in the critical literature reviewed.

> ...the educational model must move away from the more typical didactic theory focused teaching methods and incorporate different learning opportunities, based on an appropriate blend of practical and pedagogic experiences (Evans and Cloutier, 2023, p. 295).

Degree apprenticeships are context dependent requiring considerable flexibility in delivery approaches which utilise a diverse and innovative range of methods within individual workplace situations (QAA, 2022). Minton and Lowe (2019, p. 201) specifically point out that "for successful completion of an apprenticeship, learning occurs both in a formal educational setting (such as a university classroom or lecture theatre) and in the workplace." In other words, the workplace "becomes a site for the development and generation of knowledge, understanding, skills and professional behaviours rather than just a site for their application" (QAA, 2022, p. 4). As Quew-Jones (2023) found in their research, good curriculum design can widen participation and build confidence by transforming apprentices that identify as non-learners into confident professionals that could act on their own ideas for business improvement. Crawford-Lee and Wall (2018, p. 239) point out that while two main drivers of apprenticeships are "raising productivity and enhancing social mobility", sustainability is also needed to provide a consistent platform for developing this form of education and training.

With degree apprenticeships, the focus is on developing no more and no less than the KSBs and relating these to the EPA and demonstration of full occupational competence. However, work-based learning is "frequently unplanned, informal, retrospective and serendipitous" (Lester and Costley, 2010, p. 562) and illustrative of knowledge production occurring in "all sorts of venues and in all sorts of ways" (Helyer, 2015, p. 20). Furthermore, learning/training is most effective when the learner takes an active part in the experience (James Relly and Laczik, 2022). Degree apprenticeships embrace diversity of experience, working with planned and unplanned events in the workplace, with the expectation that apprentices put these experiences together as a part of establishing their own of understanding of what defines professional practice in the occupational role and in their specific workplace.

Providing integrated learning/training opportunities as new ways of working

One of the current aims of the Department for Education is to contribute to the development of high-quality apprenticeship delivery (DfE, 2023d) that provides the opportunity for training providers to engage with workforce development programmes (ETF, 2023). This includes training providers creating new ways of working the on- and off-the-job learning/training. As training providers work with stakeholders to address this important aspect of degree apprenticeship delivery, this aspect of practice is becoming more prominent in the critical literature reviewed.

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Developing new integrated models for best practice

Whilst each act as stand-alone artifacts for the project, the starter guide to the literature and the provider resource are complementary; with the review seeking to ask questions about successful integration of on- and off-the-job learning/training, and the interactive provider resource seeks to address those questions by offering best practice based on provider insights and learning.

The starter guide to the literature raises the issue of collaboration between employers and training providers to provide learning support to apprentices. Degree apprenticeships can address this by offering provision such as integrated onboarding, tripartite progress review meetings, employer forums and the collective development of a broad learning culture between employers and training providers. The provider resource offers practical advice about current practice by talking about the notion of ownership for learning in the apprentice's mindset and how training providers and employers could jointly support that notion. In addition, this resource provides practical examples in coaching and mentoring, reflective portfolio of evidence, and integrated learning/training support which starts from theory to practice and ends from practice back to theory.

The complementary nature of the exploration of the literature and senior practitioner insights are displayed in Table 1, which demonstrates how new integrated approaches to learning in and from work might be developed using the literature from this review:

Key attributes for apprentices to engage professionally and academically (Evans and Cloutier, 2023)	Best Practice Approaches for Successful Degree Apprenticeship Provision from the Provider Insights Project Review
Development of Self Awareness and Self Confidence	Reflection throughout the Learning Integrated Learning Support
Stakeholder Communication and Engagement	Employer Forum Tripartite Progress Review Meetings
Understanding of Role within the Organisation	Apprenticeships for integrated workforce development Integrated Onboarding
Personal Development and Aspiration	The Apprentice's Mindset
Professional Development	Coaching & Mentoring
Professional Contribution of Apprentice to their Organisation	Broad Learning Culture Integrated Knowledge Exchange
Learning for Career Advancement	Integrated Knowledge Exchange Reflection throughout the Learning Coaching & Mentoring
Engagement in the Educational Process	Integrated Curriculum Development Integrated Support for End Point Assessment The Portfolio of Evidence

Table 1: Developing new integrated approaches for best practice (Sutton/Project Team in response to Evans and Cloutier, 2023)

Conclusion

The purpose of the starter guide to the literature is to add to the current resources to deliver degree apprenticeships that focus on integration of 'on- and off-the-job learning/training'. It reviews key aspects for the successful delivery of degree apprenticeship programmes, briefly looking at policy and training provider context, models/frameworks within the literature, limitations and barriers, and current thinking are explored. The goal has been to establish any relevant themes and unresolved issues and identify success factors to understand what training providers are doing in line with policy and good practice to make degree apprenticeships even more effective as a route to the professions. Whilst much has been written on degree apprenticeships, a legacy (Nottingham, 2019) also exists in the literature of good practice in work-based and work-integrated learning that may be highly relevant for new providers in specialist occupational areas.

The starter guide set out to define terms for 'on- and off-the-job learning/training' and has provided a critical perspective on selected publications to highlight practical issues, models of practice, and challenges in the provision of degree apprenticeship programmes. The guide informed the project and gained valuable insights from listening to senior practitioners developing a provider resource that explored practical and theoretical models from successful and sustainable degree apprenticeship delivery. The project group felt that degree apprenticeships that operated within private or corporate businesses and SMEs, including those not-for-profit, operated somewhat differently than the public sector and were under-represented in the literature. The selected literature emphasises approaches and models that might inform and impact training provider effectiveness with the theme of integration.

> The distinctiveness of higher education in apprenticeships is significantly defined by the integration of on and off-the-job learning, as well as carefully planned work-based learning and assessments that reflect authentic work practices and real-world expectations (QAA, 2022, p. 6).

As new training providers of degree apprenticeships delivery enter this area of practice, research and practitioner insights will continue to add to this distinctive degree apprenticeship pedagogy. The starter guide to the literature has summarised policy and practice about on- and off-the-job learning/training for a wider audience to engage in an integrated, productive, and sustainable approach to degree apprenticeships.

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Acknowledgments

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