**House of Commons Select Committee on Education: Inquiry into Apprenticeships and Traineeships for 16-19 Year Olds**

**Notes on progression into Apprenticeships: Early intentions and later outcomes September 2014**

Professor Paul Croll Professor Gaynor Attwood

Institute of Education Assistant Vice Chancellor

University of Reading University of the West of England

[emscroll@reading.ac.uk](mailto:emscroll@reading.ac.uk) [Gaynor.Attwood@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:Gaynor.Attwood@uwe.ac.uk)

**Summary**

* At age 14/15 about a third of young people said they were at least quite likely to apply for an apprenticeship but at age 19/20 only just over one in ten had been in an apprenticeship.
* Early intentions were related to later outcomes but most of those saying they were likely to apply had not held an apprenticeship.
* The groups more likely to become apprentices were males, of white ethnic origin and lower attainers.
* People in apprenticeships expressed high levels of satisfaction with the quality of their training and were confident that they would complete it.

1. **Introduction**

These notes arise from an on-going research programme on young people’s educational choices conducted by the authors. They are submitted in a personal capacity. The analysis presented here is based on data from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England, a large scale panel survey managed by the Department for Education ([www.education.gov.uk/lsype](http://www.education.gov.uk/lsype)) and focusing on educational progression and transitions, including education to employment transitions. The data on intentions are based on interviews with the young people in 2005 (Wave 2) when they were 14 or 15 years old. The data on outcomes are based on interviews with the same young people in 2010 (Wave 7) when they were 19 or 20. The results therefore relate to the relatively immediate post-school entry into apprenticeships which is the focus of the Select Committee inquiry, rather than the extension of apprenticeship training for older employees of which there has been a recent expansion. Full details of the analysis summarised here are available from the authors.

1. **Intentions in Year 10**

As Table 1 shows, in year 10, when school students are 14 or 15, the level of interest in apprenticeships is relatively healthy. About one in three of the young people said that they were likely to apply for an apprenticeship. This is made up of 12.7 % saying they were ‘very’ likely to do so and 19.7% saying they were ‘quite’ likely. Just over one in five of the young people had talked to someone about apprenticeships (parents, teachers, careers advisors, employers) and most of these said they were likely to apply. But levels of discussion over apprenticeships, either at home or at school, were not as high as might be expected from these expressed intentions with only 21.6% reporting such discussions. Half of those who said they were likely to apply had not talked to anyone and more than a quarter of those who had talked to someone said it was not likely they would apply. In total, 38.5% of the sample had shown some interest in apprenticeships, either planning to apply or having talked to someone about them.

**Table 1: Intentions to apply for an apprenticeship**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Likely to apply for an apprenticeship | Very | Quite | Very + Quite |
|  | 12.7% | 19.7% | 32.4% |
| Talked to someone about an apprenticeship | Yes | No | Talked to someone and / or likely to apply |
|  | 21.6% | 78.4% | 38.5% |

**3 Apprenticeship outcomes post-16**

The figures for actual outcomes in terms of young people entering apprenticeships, shown in Table 2, are nothing like as high as the figures for earlier intentions. At age 19 or 20 just over one in ten of the sample of young people had been in an apprenticeship, a third of the level of those saying earlier that they were at least quite likely to apply. Early intentions were a moderately good predictor of outcomes. Those who had earlier said they were very likely to apply were three times as likely as other young people to have had an apprenticeship. But most of those who had earlier said they were likely to apply had not been an apprentice and more than one in three of those people who had been in apprenticeships had earlier said they were unlikely to apply for one. So early intentions provide an indicator for later outcomes but most apprenticeship intentions were not fulfilled and some apprentices had not been interested in Year 10.

**Table 2: Apprenticeship intentions and outcomes**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| How likely to apply? | Very | Quite | Unlikely | Total |
| % who have been in an apprenticeship | 30.9 | 17.7 | 6.0 | 11.5 |

1. **Gender, ethnic, socio-economic and attainment characteristics of apprentices**

There are very considerable differences between different sub-groups of young people in terms of both their expressed intentions and actual outcomes. In Table 3 a comparison of different groups of young people is presented showing the percentage of each group saying they were likely to apply and the percentage who had been in an apprenticeship by age 19. Comparisons are presented by gender (male / female), ethnicity (white / other), socio-economic status based on parental occupation (professional and managerial / intermediate / routine / unemployed) and attainment in GCSE (four quartiles based on A – C grades).

Gender has a strong association with both intentions and outcomes. Males are much more likely than females to say they are likely to apply and are also more likely to have had an apprenticeship. The male to female ratio is about the same for intentions and for outcomes. Ethnicity is also very strongly associated with apprenticeships but unlike gender the difference in outcomes is very much greater than the difference in intentions. White pupils are rather more likely than other ethnic groups to say it is likely they will apply but they are very much more likely to have actually had an apprenticeship. Fewer than one in twenty of young people of ethnic minority origin have had an apprenticeship, well under half the figure for white young people.

Socio-economic status (SES) based on parental occupation has a moderate relationship with intentions but a somewhat weaker relationship to outcomes. In particular, in Year 10 young people whose families are in professional or managerial occupations are much less likely than other young people to intend to apply for an apprenticeship. But, together with those from intermediate backgrounds, they are more likely, in aggregate, to have turned these intentions into outcomes. Young people from the least advantaged backgrounds (routine occupations and unemployed) are much more likely to say they will apply but are not more likely to have had an apprenticeship. Strikingly, young people whose parents were unemployed have among the highest level of intentions but have the lowest level of apprenticeship outcomes.

Academic attainment, as measured by GCSE outcomes, has the strongest relationship of all the background factors with apprenticeships. Young people in the highest attainment quartile were very unlikely to plan to apply and were extremely unlikely to have entered an apprenticeship. In contrast, young people in the lower half of the attainment distribution were very much more likely to intend to apply and were much more likely to go into an apprenticeship. But it is not simply a matter of the lower attainers becoming apprentices. The lowest attaining group were by far the most likely to say they would apply with well over half saying that it was at least quite likely. But in terms of actually achieving apprenticeships they are below the young people in the third attainment quartile.

**Table 3: Background characteristics, intentions and outcomes**

**How likely to apply Apprentice by 19**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Gender** | Very  % | Quite  % | Very + Quite % |  | Apprentice  % |
| Male | 18.3 | 22.9 | 41.2 |  | 13.5 |
| Female | 8.9 | 16.1 | 25.0 |  | 8.0 |
| **Ethnicity** |  |  |  |  |  |
| White | 13.3 | 19.8 | 33.1 |  | 11.9 |
| Other | 7.8 | 18.4 | 26.2 |  | 4.5 |
| **SES** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Prof & Man | 8.8 | 13,6 | 22,4 |  | 8.9 |
| Intermediate | 15.2 | 20.5 | 35.7 |  | 15.1 |
| Routine | 17.2 | 27.0 | 44.2 |  | 11.5 |
| Unemployed | 14.8 | 26.2 | 41.0 |  | 5.9 |
| **GCSE** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Highest | 2.3 | 4.1 | 6.4 |  | 1.6 |
| 2nd highest | 6.8 | 15.1 | 21.9 |  | 8.9 |
| 3rd highest | 16.1 | 27.1 | 43.2 |  | 17.3 |
| Lowest | 24.9 | 31.5 | 56.4 |  | 14.4 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

In summary, gender, ethnicity and attainment were all strongly associated with apprenticeships with males, people from a white ethnic background and lower attaining students much more likely to plan to apply and to have actually been apprentices. Ethnic minority young people were especially unlikely to have entered an apprenticeship. Young people from less advantaged social backgrounds were more likely to plan to apply but were not more likely to become apprentices. This was especially true for those whose parents were unemployed. The association of apprenticeships with lower attainment and less advantaged backgrounds is clear in the intentions of the young people but less so for actual outcomes where the highest level of entry to apprenticeships is among the third rather than the lowest attainment quartile and among young people from intermediate SES backgrounds. From these figures, over the period 2005 – 2010, apprenticeships were clearly not a route for the most academically able and the more advantaged social groups but nor were they necessarily a path for the most disadvantaged and lowest achieving.

**5. Satisfaction with apprenticeships**

Levels of satisfaction with their apprenticeships of those doing apprenticeships was generally high as shown in Table 4. Almost nine out of ten rated their training as at least good and over eight out of ten said the match to their expectations was at least good. Satisfaction with pay was lower but over half rated this as good or better. Virtually everyone was fairly confident that they would complete and most of these were very confident. So, among the relatively small proportion of young people doing an apprenticeship following school, nearly all seem to be positive about the experience.

**Table 4: Satisfaction with apprenticeships**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Aspect of apprenticeship | Good or very good |  | Confident of completion |
| Pay | 55.2% | Very | 78.9% |
| Quality of training | 87.0% | Fairly | 20.6% |
| Match expectations | 82.0% | Very + Fairly | 99.5% |

**6. Overall**

The most positive aspects of the current situation with regard to apprenticeships to emerge from this analysis are the levels of interest as young people begin their GCSE courses and the levels of satisfaction with apprenticeships among those who have taken them. The apprentice route has been seriously considered by at least a third of the young people and has been found satisfactory by nearly all who have taken it. Less positive are the relatively low levels of actual entry into apprenticeships overall and, especially, the particularly low levels among some groups of young people. At age 19/20 only 11.5% had been in an apprenticeship and the figures were much lower for young women and even more so for people from ethnic minority backgrounds. The situation is also problematic in relation to attainment and social background. An apprenticeship is not generally seen as a desirable route for higher attaining young people or those from more advantaged backgrounds. But those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly unlikely to enter apprenticeships. This suggests that interventions need to take account of gender, ethnicity and social disadvantage as well as reconsidering the relationship of academic attainment to apprenticeships.