'What Works' to support equity, diversity and inclusion in creative education:
APPRENTICESHIPS

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for government:

• DCMS and DfE, along with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), must formally rethink apprenticeships for creative occupations. They need a bespoke programme that relates directly to the actual reality of working practices and employer needs in the sector.

• DCMS, DfE, and IfATE should convene a taskforce, with employers, unions and freelancer representatives, to reimagine apprenticeship policy for the sector.

• The recommended DCMS/DfE/IfATE taskforce must work with employers and potential training providers to develop new standards and a new offer. 'Trailblazers' for higher-level apprenticeships are vitally important, particularly under the Apprenticeship Levy system.

• A major information and publicity campaign, delivered by this DCMS/DfE/IfATE taskforce, using programmes such as the DCMS Creative Careers Programme, is needed to improve industry perceptions of creative apprenticeships.

• This must sit alongside significant DfE investment in careers advice in schools and for young people. There is consensus that careers advice is neither well-resourced nor provides adequate information about creative industries, including apprenticeship routes.

• However, this can only follow when there are actual examples of large-scale policy success, as opposed to the brilliant but singular and unsystematic examples offered by our case studies.

• Successful case studies will be important to inform future apprenticeships policy. Given the very low numbers of creative apprenticeships, IfATE should conduct a 'What Works' review of successful case studies from the existing offer, including individuals' discovery and experience of creative apprenticeships and their medium to long-term outcomes.

• The newly designed apprenticeship system must draw on the 'What Works' lessons of the previous sections of this report to support diversity in the creative sector.

• Our roundtables and literature review suggested significant reforms are needed to the Apprenticeship Levy, so it is more responsive to the needs of creative organisations and creative apprenticeships.

Recommendations for HEIs
• Given the very high level of degree-holding in the creative workforce, entry-level apprenticeships will be unlikely to diversify the sector on their own. A degree-level apprenticeship may, if developed and supported properly, offer similar status to the under- and postgraduate qualifications that are now so dominant.

• Degree apprenticeships could be a route to directly support mid-career creatives in developing leadership and management skills, recognised by a formal qualification. As a result, HEIs should take the lead in developing degree apprenticeships for creative occupations.

• It is vital that HEIs' creative degree apprenticeships do not repeat the widening participation, nor the work-based learning, failures of the existing university system.

• Degree apprenticeships could also formally support those re-entering the creative sector, for example, after career breaks or family leave. HEIs should develop targeted schemes to support this aim.

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

Apprenticeships are perhaps the most promising area for 'What Works' research on diversifying the creative economy. At the same time, the current policy regime has huge challenges if it is to realise that promise.

This paper introduces apprenticeships as part of the creative education landscape; summarises the literature on 'What Works'; offers case studies of potentially successful models; and has recommendations for policymakers, educators and creative organisations.

The current apprenticeship policy does not work for diversity in the creative economy. This is clear from both the academic research and the associated policy literature.

Apprenticeships, as the key alternative educational or training route into creative occupations, are therefore as much a story of what has not worked, as much as there are any insights into how diversity might be promoted and supported.

Current apprenticeship policy is not working in two ways:

1 Apprenticeships policy is struggling to deliver a more diverse general workforce. This is particularly true in the context of apprenticeship policy's focus on social mobility.

2 Current apprenticeships policy does not work for the creative economy, for a variety of reasons grounded in the design of the policy and the industrial and business organisation of the sector.

A well-designed apprenticeship system could be transformative for the creative sector. It could address the severe lack of diversity in senior roles; the problems of mid-career progression common to many creatives, particularly those from diverse backgrounds; and the need for more management and leadership skills (Gilmore et al., 2022) across the sector. This potential to impact senior roles is matched by the potential of apprenticeships as routes into the creative economy.

However, if the creative apprenticeships system is pitched as an alternative to higher education, it will never reach the parity of esteem needed in a sector where more than 75 per cent of workers have a degree.

What, then, can we learn from the academic research, the case studies and the policy literature?

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

What are apprenticeships?
Apprenticeships are accredited educational qualifications. There are four 'levels' in the current system:
• Intermediate: Level 2, equivalent to GCSEs
• Advanced: Level 3, equivalent to A-levels
• Higher: Level 4 and Level 5, equivalent to a foundation degree
• Degree: Level 6, equivalent to an undergraduate degree level, and Level 7, equivalent to a professional qualification such as a Chartered Accountant

Over the past 10 years, apprenticeships in England have undergone significant reform. The Richard Review (2012) and the Sainsbury Review (2016) implemented the present system.

The government has two stated aims for the current system: to raise productivity and contribute to social mobility Nawaz et al., 2022; Learning and Work Institute, 2017; Evans and Dromey, 2019; Crawford-Lee, 2020).

The reformed system is supported by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). This is an employer-led non-departmental public body of the Department for Education (DfE), which approves and regulates apprenticeships. It works in partnership with relevant employers from across the economy to develop standards for occupations and the vocational and technical education to meet those standards.

The current system has several requirements for every apprenticeship: To have a minimum 12-month duration; a designated 20 per cent in-work formal training allocation; be based on 'employer-led' skills standards; have an independent end-point assessment; and have all apprentices achieving Level 2 Maths and English.

These requirements ran alongside the implementation of a 0.5 per cent Apprenticeship Levy on all employers with an annual pay bill over £3 million. The levy created an entirely new funding structure for vocational skills development. It has driven major changes to the types of apprenticeships on offer, as well as to the demographics of apprentices.

The levy has also generated significant debate, with notable criticisms on the types of apprenticeships it has been used to support; a lack of impact on apprenticeships policy aimed at supporting disadvantaged groups; a lack of flexibility on how the funding can be used, for example, to assist those in financial need; and the need for the levy to focus more on both social mobility and small and medium-sized enterprises. Indeed, some critics point to the levy as a causal factor for the overall decline in apprenticeship starts, with levy support assisting the already advantaged (Social Mobility Commission, 2020).

Criticisms of the current system, including debates over the levy, are not exclusive to the creative sector. Notwithstanding the general problems of the system (most recently summarised by UCAS, 2023), there are specific challenges in the creative economy.

Creative & Cultural Skills, the sector skills body for the creative sector, offers useful guidance for managers on how to employ and treat apprentices (CC Skills, 2022), along with useful resources reflecting on whether apprenticeships work for the sector (CC Skills, 2021). Yet despite support from the key skills organisation, the creative economy has not widely engaged with apprenticeships as a means of training and selecting new entrants. This is partially due to failures of the current policy system and also reflects a missed opportunity for the creative sector. **Apprenticeships have the potential to offer a route to addressing creative occupations' diversity deficits.**

The *Creative Majority* report (Wreyford et al., 2021), along with the other reports from this project, highlights the importance of skills, experience and job experience as part of getting in and getting on in creative occupations. 'Hiring as cultural matching' (Rivera, 2012; Koppman, 2016; De Keere, 2022) limits diversity as organisations and commissioners work with people like themselves or those who are either already known to them or recommended by their existing contacts.

Education, particularly having a degree, plays an important role in developing these networks and contacts (Friedman and Laurison, 2019). Moreover, where the degree is from can be as important as the choice of subject, helping individuals to be considered the right 'fit' (Wreyford, 2018) for a creative role (Koppman, 2016). Apprenticeships offer a potential solution to these enduring barriers to equity in creative industries.

In creative jobs, experience often comes from unpaid work (Brook et al., 2020a; Brook et al. 2020b). As our paper on internships discusses, this widespread practice has been criticised for exacerbating inequalities. Yet working without pay still offers a route for creative workers to develop networks and contacts, as well as the possibility of gaining skills and experience (Brook et al., 2020a).

Writing almost 30 years ago, the creative industries scholar Candace Jones captured the process of being 'socialised' into an occupation and the benefits that flow from understanding industry culture (Jones, 1996; Adler, 2021). In many creative occupations, the cultural and embodied capital of privileged, White, able-bodied potential workers gives them an advantage over more diverse candidates. Paid, on-the-job training, such as that offered by an apprenticeship, provides a powerful alternative to these more informal routes in.

In addition, apprenticeships, with their blend of work experience and education, offer a different type of learning to higher education courses. Research in education in apprenticeships has shown that it is a model that goes beyond learning through reading, writing and thinking. It also includes the body and skilled performance:

"Crafts – like sport, dance and other skilled physical activities – are largely communicated, understood and negotiated between practitioners without words, and learning is achieved through observation, mimesis and repeated exercise." (Marchand, 2008: 245).

Apprenticeships allow the individual to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to do the job. They can also offer the social expertise and cultural belonging that demonstrates their status and right to be members of an otherwise elusive 'club' working in creative jobs (Adler, 2021). While the creative sector continues to recruit based on networks and contacts as much as skills, experience and qualifications, apprenticeships could offer a way to challenge this un-diverse status quo.

Who are apprentices?
The aims of raising productivity and social mobility, alongside the new policy landscape inaugurated by the Apprenticeship Levy, have meant important shifts in the demographics of apprentices.

DfE's (2022) evaluation of apprenticeships suggested that

Level 3 (A Level equivalent) was the most common type of apprentice (46 per cent of all apprentices), but higher levels were growing. This is especially true for degree apprenticeships (10 per cent), which we discuss in a specific section later in the report.

Business (24 per cent), health (24 per cent) and engineering (19 per cent) dominate subject areas. Arts are consistently less than 1 per cent of all apprenticeships, a problem we discuss in detail in the next section.

Nearly half (44 per cent) of all apprentices are now aged 25 and over (DfE, 2021) and 75 per cent worked with their firm for at least a year before starting the apprenticeship (Speckesser and Xu, 2022; Murphy and Jones, 2021). Levy funding has not generally focused on younger people. Both academic and policy analyses of the Levy (e.g. Cullinane and Doherty, 2020; Social Mobility Commission, 2020; APPG on Apprenticeships, 2021; Patrigani et al., 2021; Cavaglia et al., 2022; CEDEFOP, 2022; ScreenSkills, 2023) suggest it incentivised employers to focus on higher-level (and thus higher-cost) apprentices, usually from within their own staff.

Higher-level training is vital to the economy (Crawford-Lee, 2020). However, it is clear there is a mismatch between the perception of apprenticeships as a route into work for younger people and the reality of more established workers developing higher-level skills.

This mismatch extends to a range of other demographics. Those young people who do start apprenticeships are disproportionately from a more privileged background (Smith et al., 2021). This is a huge, missed opportunity for the policy, as apprentices who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds experience a bigger boost to their earnings when they complete an apprenticeship (Social Mobility Commission, 2020), and apprenticeships can boost wages for those who do follow HE routes after the end of compulsory education (Dickerson et al, 2023).

The limited impact on social mobility is shared by virtually all analysis. Indeed, the Social Mobility Commission was stark in its 2020 assessment, asserting that not only was the system not working, but also that "the main beneficiaries of apprenticeships are the people who do not need them" (Battiston et al., 2020).

More than 80 per cent of apprenticeships started by those from a disadvantaged background were in the service industries, health, education and public administration (Battiston et al.,

2020). Although earning while learning is one of the draws of apprenticeships, the low apprentice wage is often cited as a barrier, particularly for the most socially disadvantaged, and in addition, apprentices stand to lose access to benefits and become eligible for council tax (Skills Commission, 2018). Travel costs can be another barrier, particularly for young people in rural areas.

The most recent work (e.g. Cavaglia, et al., 2022) notes a dramatic decline in apprenticeship starts between 2015 and 2020, with a change in composition from lower to higher levels. Individuals from poor socio-economic backgrounds are underrepresented at all levels of apprenticeships and increasingly so at high levels. Indeed, 69 per cent of apprentices under the age of 21 have a parent who went to university (Smith et al., 2021).

In terms of gender, there is less inequality in the number of apprentices (although none of the literature considers gender outside of a binary framework), but gendered segregation by profession is still a problem. Men are significantly more likely to study craft, technical and engineering occupations and women to study subjects from lower-paid sectors such as social work and childcare (Skills Commission, 2018; Murphy and Jones, 2021). DfE's (2022) analysis suggested men were the majority of apprentices in construction (91 per cent), engineering (91 per cent) and ICT (78 per cent), while women were the majority in health (79 per cent), education (76 per cent), retail (61 per cent), business (59 per cent) and arts (57 per cent).

An initial study of the reformed apprenticeship system (Fuller et al, 2017) suggested the most popular advanced apprenticeship for men was engineering (32 per cent), while for women, it was child development and wellbeing (24 per cent). Average earnings for men on the engineering apprenticeship were £29,265; for women on the child development and wellbeing apprenticeship, average earnings were £12,038. Pay gaps were striking for the same subjects at the same levels: on the intermediate administration apprenticeship, men's average earnings were £19,095; for women, they were £14,438. On the advanced administration apprenticeship, men's average earnings were £22,072; women's were £16,514.

The gender inequalities in apprenticeships have a long history. The apprenticeship gender pay gap was 26 per cent in 2009 (Marangazov et al., 2009). Gendered comments and criticism,

still common in the workplace, also have a history of shaping apprentice career paths (Learning and Skills Council, 2009). As recently as 2005, the Equal Opportunities Commission gathered evidence of sexism in recruitment, such as women being told, "This is a job for big, strong men. We don't want women coming in here with their hormones" in a factory (Miller, 2005).

In terms of ethnicity, the inequalities are less stark. DfE's (2022) analysis suggested racially minoritised individuals were 15 per cent of all current apprentices, a slightly higher proportion than the workforce overall (13 per cent in the 2021 Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey). However, there are large variations between specific ethnic groups, and British Asians make up just 4.6 per cent of starters (Mutlib, 2020). This proportion has been consistent since 2018-19.

Levels 2 and 3 apprenticeships had a slightly higher proportion of White individuals (88 per cent). Racially minoritised individuals made up higher proportions of apprenticeships at Level 4 and above (18 per cent). DfE (2021) estimates clear under-representations in specific sectors, with low proportions in agriculture (3 per cent), construction (6 per cent), engineering (6 per cent) and retail (10 per cent).

There are also indications that these groups were less likely to complete and less likely to get a job even if they did complete. Even though the DfE's (2021) analysis shows improvements since 2014, Cavaglia et al's (2022) analysis of apprenticeships shows under-representation by race for younger starters, suggesting future issues for diversity.

Four per cent of apprentices identified as having a disability and 6 per cent a learning difficulty. These proportions were highest on Level 2 apprenticeships (9 per cent) (DfE, 2021). Employers need to be better informed about apprentices with disabilities and made aware of how they can be adaptable to differing needs in the workplace (Learning and Skills Council, 2009).

The struggles of the reformed apprenticeship system to meet social mobility aims are not new. The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission's (2016) analysis of new starters suggested that in London, just 4 per cent of 16- to 19-year-olds start apprenticeships; the highest levels were in the Northeast, at 9 per cent.

APPRENTICESHIPS AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

The IfATE published a review of the apprenticeship offer for creative occupations in September 2021. This recognised the challenges facing the sector, both in terms of the need for flexible, multi-employer and micro-business apprenticeships and in the challenge of diversity as the sector recovered from the impact of the Covid pandemic. Indeed, promoting diversity and inclusion was the first of its principles for the future of creative and design apprenticeships (IfATE, 2021).

Following the reform and retirement of some of the initial apprenticeships on offer, the IfATE's website, as of July 2023, lists 55 standards approved for delivery under the creative and design route (IfATE, 2023). This covers the majority of creative occupations and is the focus of this report. Some occupations, for example, games programming and digital design, fall under the digital route, but initial analysis suggests there are similarities between these apprenticeships and the problems facing the creative and design route.

The 55 standards capture a huge range of creative occupations, from journalists and curators through to live event technicians and visual effects artists. They also cover a range of levels: two at Level 2, 27 at Level 3, eight at Level 4, five at Level 5, three at Level 6 and 10 at Level 7.

The existence of 55 standards, across all learning levels, suggests some creative occupations are currently being served by the apprenticeship system. However, the story is more complex. **Apprenticeships need providers, end-point assessors and organisations offering vacancies.** Later in this report, we show the crisis in degree-level apprenticeship provision, but for now, it is worth remarking on the limitations of provision for Levels 2 to 5.

Six of the 55 standards are not accepting starters as they wait to find end-point assessors. Some, for example, junior animator (Level 4), have no providers. Others, for example, publishing assistant (Level 3), have a single provider, but no vacancies.

DfE (2023) data on vacancies since 2018 shows that only 24 of the current 55 standards have had any positions advertised. This does reflect some changes in the labelling and content of the standards; for example, the current 'content creator' standard has replaced 'junior content producer'. At the same time, it reflects the struggle to provide access even where standards have been agreed.

There have been 1,010 adverts for the 24 standards since 2018. 518 of those were for spectacle makers, which are counted in the creative and design standards as they are a craft occupation.

If we look at areas more usually associated with creative occupations, we see 154 adverts for a creative venue technician, 93 for publishing assistant, 40 for live event technician, 28 adverts for broadcasting apprenticeships (across degree, higher and advanced levels) and 18 fashion studio assistants. Again, these are not large numbers of opportunities, either relative to the rest of the apprenticeship system (DfE estimates a total of 476,464 adverts for all apprenticeships since 2018) or relative to the dominance of degrees for those already working in the creative sector.

A useful case study is the role of journalist (Level 5). There have long been concerns about social mobility in journalism. In 2006, The Sutton Trust (2006) found over half of leading journalists went to private schools, and more than one-third who had been to university went to Oxford. They presented similar figures in their (2019) Elitist Britain report. The most recent research, from the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ), used ONS Labour Force Survey data to demonstrate the catastrophically low levels of working-class origin individuals working as journalists. Its 2022 reports (Spilsbury, 2021 and 2022) found that only 2 per cent of journalists were from working-class social origins. In contrast, 80 per cent were from middle-class social origins. These trends are getting worse, as in the 2021 report, 8 per cent had working-class origins and 75 per cent had middle-class origins.

The same research also demonstrated that journalism is now a graduate occupation. 89 per cent of journalists have a degree, and more than one-third (36 per cent) are educated to postgraduate level. In this context, the apprenticeship should be one element of addressing the social mobility crisis for this occupation.

Although journalism (Level 5) is reasonably well served by five providers listed on the DfE website, only one of these offers national coverage; the rest are in the South of England. Moreover, at the time of writing, there were no vacancies offering this apprenticeship. Indeed, a deep dive into DfE data (DfE, 2023) suggests there were only 11 adverts and 32 individual vacancies since it was introduced at Level 5 in December 2021.

Apprenticeships cannot be the solution to social mobility issues in jobs where there are few, if any, opportunities to participate in routes into these occupations.

These examples underpin our conclusion that the current system is failing the needs of the creative sector, as well as failing the needs of a more diverse workforce.

These are not new issues. Table 1 shows the total number of all apprenticeship enrolments, starts and achievements since 2017–18 plus the number of arts, media and publishing enrolments, starts and achievements.

Table 1: Apprenticeship numbers 2017–18 to 2022–23 (Source https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/apprenticeships-and-traineeships)

		2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23
Total	Enrolments	870,000	793,720	779,270	760,070	782,580	651,840
	Starts	375,760	393,380	322,530	321,440	349,190	195,600
	Achievements	276,160	185,150	146,900	156,530	137,220	62,030
Arts, Media and Publishing	Enrolments	1,900	1,990	2,230	3,150	3,490	3,080
	Starts	950	1,000	1,240	1,990	2,010	1,080
	Achievements	560	550	500	610	650	380

The government's own initial assessments of the impact of its 2015 apprenticeship policy reforms showed that within the 2017–18 cohort, arts, media and publishing apprentices represented just 0.21 per cent of all enrolments, 0.25 per cent of all starts and 0.2 per cent of all achievements.

Indeed, DfE data shows these low proportions of arts, media and publishing apprenticeship starts were persistently low over time, with 0.25 per cent in 2018–19, 0.38 per cent in 2019–20, 0.61 per cent in 2020–21, 0.57 per cent in 2021–22 and 0.55 per cent in 2022–23 (DfE, 2023).

Moreover, although achievement rates for arts, media and publishing apprenticeships are good compared to other sectors (Cavaglia et al., 2022), they still have an achievement rate of less

than two-thirds (under 66 per cent) annually between the years 2019 and 2022 (DfE, 2023).

It is striking that where analysis of the apprenticeship system has been conducted (e.g. Murphy and Jones, 2021), the low levels of arts, media and publishing apprenticeships means they are absent from detailed discussions.

This lack of take-up for arts, media and publishing apprenticeships, relative to other industrial sectors, should also be understood in relation to HE degrees as a route in. The sheer scale of difference, for example, where 90 per cent of London-based younger media sector workers have degrees, shows the extent of the challenge for policy.

To understand these issues in more detail, it is worth turning to two comments from a recent (2023) House of Lords' Communications and Digital Committee report on the future of the creative economy. They give the context for the issues facing apprenticeship policy for the creative economy. The Committee's *At Risk: Our Creative Future* report was critical of both current training provision for the creative sector (House of Lords, 2023):

"Post-16 education plays a critical role in developing skills for the creative industries. But training pathways are confusing for students and employers. Clearer routes into the industry are needed."

And the specifics of the current apprenticeships regime for creative jobs:

"The apprenticeship scheme remains poorly suited to a large proportion of creative businesses, who are unable to provide the required length of training placements due to the short-term, project-based nature of much work in the sector."

The identification of the clear mismatch between apprenticeship policy and the needs of the creative sector is seen in virtually every commentary on policy as well as the limited range of academic research on creative apprenticeships.

This mismatch is driven by many different factors. The need for a single employer to host the 12-month apprenticeship is immediately at odds with much of the project-based and freelance nature of creative work. The government has promised to explore flexible and multi-employer apprenticeships (DCMS, 2023), but this is only one part of the problem.

One of the few formal evaluations of current apprenticeship policy for the creative sector was equally critical. ScreenSkills'

(2023) recent work on their apprenticeships programme noted:

"Industry partners have stated that the external and internal costs of running the apprenticeship agency model as currently structured are unsustainable in the long term, particularly due to the resources required to identify sufficient suitable, continuous placements to provide on-the-job training at scale. Additionally, the industry partners feel that the lack of relevance and low quality of some of the standards and off-the-job training make these costs poor value for money and therefore less viable for production companies, especially compared with other routes for entry-level talent."

The struggles for creative sector apprenticeships are also a long-standing issue for vocational qualifications in general. They are not unique to the creative sector. Several academic and policy papers from our literature search, including Steedman et al. (1998), Fuller and Unwin (2003), DfES (2004), Campbell et al. (2005), Hogarth et al. (2012) and Patrignani et al. (2021) all stress the challenge of designing an apprenticeship system that delivers for both the economy and society.

The challenges of policy design and delivery are matched by the other dominant issue in policy-related literature, which is the long-standing lack of status for apprenticeships when compared to academic education routes. This is acute in the context of degrees. This issue was raised across our search, irrespective of the date of the paper, its subject, or whether it was policy or academic. **Against the backdrop of a sector that is dominated by degree-holders, creating parity of esteem for apprenticeships is an essential task for both policymakers and the creative sector itself.**

Parity of esteem is especially important in the context of diversity. Mutlib (2020) notes that the low status offered to apprenticeships manifests in scepticism from ethnic minorities as to the value of apprenticeships for their children when compared to the importance of degrees. More generally, Smith (2023), in a systematic analysis of five cross-national comparative research projects, demonstrates that in addition to parity of esteem issues, the attractiveness of apprenticeship opportunities is highly contextual; what appeals about apprenticeships to some social groups may be directly off-putting to others.

Synthesising 'What Works' in these circumstances is a complex task. Formal, 'What Works' style evaluations are extremely

rare and our literature review found no studies that exactly matched this framework. As with other areas covered by this project, there was a wealth of research, rich with both critiques and useful insights. Much was framed through the lens of what does not work, for apprenticeships in general, and for supporting diversity. For creative occupations, Davis and Parker (2013); Riley (2017 and 2021); Ashton (2015 and 2016); and Lahiff and Guile (2016) have various insights, and the recent ScreenSkills' (2023) programme evaluation provides valuable practical information.

CASE STUDY: ALL SPRING MEDIA

Founded in 2011, All Spring Media is a training provider that supports an inclusive and diverse workforce for the screen industries through a comprehensive range of entry and CPD programmes.

All Spring Media has helped more than 1,000 people get into the creative industries through traineeships, apprenticeships, pre-employment schemes and other training interventions.

Managing Director Martina Porter set up All Spring Media to create a bridge to access the film and television industry. She knew how tough it was to get into the business, so she wanted to help those who needed support to create a more inclusive industry.

All Spring Media now delivers high-quality training programmes that are led by industry professionals, relevant to the needs of industry and have been supported by ScreenSkills and the Mayor of London.

Drawing on film and television experience, it helps clients/learners identify and plan around their needs for specific skills. Building a network of connections, it creates direct employment routes, addresses the current skills gap and offers ongoing pastoral support to learners.

All Spring Media delivers holistic training that focuses on gaining skills rather than ticking boxes. Its approach to training is one of benefiting the learner to create an engaging learning environment.

It hosts a range of production and non-production apprentices on-site. Some current and recently completed apprenticeships include:

- Junior Content Producer, Level 3
- Public Relations and Communications, Level 4
- Broadcast Production Assistant, Level 3
- Media Production Coordinator, Level 4
- Assistant Accountant, Level 3

All Spring Media also hosts one of the current pilot apprentices from the 'flexi-apprenticeship' where the apprentices have multiple placements with different employers throughout the course of the programme run by the same umbrella agency: ScreenSkills.

All Spring Media is active in the formation of various creative industries apprenticeship occupations such as Media Production Coordinator (Level 4).

METHODS

This report is based on the findings of a systematic review of academic literature, policy documents and commissioned reports on apprenticeships, particularly those with a consideration of diversity and inclusion. A systematic approach has been applied in previous research conducted by the research team working for the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Creative Diversity (see Wreyford et al., 2021). It is intended as an effective way to scope out and review a large amount of existing research at the same time as reducing bias in the expertise and experience of the research team.

As apprenticeships in the creative economy is not a very well-established area of research, unlike widening participation or internships, the research team adopted a broad search strategy. To conduct a systematic review of the literature, the research team entered particular words into the search engines of Google Scholar, Scopus (Elsevier's abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature) and Browzine, the academic journal repository of the University of the Arts London.

A number of relevant terms were entered: 'apprenticeship' and then additional terms such as 'impact', 'access', 'UK, 'employment', 'diversity', 'education', 'culture' and 'creativity'. Separate searches were made for 'apprenticeship' and 'diversity' with terms relating to particular creative industries, such as film, TV, radio and photography, advertising and marketing, book

publishing, music, performing arts, visual arts, fashion and design.

The initial searches produced many results (see Appendix 6.1), and so limitations were added to the results such as date of publication (since 2000) and results where the search terms appeared in the title. For all of these, the abstracts were read and any that were not relevant were discarded. Where a document seemed particularly pertinent, we also considered the references, applying the same criteria as before but looking in particular for areas where the research team identified a paucity of evidence under consideration or to go to the source for information felt to be key.

The team arrived at a final list of 95 relevant papers and documents after removing duplicates and adding recommendations from the roundtables and the research team. This is the literature that has been used to compile this report.

The report has been further developed following a series of roundtable discussions with representatives from across the creative, cultural and wider industries and a series of submissions through the public consultation into the question of 'What Works' to improve equity, diversity and inclusion in creative education. Throughout this report, case studies are included from some of those who provided evidence. In many cases, they also give a voice to the lived experiences of those from underrepresented groups and ensure that the recommendations are rooted in the specific concerns of the creative sector itself. These are included as examples of effective practice and to illustrate innovative ways to implement the recommendations suggested by this report.

CASE STUDY: ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) apprenticeships programme currently offers Level 2, Level 3 and Level 5 qualifications for people interested in work-based routes into theatre. There are 12 apprentices currently employed by the company, building towards 28 apprenticeship roles in 2024. The programme is a key part of the RSC's ambition to attract young people from underrepresented groups into theatre jobs.

The RSC's current apprentices work in operations, automation, learning and front of house. Previous apprentices have worked in carpentry, props and scenic engineering.

The apprentices are employed directly by RSC and work in-house for approximately 80 per cent of their time. The other 20 per cent is allocated for work towards their qualifications with colleges in the Midlands and Chichester. They are paid national living wage, rather than the lower apprenticeship wage. This has been an important step in encouraging applications from young people from low-income backgrounds.

The RSC's Jacqui O'Hanlon told the APPG that one of the crucial elements of an effective apprenticeship programme has been developing the pipeline into those opportunities, particularly in terms of young people from backgrounds currently underrepresented in the creative industries. The key mechanism the RSC uses is its long-term partnerships with schools, colleges and regional theatres in areas of structural disadvantage. Called the Associate Schools Programme, the network is built around the principle of schools working in place-based partnerships. The RSC currently have partnerships with 250 schools and colleges in 25 towns and cities across England, from Cornwall to Middlesbrough. Opportunities inside and outside the classroom are co-created. The programme includes teacher professional development, talent and skills development, youth leadership development and co-producing festivals of work made by and with young people.

Through those partnerships, the RSC has also developed a pre-apprenticeship programme called Next Generation. Next Generation has three parts: Act, Backstage and Direct. Each element provides fully funded opportunities for young people from backgrounds underrepresented in the cultural sector to undertake work experience in a whole range of different departments and disciplines, both at the RSC and in their local regional theatre. The programme formally starts at age 13 and 100 young people each year participate in the programme. Young people aged 17 and 18 will also be supported in their applications and interviews for apprenticeship roles, both at the RSC and with other organisations. The RSC will track the progress and progression of Next Generation participants into paid training and employment.

The RSC has a working group made up of managers and apprentices from across the company to review progress and make adjustments to the programme. The voices of young people currently undertaking apprentice roles and those who have graduated into full-time employment are key to ensuring the

company learns and develops its approach.

"I'm a big advocate for apprenticeships. I think that university works for some people but [through apprenticeships]... you get the best of everything: you get the education, you get the paperwork behind you, you get the technical skills, the practical skills and just general experience, which I think is worth its weight in gold in the future." – Jack, scenic engineer and former apprentice at the RSC

"I didn't think I'd get this apprenticeship because I didn't have the experience. But I just said: 'I need someone to teach me from the ground up', and they were willing to give me the opportunity to learn." – Kate, the RSC's first female automation apprentice

QUALITY AND THE DEFICIT MODEL

Throughout the literature and policy interventions is a fundamental struggle to give apprenticeships parity of status with higher education and degrees. As we have seen in our analysis of UCAS, HESA and Census data, degrees dominate educational routes into the creative sector.

These ongoing issues manifest in two ways. First is the issue of quality in the context of apprenticeships. Second is the problem of a 'deficit' model implicit in much of the possible 'What Works' advice.

Almost every analysis of current apprenticeship policy raises issues of quality. Again, this is not a new issue. In 2004, the then Department for Education and Skills found modern apprenticeships and work–based learning were seen as second–class options compared to traditional degree and graduate employment routes. This has continued to the present.

Policy voices, for example, the APPG on Apprenticeships (2021), along with Select Committees in the Houses of Lords (2023) and Commons (2018), have all called for more to be done on the status of apprenticeships. Research (e.g. Murphy and Jones, 2021; Learning and Skills Council, 2009; Learning and Work Institute, 2017; Cavaglia et al , 2022; Fuller and Unwin, 2017; Mutlib, 2020; Ryan and Lőrinc, 2018; The Skills Commission, 2018; and Speckesser and Xu, 2022) concurs, with status and parity of esteem with degrees a dominant theme.

Apprenticeship programmes in England are often perceived as less desirable than staying in full–time education (Fuller and Unwin, 2007). Many potential apprentices must negotiate feelings of 'being looked down on', i.e. not being worth as much as a degree holder or seen as working as hard (Ryan and Lőrinc, 2018). Schools are under intense pressure to encourage pupils to continue in education and this is reflected in careers advice and parental disapproval of apprenticeships as a worthwhile option (Skills Commission, 2018).

The issue of the status of apprenticeships in comparison to degrees impacts both who is likely to become an apprentice as well as the quality of the courses themselves. Subsequent sections have a 'deep dive' on degree apprenticeships, but in general, research has raised questions about the impact of this lower status on course quality.

St Martin's Group (2022), based on survey work with apprenticeships, confirmed DfE's (2021b) statistics on dropout and completion rates. They also found apprentices did not feel well informed about their programmes or their assessments prior to starting courses.

These findings echoed 2017 research from the Learning and Work Institute on issues of quality, lack of advancement or additionality in terms of skills, and the levels of apprenticeships being taken up. Fuller et al. (2017) also found issues with progression and links between levels, in addition to concerns about diversity and the skew of funding towards London and the Southeast of England.

Second, most initiatives to address inequalities have been based on a deficit model, where it is assumed that introducing steps to help potential candidates with awareness or applying for apprenticeships will provide the solution. Little consideration has been given to what changes might be needed by the educational providers or the employers. In this way – as has been thoroughly discussed in the literature on employment and inequality of opportunity – the problem is individualised and seen to be the responsibility of the underrepresented groups themselves to adapt and learn.

Chadderton and Wischmann (2014) go even further and argue that there are assumptions of 'cultural deficiency', where those from disadvantaged demographics, for example, are assumed to lack the necessary social and cultural capital, and that their

skills and abilities may be judged subjectively as different and therefore less valuable. Rathbone Training in Newcastle suggests helping both individuals and employers to recognise the skills and networks that a diverse range of candidates could bring to the workplace (Skills Commission, 2018).

The Skills Commission (2018) found that employers were willing to "be flexible on entry criteria…as long as the person has the right attitude and desire to learn". However, this is not something that is widely communicated to potential applicants. Ryan and Lőrinc (2018) have pointed out that policymakers tend to view young people as able to make the 'right' choices when given the right information but that structural factors have not been taken sufficiently into account.

As we demonstrated with our analysis of widening participation for higher education, these approaches will not work to address the systematic issues facing diversity in the creative economy. **To properly reform vocational routes into creative work, and indeed work in general, apprenticeship policy must move away from assuming the failures of policy are the fault of individual deficits, rather than the ongoing lesser status of apprentice education.**

LESSONS FROM OTHER SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY

Notwithstanding our caveats about the lack of a 'What Works' approach to diversity and apprenticeships, there is a reasonable consensus across the literature.

From the international comparative work, we see a high-level policy suggestion: in a 2022 assessment of the impact of the pandemic on Europe's apprenticeship systems, CEDEFOP (2022) noted how most European nations have a clear vision for the purpose and role of apprenticeships policy. In the creative economy context, it is clear this vision has yet to be realised by any of the constituent nations in the British system.

Germany's approach to apprenticeships is widely regarded as the 'gold standard' in Europe (Campbell et al., 2011). It allows transferability between employers, due to several factors, including the stability of the training schemes, shared recognition of skills developed during the apprenticeship and the involvement of trade unions and other occupational associations to agree

pay scales and professional status for final awards. As a result, Germany's apprenticeships have a relatively high status compared to purely academic options (Chadderton and Wischmann, 2014).

In the English context, apprenticeships can be challenging for employers. Getting recruitment right, ensuring retention and completion, organising work culture to support the learning and assessment elements of an apprenticeship, and the need for high-quality mentoring are all areas that demand employer commitment (Rowe et al, 2017).

Moreover, managing the time off the job for the academic elements; the mismatch between employer needs and the standards (and qualified tutors) to meet those needs; employer misconceptions and stigma about the quality of apprenticeship programmes; and the need to be flexible for older and more senior level staff taking apprenticeships are all additional challenges from the employers' perspective (Murphy and Jones, 2021).

To meet these challenges, successful and effective apprenticeships are strongly associated with a sustained organisational commitment (Fuller and Unwin, 2007). This takes several forms.

For recruitment:
Well-designed recruitment campaigns, policies and practices, and dedicated personnel to monitor the progress and welfare of apprentices (Fuller and Unwin, 2007), are essential.

An early report commissioned by the National Apprenticeship Service to improve racial and gender inequities provides two successful case studies for advertising and recruitment. Adverts were placed in women's magazines to encourage women to apply for technical apprenticeships and in working men's clubs to attract men into childcare (Marangozov et al., 2009).

Early intervention matters. Pre-apprenticeship funding for relevant qualifications (e.g. driving licences) as well as general financial support at the start of programmes can be effective in supporting recruitment (Murphy and Jones, 2021; APPG on Apprenticeships, 2021). Financial support sits alongside partnerships with schools and the use of ambassadors and role models to make clear the types of support that are available on entry (Murphy and Jones, 2021; APPG on Apprenticeships, 2021; St Martin's Group, 2022). This can also be effective when targeting potential apprentices already on staff payrolls.

However, questions of status and parity of esteem are never far from apprenticeships policy. Advertising using data on pay progression, promotion and education or training outcomes, as well as dispelling myths about pay rates, can help to attract potential apprentices (Murphy and Jones, 2021; St Martin's Group, 2022). In turn, this may help raise awareness of apprenticeships as a positive alternative to degrees (APPG on Apprenticeships, 2021), which is a general issue for apprenticeships policy.

For entry and retention:
The literature repeatedly refers to the creation of a support structure and mentoring relationships as key to increasing the number and success of apprentices from under-represented groups (for example, Hansberry and Gerhardt, 2023; Newton and Williams, 2013).

Mentoring and support structures can include direct support, particularly one-to-one meetings between apprentices and managers, as an important element of retention strategy (St Martin's Group, 2022). Line managers can support apprentices during the programme through regular catch-ups to review progress and identify any issues, including ensuring that the workplace culture is supportive of apprentice needs (Murphy and Jones, 2021). Better connections and ongoing communication between the employer and provider ensure that support that is agreed at the beginning of the apprenticeship is maintained for the duration of the apprenticeship and not just in the early months. These agreements also involve upfront information about content, tasks, timescales, workplace responsibilities and how to access support, as well as how the minimum 20 per cent off-the-job training will be protected and managed.

Financial support was also identified as important for some groups, in particular younger respondents and those who did not already work for their employer. This may involve increases to the apprentice minimum wage, particularly if financial issues place apprentices at risk of not achieving.

The risks of dropping out of courses are also related to the need for formal pastoral care, particularly from training providers, and employer commitments to protect time off for learning and study.

Cross-European research suggests training for company mentors, with a specific focus on senior staff's time for preparing and providing training, as well as proper recognition and compensation, can be effective (CEDEFOP, 2022). This links to the general importance of role models – for example, apprentices seeing mentors who have themselves completed an apprenticeship (St Martin's Group, 2022).

Tasters or trial periods have had proven results for apprentices from minorities (Newton and Williams, 2013). The same paper also recommends working with employers to reduce bias in recruitment and ensure working conditions are equitable by having cultural competence around such things as dress codes and religious requirements. More generally, Murphy and Jones (2021) suggest more guidance to help employers engage with a more diverse workforce, who in turn may become more diverse apprentices.

Similar themes were found in a study on degree apprenticeships. Rowe et al. (2017) identified the need for recruitment to be steered by trained and experienced HR professionals or senior managers; regular contacts between higher education staff and businesses to develop buy-in from both sides of provision, as well as to develop ownership by senior staff; time and resources to be devoted to making sure apprentices feel part of both elements of provision; and the need for quality mentoring from both academic and employer mentors. These common factors are worth noting as they bridge to 'What Works' questions for higher education and apprenticeship policy.

CASE STUDY: RESOURCE PRODUCTIONS CIC

A model for 'What Works' is the media production and training CIC Resource Productions. Based in Slough, it balances commercial production with opportunities for apprentices. It is now an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

Five of its 11 staff members are currently undertaking or have completed apprenticeships. As a commercial need arises, Resource Productions will build a job description, design the role with a learning provider and then advertise for the post. Each position arises from a targeted skills need and with some secured project funding to cover the wages.

CEO Dominique Unsworth told the Creative Diversity APPG that: *"Resource Productions has been involved in creating a lot of apprenticeship standards – Production Assistant Screen and Audio Level 3 which has been very useful for our own company development but also as a pathway in for those not wanting to continue education particularly around the 17-19 age group.*

I've seen that on the ground apprenticeships are brilliant. People staying in the company for 10 years and going through 3 or 4 apprenticeships through that time. Coming out with a degree. That has worked very well for us. I do not see how any other company would not want to utilise that great pathway.

It is striking that apprenticeships completed by staff are mostly in the business, administration and law pathways. This reflects some of the challenges for creative apprenticeships that this paper discusses.

Siobhan White's journey
Siobhan started studying child nursing at university in 2013. She realised she wanted to pursue a career in performing arts and volunteered with organisations in Slough to build her creative performance experience.

While volunteering, it was suggested she apply for a Level 3 apprenticeship in community arts. After 12 months of working and studying, she was offered a full-time position by Resource Productions, the company providing her apprenticeship.

The initial apprenticeship gave Siobhan insights into the practical workings of the creative industries. It also gave her confidence and empowered her as a performer.

Siobhan is currently completing her Level 5 Operations and Departmental Manager on the Business, Administration and Law Pathway. She believes that creative businesses can also benefit from formal business planning, management and learning.

Siobhan believes firmly that apprenticeships do equalise opportunity for learners from working-class origins. The battle is now to convince parents, teachers and career advisors that apprenticeships are a viable path to success in the creative industries.

THE CHALLENGE OF DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

What are degree apprenticeships?
"A degree apprenticeship is a combination of work and higher-level learning, with a programme developed by employers, universities and professional bodies in partnership. The apprentice is in employment throughout but must spend 20 per cent of their time undertaking study or training, either on a day-to-day basis or in blocks. This study goes towards an undergraduate or postgraduate degree as part of the apprenticeship, accredited by the relevant higher education institution. They generally take between two and six years to complete. Unlike traditional degrees, there are no tuition fees for apprentices, and apprentices are paid by their employer throughout." (Cullinane and Doherty, 2020)

Cullinane and Doherty (2020) also suggest the importance of differentiating between degree-level apprenticeships, which are Level 6 and 7 apprenticeships, and the specific degree apprenticeship that comes with a degree qualification awarded by a higher education provider.

The major point of intersection between higher education and the apprenticeship system is the degree apprenticeship.

The two policy aims for degree apprenticeships are to increase social mobility across employment and address growing skills gaps in the UK economy (OfS, 2019). Degree apprenticeships are designed to be employer-led with assessment standards set by 'trailblazer' groups from the industry or profession associated with the course.

Degree apprenticeships are a relatively new part of the apprenticeship system (Smith et al., 2021). As a result, there is a lack of longitudinal data to make any robust claims about long-term impact. There is also little formal 'What Works' material in the policy and academic literature we have analysed.

The need for partnerships between employers and higher education, particularly on assessment standards, is both a challenge and an opportunity (Crawford-Lee, 2020; Quew-Jones and Rowe, 2022). The shift to higher-level apprenticeships following the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy (Cullinane and Doherty, 2020) has created new demand

for work-based learning within higher education. At the same time, much more needs to be done to create cohesive and standardised benchmarking on how to deliver and assess degree apprenticeships (Quew-Jones and Rowe, 2022).

These pedagogical questions are one part of the literature on degree apprenticeships. The initial evaluations, both academic and policy, show mixed results for both social mobility and addressing skills gaps. Indeed, there may be a tension between fulfilling these two aims of increased social mobility and addressing skills gaps in the context of an employer-driven learning model (Engineering Professors Council, 2018).

Much of the research on degree apprenticeships and social mobility has been highly critical. Casey and Wakeling (2022), assessing degree apprenticeships for solicitors, found most degree apprentices were from middle-class backgrounds. By contrast, candidates with lower socio-economic status retained a preference for the traditional degree route into a law career. This is one illustration of the ongoing issues over parity of esteem, even where the qualification is supposed to be of the same status as a university degree.

The issue of parity of esteem is acute in the context of racial inequalities. Multib's (2020) paper, drawing on the experiences of the BAME Apprenticeship Alliance in Birmingham, found a strong preference for traditional degree routes within the British Asian community. This again suggests degree apprenticeships are struggling to convince potentially diverse cohorts of their value via-a-vis higher education degrees.

On broader questions of social mobility, Cullinane and Doherty (2020) are particularly critical of the early years of degree apprenticeships. By 2020, degree apprenticeships were dominated by senior leadership and management training, taken by older workers. Only 13 per cent of degree apprentices were from the most deprived areas, with 27 per cent from the most advantaged, a pattern that was the opposite of those undertaking the lowest-level apprenticeships. This picture, up to 2020 at least, was getting worse over time. Indeed, this is true of apprentice policy in general (Cavaglia et al., 2022).

If degree apprenticeships struggle to meet social mobility goals, what are the positive impacts of the policy, and where can improvements be made?

The Sutton Trust is unequivocal: "High-level apprenticeships

have labour market outcomes comparable to degrees from Russell Group universities and have the potential to address skills gaps in the UK economy" (Cullinane and Doherty, 2020).

Degree apprenticeships are certainly working for *specific* graduates in *specific* sectors. Computing, for example, sees high levels of pay and career advancement for degree apprenticeships graduates (Nawaz et al., 2022). In the same study, Nawaz found employers supportive of degree apprenticeships for growing talent, bringing new knowledge and encouraging career progression in their organisations.

Where specific institutions, such as Manchester Metropolitan University (2021), offered case study material to Nawaz's study, degree apprenticeships graduates are completing degrees with high marks (96 per cent of the 2020–21 cohort achieved a merit or distinction).

However, the subject of the degree apprenticeship is important in shaping outcomes (Cullinane and Doherty, 2020; Nawaz et al, 2022). Much as with the rest of the economy, and reflecting long-standing issues with apprenticeships policy (Campbell et al., 2005; Hogarth et al., 2012), different types of degree apprenticeships taken by men and women reflect the gendering of work and occupations (Fuller et al., 2017; Nawaz et al., 2022).

Critics and advocates agree degree apprenticeships are a crucial mechanism in developing parity of esteem between academic degrees and vocational education (e.g., House of Commons, 2018; Mutlib, 2020; Crawford-Lee, 2020; Cullinane and Doherty, 2020). As such, they should be seen as a potential part of 'What Works' in the context of the apprenticeships route into CCIs.

Where there have been ideas for developments and improvements, we see some consensus (House of Commons, 2018; Mutlib, 2020; Crawford-Lee, 2020; Cullinane and Doherty, 2020; Smith et al., 2021; Nawaz et al., 2022; Quew-Jones and Rowe, 2022).

Work must be done with employers. Cullinane and Doherty (2020) found one-third of employers surveyed felt the degree apprenticeship might not fit with their staffing needs. Even where employers were receptive, they worried about financial costs and the potentially complex processes and challenges for the approval of appropriate standards.

Mutlib (2020), although not directly a 'What Works' study, offered several ideas common to the literature. The BAME Apprenticeship Alliance in Birmingham used outreach in schools and employer roadshows, role models, ambassadors, champions and awards – for example, the winners of The Asian Apprenticeship Awards were given speaking and events opportunities as role models for degree apprenticeships. The programme sought apprentice-led solutions, too (for example, how to address recruitment and status issues) and used regional-level, as well as single, higher education institution and employer partnerships.

There are similarities with widening participation agendas, with The Sutton Trust making a direct connection to degree apprenticeships. To improve social mobility, widening participation data for degree apprenticeships should be published in an accessible format; contextual admissions, from both universities and employers, are essential to broaden access; levy funds should be used to support access; applications should be clearer, with a 'national portal' containing information and direct applications; and schools need to improve careers advice to cover degree apprenticeships (Cullinane and Doherty, 2020).

The need for improved careers advice is especially important in the context of criticisms of careers advice in schools, particularly for creative work (House of Lords, 2023). Although somewhat beyond the scope of this research project, it is important to note that key creative organisations, such as the British Film Institute (BFI), see poor and under-resourced careers advice as a significant part of "what's stopping young people from pursuing careers in the screen industries" (BFI, 2022).

Addressing issues of status and parity of esteem sits at the intersection of the diversity and social mobility literature. Understanding the specific ways degrees are given status across diverse and differing communities is the first task for a successful degree apprenticeship policy (Mutlib, 2020). As with the widening participation literature, policy should be wary of seeing a lack of interest in, or uptake of, degree apprenticeships as a failure or deficit to be corrected for individuals or communities.

One way to address the status of the degree apprenticeship is to address which institutions are offering them. Both Cullinane and Doherty (2020) and Crawford-Lee (2020), although writing from very different perspectives on the implementation of

degree apprenticeships, agree on the need for growth in the offer. This is both in terms of subjects and areas of the economy and in terms of which higher education institutions, particularly those in the Russell Group, are offering degree apprenticeships. **If Russell Group institutions are to expand their offer, even more consideration will have to be given to the widening participation agenda** (Cullinane and Doherty, 2020).

There was, sadly, little on creative degree apprenticeships. This is partially because there are so few programmes.

In 2018-19, The Sutton Trust found no CCI degree apprenticeships in the six approved degree apprenticeships and the five degree-level apprentices. By July 2023, IfATE's website listed two integrated degrees – Broadcast and Media Systems Engineer (Level 6) and Outside Broadcasting Engineer (Level 7). These sat alongside three Level 7, non-integrated degrees of Historic Environment Advisor, Archaeological Specialist and Cultural Heritage Conservator.

Unfortunately, Outside Broadcasting Engineer and Historic Environment Advisor had no training provider and no apprenticeships on offer. Cultural Heritage Conservator (University of Lincoln) and Archaeological Specialist (Trinity Saint David) each had one training provider but no current vacancies.

Broadcast and Media Systems Engineer has two providers, Birmingham City University and Ravensbourne University London, but only one current vacancy listed. Looking at the list of vacancies covered by DfE data suggests 16 adverts for 32 individual vacancies for this degree and degree-level apprenticeship since 2018. As with our case study of journalism at Level 5, it is difficult to see these higher-level apprenticeships addressing diversity issues in the media industry when there are so few opportunities to access them.

The offer of degree apprenticeships for specialist roles in creative occupations is, at best, extremely limited. This is reflected in the lack of research. Riley (2021) explored the receptiveness of creative SMEs to degree apprenticeships and found all the same issues that confront apprenticeships policy and CCIs in general. In addition, the trailblazer model of standard setting was not well disseminated in the context of the creative SMEs engaged in Riley's (2021) study.

Degree apprenticeships sit at the intersection of apprenticeships policy and higher education policy. As such, they

face a dual set of problems, both in terms of providing access for diverse and socially mobile individuals and in terms of addressing the unique needs of work and organisations in the creative economy.

Yet degree apprenticeships really could be transformative in the context of creative occupations. They offer potential parity of esteem with degrees; their assessments and standards are designed to reflect employers' needs; and they build on higher education institution's support for work-based learning. Most crucially, they *could* address the creative sectors' demand for skills, experience and networks in a fairer and more transparent way than is present in current, often closed and informal, hiring practices.

So much more could be done to develop creative degree apprenticeships. As *Creative Majority* (Wreyford et al., 2021) demonstrated, no one single policy can solve the diversity crisis in the creative sector. If degree apprenticeships are to play a role in transforming the sector, they will need to be developed in the context of wider recommendations for policy reform of the entire apprenticeship system.

CONCLUSIONS

In the current labour market, and particularly in the creative economy, there is so much competition for graduate roles that a degree is no longer sufficient to secure work. Ryan and Lőrinc (2018) discuss how young people are expected to distinguish themselves through unpaid internships that widen inequalities (as seen in our paper on work-integrated learning). The creative sector's culture of interning and unpaid work in the creative economy may be undermining the potential for apprenticeships (Marangazov et al., 2009).

Apprenticeships have the potential to provide candidates who lack access to nepotistic networks or embodied competencies and confidence in cultural fields with the means to gain skills and experience that are recognised and valued by employers. However, in their current form, apprenticeships are not providing this opportunity for social mobility.

Apprenticeship programmes in England are often perceived as less desirable than staying in full-time education (Fuller and

Unwin, 2007). Many potential apprentices must negotiate feelings of 'being looked down on', i.e. not being worth as much as a degree holder or seen as working as hard (Ryan and Lőrinc, 2018). Schools are under intense pressure to encourage pupils to continue in education and this is reflected in careers advice and parental disapproval of apprenticeships as a worthwhile option (Skills Commission, 2018).

It is unsurprising, therefore, that where we have been able to synthesise 'What Works' insights from the limited policy and research base, we see echoes of 'What Works' for widening participation. For example, to support greater social mobility, Fuller et al (2017), House of Commons (2018), Doherty and Cullinane (2020), Learning and Work Institute (2017), Cullinane and Doherty (2020) and House of Lords (2023) all stress the need for better careers advice, giving young people a full, transparent and equal sense of the possible routes into a range of careers. This focus on careers advice connects directly to the government's Creative Careers programme (2020–2023).

Beyond the generic needs for more funding, better information and higher quality courses, the creative economy offers unique policy challenges. These challenges are matched by unique policy opportunities.

The current system is, as both policy reports and industry evaluations show, not fit for purpose. At best, the system is not providing the necessary courses, at the necessary levels, with the necessary flexibility. At worst, we see whole areas of the apprenticeship system where there is simply no provision at all.

At the same time, the quest for parity of esteem and equal status between vocational routes and higher education could be the basis for major policy innovation.

First, the government must rethink apprentices for the creative occupations. They need a bespoke programme that begins from the reality of working practices and employer needs. DCMS and DfE should convene a taskforce, with employers, unions and freelancer representatives, to reimagine apprenticeship policy for the sector.

Second, there is the chance for a major information and publicity campaign to change industry perceptions of creative apprenticeships. Information and awareness raising is recommended across the general literature on apprenticeships. It applies to the creative sector, too.

Third, any information and awareness-raising campaign could provide the route to bringing in both employers and potential training providers to develop new standards and a new offer. In particular, 'trailblazers' for higher-level apprenticeships are vitally important. This need is acute given the Apprenticeship Levy funding that is increasingly focused on higher-level apprenticeships for older, mid-career workers.

Fourth, degree apprenticeships can be a route to directly support mid-career creatives in developing leadership and management skills, recognised by a formal qualification. At the same time, those re-entering the creative sector, for example, after career breaks or family leave, could be formally supported by the degree apprenticeship system.

The impact of a formal degree apprenticeship qualification in a sector where employment is often driven by personal networks is uncertain. Given the extremely high level of degree-holding in the creative workforce, it is clear that lower-level apprenticeships will be unlikely to diversify the sector on their own. A degree-level apprenticeship may, if developed and supported properly, offer similar status to the under- and postgraduate qualifications that are now so dominant.

Fifth, it is vital any creative degree apprenticeship does not repeat the widening participation, nor the work-based learning, failures of the existing university system. Thus, the newly designed apprenticeship system must draw on the 'What Works' lessons of the previous sections of this report if it is to ever fulfil the promise of diversifying educational routes into creative work.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 6.1: Search Results