



International
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Flanders
State of the Art

The Future of Work and Lifelong Learning

► **Improving the attractiveness
and social perception of
apprenticeships**



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The Future of Work and Lifelong Learning

- ▶ **Improving the attractiveness and social perception of apprenticeships**

▶ Foreword

New technologies, demographic shifts, climate change, globalization and more recently the crisis such as global health pandemic are causing major disruptions to the world of work. Against this backdrop, it becomes ever more important to build an agile workforce capable of navigating the fast-changing labour market through appropriate and timely skilling, reskilling and upskilling. The use of apprenticeship models or dual training systems can be an effective solution in the context of the future of work, as it bridges the gap between education and training system and the world of work.

Although apprenticeship is a centuries-old system which enable young persons to acquire skills related to specific occupations, questions are increasingly being raised about its relevance for reskilling and upskilling in the context of the future of work and lifelong learning.

The ILO has therefore launched a research project – *Apprenticeship Development for Universal Lifelong Learning and Training (ADULT)*– which aims to generate new ideas and policy options to modernise apprenticeship systems. The project is funded by the Government of Flanders. The research aims to explore how apprenticeship systems are being modernised and transformed to promote and enable lifelong learning and decent work for youth, adults, and older workers (both employed and unemployed). The research also covers other forms of work-based learning options for students in VET institutes.

The research paper titled “*Improving the attractiveness and social perception of apprenticeships*” has been produced by the ILO as part of the ADULT project. It explores reasons why apprenticeships are sometimes regarded as unattractive or low status career choices. It also highlights the experiences and lessons learned from the initiatives taken by various countries in improving the attractiveness of apprenticeships. These include structural changes and enhancements to apprenticeship programs, as well as better promotion of apprenticeships to potential apprentices and those who advise them.

Ashwani Aggarwal
Team Leader
(WBL, Apprenticeships, RPL)
ILO, Geneva

Srinivas B. Reddy
Chief
Skills and Employability Branch
ILO, Geneva

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Ashwani Aggarwal (ILO) managed the research project, led the design and development of this thematic paper and also reviewed, edited and finalized this publication. Anita Sharma (ILO) and Majda Grine (ILO) coordinated with consultants and reviewers and also reviewed and provided comments on the paper. Sincere thanks to Professor Dr Erica Smith (Federation University, Australia) who authored the paper.

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▶ List of acronyms

AAAP	Australian Apprenticeships Ambassador Program
BHS	Ballarat Health Services
DHET	Department and Higher Education and Training, South Africa
EU	European Union
HE	Higher Education
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Executive Summary

This report examines the attractiveness and potential attractiveness of apprenticeships to those who might seek to undertake one. As apprenticeship has been shown to be a highly effective way of developing expertise and knowledge in an occupation, it has long been a goal of education, skills and employment policy in many countries to increase the proportion of the population and/or labour force in apprenticeships. Yet, the absolute numbers of apprentices have been declining in the long term in many countries, for example, in Australia, Canada and Germany (Smith 2021; Watt 2021; Deissinger 2017).

This study looks at the attractiveness of apprenticeships to individuals; it does not address the attractiveness to employers of engaging with the apprenticeship system. Making apprenticeships more attractive to individuals, however, is likely to benefit employers as it would lead to more, and potentially better suited, people applying for apprentices. It is also important to raise the status of apprenticeships among the public as those considering an apprenticeship, especially young people, will be influenced by the views of their families and peers, careers advisers and the ways in which apprenticeships are portrayed in the media.

In many countries, senior officials in government and school education systems are unlikely to have undertaken an apprenticeship themselves and, hence, have a limited understanding of the institution and its benefits. Thus, education about the benefits must take place at multiple levels. In this study, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) is used to identify and describe three levels of influence affecting potential apprentices in their decision-making.

For a potential apprentice, apprenticeship "competes" with other options. The access of young people and adults to higher education has increased greatly since the middle of the twentieth century in most countries (Marginson 2016). Other employment opportunities are available, some much more rewarding financially, at least in the short term, than apprenticeships as the remuneration associated with apprenticeship is usually quite low. Vocational education and training (VET) itself is generally viewed as low status (Cedefop 2017), as are, often, apprenticed occupations, which affects some people's willingness to consider an apprenticeship.

The effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic are as yet unknown. During 2020 and 2021, lockdowns created difficulties in many apprenticed industries and occupations and affected both on- and off-the-job training. Some governments used apprenticeship systems as policy levers to keep people in work and to encourage employers to employ new workers. The economic uncertainty from 2022, compounded by geopolitical pressures around the world, makes prediction about apprenticeship systems difficult, and so there is a need to rely predominantly on pre-pandemic data and trends.

► The ways in which the topic was explored

As apprenticeships vary greatly among countries, the strategies to increase the attractiveness of the institution cannot easily be translated. There have not been international studies specifically on the topic, and there are no internationally comparable data sources. It is therefore beneficial to consider as many countries as possible when examining attractiveness strategies.



In this study, several methods were utilized. A literature review identified the main problems and what had already been written on the topic, using documents from international agencies and research papers from all continents. Four major recent international comparative studies on apprenticeship, all undertaken within the last decade and covering 27 countries, at varying stages of economic development, were then examined in detail. This enabled current details about a range of apprenticeship systems to be accessed. The analysis identified what each study had to say about the attractiveness of apprenticeship in the researched countries and drew out strategies that had been implemented to increase attractiveness.

Various theoretical approaches were utilized to provide further insights. The first approach revolved around the fact that potential apprentices are individual people with differing aims, goals, aspirations and levels of experience, and it is difficult to make assumptions about what might attract people to apprenticeships. Using international literature, the features generally accepted as being in an apprenticeship (for example, the relationship with an employer and with a training provider, the emphasis on learning in a workplace, and the “time served” element) were examined as to their desirability to individuals. Each feature was shown to be potentially attractive to some people and a potential deterrent for others.

In the second theoretical approach, the OECD’s (2014) ten attributes of high-quality apprenticeship were analysed, and it was found that nine of them could be allocated to two “bundles” of features: one around access and inclusion, and the other around content and governance of apprenticeship programmes. Examples of attractiveness strategies from the international literature and the empirical analysis of the international studies were readily mapped to these two bundles. It was found that the two bundles of features did not allow for differences among individuals beyond age, gender and socio-economic status, and so, a third bundle of features was developed. This one consisted of attractiveness strategies for identifying and targeting people with particular characteristics – for example, people who are very unsure about what they would like to do, or people who would like a university degree but might consider an apprenticeship as a pathway.

Snapshots of initiatives from a range of countries were then used to illustrate the issues identified in the theoretical analyses. These included: strategies to attract disadvantaged people, to provide more information to reduce anxiety about the potential commitment and to attract people at specific life stages. Two detailed case studies, from South Africa and Australia, provided detail about different national strategies to raise public awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships.

▶ Policy implications

The empirical data and the theoretical analyses were brought together to consider policy implications. As an important finding of the study was the relative neglect of individual characteristics, a theoretical model of the levels of influences affecting decision-making about undertaking an apprenticeship was developed with the potential apprentice and his/her characteristics at the core. Onto this core, the levels identified in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) were added, mapping to them the influencers typically mentioned in the literature and identified in the snapshots reported in this study. The influencers were identified as:

- ▶ Micro-system: Family, peers
- ▶ Meso-system: Community, school, careers advisers, associations
- ▶ Macro-system: Society, media, public information

While it is easiest for governments to affect the macro-system, ways need to be found to access and influence potential apprentices at the meso-system and even the micro-system levels. Examples are provided in the report of interventions at each level, including the UK's former National Apprenticeship Service, which specifically targeted potential apprentices, career counsellors and the public.

While the key "selling points" of apprenticeships should always be stressed, the fact that each individual receives and interprets these messages differently according to personal circumstances should not be forgotten.

Another key factor to remember is that each apprenticeship is different; occupations vary, companies vary, the structures of apprenticeship programs vary, the availability of career ladders varies, and so on.

▶ Recommendations

For these reasons, the recommendations of this study include those to make apprenticeships more attractive as well as recommendations for marketing apprenticeships. Seven recommendations, based on the analyses and examples in the study, are provided:

Recommendations for structuring apprenticeships so that they are more attractive:

1. Offer apprenticeships in a broader range of occupations and qualification levels and expedite processes for the addition of both to the system. This range will attract both high achievers and the disadvantaged.
2. Provide good pay and conditions with proper monitoring and mediation systems.
3. Work with higher education systems both to offer degree apprenticeships and to regularize pathways into higher education from lower-level apprenticeships via qualification development systems.
4. Offer apprenticeships for industries as well as for occupations, for industries where occupations are not so clear-cut or well-known.

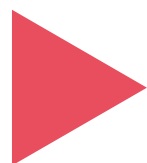


5. Provide “bite-sized” chunks of apprenticeship (as with pre-apprenticeships) to attract those anxious about the time commitment and those with low self-efficacy or less-developed skills.
6. Develop and foster a culture of training in companies, especially companies that are new to the apprenticeship system.
7. Provide structured fallback options for a situation where the apprentice has to leave a company, so that undertaking an apprenticeship does not appear so dependent on the viability or working environment of a company.

► Recommendations for “marketing” apprenticeships:

1. Make clear and impartial information directly available and accessible to young people and to mature adults who might contemplate apprenticeships in a range of media.
2. Make it clear what onwards pathways there are: into an occupation, a career path, self-employment.
3. Promulgate success stories across the full range of these options.
4. Focus on addressing the “low status” problem and the problem of low status occupations within apprenticeships.
5. Stress a particular occupation but also the transferability of skills gained in apprenticeships.
6. Use apprentices and ex-apprentices for marketing.
7. Investigate potential target groups, or individual characteristics, and what they might want or need from an apprenticeship.

The study ends by recommending that those involved in advising people on apprenticeships, as well as potential apprentices and parents of teenagers, should be involved in the co-design of strategies both to publicize apprenticeships and to make adjustments to the structures for apprenticeship programmes.



1

Introduction

Introduction

This report examines the attractiveness and potential attractiveness of apprenticeships to those who might seek to undertake one. An apprenticeship is a structured arrangement in which a person learns an occupation, usually involving off-the-job training as well as learning on the job; the training usually lasts for a substantial period of time, often several years. The attractiveness of apprenticeships is an important consideration because if we accept that apprenticeship is a highly effective way of learning an occupation, the more people that undertake an apprenticeship, the better. However, the absolute numbers of apprentices have been declining in the long term in many countries, for example, in Australia, Canada and Germany (Smith 2021; Watt 2021; Deissinger 2021). This trend was observed even before the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) affected numbers. Hence, there is concern that the model may be losing favour, and it is therefore imperative to improve the attractiveness of apprenticeship to potential applicants.

This study is confined to formal apprenticeships, that is those which are overseen by governments and/ other bodies. They are not merely individual arrangements between an employer and an apprentice. According to Smith (2010), formal apprenticeships generally involve the following elements:

- ▶ an education and training regime set up by, or with the approval of, the concerned government;
- ▶ a combination of off- and on-the-job training;
- ▶ the assumption of responsibility by the employer for the development of the apprentice; and
- ▶ the award of a qualification and/or licence and/or some other recognition that enables an occupation to be practiced independently once the apprenticeship is successfully completed.

It should be noted that only a little over half of the world's countries offer formal apprenticeships; 81 countries do not currently offer them (Chankseliani et al., 2017, 91). While in many countries, apprenticeships are primarily geared towards young people, sometimes focussing on those still in secondary school, many countries also allow adults to undertake apprenticeships. Therefore, this report considers apprenticeship as an option for adults as well as young people. It provides examples from across the world, from low-, medium- and high-income countries.

This report focuses on attractiveness to individuals. It does not address the attractiveness to employers of engaging with the apprenticeship system, because that is addressed elsewhere in this research project. However, it does address the "image" of apprenticeship in broader society, since individuals' choices to engage or not are affected by the views, advice and experiences of those around them. This applies especially to young people, who seek advice from their families and peers, schools and advisers, and who may be heavily influenced by the messages they receive from society about the status of apprenticeships.

These three sets of influences – families/peers, schools/advisers, and the media – correspond to the concepts of "micro-system", "meso-system" and "macro-system" in the ecological systems theory proposed by Bronfenbrenner in his theory of child development (1979). These systems refer to those closest to the individual (micro), such as family; at some distance (meso), such as schools; and the broader societal context (macro). Bronfenbrenner's ideas have subsequently been used in a great deal of research not only into educational systems but also in the social sciences more generally; his theory is used for some of the analysis in this report.



Throughout the report, various examples are provided from different countries and occupational areas. These examples may be adapted for use elsewhere.

Why is it important that apprenticeships are seen as attractive? It is generally understood that the combination of work and learning afforded by apprenticeships is beneficial to the individual and is likely to lead to a broader development of skills and knowledge associated with specific occupations, as compared to other forms of learning, or compared with work alone. Apprenticeships also often have an extra layer of regulation and oversight as compared with non-apprenticeship employment, and they are therefore more likely to provide safe employment in a regulated environment. Moreover, on a macro scale, apprenticeships for young people assist in the transition from full-time education to full-time work and often provide pathways into further education.

Therefore, it has long been a goal of educational, training and skills development, and employment policies in many countries to increase the proportion of the population and/or labour force in apprenticeships. It is also important for employers seeking to employ apprentices that applicants are of good quality (OECD 2018), that is, people who are likely to succeed. This will occur only if apprenticeships are seen as attractive in comparison to the other options available to individuals.

In the end, an apprenticeship begins when an individual decides to undertake one. The individual chooses to begin a relationship with an employer and/or a training provider, often both. Therefore, the system depends on an individual's choice to engage as much as it does on an employer's choice to do the same. Hence, this report addresses a fundamental, arguably the most important, task of apprenticeship systems.



2 Background and literature

Background and literature

Economies are constantly changing in their structure, but the image of apprenticeships has not always shifted with the economy. There are many examples of apprenticeships in new industries, or in high-tech occupations in older industries, but the image of apprenticeships tends to remain static. Indeed, the concept of occupations itself is also now more fluid with organizational and industry labour markets being as important as occupational labour markets. Moreover, in most countries, the access of populations to higher education has increased significantly since the middle of the twentieth century (Marginson 2016); for example, over 50 per cent of young people in the UK proceed from school directly to university (Newton 2021). This ready access to higher education provides an alternative post-school destination for more young people, as well as for adults seeking further education or a career change.

For these reasons and many others, apprenticeship is not necessarily seen as a valued or modern choice for many young people, even in countries like Germany and Switzerland where the apprenticeship system is traditionally very strong and deeply embedded in secondary school education (Deissinger 2017, 2019). More generally, those who advise young people about careers in schools and careers services (such as those in Bronfenbrenner's meso-system), are likely to advocate a university pathway (OECD 2018; Smith and Foley 2021) rather than provide information about other pathways. This may be partly because these advisers are unlikely to have experienced an apprenticeship themselves.

One perennial concern is the low status of apprenticeships, including the low status of vocational education training (VET) itself ([European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training] Cedefop 2017), the higher status of academic pathways in schools and university pathways post-school, and the lower status of the occupations served by apprenticeships. Higher-level apprenticeships are being introduced in many countries (AiGroup 2020) sometimes embedding university degrees rather than VET qualifications, as one way of combatting this and to extend the benefits of apprenticeship to other occupations. However, they have not been widely taken up; for example, in the UK, an early adopter of higher-level apprenticeships, while the number of degree apprentices has grown over the five years since they have been introduced, only 4.2 per cent of apprentice commencements are in higher-level apprenticeships (Newton 2021).

Further, there is a lack of awareness of the many career pathways onwards from apprenticeship within organizations or within industries. This is important because the occupations, which are often manual jobs, that offer apprenticeships are often not well paid as compared to jobs which require a university education. Yet, apprenticed occupations can lead to senior positions. Indeed, at its simplest, an apprenticeship often leads to a permanent job. Mature adults may especially be deterred by practical considerations, such as the rate of pay or stipend associated with being an apprentice, but they could be attracted by more awareness of likely permanent employment and career prospects.

Gender issues are also at play in the attractiveness of apprenticeships; in countries where apprenticeships are predominantly found in masculinized occupations (for example, the US and Canada), women and girls may not be able to undertake an apprenticeship if they do not wish to enter these occupations, and apprenticeships are not available in the jobs they prefer. The introduction of apprenticeships in more feminized occupations is therefore important for gender balance, but some of these occupations – for example, retail assistants – are often seen as inferior (Smith 2021; Chankseliani, Keep and Wilde 2017; Duemmler and Caprani 2017). It is also important to ensure that women are given every encouragement to enter traditionally male occupational areas (Simon and Clarke 2015).



Other deterrents vary from country to country and depend on how apprenticeships are structured. Potential recruits could be deterred by the time commitment (often several years (OECD 2018)), the structure of the programme, the hours of work, the comparatively low level of the qualification attained (if any) as compared to attending university, the low rate of pay or stipend compared with other choices, and so on. They may also be deterred by negative stereotyping and anecdotal evidence of the fears of low quality work, exploitation, and low quality curriculum at the training provider.

An important problem with any discussion of important issues in apprenticeship is that apprenticeship systems and understandings of the term apprenticeship vary around the world (Cedefop 2021; Smith 2010). In this report, as with others, such differences need to be taken into account when analysing or proposing initiatives to increase the attractiveness of apprenticeships. First, solutions may not be transferable, and something that works well in one country may not be possible or may have little impact in another. Second, stakeholders within particular countries may not even know that systems differ among countries, and policy transplants carry risk in these circumstances. Moreover, apprenticeship systems in different countries develop and change quite often, and transplanted policies may already have been abandoned in one country by the time knowledge reaches stakeholders in other countries.

Apprentice systems are rooted in cultural, political and historical factors (Deissinger, Smith and Pickersgill 2006). Many countries have a tripartite (involving the government, unions and employers) approach to apprenticeships as working arrangements, and education systems are usually also involved. These different stakeholders have separate roles and degrees of power in designing and implementing apprenticeship systems (Deissinger and Gonon 2015); their views are often strongly held and may create resistance to proposed changes. This resistance has created difficulties in the implementation of measures to improve attractiveness in some countries, for example in the UK and Australia, to broaden the range of occupations included in apprentice systems in those countries and, for example, to include retail apprenticeships or to include mature people in apprenticeship systems (Fuller and Unwin 2003; Smith 2021). In Australia, the apprenticeship system contracted considerably during the 2010s as the result of removal of government support from apprenticeship in many occupations, typically those undertaken more often by women. This development was prompted by sectional interests (Smith 2021). As mentioned earlier, the interplay between stakeholders is one reason why apprenticeship systems are likely to change slowly over time.

Despite all these challenges, the literature from the last decade shows specific actions and research around four main themes in increasing apprenticeship attractiveness around the world.

- ▶ Pre-apprenticeship programmes, short off-the-job training programmes to familiarize potential apprentices with an occupational area before committing to a full apprenticeship, are common in Australia and New Zealand (Karmel and Oliver 2011; Cannan 2015).
- ▶ The improvement of completion rates in apprenticeships (that is, finishing the term of the apprenticeship) improves the image of apprenticeship and encourages word-of-mouth recommendations; suggestions for improving completion rates have emerged from Germany and Australia (Hauschildt and Piening 2013; Loveder 2015).
- ▶ The status of the occupations served by apprenticeships is sometimes low; and there is also an interconnectedness between occupational status and the apprenticeship itself. This is receiving research attention (Wildschut, Akojee and Meyer 2013; Zhou et al 2017).
- ▶ Recently, higher-level apprenticeships, usually involving higher education qualifications, have become an increasingly common policy tool to attract more people into apprenticeships. Initiatives from Ireland, China, Germany and the UK have been documented (Li 2017; Deissinger 2019; Barrett et al 2017; Esmond 2019).

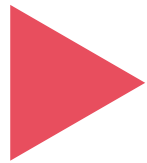
Finally, in countries where undertaking an apprenticeship is a choice made in secondary school, there may be barriers in proceeding from an apprenticeship and/or other VET programmes to higher education. Efforts to address this issue, known as “permeability” in some countries (Deissinger 2015), are also being undertaken.

Since early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on apprenticeship systems. It initially created more demand for labour in certain industries (such as healthcare) but created severe operating constraints for other industries (such as hospitality), and this has affected the recruitment of workers, including apprentices. During lockdowns, it affected both off-the-job learning (OECD 2020) and on-the-job learning (Marsh 2021) for apprentices, as both shifted to online delivery during COVID lockdowns. Apprentice numbers reduced considerably in 2020; for example, they declined by 11 per cent in Germany, where there was a considerable impact on small business (Deissinger 2021).

On the other hand, governments used their apprenticeship systems both to boost employment and to avert, or moderate, an unemployment crisis for young people. They were able to do this by leveraging and expanding existing support schemes, networks and subsidies to employers who recruit apprentices (Deissinger 2021; Watt 2021; Smith 2021). The long-term impact of such measures on the relative attractiveness of apprenticeships has yet to be researched, but the immediate availability of job opportunities via apprenticeships due to these measures is likely to have attracted applicants who might not have otherwise considered an apprenticeship.

The report discusses these, and other features, mentioned in the recent policy and research literature and presents some good practice examples, giving due consideration to the differences among countries’ apprenticeship systems. Improvements are proposed both to the way in which apprenticeships are marketed, and to the structure of apprenticeship programmes to suit more people. Included in the latter is not only the consideration of higher apprenticeships and more “permeable pathways” into higher education but also how to best reach disadvantaged groups.

The discussion includes possible actions to be taken by social partners, including associations of workers and employers, and other bodies, such as industry skills councils, and suggests how those who advise students about apprenticeships (for example, parents and school careers advisers) can be informed and influenced. The Bronfenbrenner ecological system model is used to frame this analysis.



3

**Current
understandings
of the issue of
attractiveness**

Current understandings of the issue of attractiveness

An OECD report titled *Seven questions about apprenticeship (2018)* poses as one of its questions: “How to attract potential apprentices?” The introduction to the report states that vocational education is seen in many countries as suitable only for “other people’s children” and as a poor alternative to university education (OECD 2018, 3). Yet, apprenticeships provide important answers to problems such as youth unemployment, the need for skills for both existing workers and industries, and, importantly, new parts of the economy. Therefore, an important question is how to attract individuals to apprenticeships because it serves such vital and diverse functions.

The OECD report summarizes the situation as follows:

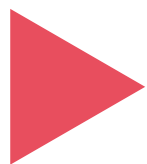
If apprenticeship systems are going to be successful, apprenticeships must be attractive to a wide range of young people. Attractive apprenticeships develop the knowledge and skills that employers demand and offer a genuine gateway to skilled employment. Where the quality of apprenticeships is poor, young people will “vote with their feet” and not participate. However, students and their families often have a weak understanding of what apprenticeships actually have to offer. This is particularly the case where apprenticeships are now available across a wide range of occupations at different skills levels. Career guidance services must ensure that young people make informed decisions at the right time. (2018,13)

Many factors are mentioned in this short summary from the OECD which will be covered in detail later. Two issues should be raised at this point, both with fundamental relevance to the current report. First, the OECD report (2018) is based on data and reports from OECD countries, which are almost all high-income countries,¹ and yet the circumstances described in the quotation could apply to almost any country. Policy borrowing may be possible across the high-income/low-income divide.

Second, the OECD report appears to assume that only young people are candidates for apprenticeships. In fact, in many countries, mature people can also undertake apprenticeships, although this may be less likely in countries in which apprenticeships are generally part of the upper secondary schooling system. However, this does not negate the points made in the OECD’s (2018) summary quoted above. The ideas that attract young people may also attract adults and vice versa, although adults may have more factors to consider.

One important point raised in by the OECD summary is the relative attractiveness of apprenticeships as compared to other forms of education. While the situation varies from country to country, even “classic” apprenticeship countries like Germany are experiencing challenges to their apprenticeship systems from “academicization” (Deissinger 2017), that is, from the growth of higher education. While the latter is, of course, valuable in and of itself, it is widely recognized that it affects the image of apprenticeships. Apprenticeship systems cannot ignore this and therefore may seek to incorporate higher education, or pathways to higher education, in their programmes.

¹ According to World Development Indicators, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>. The exception is Turkey, which is a “high middle income country”.



4 The nature of apprenticeships: Attractions and deterrents

The nature of apprenticeships: Attractions and deterrents

One way to approach this question is to ask what it is about apprenticeships that might make potential applicants view them favourably or, alternatively, unfavourably. The following theoretical model (table 1) is based on the general body of apprenticeship research undertaken by relevant bodies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) as well as by academics writing in the field. The model was developed by enumerating the generally accepted features of apprenticeship, and by then positing what each feature might mean for people considering an apprenticeship.

From an employer's point of view, the more attractive apprenticeships in general appear, the more likely they are to attract the high-quality candidates (those likely to complete an apprenticeship and to be useful as future, permanent employees) that the employer seeks. Or as the OECD puts it (2018, 128), "Attractive apprenticeships attract attractive apprentices." Employers in Australia, for example, often complain about the quality of applicants (AiGroup 2020), citing the lack of sufficient basic skills or numeracy. Some employers find it difficult to attract any applicants to work in their organizations, and an apprenticeship may be a "carrot" to entice applicants. Governments, in contrast, seek to attract young people into apprenticeships, often with the specific aim of reducing or preventing youth unemployment and may want employers to lower their requirements. While the desired bar for entry may vary considerably among these interest groups, the fact remains that without applicants there will be no apprentices. Thus it is essential to attract as wide a range of applicants as possible.

The model in table 1 highlights some commonly accepted features of apprenticeships. There is a stipulated period of time to be spent learning an occupation or a task associated with an industry. There is also a relationship developed with a specific employer, which will often be an employment relationship (but may not be). The majority of an apprentice's time is spent in the workplace, learning the job hands on. There is also generally a relationship with a training provider or school, which will often involve attendance at the training provider or school (but may not), the achievement of a qualification (usually in the vocational education system), or a formal certification of apprenticeship. The latter may take the form of a credential enabling the "licence to practice" an occupation. Apprenticeships often lead to the potential for self-employment in a field of practice after completion. In apprenticeships systems, the stakeholder groups are usually involved in system administration, ideally a tripartite system involving employer groups, unions and governments. Sometimes, these systems also have state regulation of the occupations suitable for apprenticeships, for example, via the production of a published list of eligible occupations.

The challenge is that to some potential apprentices, some of these features make apprenticeships seem attractive, but other features make them seem unattractive. For other potential apprentices, different features are attractive. Attractiveness, then, is not absolute, but is different for each potential apprentice.

Table 1 lists each of the features of apprenticeship described so far and maps the potential of each feature to make apprenticeships attractive or unattractive. It is thus an explanation of how the very nature of apprenticeship may attract or deter individuals.

Table 1. Features of apprenticeship: Attractive features and deterrents

Accepted feature of apprenticeship	Potential attractiveness to individual	Potential unattractiveness to individuals
1. Stipulated period of time	There is a clear, future plan for a reasonable length of time (generally more than a year).	The stipulated time (sometimes three or four years) may appear daunting.
2. Relationship with employer	Apprentices are generally paid a stipend. This compares well with other learning pathways, such as full-time university study. The relationship with the employer may lead to permanent post-apprentice work. A mentor may also be provided.	An apprentice may be tied to an employer in order to complete the apprenticeship, regardless of working conditions or rate of pay.
3. A majority of hands-on learning in the workplace	Learning on the job is attractive to those who are not comfortable with, or have had poor experiences of, classroom learning.	Some candidates may be deterred by a lengthy on-the-job period, preferring classroom learning and finding workplace conditions unattractive.
4. Relationship with training provider	The involvement of a training or educational institution provides extra assistance and reassurance that the apprenticeship is legitimate and includes broader educational development.	The prospect of attending a school or training provider may be unattractive for those with poor experiences of education.
5. Achievement of a qualification or certification	A formal certificate is a tangible benefit in the labour market as well as certifying individual achievement.	For candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds, passing a qualification, exam or test may seem daunting.
6. Licence to practice an occupation	Apprenticeship is sometimes the only way of entering an occupation, and so it is a necessary pathway for those occupations.	While unlikely to be a deterrent per se, this feature of an apprenticeship may seem narrow to potential applicants.
7. Potential for self-employment after completion	A well-rounded curriculum may mean that a relatively young person can confidently start up his or her own company in their chosen industry.	This potential for self-employment, for example as a carpenter, may deter people who prefer careers within large organizations, unless the latter possibility is made clear.
8. A list (generally government-generated) of approved occupations	The list generally includes “in demand” occupations and those which are widely recognized.	The occupations on the list may be unattractive or outdated and/or may favour a particular gender, usually men.
9. Stakeholder group involvement	While this is a “behind the scenes” activity from the point of view of potential apprentices, they may be aware of the role of stakeholders in protecting their interests and working towards quality in apprenticeships.	When the interests of one group prevail above another, there may be barriers to apprenticeships, but this also happens behind the scenes.

Source: Author’s analysis.

Table 1 shows that, of the features which are generally accepted as desirable, some may, in fact, be undesirable to some applicants. An awareness of these issues may help improve the strategies to increase apprentice numbers. Another inference from the table is the importance of making information about the attractive features more widely available.

Table 1 is an initial and general analysis; there are many other factors which attract people to specific apprenticeships. For example, in addition to the occupation in the apprenticeship seeming more or less attractive, apprenticeships with certain companies in certain countries are generally seen as “gold standard”. For example, one oft-quoted example is that of Siemens engineering apprenticeships in England (Chankseliani et al 2017). Further, other specific factors affect the choice of an apprenticeship, including the attractiveness of the job itself, the geographical location of the employer and the training provider, and so on.

Individual attributes of the potential apprentices may affect the perceived attractiveness of apprenticeships. Table 1 provides some examples where potential apprentices’ gender or disadvantage might affect their perceptions (features 5 and 8). The OECD (2018, 13) addresses such matters as follows:

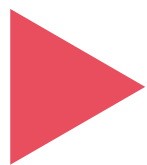
Evidence from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) database has shown how career aspirations are shaped by gender, socio-economic status and migrant background. These aspirations rarely reflect labour market demand.

Other personal factors may include would-be apprentices’ self-efficacy, often affected by their prior experience of, and success in, employment and education; family and cultural background; and views about whether apprenticeships are “for them” (features 4 and 5 in table 2). Such barriers may be addressed by government, industry or other stakeholder actions, but these will need to be well-publicized.

Another issue is that many potential apprentices make decisions at stressful times in their lives. Young people may be moving from lower to secondary school or from school into post-school activities; adults may be thinking of an apprenticed occupation when they are unemployed, facing redundancy or feeling dissatisfied with their current jobs. Decision-making may be rushed or ill-informed at stressful times. Accurate and readily available information is therefore critical.

Table 1 highlights the generally recognized characteristics of apprenticeship to analyse its potential attractiveness. The innovative aspect of this table is that it recognizes that what some people see as advantages, which should be promoted, may instantly deter other people. The report now goes on to discuss some features in more detail.





5

**Some key
constraints and
challenges**

Some key constraints and challenges

While some constraints and challenges have been discussed in the literature summary, three matters are discussed in detail in this section:

- ▶ the low status of apprenticeships and VET;
- ▶ access to information by potential applicants; and
- ▶ the lack of data to inform our understanding of why people may or may not choose an apprenticeship from a policy point of view.

▶ 5.1 The problem of the low status of VET

Apprenticeships are usually seen as part of the vocational education system. A common feature of apprenticeship systems, as mentioned earlier, is the attainment of a qualification or certification. This qualification is normally in the VET system, though higher education qualifications may occasionally be embedded in apprenticeships. VET's low status compared with higher education is likely to be a major factor affecting the attractiveness of apprenticeship. Apprenticeship may operate outside formal VET systems (if a formal qualification is not gained as in, for example, Indonesia), and VET very often operates outside apprenticeship systems. For example, in Australia, only around a quarter of government-funded VET enrolments have generally been in apprenticeship (Smith and Keating 2003, 5, 93). But VET and apprenticeships are nevertheless often linked in policy discussions and public perception.

Generally, vocational education has a lower status than academic or general education tracks. For example, a study by Cedefop (2017) involving over 35,000 citizens across the European Union (EU), looked at several issues including the awareness of VET and its attractiveness. When comparing VET with other choices at the upper secondary level, three quarters agreed that, in their country, general education had a more positive image than vocational education, and the same proportion agreed with a statement that "students with low grades are directed towards VET" (Cedefop, 2017). Of those who had chosen general education in upper secondary school, 25 per cent said that they had been specifically advised against VET, with the proportion being around half in some countries. With this in mind, an important issue for apprenticeship, as with VET in general, is to provide pathways to further or higher education, so that taking a VET or apprenticeship pathway in secondary school (or later) does not close off pathways, that is, it does not lead to a "dead end".

There are thus several interlinked issues, including the educational level of apprenticeship, the status of apprenticeship due to its historical and cultural history and its traditional participants, and the relative prestige of the occupations for which apprenticeship prepares people. It is often argued that "skill" is socially constructed, that it is not objective and measurable (Esposito 2008), and apprenticed occupations are often viewed as less skilled than occupations which require higher education to enter.

▶ 5.2. Ready access to accurate information by potential applicants

Young people, in particular, learn about potential careers from a fairly restricted range of sources, such as career advisers in schools and their family and friends (Smith and Foley 2018). These sources may have limited knowledge of apprenticeships and may not provide impartial information. As the OECD puts it, “Many young people do not automatically think about apprenticeships” (2018, 126). Hence, more accessible information may help to foreground apprenticeships as a choice. Adults as well as young people may have misconceptions, such as thinking, for example, that apprenticeships are only available in a narrow range of occupations which may seem unattractive, dirty or heavy, or only for men. They may be unaware of the future career progression opportunities as apprenticeships are often seen as linked to entry-level occupations rather than to onward career paths.

For those without family members or family friends who have been apprentices, information is hard to access. Broader networks sometimes provide information to young people but may be unavailable to some. For example, an Australian study of post-school transitions in rural areas (Smith and Foley 2019) found that sporting clubs were an informal source of information transmission for apprenticeship information and job vacancies, but girls and boys who did not play any sport were disadvantaged. But there is always the risk that information provided by such micro and meso networks (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) may be restricted or distorted.

Access to accurate information from trusted sources is therefore very important. With relation to young people, the OECD states:

There is an onus on schools to take a proactive and strategic approach to careers guidance which begins young, broadens ambitions, and ensures that regular encounters with independent and well-trained career guidance professionals are the norm. Essential to effective guidance is giving young people the chance to find out for themselves, through activities such as career talks and job shadowing, what it is like to follow different occupational and learning pathways, including apprenticeships. (2018, 7)

As well as personal contacts, online information may be another useful source of information, although there are, of course, issues of access to the internet for some people. Also, there are often private agencies, such as intermediary organizations involved in apprenticeship systems (Smith 2019), who seek to market their services and sometimes do so inappropriately. Prospective apprentices may therefore need assistance in selecting and using appropriate government websites and accessing other reliable information and agencies.

▶ 5.3. Difficulty in investigating what drives the choice of an apprenticeship

How can governments and other stakeholders find out what makes people choose an apprenticeship? One method is to survey apprentices. In Australia, this is done by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), which manages the country’s apprenticeship statistics, and many countries have a similar body. An annual survey is administered to all those who have completed or withdrawn from an apprenticeship or traineeship. A question asks for the respondent’s main reason for undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship using a set of provided choices. As an example, the main reasons reported by 2018 respondents were as follows (table 2).

Table 2. Main reason reported for undertaking an apprenticeship, Australia 2018 (in per cent)

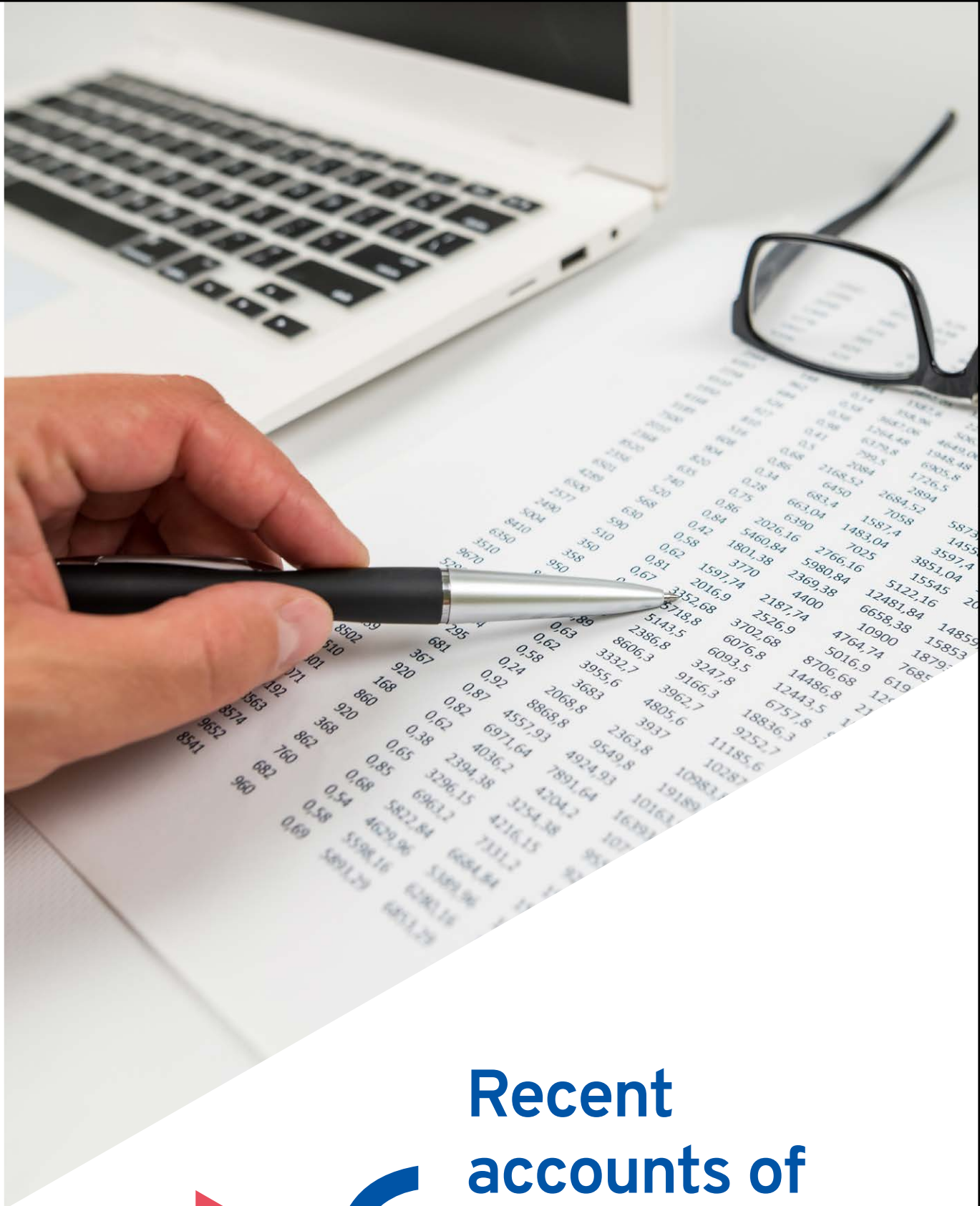
Main reason	Per cent
Wanted to work in that kind of job	27.3
To gain a recognized qualification or certificate	18.9
It was a requirement of my job	15.1
Other employment-related reasons	14.2
Opportunity to further knowledge and skills	12.8
Other reasons	5.0
Future prospects	4.8
Other training-related reasons	1.9

Source: NCVET (2019).

The main reason to seek an apprenticeship cited most often was ‘Wanting to work in that kind of job’, and this was chosen more often (37.5 per cent) by apprentices in “trade” apprenticeships (primarily artisan, manufacturing and hairdressing) than those in “non-trade” apprenticeships (including business, retail, IT and health) (22.9 per cent).

But there is a problem with this data, and this problem has wider applicability than just one country. People may have multiple reasons for undertaking an apprenticeship. One major reason for undertaking an apprenticeship in Australia, for example, is that certain trades cannot be practised without a licence, and an apprenticeship qualification is sometimes the main, or even only, way to achieve the licence (see table 1). Those whose main motivation was to achieve an occupational licence could, therefore, have selected any one of the first three responses listed in table 2 to indicate the ability to practise in the trade, or could have selected “Other”. Therefore, the results of the survey are not reliable. Similar examples could be drawn from this survey or from those in other countries.

If this problem applies even within a well-developed and reasonably stable system such as Australia, it is likely that due to the variations among apprenticeship systems around the world, and changes over time, it would be a complex matter to conduct an international survey about the reasons for undertaking an apprenticeship. Even basic data on apprenticeships are difficult to obtain, as Cededop (2021) points out.



6

**Recent
accounts of
apprenticeship
attractiveness:
Data from 27
countries**

Recent accounts of apprenticeship attractiveness: Data from 27 countries

A wide-ranging overview of initiatives and practices to improve the attractiveness of apprenticeships over the past decade is discussed in this section. A systematic analysis of the relevant sections of four major international studies of apprenticeship was undertaken. This method was chosen since the key features of relevant research and practice in a large number of countries (n=27) could be captured.

Despite the differences among various countries in their apprenticeship systems, comparative studies are quite often carried out. Four studies, which included medium- and low-income countries as well as high-income countries were selected; thus, EU studies (such as European Commission 2012 and Markowitsch and Wittig 2019) are not included. Two of the studies were published by the ILO.

The four studies, in order of date of publication, are listed in table 3 with the names of the countries examined in each study.

Table 3. Studies examined in the current report with the countries covered.

Study no.	Name of study	Countries covered
1	Smith, E., R. Brennan Kemmis et al. 2013. Towards a Model Apprenticeship Framework: A Comparative Analysis of National Apprenticeship Systems. New Delhi: ILO and World Bank.	Australia, Canada, Egypt, England, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, South Africa, Turkey, US
2	Fazio, M.V., R. Fernández-Coto, and L. Ripani. 2016. Apprenticeships for the XXI Century: A Model for Latin America and the Caribbean? Inter-American Development Bank: Washington.	“Established systems”: Australia, Austria, Canada, Germany, UK, US “Less established systems”: Turkey, Lithuania, Malta, India, France Latin American countries; Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru
3	Chankseliani, M., E. Keep, and S. Wilde. 2017. People and Policy: A Comparative Study of Apprenticeship Across Eight National Contexts. Doha: WISE Research.	Australia, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Germany, India, South Africa, UK
4	Smith, E., J. Tuck, and K. Chatani. 2018. ILO Survey Report on the National Initiatives to Promote Quality Apprenticeships in G20 Countries. Geneva: ILO	Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, Germany, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korean, Turkey, UK, US

In all, 27 countries were examined, some of them in more than one study. India, Germany and Australia, for example, were each examined three times.

▶ 6.1. Overviews of the findings

Study 1: This study by Smith and Brennan Kemmis (2013), and a team of expert international case study writers, produced an overall analysis based on 11 case studies written by country experts. The study was carried out to inform the development of the Indian apprenticeship system. It categorized the countries' apprenticeship systems by a number of factors which helped to explain the differences among them. These included the size of the apprenticeship system relative to the population and the focus on apprenticeship in public policy, the occupations covered by the system, the availability of apprenticeships to adults, and the employment status of apprentices.

Each of these features could affect the attractiveness of apprenticeships and their perceived status as a choice, as seen in table 1. For example, a system open only to young people (as in five countries in the study) would exclude adults, and a system only open to adults would exclude young people (as in two countries in the study). An apprenticeship would be less attractive to potential applicants if there were no employment contract nor wages, especially for adults who needed to earn a reasonable income. Seven of the 11 countries, for example, paid apprentices as employees; four offered only stipends or a non-formal wage (Egypt, India, Indonesia and Turkey). However, there were none which offered no remuneration at all. Women were almost always in the minority in these 11 apprenticeship systems, with their participation being linked to the nature of the occupations covered by the systems.

Most country case studies showed differences in apprenticeship administration among states, provinces and regions (2013, 11), which is commonly a feature of apprenticeship systems (Watt 2021). Such differences create difficulties for would-be apprentices in navigating the apprenticeship system and may deter candidates since their certification might not transfer among various jurisdictions.

The analysis of the country case studies in the report highlighted several factors which might adversely affect the engagement of individuals, including gender stereotypes; low educational or socioeconomic level of the current participants, creating an impression of undesirability; low wages or stipends; a lack of clear pathways for the articulation into further study; and uneven geographical distribution of appropriate employment (Smith and Brennan Kemmis, 2013, 34–35).

The report provides an overview of the factors which make apprenticeships attractive:

- ▶ A strong apprenticeship culture, which is intertwined with the age and history of the concerned industry and its status in society
- ▶ Country-specific traditions of good apprentice training
- ▶ Legislative protections for both employers and apprentices
- ▶ Strong occupational identity
- ▶ The status and employment prospects of apprenticed occupations

Study 2: This study by Fazio et al (2016), analysed 11 countries' systems for the benefit of Latin American countries looking to develop or further develop their apprenticeship systems. The study was primarily focused on employer viewpoints, but a number of attractiveness features to individuals were also mentioned: hands-on experience earning a salary, gaining a qualification, and access to career ladders.

In some countries in the analysis, financial incentives for individuals undertaking apprenticeships were provided, such as grants to apprentices for reaching milestones and for completion (Canada) and the payment of social security and insurance premiums in several countries. The study also reported on a range of financial incentives in Latin American countries themselves, including the provision of learning materials; provision of tutorial costs; allowances for living away from home; provision of food and transport; and extra support to vulnerable groups (2016, 16).

Like the other studies, this study noted the differential access for males and females, particularly relating to segregation by occupation. It also noted the differential success rates between genders using the UK as an example (2016, 41).

Study 3: The report by Chankseliani et al (2017) on apprenticeship in eight countries was based on an analysis of literature and data. Importantly, it reported on the difficulty of accessing data on apprenticeships as compared to school and higher education data. The report listed the following attractiveness features, described as ‘incentives’, for individuals to participate in apprenticeships: the appeal of learning through doing; the chance for occupational and/or workplace socialization; and the possibility of progression to permanent employment or additional education. A key attraction of apprenticeships was reported as “learning while earning” and, in countries where there was high university graduate unemployment, apprenticeship was noted as an attractive alternative (2017, 48–57).

The report also discussed reasons why apprenticeships may be unattractive, with the following features that have already been noted: the perceived relative low status of the route; lack of encouragement from parents, carers, teachers and peers; gendered occupations (for example, in England and Germany); and age-related restrictions. As with Study 1, another deterrent was the structure of the local economy and geographical considerations. A new deterrent mentioned here, but not covered in the other studies, was race and ethnicity (for example, in South Africa and India), and migration status or indigeneity. The authors note that “the permutations reflect the broader labour market, societal, educational and political contexts” underlining again (as in Study 1 specifically and more generally in the literature) the deep roots that apprenticeship has in those contexts (2017, 58).

Study 4: The ILO survey report on national initiatives to promote quality apprenticeships (Smith, Tuck and Chatani 2018) analysed a survey based on the G20’s ten agreed actions to promote quality apprenticeships. These ten actions were agreed on by the G20 labour and employment ministers in Beijing in 2016 (G20 Research Group 2016) and then endorsed at the G20 leaders’ summit in Hangzhou later that year (G20 2016). The survey achieved responses from 18 countries. Surveys were sent to the main representatives of each of the social partners (government, employer peak bodies, union peak bodies) in late 2017.

Of the ten actions, four (actions 1,3, 6 and 7) relate directly to the attractiveness of apprenticeships to individuals and are analysed below. Other actions have some connection to attractiveness, especially Action 5, which is “Ensuring that apprenticeship programmes offer good working and training conditions, including appropriate wages, labour contracts and social security coverage, as well as respect for labour rights and occupational safety and health”. Thus, the study provides a comprehensiveness coverage of activity in these 18 countries, which include low- and middle- income countries.

The major findings of Study 4 on the attractiveness of apprenticeships that were reported by governments and social partners (employer and employee associations) are presented below.

Actions reported by the G20 governments

This summary focus on the actions core to “attractiveness”. The numbering of actions is as per the list in the “initiative to promote quality apprenticeships”.

1. Establishing national goals to expand and improve apprenticeships

All countries used national targets or goals, both quantitative and/or qualitative, to promote quality apprenticeships. They actively sought to expand apprenticeship training opportunities. The majority of the countries also planned to expand apprenticeships to higher education levels or had done so already.

3. Promoting apprenticeship programmes in a broad range of occupations and sectors

The occupational coverage of apprenticeships varied significantly across countries. Apprenticeship training was generally available for a wide range of occupations, and some occupational groups had a higher participation in apprenticeships than others. Sixty per cent of government respondents envisaged expanding the coverage. Some governments were also strategically using apprenticeships to embrace new technologies and Industry 4.0.

6. Raising the awareness of apprenticeships

Most governments played an active role in raising awareness of apprenticeships among enterprises, jobseekers, career counsellors, and the general population. Publicity campaigns utilized traditional media, websites and social media. Most countries had set up web portals to provide information relating to apprenticeships and providing access to application/recruitment processes. Governments were conscious of the negative perception surrounding apprenticeships, and they targeted influencers, such as teachers and parents, to address this challenge. Career guidance in schools provided an opportunity to disseminate information about apprenticeships to youth, but it could be expanded further.

7. Improving access to quality apprenticeship for disadvantaged groups

Improving access to quality apprenticeship for disadvantaged groups was a priority. The scope of disadvantaged groups differed across countries, but it typically included indigenous people, the unemployed, people with disabilities, and women in particular occupations. Some countries included migrants and rural residents in the disadvantaged category. The most common type of support for disadvantaged groups was pre-apprenticeship programmes, which introduced apprentices to an occupation and provided targeted skills training and support to enhance the likelihood of completion. Other types of support were also mentioned, such as financial support, mentoring services, and social services support for disadvantaged groups, enabling more people to be attracted to apprenticeships.

(Abridged extracts, Smith et al 2018, xii–xv).

Some qualitative comments from the government respondents to the survey are provided below in box 1. These comments are repeated verbatim.

Box 1. Some illustrative attractiveness actions reported by governments

Action 1. Establish national goals and Action 3: A broad range of occupations: French government

A target of 500,000 apprentices for the years 2012–2017.

The opening of apprenticeship to the State Public Service (with a target of 10,000 apprentices in 2016)

Action 6. Raise awareness: UK government

The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) Business Support Team. Outbound Support: This involved a media campaign via the Career Development Institute and communications to all schools, colleges, apprenticeship representative bodies to ensure career professionals were well-informed and that schools allowed apprenticeship providers in to talk to young people.

Action 7. Improve access for disadvantaged groups: German government

A 'career entry support by mentoring' (Berufseinstiegsbegleitung) scheme offered individual assistance for young people likely to have difficulties in completing secondary school and coping with the transition to vocational training. It started two years before school-leaving and could continue for up to two years after commencing an apprenticeship.

Actions reported by G20 partners

Eighty per cent of the workers' and employers' organizations that responded to the survey in Study 4 were actively involved in raising the awareness of apprenticeships among their members and the general public, including young people and their parents. There was a high focus, particularly by workers' organizations, on attracting disadvantaged people to apprenticeship. Target groups included women, people with disabilities and migrants. Some provisions for rural residents were also described, including financial assistance and accommodation.

Some qualitative comments from social partner respondents to the survey are provided below in Box 2. These comments are repeated verbatim.

Box 2. Some illustrative attractiveness actions reported by social partners

TUC (Trades Union Congress) in U.K.

General campaigning work by the TUC and individual unions: visits to schools to encourage young people to become apprentices, and involvement in skills exhibitions attended by parents and young people (e.g. the "Skills Show" and "Big Bang"). A range of printed guides and online resources for individual apprentices, setting out their employment and training rights.

MEDEF (Mouvement des Entreprises de France) in France

A campaign on apprenticeship, together with with the member organizations, to change the image of apprenticeships, which were described as 'often considered a being a sign of failure.'

Canadian Labor Congress

Initiatives to encourage participation by indigenous people, women and at-risk youth, including:

- ▶ Nine construction unions in Alberta that recruited Indigenous adult learners for pre-apprenticeship training:
- ▶ Initiative by construction unions in Ontario to recruit young women and men from disadvantaged communities and under-represented groups for apprenticeships.
- ▶ This program helped at-risk youth gain the training and job skills to work in construction. It also offered 'wrap-around services' and ongoing support to at-risk youth. The program had a 66 per cent Indigenous participation rate.

Note: Web links for these and other initiatives are provided in the report by Smith et al, 2018

Source: Smith et al, 2018, citing survey respondents' own words.

► 6.2. A summary of attractiveness features in the four reports analysed

Table 4 brings together and summarizes the main points in the four international comparative studies on apprenticeship that relate to attractiveness.

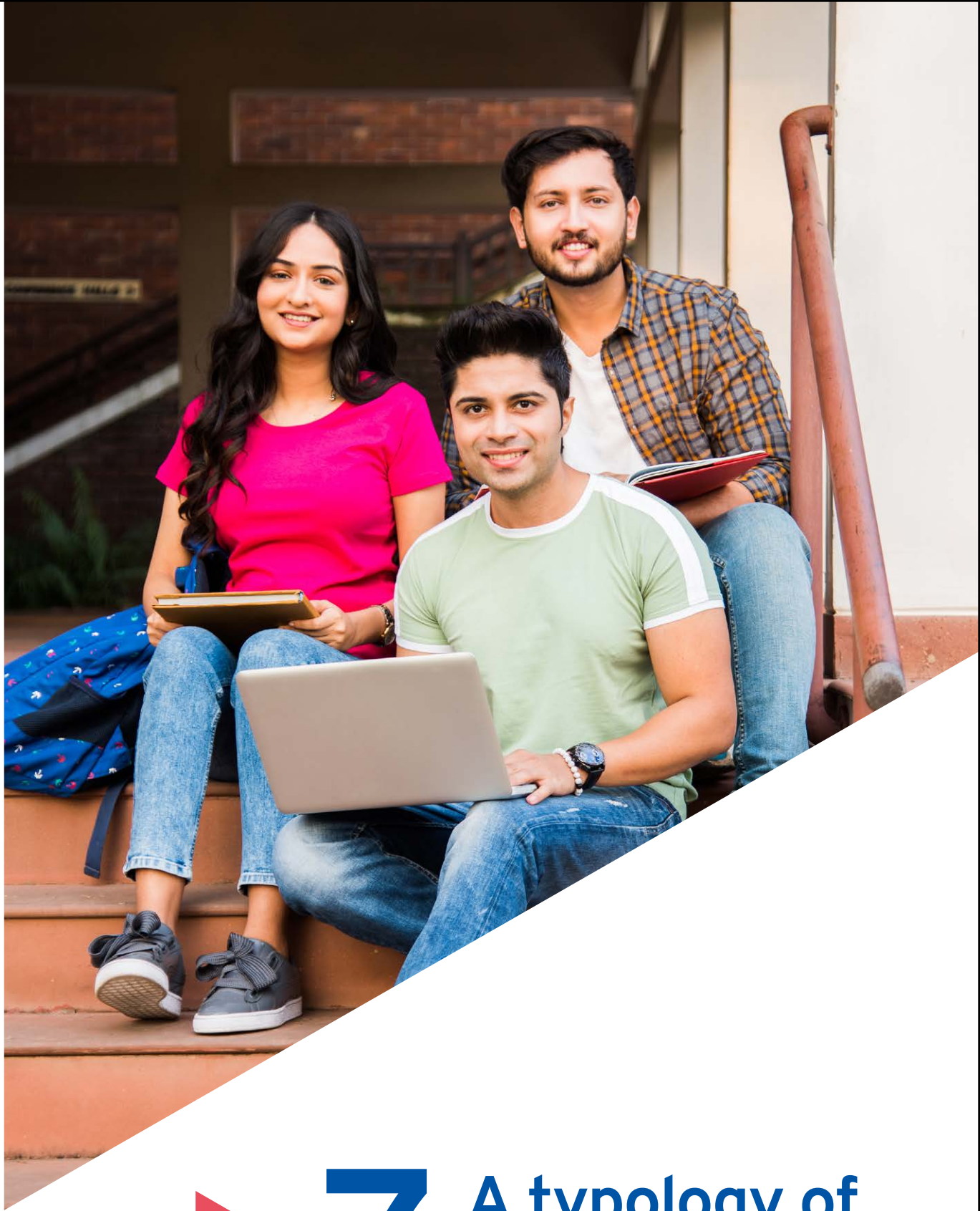
Table 4. Four recent international comparative studies: Reported, implied features or actions on attractiveness of apprenticeships

Study no.	Author/ date	Reported features or actions which make apprenticeships attractive
1	<i>Towards a Model Apprenticeship Framework: A Comparative Analysis of National Apprenticeship Systems (Smith et al. 2014)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering apprenticeships in attractive occupations • Offering apprenticeships in occupations attracting women as well as men • Creating a culture of training in more industries • Opening systems to adults and young people alike • Offering an employment contract • Offering a wage level to encourage individual engagement while not discouraging employers • Providing access for disadvantaged people
2	<i>Apprenticeships for the XXI Century: A Model for Latin America and the Caribbean? (Fazio et al. 2016)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing hands-on experience • Providing a salary • Providing a qualification • Providing access to career ladders • If not paid: Providing of learning materials, tutorial costs, food and transport. • Providing extra support to vulnerable groups
3	<i>People and Policy: A Comparative Study of Apprenticeship Across Eight National Contexts (Chankseliani et al. 2017)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appeal of learning through doing • Occupational and/or workplace socialization • Offering the possibility of progression to (permanent) employment or additional education • Learning while earning • Leading to long-term employment, which is more attractive than higher education in countries with high graduate unemployment
4	<i>ILO Survey Report on the National Initiatives to Promote Quality Apprenticeships in G20 Countries (Smith et al. 2018.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting goals for apprentice numbers • Expanding occupational coverage • Providing pre-apprenticeships and higher-level apprenticeships • Marketing campaigns, via a range of media, aimed at the general public, careers advisers/schools and individuals • Providing extra support to disadvantaged people, minority groups and women to commence and complete apprenticeships, and campaigns to attract them • Good working and training conditions

Source: Author's analysis.

Two of the reports (Studies 1 and 3) also specifically reported and analysed factors that sometimes make apprenticeships unattractive. Both of these found that the low status of VET affected attractiveness, and Smith and Brennan Kemmis (2014) found that some occupations had especially low status. Both found that apprenticed occupations were gendered. Both found geographical issues, such as the uneven geographical distribution of appropriate jobs and different provisions in different states or regions. In addition, Chankseliani et al (2017) reported a lack of encouragement from parents, teachers, peers, barriers relating to race, ethnicity and migration status or indigeneity, age-related restrictions, and issues relating to the structure of the economy affected the attractiveness of apprenticeships.

These four reports, covering between them around a quarter of the countries offering formal apprenticeships, provide a sound basis for an understanding of apprenticeship attractiveness.



7

**A typology of
attractiveness
features**

A typology of attractiveness features

This report now moves on to proposing a typology of attractiveness features, drawing from the literature, the analysis in table 1, and the international studies. An analysis of desirable and deterring actions is provided, loosely categorized here according to the OECD's (2014) features of high-quality apprenticeships.

For the analysis in this section, nine of the OECD's list of ten attributes of high-quality apprenticeships (2014, 7)² were divided into two "bundles", one relating to access and inclusiveness and the other relating to content and governance, which are shown below.

Box 3. OECD's attributes of high-quality apprenticeships

Bundle 1. Attributes that relate to access and inclusiveness

- ▶ Are not limited to specific age groups
- ▶ Facilitate participation of disadvantaged youth
- ▶ Cover multiple sectors and occupations and encourage the participation of women

Bundle 2: Attributes that relate to content and governance

- ▶ Include a strong training component
- ▶ Provide training that is not too narrowly focused
- ▶ Involve an equitable sharing of costs among employers, public authorities and apprentices
- ▶ Require good governance to prevent misuse as a form of cheap labour
- ▶ Are jointly managed by the social partners and relevant institutions
- ▶ Are certified and well-integrated with the formal (education) system.

Source: Author's analysis of OECD 2014, 7.

² One of the ten features was omitted in the analysis – competency-based rather than time-based completion – because there is little data available internationally on this matter.



Based on this categorization, the data analysed so far have shown the following actual and potential strategies to improve attractiveness:

► 7.1. Bundle 1: Attractiveness strategies relating to access and inclusiveness

1. Having more apprenticeship occupations, including those in a broader range of industries and involving qualifications at a range of lower and higher levels, but also with labour market relevance
2. Welcoming the disadvantaged, high achievers, migrant groups, and people of all genders and ages into apprenticeships
3. Providing support where needed, such as pre-apprenticeship programmes, mentoring and workplace mediation
4. Providing advance information and experience about an apprenticeship to reduce anxiety about the commitment
5. Identifying and making known onward career pathways and self-employment pathways
6. Setting targets for the numbers of apprenticeships, for example, over a five or ten year period.
7. Paying attention to geographical variations in the provision of apprenticeships

▶ 7.2. Bundle 2: Attractiveness strategies relating to content and governance

1. Providing good training
2. Providing qualifications as part of the apprenticeship
3. Offering a reasonable remuneration
4. Attending to the “psychological contract” between apprentice, employer and training provider that is inherent in an apprenticeship so that each party will play its proper role (Smith, Walker and Brennan Kemmis 2011)
5. Maintaining good oversight of apprenticeships to prevent exploitation and poor quality, and making the use and application of these oversight systems clear to potential apprentices
6. Monitoring completion rates and investigating problems

The following potential deterrents to apprenticeship have been shown in the data presented so far:

- ▶ Access and inclusiveness: These include a restricted range of occupations; occupations that are not attractive to particular genders or other groups; and occupations seen as low status.
- ▶ Content and governance: These include a low rates of remuneration; long time period; being bound to one employer; perceived lack of career paths; and poor quality training.

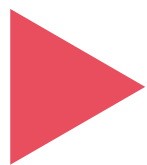
Linking these strategies and the deterrents to the OECD framework makes it clear that a high-quality apprenticeship system will be more attractive to applicants, and that low-quality apprenticeships will not be attractive.

▶ 7.3. Bundle 3: Attractiveness strategies for people with particular characteristics

As noted earlier, certain strategies will be especially attractive (or unattractive) to a particular individual or type of individual. Examples derived from the data presented so far include:

1. An adult contemplating an apprenticeship may seek a good income or a more obvious career pathway.
2. A potential apprentice in a rural area may seek a local apprenticeship or relocation/travel assistance.
3. A potential apprentice with aspirations to study at university will seek a degree apprenticeship or a pathway onwards from the apprenticeship.
4. Somebody unsure about either what occupation they seek or about their capacity for learning at the appropriate level may seek a pre-apprenticeship programme.

These strategies can be conceptualized as forming a third “bundle”. They do not explicitly relate to the attributes of high-quality apprenticeship listed by OECD (2014). They relate to individual preferences, rather than to general access and inclusiveness matters.



8

**Operationalizing
the attractiveness
strategies:
Snapshots of
specific initiatives**

Operationalizing the attractiveness strategies: Snapshots of specific initiatives

How, then, can these three sets of strategies be operationalized? In this section, specific and current examples, categorized according to the typology developed in the previous section are presented. These are allocated by the bundle to which they relate and the specific strategy within that bundle.

► 8.1. Bundle 1: Access and inclusiveness

Welcoming the disadvantaged into apprenticeships (strategy 2)

The examples provided here are of initiatives, from Tanzania and Australia, which involve specific target groups of disadvantaged people.

Tanzania: The Quality Apprenticeship Programme in Hospitality is a programme run by the Government of Tanzania and the ILO which offers apprenticeships in hospitality in 25 hotels and resorts across the country to young people from low-income backgrounds. The first year involves learning across departments, and the apprentices focus on a specific department in the second year. The programme was developed by an employer association and a training college, and the ILO funded 80 per cent of the college fees.

In Tanzania, many miss out on training opportunities because of enrolment criteria restrictions, a lack of infrastructure and an inability to pay the fees. Young women in rural areas, the urban poor, people with disability and other marginalized groups are the most affected. Apprentices were given the skills to navigate the difficult school-to-work transition so that they were not limited to informal, low-income activities. Three quarters of the graduates from the programme were able to secure full-time employment within three months of graduating. The programme set out to be inclusive of women and people with disabilities. It played a role in the breaking of the cultural bias against young Muslim women working in the hospitality sector. For more information, see the *“Implementing and strengthening quality apprenticeship in Tanzania”* page on the ILO website.



Australia: Indigenous people: The National Apprentice Employment Network, the peak body for group training organizations (GTOs), works with a select number of GTOs to manage this programme. A GTO is a type of “labour hire” company, usually not-for-profit, which employs apprentices and trainees and “leases” them to host employers. (Traineeships are a form of shorter apprenticeships in Australia.) Examples of advertised vacancies in mid-2021 were for (a) two apprentice electricians to work for a company that installed security equipment in towns in north Queensland; (b) a civil construction trainer in the town of Litchfield in the Northern Territory; and (c) a trainee bank teller in a small town in Tasmania. The first two opportunities were in towns with significant Indigenous populations. For more information, see the *Indigenous Apprentice Employment Projects* page on the National Apprentice Employment Network website.

There are also Indigenous apprentice and trainee programmes in the Australian government public service for clerical work. These are available across Australia, including in remote locations where there are Indigenous communities. For more information, see *Indigenous Careers* on the Australian Public Service Commission website.

Providing advance information and experience (strategy 4)

There examples provided here are of initiatives, from South Africa, Kenya and Australia, which provide “outreach” activities to provide information and experience.

South Africa: Blulever Education: To address employability skills, Blulever Education, a training provider, has created an eight-week “readiness” programme called Leadership Base Camp. For example, for a plumbing course, this involves four weeks on a residential camp for life and work skills followed by four weeks studying on campus and shadowing a qualified plumber. They may then decide to apply for an apprenticeship. See www.edge.co.uk for more information.

Kenya: Base Titanium (mining company): To address employability skills and encourage young people to enter apprenticeships, a one-month programme is offered in secondary school forms 3 and 4. The programme is focused on life skills and career guidance. Young people can then enter the company’s technical trades apprenticeship programme, currently offering apprenticeships in over 10 occupations.

Australia: Gason (engineering company): Gason is a metal manufacturing company in a small town in rural Australia, which makes large agricultural equipment and metal wood heaters. As the labour pool in the town is small, there is a need to recruit staff and nurture them. The pool of applicants for welding apprenticeships had not been of a high quality, and welding was not seen as a desirable trade. So, a one-week apprenticeship boot camp was introduced for people who might want to become apprentices at Gason. Each year, the company selects up to eight people to undertake the Boot Camp on a no-commitment basis on both sides. This is held in December, after the end of the school year; at the end of the camp, the company selects a number of the participants to whom it offers apprenticeships, which commence in February. If no suitable participants are found, no job offers will be made.

The boot camp involves two days at the company and three days at a technical college (such as a TAFE college). The Gason human resources manager travels daily with the participants to the TAFE campus, over an hour's drive away. It is described as "almost like a week-long interview", as the participants are observed learning, working and during casual interactions. At the TAFE, participants are introduced to different welding techniques, and the training incorporates virtual reality technology.

When they are back at the company on Day 5, the participants are given group and individual skill challenges. They are placed with skilled workers in the company for these challenges, and time is allotted for them to talk to different workers about what the job involves. The week ends with a general group discussion about that they learned, leading to individual job interviews, in which the TAFE teachers are involved.

► 8.2. Bundle 2: Content and governance

The examples provided here are of initiatives, from Mexico and India, as examples of how to structure apprenticeships to make them more attractive.

Offering a reasonable remuneration rate (strategy 2)

Mexico: In Mexico, apprenticeships are primarily undertaken as part of upper secondary studies and the workplace component is generally not paid. In an ongoing study in two states (Hernández-Fernández et al. 2021), it was found that apprenticeship programme operators play a large role in advertising and informing young people of the possible advantages of joining. In one state (Coahuila), apprentices receive a government scholarship of 2,700 Mexican pesos monthly (US\$135) for the workplace component. This economic incentive was reported by participants in the study as an important reason to choose an apprenticeship. In the state of Mexico, apprentices do not get a government scholarship, but some companies choose to provide financial support. The amount in the study was found to vary from 300 to 1000 pesos monthly (\$US15 to \$US50). Moreover, in Mexico, apprenticeships can provide a pathway into higher education, which has very restricted access in Mexico.

Note: This example also addresses the strategy of onwards pathways.

Having good oversight of apprenticeships (strategy 4)

India: In India, apprenticeship is a post-school option rather than part of upper secondary studies. An ongoing study (Sengupta, Sethwala and Fontdevila 2021) found that apprenticeships are seen as attractive to some girls as it can be used as a way to delay marriage plans. It is seen as an option where women are likely to be safe in the workplace, presumably because it is regulated by a national system. Girls often aim for apprenticeships in industries like information technology, which are seen as safe work and gender-conforming.

► 8.3. Bundle 3: Strategies for people with particular characteristics

The examples provided here are of initiatives, from Europe and Australia, which both address the potential needs of adult entrants to apprenticeships.

Europe: *Reactivate and HUB adult apprentice programmes:* Reactivate is an EU programme promoting mobility among countries for mature jobseekers. “It helps EU citizens to find work, apprenticeships or traineeships in another EU Member State and it assists employers to recruit qualified workers throughout the EU” (www.reactivatejob.eu).

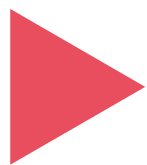
The HUB Adult Mobility Apprenticeship Programme, managed by German and Italian agencies, was a pilot project focused on trades experiencing skill shortages. The programme targeted mature people and offers pre-apprenticeship elements, and it offered accelerated apprenticeships for workers who have prior qualifications and/or have relevant working experience. It also offered relocation allowances.

Australia: A traineeship programme in nursing was developed at the Ballarat Health Services (BHS), which includes one major hospital and many other sites. The Diploma of Nursing, providing access to an “enrolled nurse” occupation, is normally taught off-the-job fulltime and provides placements, but in the mid-2010s, BHS decided to start a traineeship programme to address issues of staff shortages and training quality. In Australia, traineeships are a sub-set of the apprenticeship system.

The trainees are paid a full wage from commencement, even though for the first half of the 18 months they are supernumerary, which means that BHS still employs the same number of regular staff. This provision was required by the nurses’ trade union. The trainee nurses are involved in activities which do not require a diploma to perform; many work in the aged care areas within BHS. All of the first 115 trainees who completed the programme gained permanent employment at the health authority; BHS has benefitted in the form of their staff shortages having disappeared. The programme enables older people with family responsibilities to go into nursing without giving up an income. There is no specific strategy to involve minority groups, but in the 2018 intake, there were 12 nationalities among the 20 trainees with two were refugees.

Note: This also addresses the strategy of appropriate remuneration.

These snapshots provide practical illustrations of how the features identified in the wide range of research discussed in this report have been implemented in practice, while maintaining apprenticeship quality. Each of these initiatives was developed in a particular country but could be applied, with appropriate adaptations, in a range of countries, whether high, medium or low income.



9

**Large-scale
solutions for
promoting
apprenticeships**

Large-scale solutions for promoting apprenticeships

The OECD model of quality apprenticeship, however, can only extend so far. There are external factors which extend beyond the quality of the apprenticeship itself, which also affect the attractiveness of apprenticeships, including:

- ▶ The relative attractiveness compared to other available learning or working pathways;
- ▶ The actions and interventions of others, such as careers advisers or government agencies, who may provide advice to the potential apprentice.

Hence, in addition to the specific strategies to address specific issues, large-scale campaigns to promote apprenticeships in general are useful. Two case studies are provided in this report as examples of such activity at a national scale:

1. The Australian Apprenticeships Ambassadors Program
2. The South Africa's Decade of the Artisan programme

Both set out to present apprenticeships as attractive to attract potential apprentices and especially young people to increase apprenticeship numbers. The case studies are provided in full in appendices 1 and 2, and brief summaries are given here.

Australian Apprenticeships Ambassadors Program: This programme, launched in 2012, set out to increase the attractiveness of apprenticeships primarily by using speakers to talk about their experiences. These individuals could be seen as role models for potential apprentices. They were drawn from a pool of successful apprentices (for example, those who had won training awards), or were sometimes high-profile ex-apprentices, such as sports stars; or were connected in other ways with apprenticeships; and they were known as Apprenticeship Ambassadors. The programme also provided information on its website and via various social media. Speakers could be booked via the website. Since the end of 2016, the programme was subsumed under a broader programme called the VET Alumni programme, which also offers speakers who have studied other VET programmes.

Decade of the Artisan, South Africa: This programme set out to increase the number of "artisans" (skilled trades workers) for the decade 2014–24. Its three major strategies were to:

1. Make TVET colleges fashionable, which meant setting up new technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges which were state of the art. A catch phrase of the campaign is "It's cool to be an artisan".
2. Hold public events every three months at TVET colleges. These have been taking place up to the current date in different regions.
3. Encourage sector education training authorities (SETAs) to become involved in facilitating partnerships between colleges and employers.



Other strategies have been introduced to increase the numbers of artisans including off-the-job training programmes and recognition of prior learning, which is why the Decade of the Artisan is not confined solely to apprenticeships.

Some strengths and weaknesses of these two programmes are summarized here and are described in more detail in Appendices 1 and 2.

Australian Apprenticeships Ambassador Program: One strength of the programme was a very specific focus on apprenticeships. Another was the use of real people who had been apprentices, who could talk honestly to potential apprentices, their families and other influencers about what it was like to do an apprenticeship. In 2021, as part of the expanded VET Alumni, there were 348 apprenticeship speakers available, providing good geographical coverage across the country. However, there were two weaknesses. One is gender representation, as the programme has had a very male emphasis in its marketing, partly due to the use of sports stars in its advertisements. The other was the merging of the apprentice-only programme with the bigger TVET awareness programme. Apprenticeship is a well-known term in Australia, but other aspects of the TVET system are less known and respected, and the term “alumni” is associated with universities, not TVET programmes.

Decade of the Artisan: A very clear strategy was set out from the beginning, and the campaign has been maintained so far over the decade, with visits taking place as planned to different provinces. The campaign and the events focus on young people as the targeted potential candidates for apprenticeship. The events, which include the presence of high-ranking ministers and government officials, are held at technical colleges so young people can see the environment in which off-the-job training will take place. The events also includes training sessions for those who advise young people. The main weaknesses are that the quarterly events, the cornerstone of the strategy, take place at technical colleges, and young people who may be biased against artisan training may not attend. Also, adults may not be attracted. The other weakness relates to the apprenticeship system rather than the programme itself. The occupations on the Organising Framework for Occupations list – those eligible for apprenticeships – are heavily weighted towards certain sectors of the economy and to occupations which are generally regarded as low status. Hence the campaign, however well-organized, would not appeal to people wishing to work in other sectors of the economy.

These two general national marketing campaigns have given apprenticeships visibility and have attracted many people to events and to their websites. However, the actual outcomes have not been specifically evaluated, and neither campaign focuses only on apprenticeships now. Interestingly, the US has recently launched an Apprenticeship Ambassador Initiative program, but the U.S. programme designates organizations rather than individuals as ambassadors. For more details, see the web page for the **Apprenticeship Ambassador Initiative**.



POLICIES

▶ 10

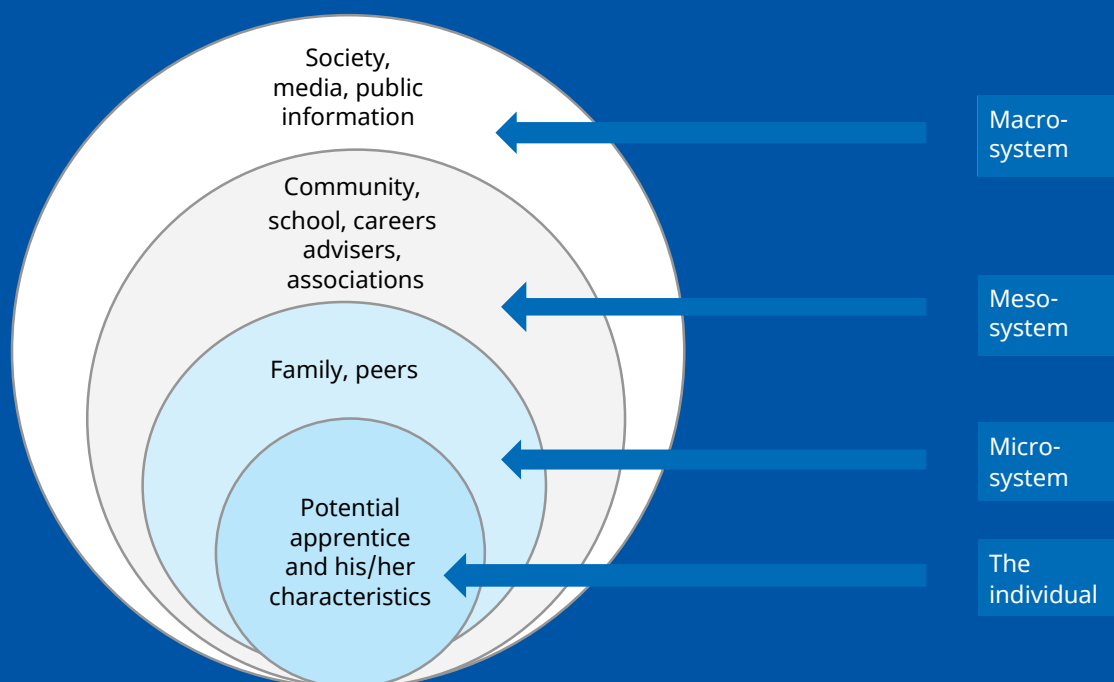
Policy implications for marketing the attractiveness of apprenticeships to individuals

Policy implications for marketing the attractiveness of apprenticeships to individuals

A range of issues that either attract people to or deter them from undertaking an apprenticeship have been discussed. Many strategies, both general and industry-specific, playing out at the national and local levels, have been presented.

What, then, are the implications and possibilities for stakeholders, including governments, who wish to increase participation in apprenticeships? Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), Figure 1 below shows the influences acting upon a person considering, or potentially considering, an apprenticeship.

Figure 1. Levels of influence affecting an individual's decision to undertake an apprenticeship



Source: Author, based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979).

Figure 1 shows that there are several layers of influence weighing on potential apprentices. Their families and peers (the micro-system) are possibly both the strongest influencers, but also the most difficult for stakeholders to influence. The meso-system is more accessible to stakeholders, and this report has provided many examples of ways in which stakeholders and actors in the system, for example, promote apprenticeships in schools and at community events, and educate careers advisers. In some cases, governments are active at this level (for example, South Africa's Decade of the Artisan programme). In other cases, governments are most active at the society level, through websites and the media, including social media. All of these campaigns influence not only potential apprentices but also their families and peers, providing a way into the micro-system.

However, the centre of figure 1 is, of course, the potential apprentice. The individual's characteristics, aspirations and beliefs will ultimately determine the decision they make to pursue an apprenticeship or not. Table 1 has shown how the features of apprenticeship systems may either attract or deter an individual depending on his/her characteristics and background. The bundle of strategies to attract people with particular characteristics (see section 8.3) provides some examples of characteristics that might lead a particular individual to consider a particular type of apprenticeship programme.

The reports, examples and case studies illustrate that there is already considerable awareness of these different influencers and the importance of taking account of the potential apprentice's personal characteristics. This is acknowledged explicitly in announcements from stakeholders and implicitly in the type of measures that have been adopted.

Three examples of countries raising awareness and marketing to clear target audiences are provided here. The first is at the national level (the UK government), and the second and third are at the company level in India and the Netherlands respectively.

Box 4: Examples of awareness raising about apprenticeships at various levels, in three countries.

UK: The former National Apprenticeship Service (now incorporated into the government) undertook a broad range of marketing activities for different target groups, which are listed here.

For potential apprentices: A campaign known as 'Get in, go far' to attract young people; creation of the Find an Apprenticeship website; webinar sessions working with Jobcentre staff to help the latter assist unemployed people into apprenticeships; a National Apprenticeship Service helpdesk for enquiries.

For career counsellors: A media campaign via the national Career Development Institute; communications to all schools, colleges and apprenticeship bodies to provide careers staff with up-to-date information. In addition, the Technical and Further Education Act (2017) now requires schools to allow training providers to talk directly to students about apprenticeships and other TVET courses.

For the general public: The Amazing Apprenticeships website to promote apprenticeships as a valued destination; resources for schools to educate young people about apprenticeships (Smith, Tuck and Chatani, 2018)

India: Dalmia Cement conducts marketing campaigns in the communities around its plants to try to attract local people into apprenticeships. Company staff put up stalls at local job fairs and visit training providers (ILO 2018).

The Netherlands: The FrieslandCampina Dairy Cooperative needs 50 apprentices a year and undertakes a number of promotional activities to recruit them. Representatives attend events run by college student associations and universities, sometimes taking existing apprentices along. The company has a Facebook page for recruitment but finds the face-to-face method more effective (ILO 2018).

The campaigns by the National Apprenticeship Service in the UK clearly targeted three of the four levels of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system: the individual (the potential apprentice), the meso-system and the macro-system. The Indian example of Dalmia Cement targets the 'meso' level of events within communities; the example from the Netherlands is also at the 'meso' level but targeting colleges.

However, an apprenticeship is not a single product that can be marketed as a single entity. It is unlike, say, soap powder, which is a product with a single purpose, where the marketing focuses on competition with other brands. The "product" of apprenticeship is, in fact, competing with other types of employment and/or study choices. Offering the twin prospect of employment, or at least quasi-employment, and learning, it may readily be seen as having advantages over other employment or study options. The simple and straightforward key points from the list created by Fazio et al (2016) in their international study underscore these factors: hands-on experience; earning a salary; gaining a qualification; and access to career ladders.

These should be key marketing features for apprenticeships. However, all four factors are not necessarily present in all countries, companies and educational systems. If they are not, perhaps policy attention needs to be paid to the gaps.

People's choices are also affected by the type of occupation. An apprenticeship does not exist in an occupational vacuum. Apprenticeships are available in a wide range of different occupational areas; for example, they are available in around 150 occupations in South Africa (see Appendix 2). The Australian survey (NCVER, 2019), discussed earlier, showed that when asked about reasons for undertaking an apprenticeship, 'Wanted to work in that type of job' was the option selected by the largest proportion of people. While some people are attracted by the concept and structure of an apprenticeship, the occupation may come first in many people's considerations. In fact, the strong sense of occupational identity in some apprenticeships (Smith 2013) is perhaps linked both to the job itself and to the fact that it is an apprenticed occupation.

Apprenticeships also vary because they are offered by individual employers. Although there are attempts, strenuous ones in some countries, to regulate what happens to apprentices within companies, in the end, an apprenticeship in an occupation will differ among companies. In this respect, an apprenticeship is unlike, for example, a higher education course of study for an occupation. There are many recognizable similarities among higher education providers; and these providers are generally tightly regulated by governments. But in contrast, companies and their human resource management practices vary greatly and hence, the reputation of a company, or indeed an industry, for good working conditions and attention to training affects the perceptions of apprenticeships.

It must not be forgotten that to some individuals, apprenticeships are simply not of interest. Even in countries where there are many occupations available through apprenticeships, there are limitations, particularly in status. For example, one cannot become a doctor or a lawyer through an apprenticeship at least currently. A recent OECD report titled Dream Jobs (Mann et al 2020) finds that over the past 20 years, young people's career aspirations have become progressively narrower, with 50 per cent of young people in each country now choosing one of only 10 occupations as a job they expected to do at the age of 30 (however, the top 10 lists varied by country). The jobs in these "top ten" lists are usually linked to the requirement for a university education.



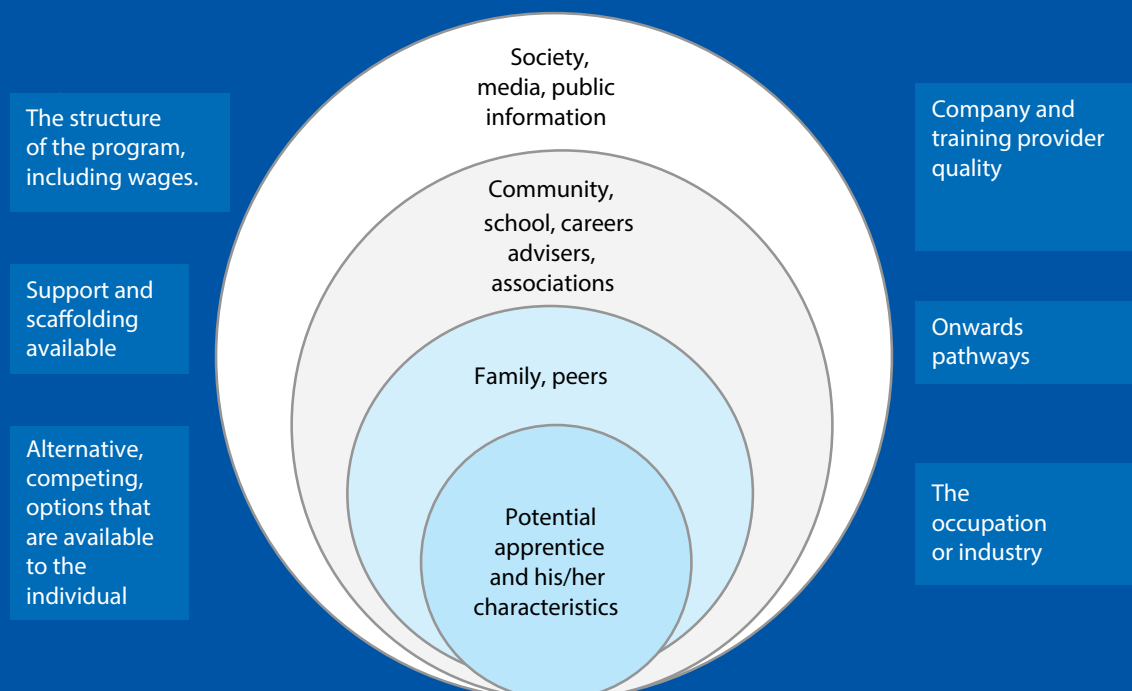
▶ **11** Conclusion

Conclusion

This report has shown that there are many instances of good practices in making people aware of the attractive features of apprenticeships at different levels. The least developed level seems to be that of family and peers (the micro-level), understandably so as that level is least accessible by policy measures. However, micro-level actors can, to some extent, be reached by the same means used to reach individuals, and by general public campaigns at the macro-level including the National Apprenticeship Service in the UK and the MEDEF in France. But this is not straightforward. In a specific example, the Trades Union Congress' response to the G20 survey (Smith et al 2018), as discussed earlier, mentioned that parents attended skills exhibitions and could thus be influenced in favour of apprenticeships. But there is the possibility that such events would be attended only by families already committed to VET and/or apprenticeship, and the challenge is to reach families who might view apprenticeships as low status. This is just one example of the challenges involved in reaching micro-level actors.

Beyond this, attempts to disseminate the attractiveness of apprenticeships are likely to be more successful if the contextual factors discussed in the previous section are taken into account. Figure 2 builds on figure 1 to add these contextual factors, arranged around the central part of figure 2, to the consideration of different influences.

Figure 2. Contextual factors to be taken into account when promoting apprenticeships at any level of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system





Each of these six factors may affect an individual's decision about taking up an apprenticeship. All six factors, therefore, need to be considered by those wishing to attract more people to apprenticeships.

For all apprentices in all apprenticeships, the company and training provider need to be of good quality. Word of mouth recommendations will convey this to future potential apprentices, both for those companies and elsewhere in the industry. To attract the maximum number of apprentices of different ages, these programmes need to have an appropriate structure involving adequate wages, and pathways account for both those seeking to go further and those needing scaffolding to enter an apprenticeship. For individual potential apprentices, the occupation has to be attractive; and an apprenticeship has to appear competitive compared to other options open to that individual.

Figure 2 also illustrates that comprehensive strategies need to be adopted by stakeholders across the macro, meso and micro levels as well as target individuals. Each individual is different, and there needs to be careful thought about the nature of potential applicants. The examples in this report show that this definitely occurs in programmes targeted at specific groups (such as the disadvantaged or ethnic minorities), but this is probably less frequently done for potential applicants (young and mature) in general, who do not fall into designated groups who need support, but nevertheless have individual needs and desires that they hope to meet through their work.



 **12**
Recommendations

Recommendations

Several recommendations flow from the authors' analysis of current and past practices and policies. To make apprenticeships more attractive to more people, seven structural recommendations and seven marketing recommendations (suggestions for information dissemination) are offered. The structural recommendations should all involve the social partners.

Recommendations for structuring apprenticeships to be more attractive

1. Offer apprenticeships with a broader range of occupations and of qualification levels and expedite processes for the addition of both to the system. This range will attract both high achievers and the disadvantaged.
2. Provide good pay and conditions with proper monitoring and mediation systems.
3. Work with higher education systems both to offer degree apprenticeships and regularize pathways into higher education from lower-level apprenticeships via qualification development systems.
4. Offer apprenticeships for industries as well as for occupations and for industries where occupations are not so clear-cut or well-known.
5. Provide 'bite-sized' chunks of apprenticeship (such as pre-apprenticeships) to attract those who are anxious about the time commitment and those with low self-efficacy or less-developed skills.
6. Develop and foster a culture of training in companies, especially companies that are new to the apprenticeship system.
7. Provide structured fallback options (for example, a situation in which an apprentice has to leave a company), so that undertaking an apprenticeship does not appear so dependent on the viability or working environment of a company.

Recommendations for marketing apprenticeships

1. Make clear and impartial information directly available and accessible to young people and to mature adults who might contemplate apprenticeships, in a range of media.
2. Make it clear what the onwards pathways are: an occupation, a career path or self-employment.
3. Promulgate success stories across the full range of these options.
4. Focus on addressing the low status problem in general and more specifically, the problem of low-status occupations within apprenticeships.
5. Stress a particular occupation, but also the transferability of skills gained in apprenticeships.
6. Use apprentices and ex-apprentices for marketing.
7. Investigate the potential target groups, or individual characteristics of potential apprentices, and what they might want or need.

Each of these recommendations needs to be implemented at all of the Bronfenbrenner levels.

Marketing needs to take place at the micro, meso and the macro level, but some marketing strategies are more important at different levels. For example, it is particularly important to target the meso-level for marketing recommendation 4 – careers advisers in schools and elsewhere.

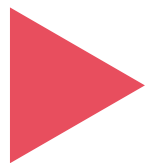


Different stakeholder groups can be involved in different aspects of these recommendations. Social partners are already involved in many of the structural items mentioned, and their involvement needs to increase. Employer associations in particular, together with industry skills councils, can contribute to the development of industry apprenticeships. Higher education and VET systems, along with industry skills councils, can contribute to qualifications pathways; and individual companies can work to improve their own arrangements and to make provisions for apprentices who need or want to leave.

Marketing apprenticeships effectively is the responsibility of all social partners, and this is an accepted fact as was evident in the activity reported to the G20 survey (Smith, Tuck and Chatani 2018). Also, schools and adult careers services need to be involved in the co-design of information campaigns rather than simply receiving information and passing it on. Potential apprentices and the parents of teenagers from a range of educational and employment backgrounds, and the appropriate community organisations to investigate strategies for adults, should also be involved if possible.

These are some interesting areas for future research.

- ▶ An adaptable international survey on the reasons for undertaking an apprenticeship to be carried out with apprentices who are young people and adults
- ▶ A method of investigating what would make apprenticeships attractive to potential candidates, that is, to the general public
- ▶ Investigating what basic data on apprenticeship systems would enable ideas from other countries to be evaluated for usefulness
- ▶ Mapping the attractiveness features in different countries with a view to developing a typology



12

Case Study

▶ Case Study: 1

The Australian Apprenticeships Ambassador Program

Introduction and background: The Australian Apprenticeships Ambassador Program (AAAP), launched in 2012, set out to increase the attractiveness of apprenticeships by primarily bringing speakers to talk about their experiences. These were mainly from a pool of successful, and they were sometimes high-profile ex-apprentices or people connected in other ways to apprenticeships. These people were known as Apprenticeship Ambassadors; the term included people who had completed traineeships, a shorter form of apprenticeship in existence since the mid-1980s (Smith 2021). The programme also provided information on its website and via social media.

A report by the Australian government had recommended strategies to raise the status of apprenticeships and traineeships (Commonwealth of Australia 2011), noting that employers often complained about the difficulty of attracting good candidates for apprenticeship vacancies; the AAAP was one of the government's responses to counteract this shortfall.

The programme: The AAAP had two tiers of ambassadors who were willing to speak publicly about the benefits of apprenticeships and traineeships and of the subsequent careers they had.

- ▶ Tier 1. Public personalities who had been apprentices or were connected with apprenticeships (such as sports stars)
- ▶ Tier 2. "Ordinary people" who were former apprentices and trainees.

These speakers could be booked to appear at events attended by young people, such as careers expos, training providers and universities; they would also appear at business functions and other public events. The main target group was young people aged 15–25 and those who influence them. Small businesses were especially targeted. The Tier 2 people were drawn from finalists in the Australian heats for the international WorldSkills competition, and from finalists in apprentice and trainee categories in the Australian National Training Awards. By 2017, there were 200 Ambassadors who could be booked for events. The Australian Department of Education and Training found that by that year, almost 6 million people had been reached by the programme in one way or another.

Change of name and function: The AAAP has now been subsumed into the VET Alumni programme which covers graduates of all VET pathways, such as full-time TVET programmes at TAFE institutes (the public provider) and other training providers. This programme was launched at the end of 2016. However, current Australian Apprenticeship Ambassadors still hold their former title. Since 2017, all finalists at the Australian Training Awards, not just apprentices and trainees, automatically become VET Alumni, and their profiles can be found on the VET Alumni website. Alumni can also be representatives of businesses and training providers that have won training awards, and winners at the building industry's training awards. Worldskills Gold medallists also continue to be eligible. Sometimes prominent people, especially from the sporting world, who do not meet these criteria are also invited.

People who wish to book a speaker can choose someone from any of these categories and can specify an industry area. Requests can also be made on a state by state basis. The service also creates video promotions; and media training is provided to some VET Alumni.

In mid-April 2021, the Alumni had 537 active members in the programme, 348 of whom were Apprenticeship Ambassadors (AAs). There has been a conscious effort to increase women's participation; of the 348 AAs, 141 were female and 191 males (16 undisclosed), with an even mix of apprentices and trainees.

The new programme can be viewed at the Australian VET Alumni Program webpage. Two staff members administering the programme provided information for this case study; one was a former ex-Australian Apprenticeship Ambassador since 2011. She had undertaken a business traineeship while still in secondary school; she reported that another staff member in the department has also been an ambassador.

Impact: The impact of this programme has primarily been measured in terms of bookings and webpage views. One problem in monitoring impact has been that the bookings of Ambassadors and other VET Alumni can be made at a local state level as well as centrally. A new centralized monitoring system to be released in late 2021 or early 2022 will allow all requests to be tracked centrally. In 2021, until May, central staff had personally organized over 40 Alumni to be involved in engagements, such as filming projects, media training, career expos and webinars. Until mid-2021, there had been 24,000 views of alumni pages since the launch of the Alumni portal in late 2019 at the Australian Training Awards. There has not been any other form of evaluation of the programme, and apprentice numbers have fallen considerably since 2012, mainly due to specific funding issues (Smith 2021).

Strengths and weaknesses: One strength of the programme is its very specific focus on apprenticeships. Another is the use of real people who had been apprentices and who could talk honestly to potential apprentices and their families and influencers about what it was like doing an apprenticeship. However, there are two weaknesses. One is gender representation, and the other is the merging of the apprentice-only programme with the bigger TVET awareness programme.

In Australia, for decades, there has been a perception that what is known as “traditional apprenticeships” (in crafts, manufacturing and construction) have a higher status than other apprenticeships and the shorter and more recently established traineeships (Smith 2021). Traditional apprenticeships are mainly (around 90 per cent) taken up by men, and trainees are more likely to be women. While the programme has covered traineeships from its inception, which are much more likely to involve women, the title did not reflect that both were included, and so the public perception could have been that it was primarily for men. Certainly, the cover of a document provided on the UNESCO-UNEVOC Promising practices website (Australian Government 2017), showing Tier 1 Ambassadors at that time, depicts five men and only one woman. The woman is in hairdressing which is the only “traditional apprenticeship” with high participation of women. Three of the men depicted are football and rugby players or ex-players, indicating the strong masculine bias. One was a celebrity chef, and one was a TV personality. Moreover, none of the photographs depicted non-white people.

The change of the programme name to VET Alumni has advantages and disadvantages. While the VET Alumni program is more likely to correct the strongly masculine flavour of the original AAAP, it has moved the focus away from apprenticeships and traineeships to the TVET system. It is stated that the AAAP program is still active within the VET alumni programme, but it has no separate public face on the VET alumni website. The VET alumni website, in fact, does not contain a clear overview of the programme, and so without prior knowledge of its purpose, people may not understand its function.

► Case Study: 2

Decade of the Artisan in South Africa

Introduction and background: The Decade of the Artisan scheme is managed by the South African Department and Higher Education and Training (DHET) and was launched in 2014 at the Ekurhuleni East TVET College by the Deputy Minister Mududzuni Manana (MerSETA 2014). This followed the launch of the Year of the Artisan by Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology Blade Nzimande, in February 2013 at a conference of the International Network on Innovative Apprenticeship (INAP) (Nzimande 2013). As part of the campaign, DHET promotes the “seven steps to becoming an artisan”: career development; learner contracting; knowledge, practical and workplace training; artisan recognition of prior learning; trade testing; certification; and quality assurance.³

‘Artisan’ is a term for skilled trade worker, and in South Africa, according to the Government Gazette no. 35625 (31 August 2012), around 150 occupations declared as listed trades. These trades are required to have an artisan qualification, and if this is gained via an apprenticeship, it is expected to involve structured learning, external assessment, and last for three years. New occupations may be submitted for inclusion on the Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO) by a sector education and training authority (SETA) (industry skills council) to the National Artisan Moderation Body. The criteria for “trades” occupations include the production of tangible goods and the use of tools (Government Gazette no. 35625) and therefore, the list is heavily weighted towards production jobs and away from services. As Akojee (2103) puts it, they are typically “typically blue collar trades”, and “learnerships’ cater for much non-trades training”.

Introduced in the year 2000, learnerships involved mainly off-the-job training with work placements and were around 12 months in duration; now, some of these are of a longer duration. In 2013, there were five times as many people in learnerships as apprenticeships. People in learnerships receive a stipend, typically 3,500 South African rand to 5,000 rand monthly (approximately \$US240–340).

South Africa has many underlying economic problems and inequalities among its population. These were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the economy contracting by 7 per cent during 2020 and unemployment reaching 32.5 per cent by the fourth quarter of 2020. Unemployment was 63 per cent among youth aged 15-24, underlining the importance of apprenticeships for young people.⁴

The political history of South Africa is also important in understanding its apprenticeship initiatives. Apprenticeship cannot be analysed without an understanding of apartheid (Wedekind 2013; Akojee 2013). Non-white people were excluded from apprenticeship opportunities until the Manpower Act of 1981 (von Maltitz 2018; Papier 2021). As Wedekind (2013, 9) puts it, “In South Africa apprenticeship is still tied to a history of slavery, colonialism and apartheid that shaped the understanding of apprenticeship as raced and classed in particular ways.” This means that attitudes towards apprenticeships among non-white people, the large majority of the population, may be ambivalent, with people feeling an apprenticeship is “not for them” or alternatively seeing apprenticeship as aspirational. Certainly there may be little family history with apprenticeships (Wedekind 2013; von Maltitz 2018) By 2012, three quarters of apprentices (73 per cent) were non-white, which was an improvement, but nevertheless disproportionate, as white people constituted less than 10 per cent of the population. In the manufacturing sector, by 2020, over 80 per cent of apprentices were black (MerSETA 2020).

³ For more information, see 7-Steps to becoming an Artisan on the South Africa, Department of Higher Education and Training website.

⁴ For more information, see the South Africa overview page on the World Bank website.

The programme: At the 2013 launch of the Year of the Artisan, Minister Nzimande focused on raising the status of apprenticeships:

Artisan training and other forms of workplace-based training are a central part of our strategy to expand education and training opportunities for our people, especially the youth. Closely associated with the expansion of education and training opportunities is the question of raising the status of vocational training. The idea that trades and other vocational programmes are only for those who can't get into university is deeply ingrained in our society and has a detrimental effect on our ability to develop the skills required by our labour market, not to mention the status of those who make a very important contribution to our economy and society. With the launch of "2013: The Year of the Artisan", we are actively changing this misconception, and working towards making FET Colleges, and the artisan and other career-based training programmes that they offer, the option of choice for the majority of our youth - and other out of school adults - who take this route. (Nzimande 2013)

The country's National Development Plan stated the need for 30,000 artisans a year, particularly to assist with strategic infrastructure projects and to avoid importing skilled labour. The aim was to achieve this by annual increments of 1,000 artisans (MerSETA 2014). The programme also aimed at helping to alleviate the then high levels of unemployment among university graduates. At the same time, the National Artisan Development Support Centre was set up, which was aimed to be the central learner placement and tracking mechanism for learners and employers.

The three major strategies were to:

1. Make TVET colleges fashionable, which meant setting up new TVET colleges which were state of the art, according to the DHET Deputy Minister Mduduzi Manana. A catchphrase of the campaign is "It's cool to be an artisan".
2. Hold public events every three months at TVET colleges. These have been taking place upto the current date in different regions.
3. Encourage sector education training authorities to become involved in facilitating partnerships between colleges and employers.

Example of a public event: An example of one of the quarterly visits (strategy 2) was at the False Bay TVET College in the Western Cape region on the fifth anniversary of the programme; this was fronted by the Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Buti Manamela. A two-day programme was conducted; Day 1 was spent with 70 employers to encourage them to partner with the college, and Day 2 was spent with 1,200 learners from local high schools, with a parallel "Artisan Ambassadors Training" session for teachers, careers officers and community workers. Day 2 for the learners included a concert by a popular band, demonstrations by the South African Police Services Dog Units and St Johns Ambulance Services, as well as sessions placing emphasis on Industry 4.0 skills such as robotics, mechatronics and 3D printing.⁵

Impact: There has not been a formal evaluation of the campaign, but there does not seem to be a sustained increase in apprentice commencements. In the financial year 2013/14, commencements were 27,670, rising to a high of 32,330 in 2017/18, but falling to 29,982 in 2018/19. As the figures also include learnerships and other artisan training programmes, the picture is not clear. The figures fell by 45.9 per cent for 2019/20 (DHET 2021), which is attributed to issues associated with the implementation of a new Artisan Recognition of Prior Learning program.

⁵ For details of the event, see the Decade of the Artisan Advocacy Campaign hits the Western Cape page on the False Bay College website.

Strengths and weaknesses: The main strengths are that a very clear strategy was set out from the beginning, and the campaign has been maintained so far over the decade, with visits taking place as planned to different provinces. The campaign and the events focus on young people, the potential candidates for apprenticeship, with the “It’s cool to be an artisan” slogan. The events are held at technical colleges so the young people can see the environment in which off-the-job training would take place. The events also include training sessions for those who advise young people.

The main weaknesses are that since the quarterly events that are the cornerstone of the strategy take place at technical colleges, young people who may be biased against artisan training may not attend. The occupations on the OFO list are heavily weighted to certain sectors of the economy and occupations. These occupations are of low status and are not the major occupations in the economy (Wedekind 2013; Balwanz and Ngcwangu 2016). Many of the occupations, however, are in line with the infrastructure targets. The campaign covers other forms of becoming an artisan as well as apprenticeship. In the manufacturing and engineering sector, for example, MerSETA (2020) found that apprenticeships only accounted for around 50–60 per cent of artisan training commencements over the past decade, although it was the most successful pathway.

Ideas for the future in South Africa: A meeting of apprenticeship stakeholders was led by Blulever Education in 2019; it was called the Artisan 4.0 summit, and it included two stakeholder group discussions on raising the status and perceptions of apprenticeships for potential applications. The suggestions (Blulever Education 2019, 4–5) are included here as the ideas have application in many countries. They have been analysed to create two main categories from these points: structural and informational/educational.

Box 4: Ideas for the future from South African stakeholders (Blulever summit)

Structural

- Redefining what it means to be an artisan and what an artisan of the future looks like
- Getting younger people into these careers and change the image of being a tradesperson for the next generation
- Skills transfer through recognition of prior learning (RPL) to address the need for recognized qualifications and the large population of experienced but unqualified artisans operating in the informal space
- Increasing barriers to entry for young people, which may help with elevating status and making artisan careers more attractive and aspirational

Informational/educational

- Providing dialogue on social media and sharing success stories
- Sharing more information on what apprenticeships are and on the opportunities that exist
- Creating primary school initiatives that expose school learners to different artisan careers
- Exposing underprivileged areas to apprenticeship campaigns
- Getting role models in the communities to share their stories and identifying local champions
- Educating parents on artisan careers

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