Cover Sheet

Response to Consultation on Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

Name of Organisation HSE
Address HR Succession Management
4TH Floor 20-23 Merchant’s Quay
Dublin 8

Occupational sectors which are covered in the submission

Date of submission August 30th 2013

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The submission should be made by e mail to Apprenticeshipreview@education.gov.ie
by close of business on Friday 30 August 2013. Please note that all submissions will be
published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.
Consultation on Review of Apprenticeship in Ireland. Suggested issues for submissions.

Area 1 Overview

1 Having regard to the issues outlined in the Press Release and Discussion Paper, please set out your views of the effectiveness of the current apprenticeship programme, highlighting the issues you consider should be addressed to ensure a skilled workforce to meet Ireland's current and future needs.

In our view the apprenticeship programme has previously worked very well in areas where larger organisations have been in a position to provide structured and well supported development within the workplace, to complement college based academic and practical learning. In many instances the Apprentice of the Year Competitions confirmed that people who had exposure to full support (to attend college etc.) and high levels of varied and challenging work experience were the ones who really prospered.

It is now timely to look at reframing the Apprenticeship Model used in Ireland with a view to better preparing a young workforce, to meet the needs of a country slowly beginning to come out of recession. Looking at the research across Europe it appears that many countries have varying lengths of apprenticeships, this would appear to be the single most obvious benefit to shortening the development pathway for certain programmes. Perhaps an opportunity exists to standardise an apprenticeship model across the EU, this may attract some funding?

In terms of Workforce Planning, the HSE have been working with FAS to look at labour trends in Healthcare for the forthcoming years and were able to identify some interesting issues; such as a potential shortfall in GP numbers over the next five years due to the increase in the number of female GPs (of a certain age category) and the implications for maternity leave cover, based on research data captured over previous years. Can similar techniques be used to look at future trends in term of craftsmen/tradesmen. As we know there is less requirement to train in some of the traditional areas and significantly less demand for construction related work, however, this could change progressively as the economy picks up. A question comes to mind as to whether it is more economical to utilise migrant workers or to invest (heavily) in building home-grown talent.

In terms of succession management it would be very useful to look at how many qualified tradesmen are due to retire or emigrate over the next five years. Another question in this regard as mentioned in the report, is to indentify how many part qualified tradesmen are currently out of work and would be willing to complete their training, perhaps following a short transition programme. This arrangement would not only be more cost effective but would have a far quicker turnaround; however, the nature of the work must again be based on identified need and not just on previous activity.

There is little doubt that aligning training and education of all categories to the FETAC system, has created an instantly recognisable set of progressive qualifications. Within Irish Healthcare Services over the past number of years significant progress has been made in creating career pathways for Care Workers and Nurses. Making a Nursing Degree the
mandatory standard for example has significantly altered how nurses are trained and makes further Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and ultimately career progression easier to manage. Within the support grades, over 10,000 employees have been trained and developed to reach a minimum of FETAC 5 level, the results of which have not only enabled thousands of people to return to learning, but encouraged them to pursue further education to higher standards. In terms of quality improvement and standards HIQA are very anxious to ensure all support grades receive training before they are allowed to work with patients and clients.

2. Please set out an overview of your ideal model for apprenticeship in the future, indicating whether the programme should be extended to cover new occupations, and whether there should be various sub models for different fields of activity.

Within the HSE at present we only have 5 apprentice craft workers, primarily due to the employment embargo which has been in place for a number of years. Whether we are therefore in an informed position to influence the future model is perhaps questionable. What we can share is our experience (as outlined above) of how Nurse Training and that of support workers has evolved over the past 10 years. Specifically relating to support workers, significant investment was put into designing the specific and technical/clinical content of the FETAC accredited modules, based on pathways of minor awards. Expert panels from across the service areas contributed and designed the content of the modules and they have been updated recently based on the requirement to migrate to the new QQI structures. Much of our activity in this area is driven directly by frontline service requirement, such as the need to upskill every Home Help, again up to FETAC level 5 based on national standards/recommendations.

Suggestion: Would the possibility of giving young apprentices, some general skills training early in their career with a view to them specialising or graduating in a specialist area, in years 3&4, being based on labour market requirements.

3. How should the Irish apprenticeship system fit into the EU and international structures?

It could be hugely beneficial for Ireland to take a lead in this area, looking at good practice in the UK & Germany/France for example. In the UK the City & Guilds Model enables qualifications to be recognised in many other countries, could an EU model not be aligned to such a system.
Looking forward, what changes would you recommend in a re-structured or fundamentally reformed apprenticeship system in regard to any or all of the issues below. Please feel free to consider a significantly broader approach which embraces a wide range of occupations, and provides for different modes of funding and delivery.

1  Governance

1a  Should future apprenticeships have a statutory underpinning? What aspects, if any, should be statute regulated, and what aspects should be market or stakeholder controlled?

The only way to ensure standards are being maintained is to have proper planning and effective evaluation. Due to the potential implications of getting this wrong, some state governance structure is essential. Clarity on statutory Vs mandatory training is crucial.

1b  How and who should be involved in planning, curriculum development, support, regulation and monitoring of apprenticeships to ensure compliance with national objectives? (Quality assurance to be through Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)).

Input form the various professions/professional bodies, education providers, Workforce Planning Experts. A mixture of public and private industry to establish a review board under the Department of Education. Perhaps a procurement process could be utilised to identify the most efficient and effective suppliers (and methodologies) following the findings of the review. Again within the HSE significant savings have been made in this area.

1c  What would be the most effective system of governance to combine long term system and brand stability with an agile response to national needs? How can governance arrangements be simplified/streamlined?

One agency or subsection of an existing agency.

2  Equity

2a  How can a better gender balance be achieved in apprenticeships?

Again going back to a previous point, if a model where general or basic training comes before specialist training then decisions can be made for men and women in terms of future specialisation. There are a number of mechanical (Construction Plant Fitter) & construction (Carpentry) where high levels of physical strength may be required, however, the majority of apprenticeships could be undertaken by both sexes. There may also be certain work environments which have been traditionally male oriented, like the fire & ambulance services; Gender ratios particularly in the ambulance service have been shifting, although within the fire service the ability to physically lift a person over a certain distance (for rescue purposes) remains a factor.

The point is here, choices should be available to all, perhaps with the odd exception where there are health & safety risks etc.
2b How can education and training and labour market entry routes for early school leavers, and those ill equipped for direct entry to more academically oriented FE and HE programmes, be best protected and expanded?

There are FETAC programmes starting at level 3, which assist people with any issues around literacy and numeracy which potentially prohibit further learning. A systematic support system to ensure minimum levels of capability in this area, are open to all. There are many examples of good practice in this area within the health system, utilising prior learning skills to good effect based on years experience etc.

2c How can the interests of persons with disabilities be advanced within future apprenticeships?

In the healthcare area, significant effort is made to ensure people who have a disability, which impacts on their ability to perform certain tasks, are provided with meaningful work which they can undertake safely. There are considerable and sensitive issues to consider when looking at suitability to undertake certain apprenticeships, including such realistic things as physical agility and good eyesight/hearing for example. Proper risk assessment would need to be undertaken before any policy decision should be considered.

Further investment in alternative forms of education and training, again based on the FETAC models such as programmes undertaken by the Disability Federation of Ireland, should be considered, as they are real working models. Having an overall strategy here with career pathways makes choice for all a critical success factor here.

3 Range of occupations

3a Should the range of occupations covered by apprenticeship/traineeships be broadened outside the traditional craft industries? If so, what occupations/programmes should be covered and how would this be achieved? Please state why you consider these occupations suitable for apprenticeship.

An alternative view here is that we should look at the practical exposure to real service areas that our degree students in college get compared to say a typical apprentice. In France for example the majority of senior public service managers go through a graduate school(X College) where a key part of their training is like an apprenticeship model, they have placements in key areas to ensure proper levels of exposure and entry level experience in a structured programme. As an aside the transition from the traditional student nurse training programme, to the degree programme over the last number of years, was not without its challenges, persistence and resilience with the programme of change has ultimately proved successful.
There will be some traditionalists who will wish to continue using the existing apprenticeship models; however, combining the best experience from degree programmes and apprenticeships in a hybrid system is key. Every apprentice should have at least an entry level degree at the end of their training, which will enable them to have clear goals for further or alternative forms of training as required.

4 Funding

4a How can the costs of apprenticeship be shared between apprentices, employers and the State?

There is a strong ethical argument that equal opportunities to access training and education should be available to all people who have the appropriate level of entry criteria and are deemed suitable for a particular programme. In terms of recruiting apprentices, a mixed model operated in the 80s (through AnCo/FAS) whereby a number of apprentices in a particular class were either sponsored/recruited by an employer for their full 4 years, or they were sponsored by FAS for their first year and sought a sponsor for their remaining three years. With this arrangement the labour market dictated who got to complete their studies and costs were shared. Resources and opportunities at this time were very tight; emigration for newly qualified tradesmen was commonplace. Based on direct personal experience a significant number of fitter/mechanic apprentices that were trained through this model, (& were not employer sponsored) did not get an opportunity to complete their apprenticeship.

Perhaps a means tested model of funding, following a competition for apprenticeships, should ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to compete (regardless of ability to fund the programme) and those deemed suitable get the opportunity to pursue the programme with a level of necessary support.

4b How can the costs of expansion into new disciplines be best supported given economic constraints?

Not sure we entirely understand the nature of this question; at the risk of sounding repetitive generalist skills early on, followed by specialist learning later, on the FETAC ladder.

4c Who should pay the learner (a) on the job (b) off the job?

A hybrid model of private and state funding is required again. Depending on whether the employer has the resources to pay someone; they will reap benefits if the scheme is managed
effectively. The management of Compulsory Pension Payments for employers should be factored into any model.

4d Should pay or allowances vary by discipline?
Perhaps a system of pay bands like the one in the NHS could address this issue. E.G. Electricians & carpenters in one band based on industry average, motor technicians/fitters in another.

4e What supports, if any, should be available for learners availing of off the job training away from home?
Means tested allowance.

4f Describe how the changes you propose will decrease or increase the costs of apprenticeship to Employers, apprentices or the State.
There are many external market factors which will determine if the Return on Investment (ROI) on the apprenticeship model is effective. However;
If we only train the people we are going to require based on good practice research, then the numbers gainfully employed afterwards should be higher.
If we get EU funding to standardise a Europe wide system then this might help.
If we do a proper workforce plan based on current and future strategic trends we should be able to predict where the Irish competitive advantage will come from and prepare our young workforce accordingly.
Quantify the number of part trained apprentices in the required service areas and see if it is more viable to complete their studies first.

5 Recruitment 5a Who should control recruitment to apprenticeships and how should this be done?
Department of Education/ ETB based on annual/biannual research

5b Given that an agile response to labour market needs inevitably gives rise to peaks and valleys in demand, how can the impact of this on planning, infrastructural investment, and employment of trainers, be best catered for?
Shorter apprenticeships for certain trades, flexibility in career pathways. Business and workforce analysis should be used to predict future demands in technology and less requirement for some traditional craft areas.

5d Should State provision of training be decoupled from employer recruitment?
No, employers need to have secured student places with a government agency before recruiting, unless a more effective
private system can be introduced.

5d How can the supply and demand for the different disciplines be most effectively planned?
Research and valid data, government policy to invest in certain disciplines such as technology/science or whatever.

5f What should be the minimum entry requirements? Should these vary for individual occupations?
Yes they should vary, although a progressive system would enable late starters or those returning to work to maximise their existing skillsets.

5g Should there be a probationary period?
Yes this is good practice in all areas of employment, good practice in recruitment & selection (practical aptitudes etc) should ensure higher levels of suitable entrants.

6 Curriculum 6a What is the appropriate balance of (a) technical and occupational skills and (b) transversal skills, and what subjects should be added or strengthened in the programme? (e.g Transversal skills could include mathematical skills, ICT, communications, literacy, teamwork, planning, research and evaluation skills).
Each trade will need to analyse to get these balance right, changes in technology for motor mechanics for example has placed far greater emphasis on ability to be comfortable with technology and numeracy.

6b Should the programmes for various trades and occupations have different learning outcomes and durations?
Again yes based on expert guidance.

6c How should the programme provide for progression beyond apprenticeship?
FETAC ladder and investment in career pathways and advice.

6d How can learners be best prepared for potential career change in a knowledge based society?
Get the right people on the right programmes, people will prosper if the right opportunity and reward structure is introduced. We have excellent primary and secondary standards of education, third level will only complement these services if the right programmes of study (with career prospects) are available.
What transition measures/programmes, if any, are needed to prepare students to enter an apprenticeship, (a) in the case of early school leavers and (b) in the case of those with a Leaving Certificate or equivalent and (c) those with significant experience beyond school?
A combination of aptitude & psychometric tests, depending on trade/craft, coupled with a format for evaluating prior learning where appropriate.

Should the different disciplines/trades lead to awards at different levels of the national framework of qualifications?
Recommend one standard, e.g. FETAC 7, should be set for all full apprenticeships.

Should interim awards be provided for during training?
Yes; Minor awards on the FETAC awards system enable students to bank qualifications, should a situation arise where they cannot complete a full (Major) Award.

Should time spent on and off the job be more flexible where learners are assessed as meeting the final learning outcomes for the relevant discipline?
Time spent in both areas should be prescribed and signed off, with a flexible approach to how and when it takes place based on the nature of the programme.

How should arrangements for accreditation of prior learning be best delivered?
Through a combination of placements and work based assessment, quality assured by their accredited sponsor. This system is already in place on the HSE SKILL Programme.

How can redundant apprentices be best catered for?
Previously referenced above, quantify the number, verify experience/availability and put them through a transition/return to learning programme, depending on their circumstances.

What should be the appropriate balance between work based learning and education/training?
Again trade specific, certain skills can be taught within the academic environment, but hands on real work experience should represent at least 50-60% of the apprenticeship.

How should this be best structured in terms of phases, duration, block or day release, e-learning etc.
E-learning or blended learning, can improve ratios of time away from work however, this approach needs to be monitored and
assessed which can be labour intensive. Block release enables student’s apprentices, to fully focus on their study and is less likely to be broken by demands on having to return to work for busy periods etc.

8c Can employers play a greater role in delivery and how should this be done?
Yes by prior agreement or learning contracts, obviously larger employers will have greater flexibility to support college time compared to smaller enterprises.

8d Should web based learning form part of the approach and how would this be integrated into the programme?
This can be advantageous, (in a form of blended/distance learning) particularly with theoretical learning, although a careful balance must be struck here

9 Providers
9a What providers should deliver the off the job elements in regard to (a) technical and occupational skills (b) transversal skills.
The VECs are currently providing the training & education for the HSE SKILL Programme, following a tender process. There are a number of options in this regard, identifying or combining the specialist areas the various third level institutions have across the country. The secret to maximising the leverage of procurement is in the design of the specification and breaking the allocation of smaller specialist tasks into separate lots.

9b How should this be structured?
Our Department would be happy to share our experience in procuring education programmes, (privately as some of the details could still be commercially sensitive)

10 Economy
10 What is the impact of your proposals on the economy in terms of (a) meeting Ireland's current and future skills needs (b) providing a high quality entry route for apprentices to sustainable employment (c) costs to the State, to employers and apprentices
The future of the apprenticeship training model is dependent on some early relatively low level investment in research, seeking input and support from a combination of existing government agencies and private industry.
There are plans afoot to introduce a single procurement office for all government offices. A project of this nature could form the basis for a very worthwhile and cross agency initiative to demonstrate the
effective power of sharing experience of designing delivering and evaluating the future of Apprentices in Ireland.
**Area 3. Information on other systems in Ireland including those with a significant work based learning element.**

Please provide information below on any programmes which you feel should be considered as part of this review in the format requested below. (The review group already has data on Skillnets and FAS Traineeships so these need not be covered). Complete a separate sheet for each type of programme. Please include programmes such as internships, or programmes of an ad hoc nature which you consider relevant).

1. Name of programme; HSE SKILL Programme for Support grades, Healthcare Assistants, Home Helps etc

2. Level of Certification and Certifying Body; FETAC 5 (General) FETAC 6 (supervisors)

3. Target Group: Healthcare Workers

4. Main Providers: Combinations of VEC & Accredited Internal Nursing/Midwifery Education Centres

5. General disciplines/occupations covered; Healthcare Assistants, Home Helps, Physiotherapy Attendants etc,

6. Duration of programme in
   (a) months/years 1-1.5 yrs at present
   (b) tuition hours per annum 80 plus placements

7. Duration of programme in weeks
   (a) in the workplace, 1 Academic Year
   (b) in education
   (c) in a training centre

8. How is work placement structured (e.g block release for x weeks, day release etc)

9. Who is responsible for recruitment ? Employer

10. Who funds the programme? HSE

11. What pay or training allowances apply? Hybrid model depending on number of hours worked, full or part time.

12. Please state why you feel this would be a good model for apprenticeship/traineeship?
   Some form of a more structured career pathway is required, whether an apprenticeship model is the correct option should be at least investigated.
**Area 4. Programmes in other jurisdictions which have a significant work based learning element, and are relevant to future models of apprenticeship/traineeship in Ireland.**

Please give details of relevant programmes of which you are aware, if possible quoting relevant reports or website addresses. Please complete a separate sheet for each programme.

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<th>Country</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Name of programme</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Who regulates the programme and its curriculum and how is this done?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Target Group</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Main Providers</td>
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<td>General disciplines/occupations covered</td>
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<td>Duration of programme in</td>
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<td>How is work placement structured (e.g block release for x weeks, day release etc)</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>What pay or training allowances apply?</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Please state why you feel this would be a good model for apprenticeship/traineeship in Ireland?</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Please quote any relevant sources, websites.</td>
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**Area 5. Scope for broader integration of other disciplines into an apprenticeship or traineeship model in Ireland.**

Please provide examples of programmes or occupations which could be integrated into a more structured form of traineeship/apprenticeship.

Please complete a separate sheet for each programme/occupational area. Where multiple programmes of a similar structure are being described only one sheet is necessary, but please list the names of each programme here.

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<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Occupations covered*</td>
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<td>Level of Certification and Certifying Body*</td>
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<td>Duration (a) in work (b) in an education centre (c) in a training centre.*</td>
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<td>Nature of payment or training allowance to learner, if any</td>
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<td>Who controls recruitment?</td>
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<td>Who funds the programme?</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>How and who should regulate the operation of the programme and the curriculum?</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>What are the advantages of incorporating this into an apprenticeship/traineeship model?</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>What key interests should be engaged with in developing such an approach (e.g. name key unions, employer bodies, providers)</td>
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* If the occupation is not catered for at present through a formal training programme, please make suggestions under the headings above, as to what format, duration, and level of certification might be suitable.
Area 6. Please make any other points you consider relevant to the review.