Response to Consultation on Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

Name of Organisation

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Electrician (Time served, AnCO System)

Occational sectors which are covered in the submission
Apprenticeship / Traineeship

Date of submission

The submission should be made by e mail to
Apprenticeshippreview@education.gov.ie
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.

The effectiveness of the current apprenticeship programme depends upon what is being measured and what it is compared to.

The FORFAS\(^1\) report looked at performance metrics limited to: people obtaining employment, people progressing to further education and training and qualification awards received by individuals.

In that report apprenticeship ranked well against other labour training programs in regards gaining initial employment directly after leaving school and continuing employment post apprenticeship, including trades-people in the Construction Industry forming their own companies. They also ranked well in people progressing towards a National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) award in a dual work-based and third level education system and 100% (4917 participants in 2007) achievement of a Level 6 Advanced Certificate Craft Qualification Award, which is internationally recognised. [Compared to NFQ achievement in Traineeship 67 % (1998 participants in 2007)].

In the field of Human Resource Development (HRD) focus is ‘on improving the job performance and growth of the employee. Training, education, and development are the three areas of

\(^1\) REVIEW OF LABOUR MARKET PROGRAMME Feb 2010 FORFAS
learning in HRD (Nadler, 1990). Each has a distinct purpose in improving performance and expanding the growth of employees. Training is learning activity to enhance an employee’s current skills for his or her present job. As technology changes, training is necessary to keep pace with these changes. Education prepares an individual for a future job that has been identified, and it enables an employee to gain skills for a future job and/or promotion within the company. Development of an employee refers to individual growth for the employee but is not tied to any specific current or future job (Laird, 1985; Nadler, 1990). Personal growth and development is important for employees.’ (Brewer 2)

It could be argued that an apprenticeship provides all three areas of learning. On site training in practical and workbased skills, education in all the Institutes of Technology (IoT) providing the desire and ability to be an independent learner to keep pace with technology changes and finally, personal development, with the shared ‘Community of Practice’3 which exists between the apprentice and the site trainers/FAS trainers/IoT educators, all generally coming from the same applied skill background.

Apprenticeships and Traineeship schemes intrinsically support these three areas of learning. The long tradition of the apprenticeship model and people’s perception of the attainment of a high level of manual and technical skill should not be diluted by repackaging Apprenticeship and Traineeship under one term. Both have their place in Education and the Labour Market and the

2 http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc3996/m2/1/high_res_d/dissertation.pdf

3The term "community of practice" is of relatively recent coinage, even though the phenomenon it refers to is age-old. The concept has turned out to provide a useful perspective on knowing and learning. A growing number of people and organizations in various sectors are now focusing on communities of practice as a key to improving their performance. http://www.ewenger.com/theory/
branding is important for new entrants and customers.

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.

The ideal model for apprenticeship would include all three areas of learning (training, education, and development).

The model should be competency based, with recognition of prior experiential learning. Use of a learning portfolio may provide evidence of achieving all the necessary learning outcomes in a shorter time than a possible two to four year fixed time apprenticeships.

E Learning should be used to link the off site and on site learning of apprenticeships.

The model should include independent authentication of learning outcomes for each phase of the apprenticeship, similar to the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce practice\(^4\). The Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) require FAS to carry out this function at present. Due to economies of scale (Germany 80 Million people, Ireland 4.5 Million people), tradition and resources, FAS is best suited in Ireland to continue authentication but with a more open involvement in on-site authentication.

Craft people involved in training apprentices should have successfully completed a ‘train the trainer’ course related to their trade.

Trade organizations should be actively involved in the work placement of apprentices across different aspects of industry to cover the wide range of skills required but not available from any

single employer. This is done in New Zealand\textsuperscript{5}, for example, in the electrical trade when electrical installation apprentices are transferred to maintenance contractors for industry experience on motors and machinery.

In consultation with stakeholders and following a review of a period of Traineeship, additional occupations could be designated Trade Apprenticeships in line with current practice.

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

Apprenticeships should always be certified through the NFQ, which will continue to link them with EU and international structures.

The World Skills Competitions should be better supported and funded by Government.

\textsuperscript{5}http://www.etco.co.nz/about-etco
Area 2

Looking forward, what changes would you recommend in a restructured 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?

Apprenticeships should have a statutory underpinning similar to the present structure but be more open and professionally managed.

The new Education and Training Boards (ETBs), SOLAS and the review of the Third Level Education will allow for greater market and stakeholder involvement.

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))

The current FAS model for planning, curriculum development, support, regulation and monitoring of apprenticeships works but should be more open and better managed. The new Education and Training Boards (ETBs), SOLAS and the review of the Third Level Education will allow for greater market and stakeholder involvement.

The Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) require FAS to carry out quality assurance at present. Due to tradition and resources, FAS is best suited to continue authentication but with more open involvement in on-site authentication.
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 or streamlined?

Apprenticeship provides long-term system and brand stability while Traineeship provides an agile response to national needs. A requirement for a License to Practice (common in USA, Canada and Australia) combined with Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for certain trades like Electrician, Plumbing, Gas Fitter would improve documented response to national needs.

2 Equity

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

Requires promotion of apprenticeships to Second Level Students. In New Zealand, a one-week work experience course is offered to ‘sample’ certain trades.6

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?

The current apprenticeship model best protects some entry routes. A large number of school leavers desire to experience the work environment before pursuing further academic programs. This is evident in the number of academically qualified educators and trainers in FAS and the IoTs and in the high numbers of postgraduate Engineers from a trade background.

In the Nova Scotia Community College 7 a person may register as a youth apprentice if aged between 16 to 19 years and work part or

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6 http://www.etco.co.nz/about-etco
7 http://www.nscc.ca/learning_programs/programs/PlanDescr.aspx?prg=ELCI&pln=ELECONIN
full-time in one of Nova Scotia's designated trades.

As a youth apprentice, they can earn while they learn, get a head start in a career in the trades and complete secondary level school, all at the same time.

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

In the Nova Scotia, Canada Apprenticeship system Individual Program Plans (IPPs) are designed to support persons with disabilities. Similar systems can be done in Ireland.

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

Apprenticeships and Traineeship schemes intrinsically support the three main areas of learning. The long tradition of the apprenticeship model and people’s perception of the attainment of a high level of manual and technical skill should not be diluted by repackaging Apprenticeships and Traineeship under one term. Both have their place in Education and the Labour Market and the branding is important for new entrants and customers.

The German system has 348 training occupations that may be of interest for Traineeships and later Apprenticeships.

The expansion of the term Apprenticeship in the UK to cover a wide range of training or Traineeships reduced their quality and branding perception of Apprenticeships in general in that country.

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8 http://nsapprenticeship.ca/apprentices/technical_training.asp
4 Funding

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

The Employers and apprentices have a fair exchange of salary for labour. The State treats the apprentice differently to other students attending training in regards to pay allowances. Should they wish to amend this practice, a transition period should be involved to avoid hardship.

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

No Reply

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

The Employers and apprentices have a fair exchange of salary for labour. The State treats the apprentice differently to other students attending training in regards to pay allowances. Should they wish to amend this practice, a transition period should be involved to avoid hardship.

4d Should pay or allowances vary by discipline?

The Employers and apprentices have a fair exchange of salary for labour determined by market conditions. The State pays all students attending training the same allowances irrespective of course or discipline. This should continue.

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

No Reply

4f Describe how the changes you propose will decrease or increase the costs of apprenticeship to Employers, apprentices or the State.

No Reply
5 Recruitment

5a Who should control recruitment to apprenticeships and how should this be done?

No Reply

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?

No Reply

5d Should State provision of training be decoupled from employer recruitment?

No Reply

5d How can the supply and demand for the different disciplines be most effectively planned?

No Reply

5f What should be the minimum entry requirements? Should these vary for individual occupations?

Apprentice trades with a requirement for a higher ability in mathematics and / or Science should have a higher minimum entry requirement. (i.e. Electrician)

5g Should there be a probationary period?

Present in practice prior to the apprentice being registered with FAS.

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)

Additional time in the IoTs is required to provide Transversal skills over the current 10/11 weeks per Phase. The IoTs have a lot of experience in providing this education during the AnCO apprenticeship period and is ongoing for their full time students.

6b Should the programmes for various trades and occupations have different learning outcomes and durations?

Yes, to be agreed by the stakeholders involved.

6c How should the programme provide for progression beyond apprenticeship?

The involvement of the Institutes of Technology with the Phase 4 and Phase 6 apprenticeship provision is the strongest driver and facilitator for progression beyond apprenticeship. The Apprenticeship NFQ Level 6 can lead to many NFQ Level 7 and 8 awards with some additional link modules.

6d How can learners be best prepared for potential career change in a knowledge based society?

The involvement of the Institutes of Technology with the Phase 4 and Phase 6 apprenticeship provision empowers apprentices to become self and life long learners. This would improve if a requirement for a License to Practice (common in USA and Australia) combined with Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for certain trades like Electrician, Plumbing, Gas Fitter was required. Additional time in the IoTs is required to provide Transversal skills over the current 10/11 weeks per Phase.

The use of E Learning if used to link the off site and on site learning of apprenticeships would improve on line familiarity with skill updating in the knowledge-based society.

6e 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) (b) In the Nova Scotia Community College 10 a person may register as a youth apprentice if aged between 16 to 19 years and work part or full-time in one of Nova Scotia's designated trades. As a youth apprentice, they can earn while they learn, get a head start in a career in the trades and complete secondary level school, all at the same time.

(c) Skill assessment of prior experiential learning is required to obtain a License to Practice in Australia. Similar skill assessments could be done in the IoTs involved in Apprenticeship Education.11

7 Assessment

7a Should the different disciplines/trades lead to awards at different levels of the national framework of qualifications?

Yes, to be agreed by the stakeholders involved.

7b Should interim awards be provided for during training?

Interim awards could be provided in line with current NFQ / QQI requirements once it was clear that a Trade Award was not conferred (The term Craft Award can be confused with traditional artisan crafts). This would require a License to Practice (common in USA and Australia) system to be already in place to protect the public and employers from incompletely trained trade workers and protect the trades quality branding.

7c 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?

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10 http://www.nscc.ca/learning_programs/programs/PlanDescr.aspx?prg=ELCI&pln=ELECONIN
The model should be competency based, with recognition of prior experiential learning. Use of a learning portfolio may provide evidence of achieving all the necessary learning outcomes in a shorter time frame than a possible two to four fixed time apprenticeships.

**7d How should arrangements for accreditation of prior learning be best delivered?**

The model should be competency based, with recognition of prior experiential learning. Use of a learning portfolio may provide evidence of achieving all the necessary learning outcomes in a shorter time than a possible two to four fixed time apprenticeships. Skill assessment of prior experiential learning is required to obtain a License to Practice in Australia. Similar skill assessments could be done in the IoTs involved in Apprenticeship Education.¹²

**7e How can redundant apprentices be best catered for?**

No Reply

**8 Delivery**

**8a What should be the appropriate balance between work-based learning and education/training?**

Depends upon the trade involved. It requires discussion and agreement by the stakeholders involved.

**8b How should this be best structured in terms of phases, duration, block or day release, e-learning etc**

Depends upon the trade involved. It requires discussion and agreement by the stakeholders involved. There is a strong case for some e-learning in all apprenticeships.

8c Can employers play a greater role in delivery and how should this be done?

Trade people involved in training apprentices should have successfully completed a ‘train the trainer’ course related to their trade.

The employer’s role depends upon the trade involved. It requires discussion and agreement by the stakeholders involved.

8d Should web based learning form part of the approach and how would this be integrated into the programme?

There is a strong case for some e learning in all apprenticeships. As a minimum, it should be used to link the on-site phases with the off-site phases with assignments and continuous assessments. E learning could support use of a learning portfolio.

The use of E Learning would improve on line familiarity with skill updating in the knowledge-based society.

9 Providers

9a What providers should deliver the off the job elements in regard to (a) technical and occupational skills (b) transversal skills

The education in all the Institutes of Technology (IoT) provides the desire and ability to be an independent learner to keep pace with technology changes.

There exists a shared ‘Community of Practice’ between the apprentice and the site trainers/FAS trainers/IoT educators, all

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Additional time in the IoTs is required to provide Transversal skills over the current 10/11 weeks per Phase. The IoTs have experience in providing this education in the AnCO apprenticeship period and it is ongoing to their full time students.

9b How should this be structured?

No Reply

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

No Reply

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.

No Reply

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.

Please see footnotes.

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.

No Reply

Area 6

Please make any other points you consider relevant to the review.

No Reply