

CONFÉRENCE  
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ORIENTATION, FORMATIONS,  
INSERTION : **QUEL AVENIR POUR  
L'ENSEIGNEMENT PROFESSIONNEL ?**

# Employers and VET in England

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**Research Centre**

19 & 20 mai 2016 – Lycée Diderot (Paris)

# ➤ Shock, Horror! Paris Exhibition 1867



## ➤ English VET's Political and Cultural Context

- Education and training historically divided – conceptually and practically
- Left & Right political focus on general (schooling) and higher education

‘the education of the ablest is what the English system does best’ (Crowther Committee, 1959)

## ➤ VET within a broad 'Further Education and Skills System'

- FE = general, **vocational**, adult education – 'other than schools and universities' (1906)
- **300+ FE Colleges** + approx 3,000 training providers (private and charity)
- University Technical Colleges (14-18 schools)
- Apprenticeships – Levels 2, 3, 4/5 and 'Degree' – highly variable in quality
- Traineeships (16-24) – work experience + English and Maths – no pay

# ➤ Weak Institutional Framework for VET

- Government approach – oppositional – employers know best (treated as homogenous category) – VET qualifications positioned as ‘products’ to be ‘sold’ by training providers
- Employer associations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, Trade Associations) fragmented & diverse in focus
- Lack of policy stability - bodies such as Sector Skills Councils vulnerable to Ministerial change
- Trade unions focus on adult education

## ➤ Voluntarism + Supply-led Targets

- VET funding governed by national targets – supply-led - low demand from employers
- Devolution of adult skills funding to city-regions – but centrally determined
- Apprenticeship Levy 2017 – large employers with £3 million+ wage bills – first State intervention since 1964 - but will it improve quality?

## **Roots of Strong VET Provision**

- Regulated and bespoke occupational fields (e.g. electrical engineering; dental technology; accountancy; tailoring; stone masonry)
- Employers with apprenticeship history and apprentices at management levels
- Trust between employers and VET teachers – pipeline of potential employees from full-time courses

## ➤ Collective Relational Approach

- Many employers lack capacity to organise quality workforce development
- Relational approach – starts with capacity of employer and business needs – VET as a developmental process
- Best practice example - Group Training Associations (40) – organising training (including apprenticeships) for employer members



## Challenges for Comparative Analysis: Importance of Sector-based research

- Institutional approach problematic – labels misleading + shifting policy landscape
- Sector/occupational perspective - allows comparison at level of: employer practices; workplace competences; vocational and workplace curriculum; pedagogical strategies; apprentice/student experience
- Comparative analysis – how do employers in same sectors behave? What is the experience of VET students and apprentices in same occupational fields in different countries?

## Sample Research papers

- Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2012) (eds) *Contemporary Apprenticeships: International Perspectives on an Evolving Model of Learning*, London: Routledge.
- Unwin, L., Davey, G., Fuller, A. and Leonard, P. (2015) Supporting an Ageing Workforce: Implications for Working Life, Training and Skills Policy in England, Llaques Research Paper:  
<http://www.llakes.ac.uk/sites/llakes.ac.uk/files/51.%20Nuffield%20report.pdf>
- Fuller, A., Leonard, P., Unwin, L. and Davey, G. (2015) Does apprenticeship work for adults? The experiences of adult apprentices in England. Report available at:  
<http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/does-apprenticeship-work-adults>
- Bailey, B. and Unwin, L. (2014) Continuity and Change in English Further Education: A Century of Voluntarism and Permissive Adaptability, *British Journal of Educational Studies*:  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2014.968520>

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