

Think Piece: The potential Impact of UK Vocational Reform on Scotland

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This paper grew from work commissioned to give an overview of the Scottish Apprenticeship market for a prospective UK based supplier on the likely impact of UK reforms on the Scottish provision of apprenticeships. As I interviewed stakeholders in Scotland it was clear that many of them had limited awareness of either the current system in Scotland or of the scale of the vocational reform programme in England.

This paper attempts to synthesise work from this earlier report and highlights some impacts that the reform programme will have on the Scottish system and finally suggests areas that require reform in Scotland.

The intended audience is one that has some awareness of the current roles of SCQF , SQA , Skills Development Scotland , Scottish Funding Council and the committees associated with the vocational landscape in Scotland, but it would serve too as an introduction to this area, which is one that is surprisingly rarely discussed in public forums or is the subject of academic research.

Executive summary

Skills and training is a devolved matter reserved for the Scottish Government. However, currently there is a major programme of vocational reform in England, which in turn has driven reform programmes in Wales and Northern Ireland. This paper outlines the changes in the English vocational system that have a direct impact on Scotland and highlights the broader challenges and opportunities for vocational education in Scotland in this period of change. This paper is intended for a Scottish audience seeking a deeper understanding of the UK vocational reform and for a UK audience seeking to understand the current Scottish approach to apprenticeships and the vocational landscape.

The Westminster government and the press have been using the title UK Vocational Reform and, as all large employers across the UK will be subject to the HMRC training levy, there is a level of confusion around the system on which parts of the reforms will impact on Scotland.

The English Reforms have been driven by a desire to ensure that apprenticeships in England become more rigorous and more responsive to the needs of employers¹ while making the progression routes from apprenticeship to degree more clearly delineated for learners. Alongside apprenticeship reforms, the Westminster government is also reviewing technical education from Entry Level to Level 3 for 16 to 18-year-olds and has reviewed the system available for funding advanced level apprenticeships delivered in part by English Universities². These reforms will lead to major changes in what Schools, Colleges, Universities and training providers offer across the English system and these changes will have an impact directly and indirectly on the Scottish market.

The reforms need to be viewed in the context of the English system in the round: where there are many different types of secondary school, where there are sixth form colleges, as well as what we in Scotland would recognise as full service Further Education Colleges and where learners have to take out loans, to pay fees for undertaking degree level study in Colleges and Universities and where there has been a culture of very large training providers providing apprenticeships through a system of complex sub-contracts.

However, some of these vocational reforms will support routes that would be attractive to Scottish learners and employers, if they were available in Scotland, for example there are more routes developing in England toward apprenticeships in professional occupations, like accountancy and law and other areas where history has narrowed these pathways for apprenticeships. These new routes supported by employers, enable learners to earn while they learn and pick up a degree along with their professional qualifications as part of their programme, where this is required, without picking up the large associated debt that is a feature of the English university system.

The key documents setting out the reforms to the apprenticeship landscape in England are the Richards Review³ which proposed the reforms and in response the Westminster government's timeline outlined in Apprenticeships our 2020 Vision⁴ while the overall progress of the reforms can be tracked on the Department for Education's dedicated pages⁵.

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482754/BIS-15-604-english-apprenticeships-our-2020-vision.pdf

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-success-as-a-knowledge-economy-white-paper>

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/34708/richard-review-full.pdf

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482754/BIS-15-604-english-apprenticeships-our-2020-vision.pdf

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>

The key documents in relation to the broader 16+ Vocational Reforms are the Lord Sainsbury Review⁶ and the government response contained in the Post 16 Skills Plan⁷. The Post 16 Skills Plan with its ambition to shape further education delivery in England toward 15 full-time technical pathways from the age of 16, each with a single awarding body, promises to be equally as contentious as the restructuring of the apprenticeship landscape.

This paper will focus on the changes on the near horizon around apprenticeships.

As a headline the new training levy could make up to £221 million pounds available for investment in training in Scotland. The current MA support is around £80million this could mean that there is an additional £140 million available for vocational training and development in Scotland⁸. However, the impact of the changes are potentially much more complex. Many of the issues that have prompted the reform of the vocational qualifications landscape in England have not been features of the Scottish landscape.

One criticism levelled at vocational provision in England is that learners and employers had to choose between more than 20,000 courses provided by 160 different organisations with no clear indicator of which course would give them the best chance of landing a job. This was a direct product of there being a loosely regulated marketplace for qualifications and training in England over a prolonged period.

In Scotland we spend a lot of time exploring educational reforms around what our schools deliver. It is time to have a deeper look at what our colleges, universities, training providers and workplaces deliver. There are inefficiencies in our own system some of these are set out in a recent paper by Colleges Scotland⁹, but the solutions lie in taking a broader look across the system and perhaps using the levers that may come from the ongoing Enterprise and Skills Review in Scotland.¹⁰

This paper sets out the changes in English system, the impact they will have, makes some judgements on the rationale for these decisions and lays out some areas where there should be some more active and informed discussion and perhaps, a more active vocational reform programme in Scotland.

This is a work in progress

The Changing Landscape

To date the UK vocational system while funded on different models in the devolved administrations has been broadly based on a similar underlying architecture based on national occupational standards created and maintained by UK sector skills councils. These activities, along with the management of the Employer Skills Survey, the Employer Perspectives Survey and the LMI (Labour Market Information) for All Portal were coordinated at a UK level by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES). As part of the English vocational reform programme the UK Commission has been wound up.

The national occupational standards were translated into credit and levelled qualifications that passed through a national approval process in each of the devolved administrations, to be then entered onto a relevant national registry that then made them available for public funding in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536046/Report_of_the_Independent_Panel_on_Technical_Education.pdf

7 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education>

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-agrees-apprenticeship-levy-funding-deal-with-devolved-administrations>

9 <http://collegesscotland.ac.uk/briefings-and-publications/851-think-piece-the-learning-and-skills-journey/file>

10 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Economy/EntandSkillsreview>

While the administrative structures and the vocational qualifications available for public funding in the devolved nations could have some regional distinctions they sprang from a common set of occupational standards and these work based qualifications were then delivered in broadly similar ways across the UK. Delivered in the workplace, assessed on the job against competency statements and externally quality assured by awarding bodies, funding agencies and the relevant national inspection bodies.

These vocational qualifications underpinned principally the apprenticeship frameworks of the administrations across the UK. In addition the national occupational standards played a role in underpinning a broader range of vocational awards in the workplace and in Colleges and schools. This meant that most qualifications in mainstream areas like construction, care, office administration, accounting and finance, computing and IT etc came from a common stem to support employers and the movement of labour across the UK.

Changes initiated by the Westminster administration will significantly change the UK model. These changes are much broader in their ambition than those for instance set out in Developing Scotland's Young Workforce. In fact the most comprehensive vision in this space in Scotland is set out in Scotland's Labour Market Strategy¹¹ which looks across the needs of employers and the impact that all publicly funded education and training could have on the labour market.

The current Scottish system has some very distinct strengths but it has its share of weaknesses too. Some of the challenges are highlighted in the table below. Audit Scotland produced an audit of the system in 2014 that gives a detailed overview of the system¹²

In the Scottish system the main mechanism for the approval of apprenticeships in Scotland has been the Modern Apprenticeship Group (MAG)¹³ who are responsible for the approval and de-approval of all Scottish frameworks. They encouraged Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to develop robust frameworks with high participation and completion rates. This group consistently approved a narrower and more focussed set of apprenticeship frameworks than those available in England but this reflected the needs of Scottish employers and the job market for apprentices in Scotland. They also made sure that proposed frameworks were not simply lifted with rationales and structures based on the English education system but reflected the market, entry and progression routes available in Scotland.

In England, following the passing of the Enterprise Bill, by 2017 all frameworks in England will be replaced by 'standards'. There are a growing list of standards¹⁴, these designed by groups of employers rather than sector skills councils. In England the standards will provide apprenticeships at four levels: Intermediate, Higher, Advanced and Degree and will in addition inform the design of traineeships and pre-apprenticeship programmes. A legislative change in England will make the word 'Apprenticeship' protected by law and it will only be able to be applied to programmes that follow the new standards. The legal protection is only for those apprenticeships delivered by a college or a training provider, employers will still be entitled to call their in house self-funded training programme an apprenticeship. However, with the apprenticeship levy coming in, it is probable that these employers will switch to a "proper" apprenticeship in order to recoup their money.

In contrast, Scotland will continue to use the term Modern Apprenticeships as the overarching programme title and these will continue to be supported by 'frameworks' for apprenticeships. There are over 80 Modern Apprenticeship frameworks which provide apprenticeships at four different levels: (Foundation, Modern, Technical and Professional or Foundation, Modern, Technical, Advanced/Graduate - dependent on which Skills Development Scotland briefing you read). This means that in Scotland the bulk of apprentices will continue to study a competency-based (vocational) qualification alongside any additional technical or specific qualifications

¹¹ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/08/2505/7>

¹² http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/central/2014/nr_140313_modern_apprenticeships.pdf

¹³ <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/partnerships/modern-apprenticeship-group/>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards>

required for a particular job role and develop a set list of core skills, including communication and numeracy, while a smaller number of candidates will be funded for technical and professional apprenticeships. Technical and professional apprenticeships can include a broader range of qualifications, do not always have to be work based and professional qualifications can be included. Technical and Professional Apprenticeships do not include core skills, rather they include a range of SVQ units which have been labelled as career skills. These are drawn from Management, Business and Administration, IT and other SVQs at SCQF level 8 and above.

Both the Scottish and English funding criteria are designed to incentivise employers to hire apprentices aged 16 to 24. In Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, (the equivalent of England’s Skills Funding Agency), makes a contribution to the training costs for all apprentices aged 16 to 24 and there is also some partial funding provided for apprentices for a smaller sub-set of frameworks for older apprentices.

The Scottish Government has some well defined aspirations around the growth of apprenticeships and vocational routes and in closing the academic vocational divide. However, some of the Scottish challenges are not dissimilar to those that have prompted wholesale vocational reform in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Current Scottish targets focus on :

1. Growing number of Foundation Apprenticeships¹⁵ (a distinctly Scottish approach, a qualification at SCQF 6 delivered over two years to learners still in school to have the same value as Scottish Higher delivered in school , college , training provider and employer partnership) to 400 starts across Scotland by 2018
2. To grow Modern Apprenticeship¹⁶ numbers using the current model from 25,000 starts per year to 30,000 starts per year by 2020
3. To increase the number of Higher Advanced Level and Graduate level of apprenticeships. The first Graduate Level Apprenticeships¹⁷ will begin in 2016 with an initial focus on Business Management, Financial Services, ICT/Digital, Civil Engineering and Engineering, SCQF level 8 - 11
4. To increase employer ownership and involvement in apprenticeships and broader social understanding of the vocational routes to learning, progression and employment and improving parity of esteem with academic routes.
5. Overcoming equality and diversity issues deeply embedded across system in relation to disability , gender, ethnicity and care leavers
6. Through these targets to support the aims of Developing Scotland's Young People¹⁸

The table below sets out the strengths of the existing Scottish system, the challenges it faces and the challenges that prompted vocational reform in England. These are presented here as associated lists as drawing direct comparisons would have been overly complex.

Scottish Work Based System Strengths	Some Challenges in Scotland	Challenges in previous English System
Apprentices in Scotland have to be in employment	There is still relatively low numbers of young people accessing apprenticeship route in comparison to England and other leading European countries - Switzerland/ Germany	For a period allowed apprentices to be programme based - so not in employment - this devalued system. Allowed large training companies and some large employers to gamify system pulling down funding for year long programmes that were then delivered in weeks, so that some

¹⁵ <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/our-products/foundation-apprenticeships/>

¹⁶ <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/our-products/modern-apprenticeships/>

¹⁷ <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/our-products/graduate-level-apprenticeships/>

¹⁸ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/developingtheyoungworkforce>

<p>High level of apprentices staying in employment post apprenticeship</p>	<p>Only 13% of employers engage and many smaller employers do not engage with the programme</p>	<p>apprenticeships were too short, not giving the time for the individual to transform from an apprentice to a skilled worker. There was also feeling that the definition of an apprenticeship stretched too far - undermining the quality of the brand.</p>
<p>High level of satisfaction rates from employers and apprentices with the training available</p>	<p>But poor recognition and progression it is hard to switch from SVQ level 3 apprenticeship into HNC/D or onto degree level programme. There are not always coherent progression pathways for many choosing the apprenticeship route even in the highest take up subjects like Business Admin.</p>	<p>The continuous assessment model only tested the incremental progress of the apprentice, not whether they had reached the desired level of competency and did not provide progression pathways.</p>
<p>High level of 16-24 year olds access and complete apprenticeships</p>	<p>While Scottish system is different it is common to use UK nomenclature of VQ levels rather than SCQF levels which can create confusion. Though new and refreshed titles are adopting the SCQF levels.</p>	<p>The outcomes in England on achievement and progression were weak There was dissatisfaction around the quality assurance of system from employers and from government that focus on transferable skills of literacy and numeracy not demanding enough.</p>
<p>Apprenticeships in Scotland are mainly at SVQ level 3 and above</p>	<p>There are range of deep seated equality and diversity issues in access to apprenticeships.</p>	<p>A large amount of low level provision was being used to train older workers already in work</p>
<p>Through Developing Scotland's Young People there is a greater focus on vocational progression routes across the Education system.</p>	<p>There are few graduate apprenticeship routes level 4 and above and there is a lack of clarity around what an advanced or graduate apprentice actually is. This around both the design and the funding routes available for those who would wish to deliver an advanced or graduate MA. In compiling this paper, it is clear that even system experts interchange the names Technical and Advanced Apprenticeships with term Graduate Apprenticeship.</p>	<p>The English system had allowed large number of frameworks to be at level 2 rather than higher levels adding little value to learners or employers</p>
<p>There have been consistent efforts to improve the range of vocational options available in schools and make the world of work more accessible to schools</p>	<p>The Scottish system still retains some deep prejudices against vocational learning - schools, colleges and universities still do not give it the recognition it deserves. There are clear progression routes for HNC/D learners but less certain progression routes for SVQ learners.</p>	<p>Over a number of years English system had allowed market forces to flood schools, colleges and work based learning with inappropriate low level technical certificates and qualifications - aimed more at securing public funding than supporting learners' progression.</p>
<p>The Scottish system encourages academic and vocational pathways to exist together</p>	<p></p>	<p>The English system has been moving at school level to having quite divergent paths for those considering a vocational pathway.</p>

This could be a strength or a weakness large employers can still offer customised apprenticeships.

The new Insight Tool for School Curriculum Benchmarking is still resistant to the inclusion of a broad range of work based qualifications and or tariff rating them appropriately within the system, although efforts are currently being made to rectify this.

A cogent argument could be made that a Foundation Apprenticeship at SCQF 6 is an inappropriate level for many school learners who would probably gain more benefit from an award as a 'foundation' at SCQF 5

The core skills set needs updated and streamlined to align to meet needs of employers and learners. Digital literacy should replace IT as a Core Skill.

Large employers can draw down funding for apprenticeships and other approved training programmes and must only comply with SDS quality arrangements, they are not like English employers subject to Ofsted.

In England inspection follows any public money - while Education Scotland inspects some elements of training provider delivery - there needs to be greater clarity around the quality framework in this area. In England Ofsted are likely to be inspecting graduate level provision.

There can be a lack of transparency around which large employers draw down public funds for training and the contribution rates that can be available from SDS.

The reform programme in England addresses some pressing English challenges, but as a byproduct , it dismantles the UK system and some of these changes will have a specific impact on Scotland . It is worth considering both the impact on the Scottish system and some of the rationale for these English decisions.

Changes in the UK Landscape with direct impact on Scottish system.

Change	Impact	Rationale
<p>The closure of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills</p>	<p>National Occupational Standards currently underpin the vocational education system in Scotland and the systems in Wales and Northern Ireland. While old frameworks will remain available these will no longer be commissioned at a UK national level. The devolved administrations are seeking a fresh combined approach to commissioning with Scotland leading this process.</p> <p>The UKCES also played a significant role in coordinating the UK Employer Skills Survey, the Employer Perspectives Survey and the LMI (Labour Market Information) for All Portal</p> <p>Scottish Government in discussion with the devolved administrations are looking towards a five year commissioning plan for future frameworks</p> <p>In Wales and Northern Ireland these changes have prompted vocational reform programmes within these devolved administrations. While some arrangements have changed in Scotland to date there has been no announcements of any vocational reform programme. Though there has been the establishment of new national committees in Scotland to have a specific overview of apprenticeships.</p> <p>In Scotland a new Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board led by employers and representatives from industry bodies across a range of sectors, the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) will provide employer leadership and contribution to the development of apprenticeships in</p>	<p>This decision is driven by English administration taking devolved decisions to implement vocational reform in England .</p> <p>The rationale and reform timelines are set out clearly in Apprenticeships our 2020 vision. The impact of these changes on the UK vocational landscape has not been a consideration in these reforms. Though the devolved administrations have had little notice in planning for the impact of these changes.</p>

	<p>Scotland; ensuring they are aligned with industry and economic need, fair work and job opportunities. The Board consists of four groups – a Group Board, Employer Engagement Group, Employer Equalities Group and a Frameworks and Standards Group.¹⁹</p>	
<p>The introduction of an employer levy to fund vocational learning and apprenticeships April 2017 ²⁰</p>	<p>Driven by the UK treasury HMRC , this impacts on every employer across the UK . The levy is expected to raise £3 billion pounds in revenue across the UK . Every employer paying in a 0.5% levy on any salary bill over £ 2 million. This will impact employers in both the public and private sectors across the UK</p> <p>Some industries like construction where there is an established levy system will now be hit with two levies</p> <p>Employers who are contributing will be looking for a rich set of training opportunities to recover their levy contributions.</p> <p>The funding available for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has been announced²¹ In Scotland the funding available will be 221 million in 2017/18 raising to £239 million by 2019/20</p> <p>In theory at least this greatly increases the available funding for vocational learning in Scotland potentially by around £130 million.</p> <p>Since the Apprenticeship levy is not a hypothecated tax any funding received via the Barnett formula would not be ring fenced for apprenticeships, so there is no guarantee that funds will be spent on apprenticeships or indeed training in Scotland.</p>	<p>In many respects this is quite progressive thinking. The aim being that large employers rather than the public purse will make the main contribution to work based learning and that large employers will subsidise the training needs of small employers who will be able to access the funds raised through the levy. In England this will be through their digital training account.</p>

¹⁹ <http://www.collegedevelopmentnetwork.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/SAAB-Structure-and-Remit.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work>

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-agrees-apprenticeship-levy-funding-deal-with-devolved-administrations>

Some UK wide employers will start actively campaigning to access their levy and apprenticeship programmes in Scotland on the same basis as they can access courses and funding in England.

There are no barriers to an English based employer registering a Scottish apprentice and using an English based College or Training Provider to deliver one of the new apprenticeship programmes.

There are already national variations in the funding pots available for different apprenticeship frameworks. UK employers will become more acutely aware of this and draw comparisons to what they can access in England and how training funds are administered in Scotland.

Skills Development Scotland have conducted a survey of employers and established a new national committee to gather employer views on the investment of the employer levy in Scotland²² The consultation document highlights support for initial Scottish Government initiatives and suggests creation of 'flexible skills fund' this may go some way in appeasing firms who may lobby for greater access to their funds.

Currently there are no formal arrangements for distribution of the apprenticeship levy in the devolved nations of Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales. But following consultation and based on the analysis of feedback the suggested model in Scotland is a more centralised approach.²³

²² <https://www.apprenticeships.scot/take-on-an-apprentice/apprenticeship-levy/>

²³ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00509777.pdf>

<p>New standards and assessment strategies created by Trailblazers/ Pathfinder groups rather than national occupational standards created by sector skills councils</p>	<p>Trailblazer/Pathfinder groups are self selecting groups of large employers who have been invited by the Westminster Government to create new standards for their specific sector.</p> <p>While these new standards and assessment strategies are aimed towards supporting vocational reform in England, it means that national occupational standards and sector skills councils no longer enjoy consistent support and funding from across the UK. This will challenge the administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland who will now need to tender for their own frameworks or accept the new standards and assessment strategies developed in England.</p> <p>The new standards must contain an English and Maths component and the relevant digital skills</p> <p>The English proposals to drop National Occupation Standards could cause difficulties with aligning and comparison of training standards across the UK. This could also have a negative impact on apprentices receiving training in one jurisdiction who wish to move to work in another jurisdiction</p> <p>Large UK employers will seek the adoption of these new standards and frameworks across the UK and this will challenge the current devolved vehicles for the recognition, approval and funding of apprenticeships in Scotland.</p> <p>It may be that the Frameworks and Standards Group in Scotland will come to replace the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Group that has previously operated in this space²⁴ However, there is a volume of work involved in commissioning, preparing, approving and monitoring standards over time that will require</p>	<p>In England this new model was driven by on going frustrations with the existing model of sector skills councils and of the delivery model through a large number of awarding bodies- which was a specifically English challenge.</p> <p>The idea of large employers creating apprenticeship standards was to put employers at the heart of the reform process</p>
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²⁴ <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/partnerships/modern-apprenticeship-group/>

	<p>the continued support of the MAG group or a suitably experienced staff resource. Much of this work is done by the SQA Accreditation team currently.</p>	

The changes listed above are those that will have a direct impact on the Scottish system. It is highly likely that some large UK employers will make demands that the Scottish system considers some of these reforms or in some cases large UK employers may simply choose to train their Scottish employees in England.

However, there are also some real challenges emerging in English system. Some of these may be related to the speed of the reforms. These challenges are included in the impact column marked below and are ones that the Scottish system will need to be wary of importing.

Changes Specific to the English Landscape

Change	Impact	Rationale
<p>The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education a new quango will oversee the implementation of the new system in England will start formally in April 2017</p>	<p>The new organisation has a very long list of duties and currently a very small number of staff.</p> <p>The IfA will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve/reject expressions of interest for new standards; Provide guidance on the development of standards/assessment; Approve/reject standards/assessment plans, including expert/peer review; Maintain an overall picture across all sectors; Determine policy on standard refresh or closure; Advise the government on funding allocation to each standard. <p>It is already apparent that there are some systemic challenges - many Trailblazer standards and Endpoint Assessments are not fit for purpose. Some standards are too small or too narrow as a definition of an apprenticeship - some endpoint assessments are undeliverable.</p>	<p>A single organisation is needed to maintain and commission new standards and assessment strategies.</p> <p>Manage the levy process and ensure the reforms deliver value for money.</p>

	<p>There are some areas of overlap between role of the IfA and that of OfQual who regulates qualifications in England.</p> <p>The organisation is scheduled to officially come into being at same time as levy is charged in April 2017</p> <p>The IfA funds and creates the system the Skills Funding Agency co-funds the training and assessment organisations. Ofsted inspect wherever public money goes this across public and private providers and into employers.</p>	
<p>Employers in England will have access to a digital training account as a vehicle for employers large and small to claim back training funds on a matched funding basis</p>	<p>The new model is a co-investment one. The current pilot allows employers to claim £2 for every £1 invested into training up to a defined cap for each available framework . However, small organisations will be able to access funding without making a contribution to encourage small employers to take part in the system.</p> <p>Employers rather than training providers will now contract for training and assessment services for their apprentices. This changes landscape in past training providers drove market by delivering apprenticeships and drawing down public funding for these.</p> <p>Employers will now tender for training providers to make the most effective use of their money</p> <p>It is likely that many more large and medium sized employers will become training providers in their own right to maximise efficiency of new system. Large organisations will work hard to ensure they recover as much of the levy as they can.</p>	<p>This puts employers in the driving seat in terms of accessing funding for training.</p>

	<p>Many smaller employers without the support of an external training organisation may not be compelled to access the funds in the electronic training account</p>	
<p>There will be a register of approved training providers ²⁵</p>	<p>Employers in England will contract directly with a training provider from the approved list or could become a registered training provider in their own right . The Register will be maintained by the IfA</p> <p>Given the sums of money involved some very large outsourcing organisations will enter the market aggressively offering training solutions for large employers to maximise their levy returns.</p> <p>Any organisation offering training in this space will become subject to ofsted inspection</p>	<p>Employers will select and contract with the training companies they wish to work with.</p> <p>This will probably reduce the number of training providers in the English market place</p> <p>Any training provider in receipt of public money is liable for relevant inspections - to level 3 this is Ofsted in England .</p>
<p>There will be a registrar of approved End Point assessment organisations ²⁶</p>	<p>Employers will select the appropriate assessment organisation from the registry of assessment organisations to conduct the End Point Assessment for their apprentices.</p> <p>The nature of an apprenticeship has changed in England and they will now be assessed by an End Point Assessment</p> <p>This assessment model will mean that the End Point Assessment will become most costly element of the process.</p> <p>While there will be an incentive payment for employers entering candidates for EPA given costs associated with EPA we may see more ‘part-qualified’ apprentices.</p>	<p>The focus moves from one based primarily on qualifications achieved through demonstrating competences in the workplace to one that has greater summative assessment - assessed by an organisation that is external to the employer and/or training provider.</p> <p>This will reduce the number of qualifications and awarding bodies operating in this space in England</p>

²⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sfa-register-of-training-organisations>

²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/register-of-apprentice-assessment-organisations-overview>

	<p>Employers drawing down funds for training but not for end point assessed element.</p> <p>Many of the awarding or qualification based organisations that operated in this sector are moving into this space.</p>	
<p>An apprenticeship will last at least one year and will be assessed by an End Point Assessment that must be administered by an approved provider . This cannot be the employer or training provider who has delivered the training .</p> <p>The EPA is a holistic assessment of the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) that have been learnt throughout the apprenticeship and will graded (pass / distinction etc)</p>	<p>The existing frameworks were made up of a number of units and qualifications that candidates took in the course of their apprenticeship and the assessments were normally based on work based evidence rather than a cumulative end point assessment.</p> <p>This new structure removes the need for many qualifications but puts the focus on the End Point Assessment.</p> <p>It means that the EPA becomes very high stakes both in terms of candidates but also in terms of cost of presentations.</p> <p>Traditionally achievement in this space has focussed on achieving competence on a pass/fail basis and has not been graded.</p> <p>This form of end point assessment even when very well designed is very expensive to run. This may be one of the underlying reasons for a number of currently available standards having no approved EPA organisation.</p>	<p>This will prevent some of the worst abuses in English system - where in areas like retail some low quality ‘fast track’ apprenticeships ate up a lot of public money but had a very low impact either on productivity or career progression for apprentices.</p> <p>That the EPA organisation has to be independent of the training provider and employer will improve the robustness of the assessment process and discourage some of the past practices - where training providers could have been providing training , assessment and were perhaps too the awarding body. Though this is model in University sector and model of many professional bodies.</p> <p>The more robust assessment process and introduction of grading may lift the recognition of vocational qualifications.</p>
<p>The new standards must include relevant English and Maths qualifications and relevant digital skills</p>	<p>This embeds the journey that English apprenticeship system has been on to make GCSE English and Maths an essential in all frameworks.</p> <p>There will be further government guidance around the nature of digital skills and competencies but they will be embedded in all the frameworks - This is still not well</p>	<p>The government thinks (I think this is ill judged) that GCSE English and Maths are benchmark qualifications. Much better would be revisiting functional skills.</p> <p>I support this as there is a broad set of digital competencies that every citizen should have and every occupation has a specialized set of digital competencies. This is distinct</p>

	enough defined in England to have significant impact.	from computing skills for all and needs unpicked.
All standards must have a mandated 20% of off the job training	<p>It is hard to see how this will be managed. Training can take many forms including online delivery to an employee's desktop or mobile device.</p> <p>In England some colleges see this as an opportunity to offer more day release courses for employers . They will face fierce competition from a new breed of online , digitally enabled training providers.</p>	To make sure that learners get opportunity and time to learn relevant underpinning knowledge and theory and to support the new mandatory grading element now in the new assessment standards.

There are a some specific challenges in the English system that are worth drawing out further. These are mostly in relation to the new the role that the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education will play within the new system.

Challenges faced by IfA	Potential Issues and solutions / v Scottish Landscape
IfA has been asked to ensure digital skills are embedded within standards and that digital capabilities are considered across the post 16 vocational reforms.	<p>There is confusion in the system around what effective digital skills are for learning, life and work Digital skills and digital vocational skills should be incorporated into the new standards. The Welsh essential skills model includes digital literacies alongside English and maths while taking account of digital vocational skills.</p> <p>There is no similar push to review the core skills component in Scottish MAs . This should be an area of priority action.</p>
IfA needs to ensure that standards can be delivered and assessed by making the most effective use of relevant systems.	<p>The focus on End Point Assessment (EPA) makes the tracking of a candidate's readiness for the EPA critical for all stakeholders. Many of the EPAs as they stand will be very costly to implement. The assessment strategies do not make or suggest best use of the systems that are available for assessment. There is a crisis looming as a number of apprentices are currently working on new frameworks where there is no appointed end point assessment organisation in place.</p> <p>The new system could drive a lot of innovative delivery and assessment.</p> <p>By making more effective use of e-assessment, e-portfolios, web-conferencing and a range of tools the costs of the EPA could be</p>

	<p>substantially reduced and the effectiveness of the system for employers and candidates improved.</p> <p>Positive references to the use of technology in delivery and assessment do not currently appear in the guidance to pathfinders, training providers and assessment organisations.</p> <p>There are some moves in Scotland for the system to make greater use of digital evidence but there are not the same system drivers in Scotland.</p>
<p>IfA has the ability if it chooses to drive the implementation of technology enhanced learning including the use of blended and flipped learning</p>	<p>The nature of learning has changed and it now can be delivered at a time and place that meets the learners’ needs. There is scope in the system for much greater development in this area if employers and learners are to get the full benefit of the flexibility that blended learning can deliver.</p> <p>A lot of work has already been done in this area across England , Jisc , Colleges and Training Providers are working to increase the use of blended learning across the system and build on the legacy of the FELTAG²⁷ work to date by utilising the case studies and support available from Jisc and partners. (FELTAG is the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group. : its mission the agile evolution of the FE sector in anticipation of disruptive technology, for the benefit of learners, employers & the UK economy as a whole)</p> <p>There is no comparable driver in Scotland . There are some real dangers that Scottish Colleges and Training Providers will be overtaken by providers based in England who have embraced learning technology more effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·
<p>IfA could drive the use of technology to provide effective tracking and monitoring of learner progress and achievement</p>	<p>In England there is a disjoint between the data requirements of a number of agencies. There is an opportunity here to make more effective use of the identifiers that are already in place to both improve the tracking and monitoring of learners through the system and to make these tools particularly the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) be more supportive of learners themselves. IfA should make better use of both Unique Learner Number (ULN) and ILR in the process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Working with the suppliers of MIS and other relevant systems and building on the work of organisations like jisc there is an opportunity to improve data management, reporting and analytics across the system and an opportunity to explore ways to make the ILR more accessible to learners <p>There are similar challenges in Scotland - the recent review of Skills and Enterprise Agencies promises a more joined up approach to learner data management ²⁸</p>
<p>IfA should look to improve the awareness of and responsiveness of, the system to changes in digital skills and system’s ability to horizon scan.</p>	<p>Employers, Training Providers and Colleges need ongoing support and guidance to ensure they are maximising the effectiveness of learning technology in their delivery.</p>

²⁷ <http://feltag.org.uk/>

²⁸ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00508447.pdf>

	<p>Pathfinders need to ensure that their standards reflect the technological changes that are impacting directly on their industry and that best use is made of the support that is available for the Institute and Pathfinders around understanding the impact of new technologies on learning to support the horizon scanning necessary to develop and future proof new standards and assessment strategies.</p> <p>There is not a similar push in Scotland to ensure that digital literacy is embedded across the current frameworks or in future frameworks.</p>
<p>IfA could improve the flexibility of certification</p>	<p>It is not clear currently who will be certificating the apprenticeships and there is scope too to relook at certification as the new post 16 vocational qualifications arrive in the College space in England.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an opportunity to work with Jisc and awarding bodies or relevant agencies to explore and develop new richer forms of digital certification to support learners and employers. This would align with more effective use of digital data on learners progress and the greater use of e-portfolios. <p>While the systems are in place there has not been support to move to digital certification in Scotland . This would potentially be cost saving and would allow candidates and employers to be provided with a richer set of data on performance.</p>
<p>IfA could ensure digital practice is embedded in the process of creating standards</p>	<p>The current models of consultation on standards and assessments strategies are too short and not comprehensive or inclusive enough. Move away from short windows of online surveys to validate standards and assessment strategies and create a more iterative and responsive model to improve the quality and sustainability of both standards and assessment strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the early tasks of IfA will be to recall or revise many of the standards and assessment strategies created by the trailblazers as though they were approved by BIS they are not fit for purpose. <p>Scotland should learn from this, standards should be fixed for a period with an open version available in a collaborative space for comment - to smooth re-validation process and to reduce the cost of reviewing frameworks on an ongoing basis .</p>

Towards a more active vocational reform programme in Scotland - In progress ...

In many ways the overarching ambition in Scotland around vocational learning is distinctive in that the system is still one, in aspiration at least, that consistently tries to bridge the academic vocational divide to smooth the progression pathways for learners on their lifelong learning journey. There are a range of dangers, lessons and a number of opportunities that arise from these developments. It is a good time to consider making some distinctive changes to the Scottish vocational landscape.

Dangers

1. That Scottish system comes under pressure to adopt and/or import some of these reforms without appreciating the broader context and inadvertently imports some of the challenges, among these : weakly developed standards and in some cases unassessable End Point Assessments, the philosophy of a more distinct pathway for academic and vocational learners rather than the Scottish one which in theory should allow articulation links across school, college, HE and vocational provision. The costs associated with both the End Point Assessment and in some cases the professional certification that has been packaged and embedded into the new standards.
2. Conversely there is the danger that the Scottish system instantly discounts many of the fresh ideas that are emerging south of Hadrian's wall and does not give some of the new models due consideration.
3. That the Scottish system does not see this as an opportunity to review the system as a whole, as is the case in Wales and Northern Ireland.
4. That there is no equivalent body to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education in Scotland. There has not been the same degree of market failure in Scotland, but there is a danger that system design stalls in Scotland while the systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are reformed. There could be danger too if the system is designed by a funding body and or by a narrow selection of employers rather than by employers and all relevant agencies in Scotland without a clear narrative that we repeat some of the mistakes happening in English system. In Scotland it is clear that activity will be coordinated by the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board and the Centre for Work Based Learning - but there needs to be more detail available on their roles.
5. That we need better working definitions of what an apprenticeship is in Scotland : Foundation, Modern, Technical and Professional or Foundation, Modern, Technical, Advanced/Graduate. It is unclear currently, although direction of travel appears to be toward Foundation, Modern and Graduate Level apprenticeship.
6. That employers, professional bodies, training providers, Colleges, Universities and Schools in Scotland have a clear understanding of the apprenticeship landscape in Scotland, the rationale for it being distinct from English landscape and that they have an understanding of the committee and governance structures around the commissioning, design, approval, quality assurance and the funding available to the system in Scotland. This becomes more of a pressing issue without UKCES as an overall governing body and for many of these organisations cooperating around, thinking around and designing occupational standards is new territory for them,

Lessons

1. That it is useful to look across vocational delivery in Colleges , work-based Learning, Schools and Universities in the round rather than sector by sector for instance the 16+ Vocational Reforms will change design of College courses in England by 2020 giving them a closer relationship to apprenticeships.
2. That the speed of reform in England and in many cases poor or weak consultation has produced standards that are not fit for purpose. There are real opportunities in the commissioning and development of standards to make more effective use of technology and modernise this process to make it more flexible and inclusive.
3. That by excluding sector skills councils , awarding bodies and those with experience of standards development , qualifications design, delivery and assessment development, with the best of intentions, you can create standards and assessment strategies that are not fit for purpose. It is likely that in time and to maintain standards England will need to reinvent 'sector skills councils' or some other employer bodies to maintain standards. It is certain that many of the current standards and assessment strategies will need to be recalled to be made fit for purpose.

Opportunities

1. That the funding available from the training levy in Scotland provides the funding for fresh approaches to closing the academic and vocational divide and moving the Scottish system closer to those of Switzerland and Germany.
2. That the Scottish system sees this as an opportunity to be proactive rather than reactive and looks at vocational learning in a more holistic way.
3. That learners are able to take advantage of a fresh system with fresh progression routes which makes the system more productive for learners and employers.
4. That Scotland takes a fresh look at the professional apprenticeship pathways becoming available in England in areas like accountancy and legal practice. This would firmly challenge the academic vocational divide and that the system builds on HNC/D developments .
5. This is an opportunity to relook at the contribution that large and small employers make towards training. The training account model under adoption in England, brings it's own challenges, but puts a greater onus on employers to make a contribution.
6. That it is worth looking at the new focus on essential/key/foundation skills component in the new English apprenticeships in Scotland and overhauling the current core skills framework, this to embed digital literacy and make it relevant across schools , colleges and work based learning. The Welsh have already developed a flexible model to be used across School , College and Work Based learning. There is a sound pedagogic logic for embedding problem solving and working with people and teams and refocusing on communication, numeracy and digital literacy along with employability as the essential skill set. Digital literacy is a broader skill set than that of IT and gives learners a platform for learning, life and work and has been well defined by Jisc²⁹ - this model was used to shape the Welsh model³⁰
7. In Scotland there should be a closer relationship between non advanced FE programmes in Colleges traditionally called NC Courses and apprenticeship programmes.
8. That the newly designed English apprenticeships require a 20% off the job component and these new apprenticeships are more than the pass fail competency based system that is currently in place in

²⁹ <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/rd/projects/building-digital-capability>

³⁰ <http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/digital-competence-framework/?lang=en>

Scotland. A fresh look at design rules would support a greater degree of articulation between apprenticeships and HNC/D and Degree level study in Scotland . This should be seen as a priority - as the investment in apprenticeships in Scotland grow. There should be a refocusing of efforts to ensure that progression routes are available to all apprentices.

9. That funding and the existing mechanisms and agencies focus on making the best use of the SCQF , SQA Accreditation , qualifications design and development and the levers that are available in Scotland to ensure that learners can enjoy seamless progression pathways. This in tandem with review as suggested above to better align College , Workplace and HE provision to support progression of apprentices through system.
10. Ensure that there is effective tracking of learners . The English system is building towards one where learners will have a ULN (a unique learner number) we have this in Scotland in the SCN but this is underutilised, where learners have an ILR (an individual learning record) and where the impact of their learning on their incomes will be tracked by HMRC . All these components exist in Scotland but there seems to be a lack of vision and or willingness to pull this together. The new overarching body for skills should make this a focus of the Enterprise and Skills Review.
11. There should be an aspirational mapping of what we need this landscape to look like in Scotland - that is specific in its ambition for learners , owned and shaped by the system with clear areas of delegation and cooperation around how the various actors across the system work together to achieve this vision.
12. Encourage more active cooperation across Employers , Training Providers , Colleges , Universities and schools that include the sharing of learning materials - as well as the promotion of clearer learning pathways.
13. There should be a richer source both of data and of research around the impact of vocational education in Scotland . This requires more open data sharing on progress of learners moving through the system and the establishment of a better knowledge base on effective practices in vocational education. This should include an independent evaluation of the impact of interventions to date. What for instance have the real gains been from 'Getting Ready for Work' qualifications , Foundation Apprenticeships at SQCF6 or the success criteria for Graduate level apprenticeships ? The research output from national agencies and universities in this area in Scotland is very low given the policy aspirations around building a more effective vocational system.
14. Some of this work grew from advice provided to English system on opportunities specific to their reforms - the models suggested here³¹ are in many cases applicable to the Scottish system.

About : Joe Wilson

Joe Wilson is a UK and international education consultant and the former Chief Executive of the College Development Network. His work mainly focuses on College and work-based education and its structures and practices. He is currently the UK Ambassador for the Association of Learning Technology and Co-Chair of ALT in Scotland, a board member of Youth Link Scotland and Kelvin College Glasgow and has held a number of public appointments in Scotland over the last 20 years mainly in areas around adult and community education and learning technology. Previously a school teacher, an adult education tutor, a college lecturer and a senior manager in Scottish Colleges before working for national agencies and non-departmental public bodies, including the Scottish Qualifications Authority where he managed the national vocational portfolio of qualifications.

³¹ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qzcb7kjYa9uW1qDivr4Fbphxz04WTMUzjE6jr2MCGpk/edit>

He has an ongoing interest in Open Education and was one of the co-developers of the Open Scotland Declaration. As Head of New Ventures at the Scottish Qualifications Authority, he secured a public statement of recognition in Scotland for Open Badges as a valid means to recognise achievement in formal and informal learning. Through his consultancy he remains an active evangelist for open educational practice.

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Appendix one - Where the money is going currently - Source Scottish Government ³²

MEASURES SUPPORTED BY THE APPRENTICESHIP LEVY

Activity	Estimated Expenditure in 2017-18 £m
MODERN APPRENTICESHIPS	
Our continued commitment to delivery 30,000 new Modern Apprenticeship starts each year by 2020.	81.5
National Occupation Standards	0.5
Sub-total	82.0
GRADUATE LEVEL APPRENTICESHIPS	
Graduate Level Apprenticeships	4.7
Sub-total	4.7
FOUNDATION APPRENTICESHIPS	
Foundation Apprenticeships	6.8
Sub-total	6.8
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	
Support to employers to help disadvantaged young people to access and sustain employment	9.3
Developing the Young Workforce Regional Groups	4.1
Flexible Workforce Development Fund	10.0
Digital Economy Skills & Business Support	1.9
Care Sector Skills - Voluntary Sector Development Fund	0.9
Early Years Recruitment & Training	25.0
Energy Sector – Transition Training Fund	6.0

³² <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/01/2588/2>

Teacher Training	2.5
Individual Learning Accounts	3.9
Sub-total	63.6
PRE-EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT	
Employability Programmes	25.0
Employment focussed college provision	36.3
Inspiring Scotland	3.0
Sub-total	64.3
Total	221.40