



**A survey of Construction and Built Environment
Advanced Apprenticeships - attitudes and aspirations for the future**

**Karen Gaston
Department of Real Estate & Construction
School of Built Environment
Oxford Brookes University**

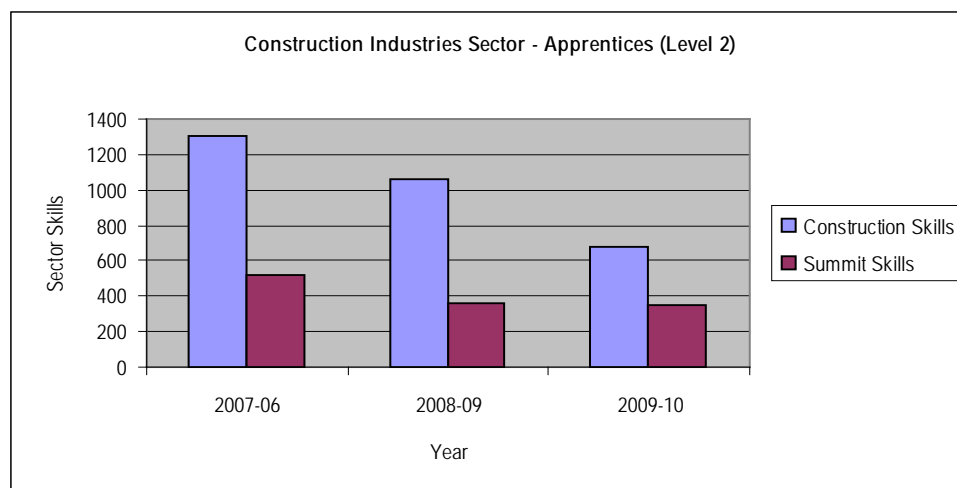
Outline of report

1. A total of 87 Advanced Apprentices were questioned as part of a larger survey conducted by Progress South Central Lifelong Learning Network in collaboration with partner colleges into the attitudes and aspirations of Advanced Apprentices living, working and studying in the region of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Surrey. The questions are the same as those in a recent Apprenticeship survey conducted by Sussex Lifelong Learning Network (SLN) to allow for comparative analysis. This study focuses on 57 Advanced Apprentices who come from programme areas such as Plumbing and Electrical Engineering. 5 Colleges of Further Education/training providers responded to the main survey – all 5 Colleges returned Advanced Apprentices in Plumbing and Electrical Engineering. However, the majority of Advanced Apprentices who answered came from either Oxford and Cherwell Valley College and Basingstoke College of Technology.
2. The second part of the survey includes responses from Advanced Apprentices who are associated with BAM Nuttall. This survey only constitutes 10 replies, but it does produce an alternative perspective on the Advance Apprentices' experience and future career and educational aspirations.
3. The final section of the report provides a summary, a conclusion to the survey (s) conducted and a discussion about the future.

Introduction: Apprenticeships – geographical location and numbers – changing patterns?

The Skills Funding Agency has provided data on the number of Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships listed for the South-East Local Authority regional area.

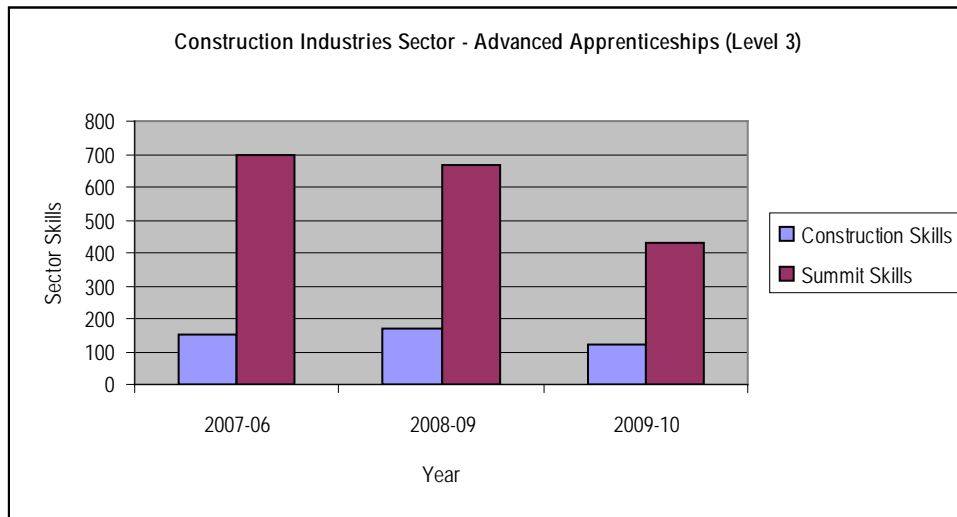
Figure 1: Apprenticeship demand/provision by Sector Skills groupings (Level 2) in the South-East Local Authority region



Source: Skills Funding Agency - 2007/10 Apprenticeship starts by South East Local Authority and Level 2

From looking at both Figure 1 and Figure 2 a contrasting picture emerges. The majority of Apprentices at Level 2 (Figure 1) tend to be working in association with Construction Skills – although numbers are slowly declining for both Sector Skills. In Figure 2, the reverse pattern emerges. The majority of Advanced Apprentices are with Summit Skills. This is obviously a reflection of the skills requirement at Level 3 at that time. The demand here is for building service engineering type skills rather than construction.

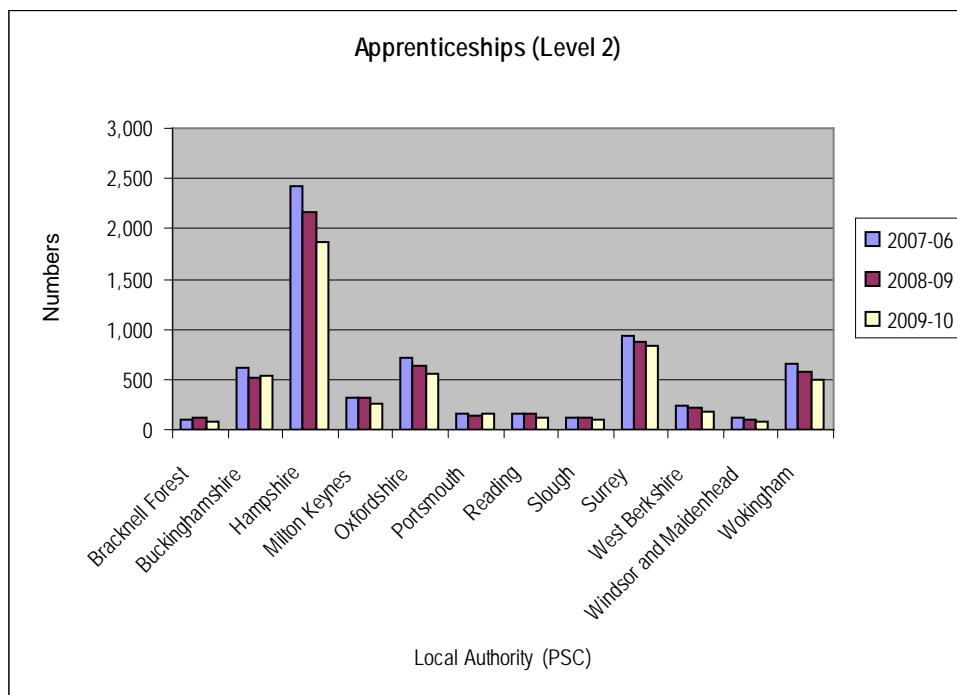
Figure 2: Advanced Apprenticeship demand/provision by Sector Skills groupings (Level 3) in the South-East Local Authority regional area



Source: Skills Funding Agency - 2007/10 Apprenticeship starts by South East Local Authority and Level 3

At the local level, i.e. for the Progress South Central Lifelong Learning Network region, Figure 3 provides an insight into the geographical location of Apprentices. In all locations, the numbers of apprenticeships registered have been slowly declining between 2007 and 2010. There is also a marked difference in the overall numbers of apprenticeships registered – more in the more rural areas.

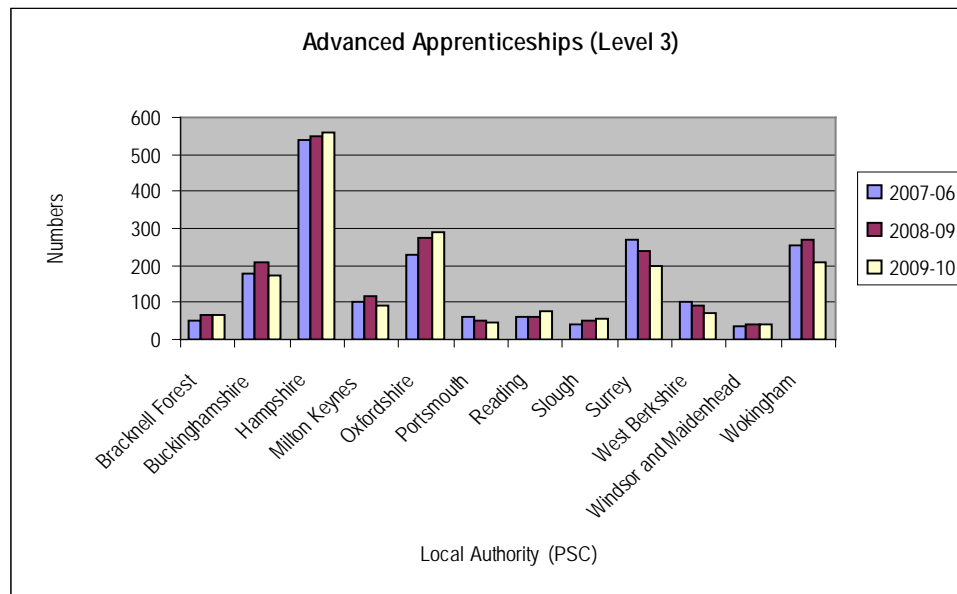
Figure 3: Apprenticeships at Level 2 for the Progress South Central Lifelong Learning Network region



Source: Skills Funding Agency - 2007/10 Apprenticeship starts by South East Local Authority and Level 2

A similar pattern is apparent for Advanced Apprenticeships (Figure 4). The most notable difference is in volume – there are far fewer Advanced Apprentices registered at Level 3 in the Progress South Central Lifelong Learning Network region. The low take up at Level 3 can be due to two reasons (1) demography – fewer 18+ year olds in the local population or (2) a failure of progression from Level 2 Apprenticeship to Level 3 the Advanced Apprenticeship. In terms of geographical location, there is a similar variation in where these Advanced Apprentices can be found. Hampshire seems to stand out as a strong provider of Advanced Apprenticeship opportunities, closely followed by Oxfordshire, Surrey and Buckinghamshire. Note: the numbers of Advanced Apprenticeships are actually increasing in Hampshire, Oxfordshire and in Reading during this period.

Figure 4: Advanced Apprenticeships Level 3 for the Progress South Central Lifelong Learning Network region



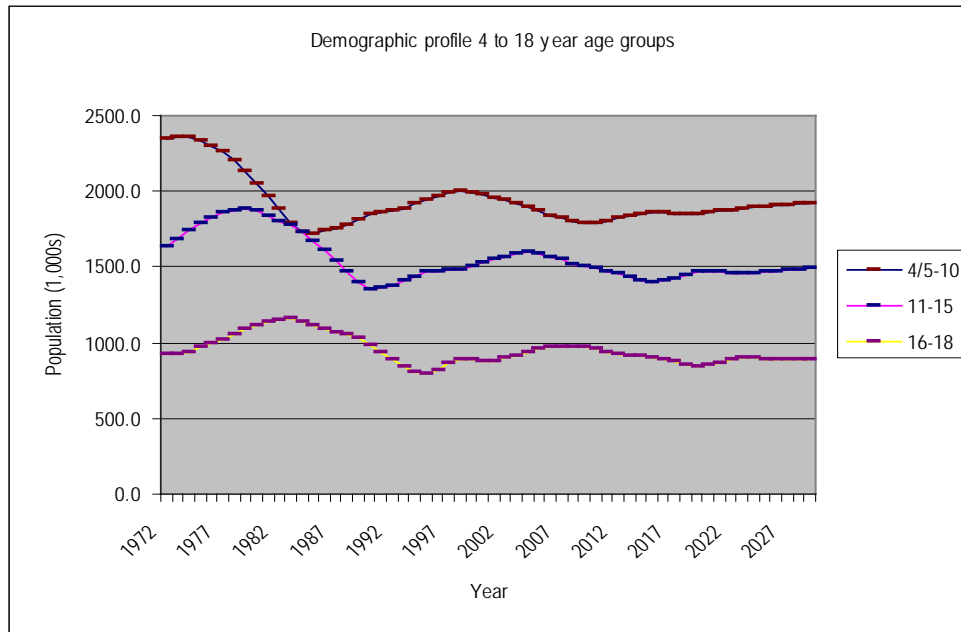
Source: Skills Funding Agency - 2007/10 Apprenticeship starts by South East Local Authority and Level 3

Looking ahead – long-term planning

Figure 1 in an attempt to illustrate how the compulsory school age population has changed over the last four decades. The 16 to 18 year old age group reached a peak in 2010. From 2010 the numbers in this age group will slowly decline and this will continue until 2020. Interestingly, the reverse is true for the 11 to 15 year old age group and for the 4 to 10 year old age group. Here it becomes apparent that potential demand for places in education for individuals aged 11 to 18 is actually declining. However, these figures are national figures and do not account for local and regional variations and changing migration patterns. In conclusion, where demand for primary school places will rise as the current birth rate rises, demand for secondary school and tertiary level education will remain the same or will fall in the next decade as fewer individuals enter the 11 to 19 age group.

In terms of planning for the future, the demand for 14 to 19 educational places is set to slowly decline – fewer places at the late-secondary and tertiary education stage will be required. This may make life a little easier for those charged with providing educational and training opportunities for the 16 to 18 year age groups after 2015 when the Raising of Participation Age (RPA) Education Act of 2008 becomes a requirement in law. However, this does not alter the fact that efforts need to be made in order to provide education and training for the 14 to 19 age group which is appropriate and meets the needs of individuals, the needs of employers and society in the future.

Figure 5: Demographic profiles – demand for education in the next decade



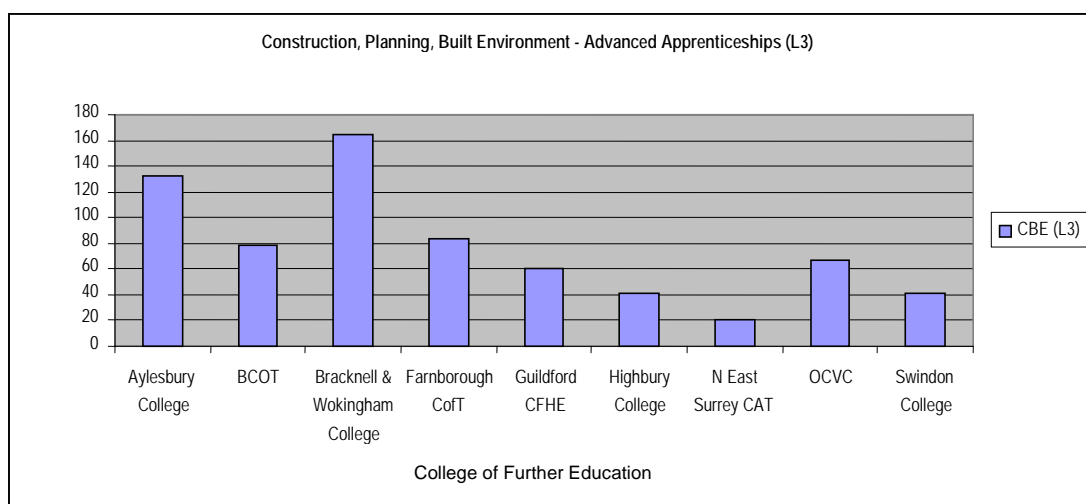
Source: ONS population estimates and GAD projections (2007).

The following commentary is an outline and comparison between the Progress South Central Lifelong Learning Network survey on Advanced Apprenticeships and a similar survey undertaken with BAM Nuttall – a construction company with a Head Office based in Maidenhead, Berkshire.

The Progress South Central Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

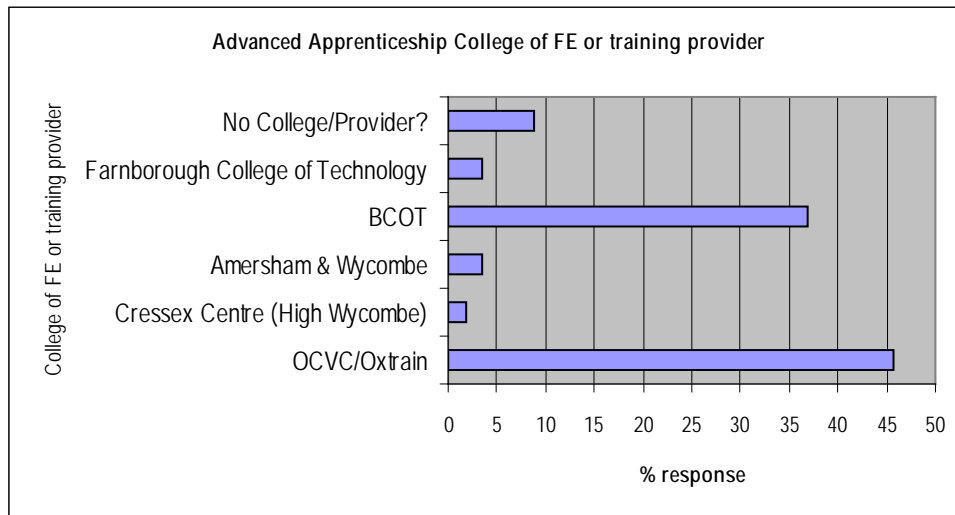
Figure 6 gives an outline of the total number of Advanced Apprenticeships in the Progress South Central Lifelong Learning region by College of Further Education. For the academic year 2009-10, there were 686 Advanced Apprentices registered in the Construction, Planning and Built Environment sector.

Figure 6: Advanced Apprenticeships by College of Further Education in the Progress South Central Lifelong Learning region for 2009-10



Data collected from the Progress South Central Advanced Apprenticeship survey begins to provide a more detailed overview. Figure 7 provides a summary of Advanced Apprenticeship training organisations i.e. the college of further education or training provider. In this study, 45.6% come from Oxford and Cherwell Valley College/Oxtrain and 36.8% from Basingstoke College of Technology.

Figure 7: Advanced Apprenticeship training college or provider



The Progress South Central Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

Figure 8 focused on age distributions. Advanced Apprentices are slightly older – the 19 to 24 year old age group. 66.7% of the Advanced Apprentices were in this age group for the 57 group on Plumbing and Electrical Engineering programmes. A similar result of 67.3% was obtained in the Sussex Lifelong Learning Network study (Sussex Council of Training Providers, 2009). This group mostly represents a post-compulsory age group. This is also traditionally the age for apprenticeship training.

Figure 8: Age Group



Unlike the Sussex Lifelong Learning survey, where most planned to complete within 6 months, most of the Advanced Apprentices questioned in the Progress South Central Lifelong Learning Network region for Plumbing and Electrical Engineering, plan to finish their Advanced Apprenticeship in 2 years. This also suggests they have only just begun their Apprenticeship i.e. 45.6% of respondents in the 2009 to 2010 academic cohort are due to complete in 2010 to 2011.

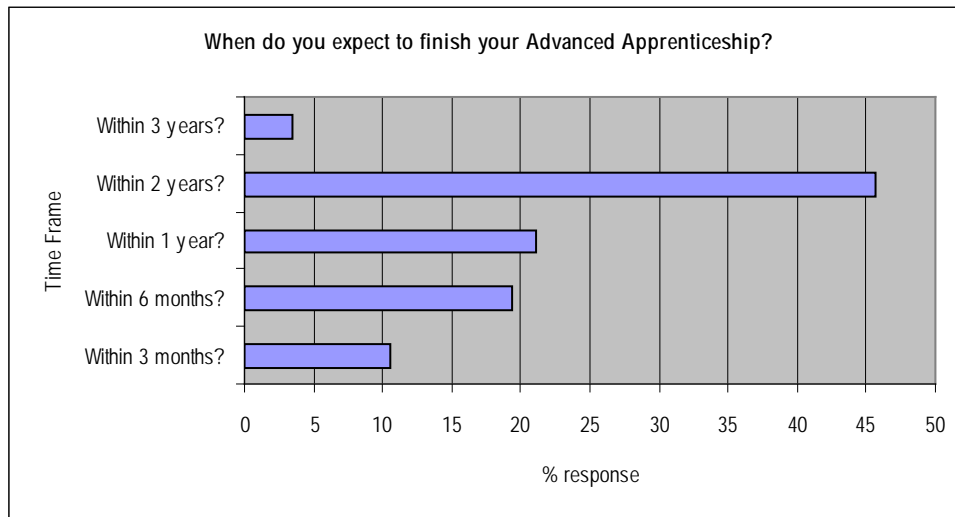
BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

A similar survey was conducted with BAM Nuttall and 60% of Advanced Apprentices were in the 19 to 24 age group.

The Progress South Central Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

46% of Advanced Apprentices expect to complete their Advanced Apprenticeship within 2 years. From this it can be assumed that around half of those surveyed have only just begun their Apprenticeship at Level 3. The remainder have already completed over half of their Advanced Apprenticeship.

Figure 9: Time frame for completion



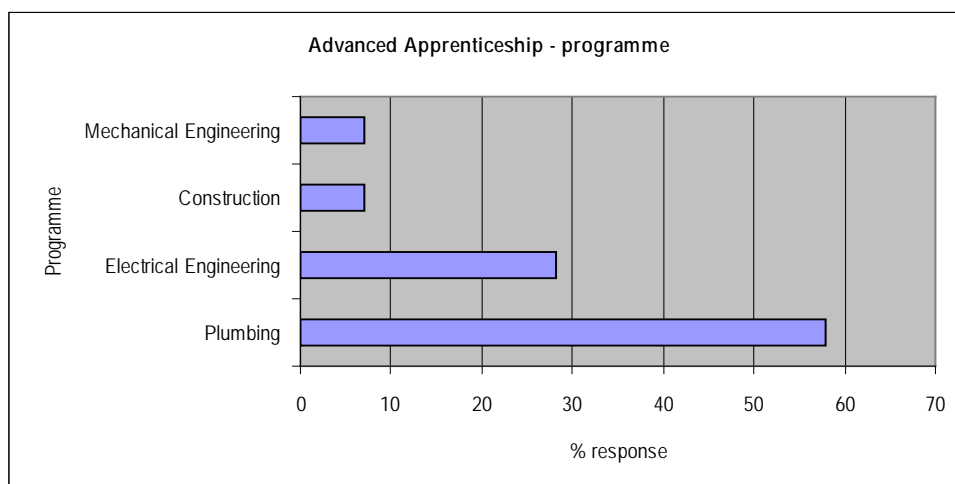
BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

For BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprentices 50% expect to complete their Advanced Apprenticeship within 2 years. This is comparable to other Advanced Apprentices in the Progress South Central Lifelong Learning Network region.

The Progress South Central Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

Figure 10 below suggests the Advanced Apprenticeships programmes are very popular in 'plumbing' and 'electrical engineering' – Building Services Engineering. The Advanced Apprentices are employees of local Small to Medium Sized (SME) organisations – examples include: Renelec, Curtis and Carder Services, Uniheat (Oxford) Limited, Aquaheat (Oxford) Limited, Abbey Heating and Plumbing Limited, Warburton Building Services, PRS Plumbing, Heating and Electrical, JMG Electrical Limited and Steve Cross Plumbing and Heating.

Figure 10: Advanced Apprenticeship – programme



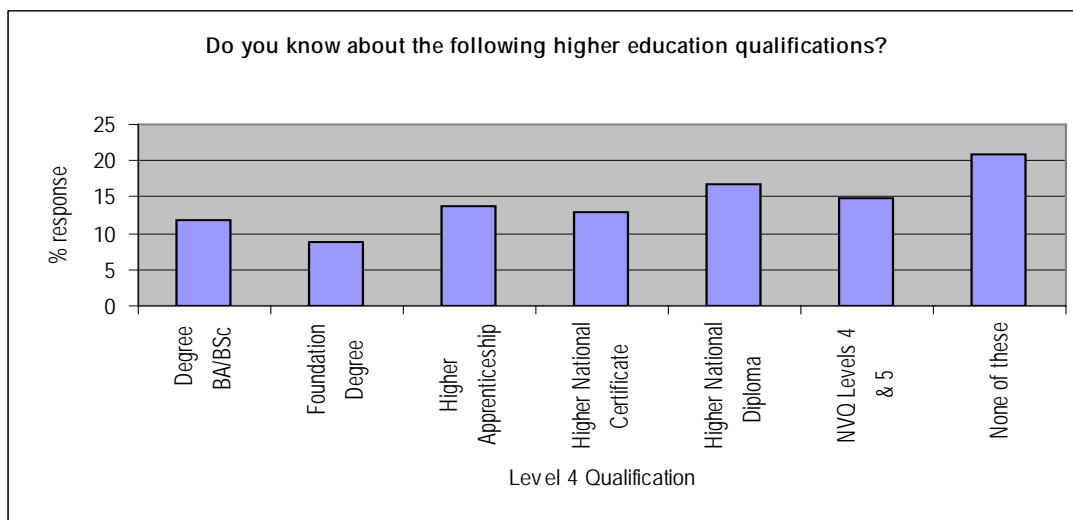
BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

Obviously all the BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprentices work for BAM Nuttall. Although in this survey, their actual job descriptions and therefore associated trades are unknown.

The Progress South Central Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

Figure 11 tends to suggest that the Advanced Apprentices surveyed tended to be more aware of HNC, HND and NVQ programmes at Level 4. However, the majority of those questioned did not have any knowledge of any Level 4 programmes of study/training. Their lack of awareness about the Foundation Degree might be a matter of concern – as a group, they seem more aware of the HND as a Level 4 course of study and vocational qualification.

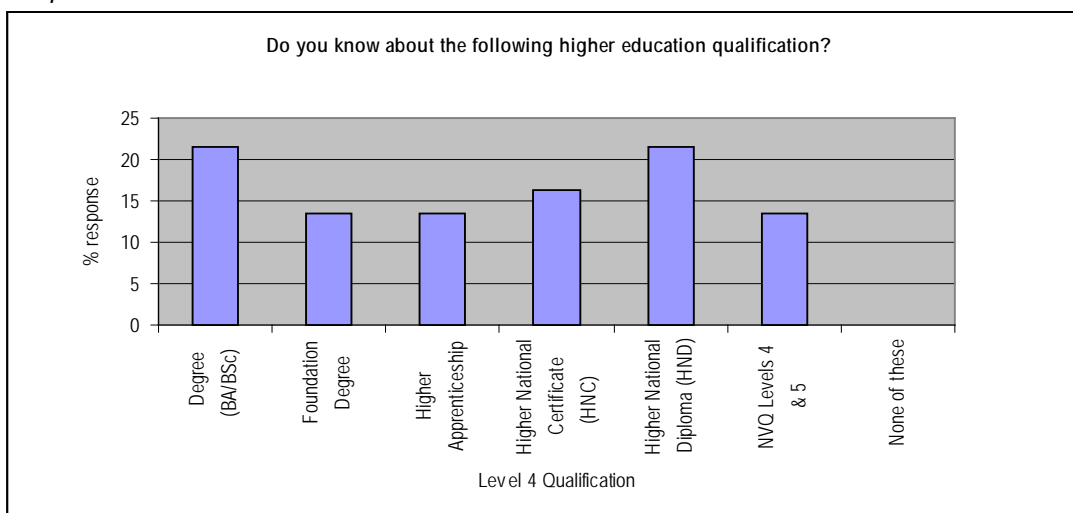
Figure 11: Knowledge about higher education qualifications at Level 4



BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

The same survey was completed for the BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprentices and presents a slightly different result. Figure 12 provides a level of awareness for BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprentices. This is a slightly different perspective to the results obtained from the Advanced Apprenticeships associated with Colleges of Further Education in the Progress South Central region. For instance there is more emphasis on Honours Degrees and the Higher National Certificate and Diploma as a Level 4 option.

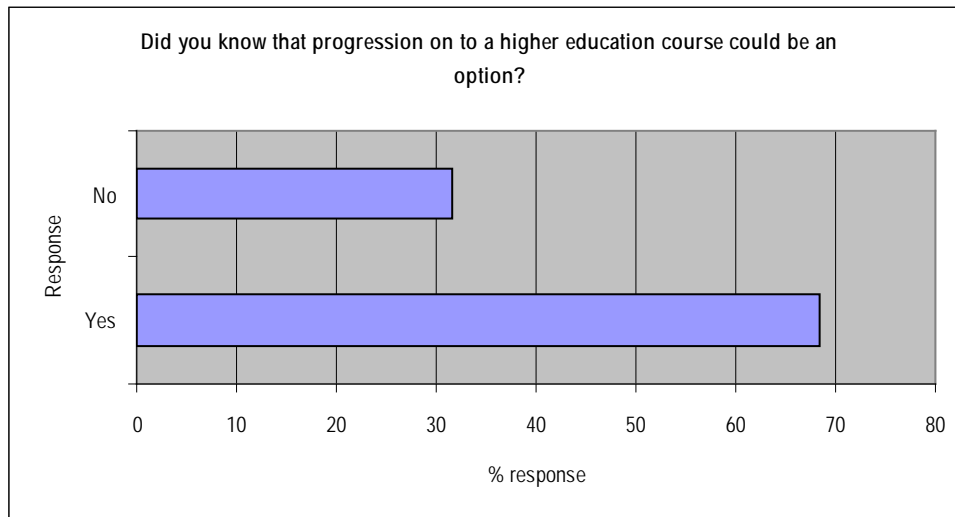
Figure 12: Knowledge about higher education qualifications at Level 4 – BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprenticeships



The Progress South Central Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

Figure 13 confirms that most of the Advanced Apprentices questioned know they can progress onto the higher education, but Figures 8 and 9 seem to suggest they have no plans to do so. In Figure 9, 80.7% state they have no plans to continue to higher education – against 19.3% who suggest to the survey that they are interested in pursuing further study at university.

Figure 13: Is higher education an option?



BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

For BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprentices 90% know they can progress onto higher education after successful completion of an Advanced Apprenticeship. This indicates a greater awareness of higher education as an option.

The Progress South Central Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

Figure 14: Interest in higher education

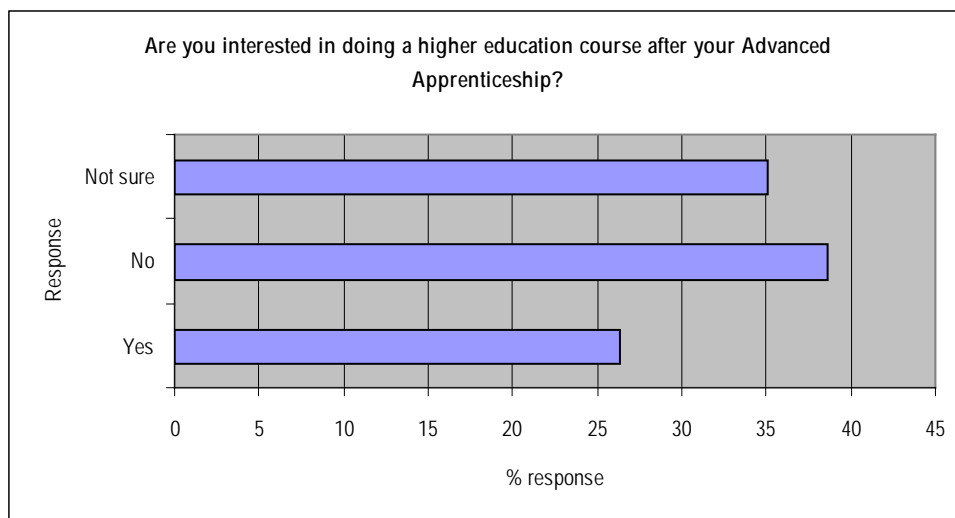


Figure 14 (above) provides an insight into the level of interest Advanced Apprentices have in higher education. The results are fairly mixed, but it suggests an air of indecision with only 39% expressing an interest in higher education and another 35% not sure. When looking at the descriptive analysis, there seems to be several distinct answers to this. On the one hand, the individuals concerned feel they have not thought about higher education and therefore have not

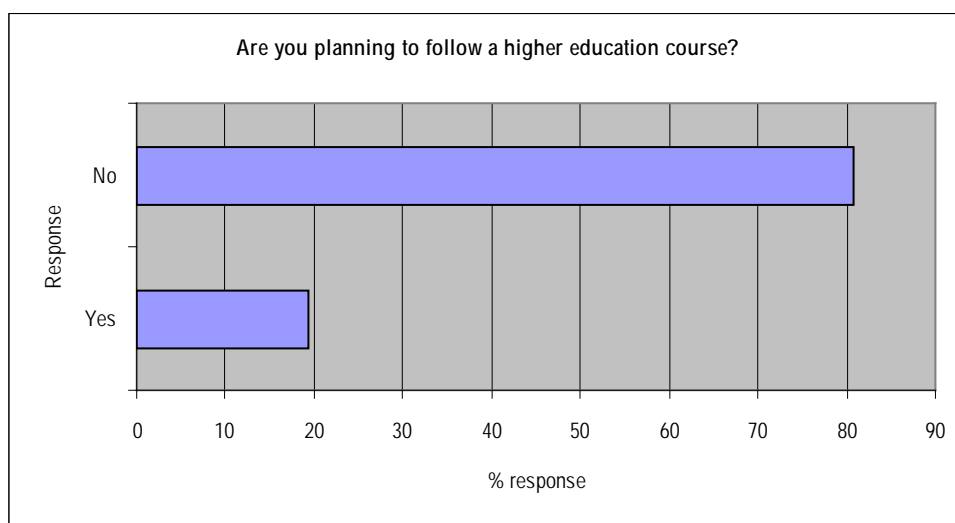
looked into it. Others are disillusioned with study and would rather work full-time and not have to study at all. This group is already 'fed-up' with being at college and cannot see further education and therefore higher education as an option for them. Some in the group are unsure of what the options are – do they need to progress further in order to do what they want to do? The more positive in the group (which tends to be the minority) want to learn as much as possible and do see the pursuit of higher education may lead to greater career opportunities in the future.

BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

For BAM Nuttall, 90% of Advanced Apprentices approached are interested in higher education. This is a more positive response and indicates a greater and more positive awareness of the possibility of progression to a Level 4 programme at university.

The Progress South Central Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

Figure 15: Plans to follow a course in higher education



Qualitative answers provide an insight into some of the problems. Many Advanced Apprentices express their need for more information on higher education course provision. In other cases, many may have not even thought about or considered what they will do after they finish their Advanced Apprenticeship. However, in Figure 10, 50.9% of those questioned state they have enough information about higher education. This suggests there is definite room for improvement in terms of reaching out to potential university applicants.

BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

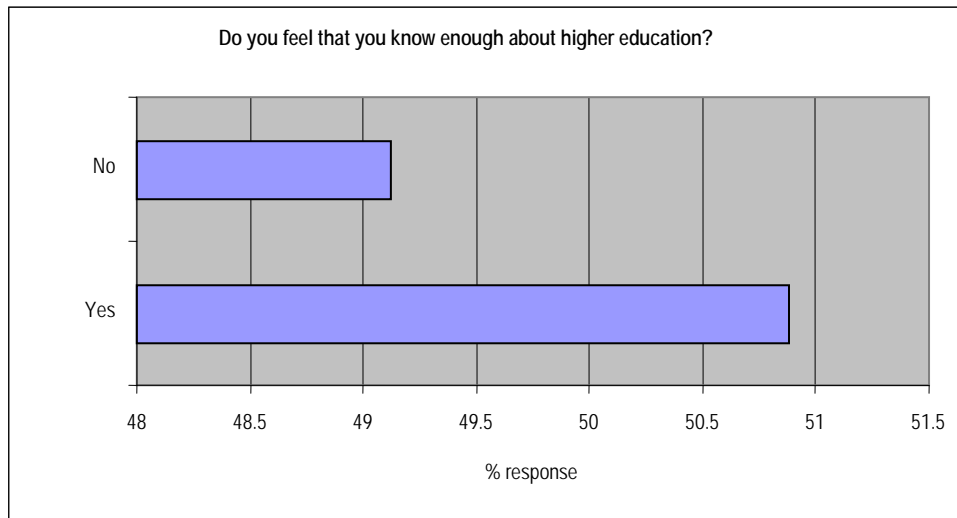
BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprentices are more positive about progression to higher education. 90% of the Advanced Apprentices approached with BAM Nuttall are planning to progress further with their education and training. This is the complete opposite to the results obtained from the survey focusing on Advanced Apprentices associated with Colleges of Further Education in the Progress South Central Lifelong Learning Network region. This suggests employer-led provision might be more successful in inspiring and supporting their employees who have the ability and motivation to progress to higher education.

The Progress South Central Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

Over 50% felt they had enough knowledge of higher education (Figure 16 below). Although 49.1% suggested they did not think they had enough knowledge. Is this because they do not want to know anything about higher education or is it because they have no access to knowledge about studying further at Level 4? The comments here tend to focus on a need for more access to information. This includes information on: specific courses available, more information on higher education in general and more importantly, the main advantages of further and higher education will have for

them in a future career in construction and built environment. The method of communication and transmission suggested seemed to be the greater supply of more paperwork i.e. more detailed prospectuses and opportunities to discuss future plans with lecturing staff in further and higher education.

Figure 16: Enough knowledge of higher education?



BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

All the Advanced Apprentices approached by BAM Nuttall feel that they have enough information about the higher education options available to them. This suggests that BAM Nuttall has a strong commitment to higher education.

The Progress South Central Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

Figure 17: Employer support?



In terms of employer support (Figure 17), 43.8% of those questioned replied by suggesting they do think their employer would support further study. A further 38.6% were unsure about future employer support. The Advanced Apprentices questioned did raise the problem about being in full-time higher education as opposed to working – they felt they could not do both at the same time. The other problem seemed to be an uncertainty about whether the pursuit of higher education would be necessary even though the individual felt their employer would be very supportive if it was.

BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprenticeship survey and analysis

The final and most crucial question focuses on employer support 'do you think your employer would support you?'. All the Advanced Apprentices in the survey believe they would be supported by BAM Nuttall if they progressed further to higher education.

Survey results: a summary

- Both surveys indicated that the Advanced Apprentices planned to complete their apprenticeship within 2 years.
- BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprentices tend to be more positive and aware of opportunities in higher education. In particular, degree and Higher National Diploma opportunities.
- Both surveys provided strong evidence that employers were willing to support their employees if they wanted to continue and go on into higher education. The BAM Nuttall Advanced Apprentices were more convinced about this – suggesting BAM Nuttall has good lines of communication and a positive attitude to supporting the education and training of their Advanced Apprentices.

The survey - conclusions

Advanced Apprentices are aware there is an opportunity for them to progress to higher education, but those planning to move onto higher education are definitely in the minority. Many require more information and advice on what is available as an option to them in higher education. However, there is a significant number who do not see higher education as their future – largely because they do not want to go to university or they do not see what it means to them.

The future

Progression rates for Advanced Apprentices are very low at 4% compared to other vocational learners – 41% for BTEC and 90% for A Level students (Carter, 2009; Hall et. al, 2010). A new focus will be to increase the number of Advanced Apprentices. Since June, £150 million redirected and released from Train to Gain funding for 50,000 additional apprenticeship places for Small and Medium Sized businesses.

One main aim of the project is to develop and implement an action plan which supports progression and transition into higher education, through their time at university and beyond for students undertaking Apprenticeships in the Progress South Central Lifelong Learning Network region.

- From 2011 some universities do recognise the Advanced Apprenticeship framework and have been listed under UCAS tariffs section – note at the present time only certain universities have signed up to this and include the Advanced Apprenticeships as a recognised entry qualification. The UCAS listings do not provide a tariff score – just a mention of their acceptance as an entry qualification.
- A review of the curriculum issues between Advanced Apprenticeship and degree programmes in higher education – innovation is needed to fill and reconcile gaps. It is suggested that the Advanced Apprenticeship may need to incorporate a 'preparation for university' component – something similar to what is currently being taught as part of other Level 3 courses, for example the Advanced Diploma and BTEC National. The Skills Commission (2009) does recognise this and suggests individuals should have access to bridging courses which develop additional skills, such as essay and report writing.
- It is recognised that diplomas (and other vocational courses and qualifications) and apprenticeships have different and contrasting educational and training objectives. Whereas the diploma provides a balanced mix of practical, applied and academic content. The apprenticeship aims to prepare young people with an occupational focus bringing with it training in specific skills and limited generic skills. By its very nature, an apprenticeship

tends to provide a practical and applied training rather than an academic one. For progression to higher education to be successful, an individual must acquire a Level 3 grounding in the more academic areas in the field of Construction and Built Environment.

- A study and report by Turbin, Fuller and Wintrup (2009) looks at the mapping the curriculum for construction in the Southampton area. They note that vocational courses such as the BTEC National have a higher technical content and are therefore better matched to higher education provision. In comparison to the more practical and craft-based courses which were not seen as being appropriate for progression to higher education. In summary, the possibilities for progression to higher education for Advanced Apprenticeships will depend on the type of technical content being pursued within a particular Advanced Apprenticeship framework. They seem to suggest the traditionally established route via the BTEC National and Higher National Certificate/Diploma and Foundation Degree would be more likely to be supported by employers who are already familiar with them and would also prove to be a clearer, more successful and secure experience for the individual.
- Commission Skills (2009) points towards a semi-merger of the 14-19 Diploma qualification with the apprenticeship framework. It is suggested that one successful route may be from the Level 2, Higher Diploma in Construction and Built Environment (or similar provision at Level 2) to the Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship.

The Commission Skills (2009) report outlines in Recommendation 6: *There should be much clearer mapping between Diploma and apprenticeship requirements so that those studying Diplomas know precisely when and where they have acquired a qualification that is also part of an apprenticeship, and what further qualifications would then be required to complete the apprenticeship.*

- University admissions policies and materials may need to be more 'user' friendly – to attract potential applicants, but also informing them of the challenges and demands studying for a degree programme places on them. It must be remembered that responsible and honest information and guidance must be provided at the outset otherwise the individual can be misinformed and the result non-completion and withdrawal.
- Reports suggest many Lifelong Learning Networks (Carter, 2009; Hall et. al., 2010) have already been successful in developing innovative teaching and assessment for vocational learners and further developed bridging courses for Advanced Apprentices wishing to progress further with their studies. This suggests universities may need to become more aware of the needs of Advanced Apprentices especially during the first year of a Foundation Degree or Honours Degree programme. This points to the need for greater awareness and provision of support (e.g. Information, Advice and Guidance, study skill tuition, student academic counselling) both at Level 3 and Level 4 and beyond the initial transition phase at university. It must be remembered that there is a difference between study at Level 3 and Level 4. The student at university has to be more self-motivated, more willing to 'take control' and more used to problem solving and working in a team, no longer a passive learner, but more a researcher than a student. Intellectual and technical demands change and become more challenging – the student becomes intellectually more independent, but also more aware of the world.
- One other answer may be for better strategic provision of more part-time opportunities at Level 4, 5 and 6. Many Foundation Degrees and, indeed the, Higher National Certificate are part-time. This, however, will be largely determined by employer demand. The part-time and Continuing Professional Development route may also provide more scope for inclusion of the essential and more academic education required as a basis for study at university and beyond.

References

Carter, P. J. (2009) *'Progression from vocational and applied learning to higher education in England'*, (UVAC).

A survey of Construction and Built Environment Advanced Apprenticeships – attitudes and aspirations for the future

Gallagher, P. (2010) *'Advanced Apprentices: Progression to Higher Education [A survey of Advanced Apprentices' attitudes to Higher Education]'*, Progress South Central Lifelong Learning Network.

Hall, G., Joslin, H. & Ward, J. (2010) *'Developing Higher Apprenticeships in England'*, Lifelong Learning Networks National Forum.

Skills Commission (2009) *'Progression through apprenticeships: The Final Report of the Skills Commission's Inquiry into Apprenticeships'*.

Turbin, J., Fuller, A. & Wintrup, J. (2010) *'Curriculum Area: Construction: Finding their own way? Advanced Apprenticeships as a route to Higher Education'*, University of Southampton.

Sussex Council of Training Providers (2009) *'Building on the 4%: Is there a market for Apprenticeship Progression in Sussex '*, [Report by the Sussex Council of Training Providers for the Sussex Lifelong Learning Network].