

Pearson response to the BIS Consultation preventing the misuse of the term 'apprenticeships' in relation to unauthorised training

August 2015

Introduction

Pearson welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation on the misuse of the term 'apprenticeships'.

As a major international and UK employer, Pearson invests significantly in the professional development of its people. This supports our wider mission of helping people make progress in their lives through learning as well as making sound business sense. In the UK, we are a national apprenticeship employer as well as a provider of qualifications and assessments for apprenticeships. We therefore fully support measures that are designed to ensure the esteem in which the apprenticeship brand is held is strengthened.

In our role as a qualification and assessment organisation, we employ robust and rigorous quality assurance and approval processes to ensure the provider is supplying all learners, including apprentices, with excellent training and there is no attempt to mislead the learner (or employer) on the nature or outcome of his or her learning.

The proposals

- Pearson welcomes government's commitment to apprenticeships and supports the drive to increase both quality and quantity in this education and training pathway.
- Learners who embark on an apprenticeship need to be confident that the learning programme they have enrolled on is high quality, widely recognised and respected by employers in that sector or occupation. It also needs to carry meaning for the general population and the wider employment sector.
- As the executive summary states, any legislation would not affect the vast majority of training providers who already ensure that they only offer 'legitimate' nationally recognised and funded apprenticeship programmes. We would therefore question whether legislation is a wholly appropriate measure for the very limited number of providers who operate "at the margins".
- The use of the apprenticeship logo through the SFA is widely used and recognised by employers and learners alike. While government has considered protecting the brand by trademarking, this would still appear to be a viable alternative to legislation for government funded programmes.
- The terms 'apprenticeship' and 'apprentice' have a long tradition in the UK and have been used by employers for centuries without any external support or funding. There will certainly be instances where modern day employers, for a variety of reasons, will not wish to access government funding but still offer their own brand of apprenticeship. Under the current proposals, this will continue to be the case and may lead to confusion for providers, learners and the general public.

Pearson recommends

- Reviewing the legislative necessity for protecting the terms 'apprenticeship' and 'apprentice' where so few examples of misuse are apparent.
- Re-evaluating the protection of the brand through trademarking and other measures (for example compulsory use of the NAS apprenticeship logo).
- Reviewing additional protection of the brand by quality audit through awarding organisations and Ofsted.
- Ensuring there is clarity on all apprenticeships whether these are supported through government funding or fully funded by the employer.
- Encouraging those employers who run their own non-funded apprenticeship schemes to place their own brand before the apprenticeship title.

Details for further information

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