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Pocket Watch – Building up to the next big Apprenticeship Report

Introduction

In the next few weeks, Doug Richard is due to present his Report on apprenticeships. Apprenticeships remain a high profile policy area and as such subject to a string of reviews and reports but this latest one may be scrutinised more closely than most because it's intended to set out a strategy for future development. Key issues appear to be almost inevitably how best to fund but also employer ownership, system simplification, value for money and school engagement or lack of. Doug Richard has not been short of advice as last week showed with Ed Miliband expressing his thoughts in his Conference speech and the Association of employment and learning providers (AELP) publishing their latest paper on apprenticeship reform

What did Ed Miliband have to say?

A significant chunk of Ed Miliband's speech was given over to reform of vocational education and training including developing what he called "*a real route for apprenticeships*." There had been some thought that he might refresh the industry levy model of old, rather he argued for giving employers greater control of the apprenticeship budget and for what sounded like an extension of the GTA delivery model with 'groups of larger businesses coming together in regions, sectors and supply chains to deliver increased numbers of apprenticeships.' Some of it, such as the commitment to include apprenticeship training in Government private sector contracts, builds on current thinking but equally shows that the push to give employers greater ownership is being seized as a way forward by all political Parties

The view from AELP

AELP believe we should be much more ambitious about apprenticeship growth, "*we should aspire to the creation of 2m apprenticeships*" but argue that some important reforms would be needed first. The most radical deal with the long-standing issue of school engagement. In all there are five main proposals:

- For schools: an extensive information programme with at least one teacher per secondary school also undertaking work experience with an apprenticeship provider, clear careers guidance and most contentiously, the use of output related funding to overcome 'remedial' weaknesses such as poor levels of literacy and numeracy
- For pre-apprenticeships: bringing together current fragmented programmes into one rationalised preparatory programme offer
- For SMEs: the use of a voucher system that would allow employers to draw down part payment against final completion
- For higher level training: bringing together professional post graduate programmes into a coherent on the job training framework
- On framework design: the creation of a core and options model with 'basic skills' part of a Government funded and essential core, and industry specific skills based on a technical certificate with industry defined options included where necessary



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