

Employer Support for Higher Level Skills

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‘When I asked about what small employers would do, it was really as though it had to be investigated from the start; it should not have been the first time it was asked’ (Policy-maker)

‘public policy focuses on skills and on ensuring that individuals participate in the labour market; the deployment of those skills is left to be sorted out in the workplace’. (Stakeholder)

‘in the absence of an industrial policy, the tendency is for BIS (and its predecessors) to use the tools it has to hand - targets, provider reform, and qualifications’ (Stakeholder)

The reality is that businesses will only start to undertake higher level skills training if there is a change in the market context in which they think about their business strategies.' (DIUS Select Ctte 2009)

*‘Contrary views would not have been listened to
- because of the dominance of the targets
regime’ (Policy maker)*

‘Politicians are not interested in skills but will be drawn by a target like 3 million to engage them’
(Stakeholder)

‘There have been occasions where the alignment of employers’ interests, providers’ commercial interests and the Government’s interests in achieving targets have led to a less than optimum outcome’ (Nield 2012)

'The systems allows for too much interference by ministers' (Stakeholder)

'There were problems of implementation - it worked when there was ministerial patronage, it was different when there was not' (Stakeholder)

‘There is a mismatch between what employers are looking for and what the government provides; this has been the case for the last 15 years with all of the different training ideas and schemes by the government’ (Employer)

‘Government has peripheral view on skills, throwing out ad hoc policies in a not so impactful way’ (Employer)

*‘There was no data backing up the need to do this; it wasn’t strategic business planning....just thought it was something we needed to do...
....there is a business requirement but not driven by strategic planning.’ (Employer)*

‘We have received a very good video games tax break, but now the apprenticeship levy will take the advantages of being in this country away again.’ (Employer)

‘Internal budgets ...are structured by the strategic needs of the business and we bid to the head office in Paris. It is a global decision’
(Employer)

‘We need to look at the size of a team and its capacity; key costs are study time (as away from customers), salary costs (especially if you are not increasing head count).....

....we have a finite training budget; higher qualifications are more expensive and the new ones even most costly’ (Employer)

‘Business understands that if you are going to get public funds, you have to tick some boxes.....

.... Whether we will feel the same when we are paying the levy remains to be seen.’ (Employer)

‘We need different approaches; modular works well because people can develop the skills they need at the time, but also have pathway to develop further’ (Employer)

‘We do ‘apprenticeships without the apprenticeship logo...We will go to colleges and different places for different aspects’ (Employer)

*'It is a shame the government cannot support us
on the things that would make our business
grow' (Employer)*

Better policy

- if initial and profound choices about strategy better understood and more openly considered
- if the evidence on effects of targets and investment gathered and placed into policy
- if better evidence on employer decisions and employers who do not train
- if the long-identified challenges had been tackled

An Academic and Policy Council

- highlight major strategic issues and choices
- identify the issues policy makers need to understand
- anticipate future policy choices facing ministers

The Apprenticeship Levy

'has its roots in solving a problem for government, not a business problem'...
(Stakeholder)