



The Apprenticeship (Scotland) Bill

ATL's response to John Park MSP Members' Bill

17 JUNE 2008

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), as a leading education union, recognise the link between education policy and our members' conditions of employment. Our evidence-based policy making enables us to campaign and negotiate from a position of strength. We champion good practice and achieve better working lives for our members. We help our members, as their careers develop, through first-rate research, advice, information and legal support. Our 160,000 members – teachers, lecturers, headteachers, support staff and students – are empowered to get active locally and nationally. We are affiliated to the TUC, and work with government and employers by lobbying and through social partnership.

ATL Scotland is the fastest growing section of the Association. A National Official was appointed in August 2007 to develop the Association's capacity in Scotland in relation to recruitment, organising, policy development and campaigns. We believe in positive engagement with Government at all levels across the UK.

ATL is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and Education International (EI). The union is a member of the Social Partnership – working with the UK Government, employers and other unions on education issues. ATL is not affiliated to any political party and seeks to work constructively with all the main political parties.

Introduction

ATL is pleased to be able to respond to the consultation on the Members' Bill by John Park MSP, *The Apprenticeship (Scotland) Bill*. We as a trade union operating across the UK have previously submitted responses to the *World-class Apprenticeships: Unlocking Talent, Building Skills for All* consultation in England and Wales. This response reflects ATL's genuine commitment to helping deliver the best possible programmes which fully develop the knowledge, skills and capabilities of young people who select the Apprenticeship pathway.

ATL supports the proposal to establish a right to a Modern Apprenticeship for young people aged between 16 and 18 providing they meet the entry requirements. We believe that the proposals for public sector bodies to offer apprenticeships and for all contractors bidding for public sector projects to have an apprenticeship scheme in place are worthy of greater consideration by the Scottish Government.

Whilst we would welcome apprenticeships being promoted in schools through improved advice and guidance to pupils we do not wish to see this occur at the cost of other opportunities pupils may wish to consider. Public confidence in any new right to an Apprenticeship would be damaged if it was believed that they were used as a strategy to simply occupy those formerly described as the NEET generation. Furthermore the Apprenticeship programme must also have currency with employers for it to succeed.

ATL welcomes this opportunity to engage in this important discussion and hopes that the Members' Bill progresses to be discussed by the Parliament as it raises important issues in relation to the choices and opportunities open to young people in Scotland today.

References

- ♦ ATL's response to *World-class Apprenticeships: Unlocking Talent, Building Skills for All* consultation

This submission was prepared on behalf of
ATL Scotland
CBC House
24 Canning Street
Edinburgh,
EH3 8EG

Issues to consider

1. In what ways do you think apprenticeships enhance employee skills?

Apprentices will benefit from the opportunity to develop their skills, experience and confidence in their chosen careers. Apprenticeships can also benefit apprentices in a number of softer skills in relation to developing communication, teamwork and interpersonal skills within the workplace. ATL would hope that the apprentices develop a commitment to lifelong learning through their apprenticeship and beyond.

2. In what ways do you think apprenticeships benefit employers?

Apprenticeships benefit employers with an increase in the skills level of staff, either those they retain from their own programme or employ having successfully qualified with another company. They will also benefit from engaged employees who hopefully will have been switched onto the benefits of lifelong learning that will serve them well throughout their career.

3. What incentives do you think are required to encourage 16-18 year olds to take on apprenticeship positions?

Young people, 16 – 18 year old, may require to be incentivised in order to view the proposed Apprenticeship programme as a quality route for their career and not a dead-end option. This cannot be viewed as another scheme to deal with the former NEET category with no long term benefit to participants.

4. What incentives do you think are required to encourage employers to take on apprenticeships?

Employers may well require some assistance with the financial costs of employing apprentices under the proposal. Whilst ATL believes that employers have a social duty to take on apprentices, we also believe that they cannot be expected to bear the full cost of doing so if the proposals are to succeed.

5. Are there any disadvantages in stimulating growth in apprenticeship places?

ATL does not believe that any stimulation in the growth in apprenticeship places should occur at the expense of other options that the young person may further consider, nor at the expense of being seen as on a particular track that cannot be reserved. That aside we do not believe that there would be any disadvantages in stimulating growth in apprenticeship places.

6. What costs will be involved in delivering an increase in apprenticeship places?

We believe that this proposal is worthy of greater consideration and this is one of the factors which the Parliament will have to discuss.

7. Who do you think should bear the cost of creating apprenticeship places?

The cost of creating apprenticeship places should be borne by employers and the Scottish Government. We believe that employers have a wider social duty to offer apprenticeships than just ensuring the workforce is adequately skilled to meet current and future challenges. That means employers should be willing to meet some of the costs of apprenticeship places. We also believe that the Scottish Government should provide financial support employers to assist them in meeting the cost of apprenticeships.

8. Are there any equal opportunity impacts that may arise from this proposal (either positive or negative ones)?

ATL can foresee a number of potential equal opportunity impacts arising from the proposal such as the gendered pay differential, the gender segregation of sectors and the under representation of black and minority ethnic and disabled young people. The reasons for these inequalities may be out with the scope of the proposal but we believe that they may nevertheless impact on the success of the proposal.

For example, gender stereotyping plays a central role in the gender pay gap, gender barriers to better jobs and occupational segregation. Dominant notions within our society of what it means to be a boy/man or girl/woman are reproduced in expectations about caring responsibilities, career choices, pay, career progression and the organisation and structure of workplaces. Tackling the inequalities arising from gender stereotyping, therefore, requires a comprehensive, cross-sectoral approach bringing together government, business, trade unions, charitable organisations and the education sector, beyond the scope of this proposal.

ATL believes that strategies to tackle gender disparity in Apprenticeships should be linked directly to initiatives aimed at redressing gender inequalities in employment in general. This requires, for example, the revaluing of jobs that have traditionally been regarded as women's work due to the high concentrations of women in these occupations which are simultaneously associated with the lowest rates of pay. ATL is particularly concerned that gender stereotyping, which effectively restricts both sexes, in practice disproportionately disadvantages girls whose 'traditional' career choices tend to lead them into a life of low pay with often poor working conditions.

ATL would also like to see that not only are Apprentices paid a minimum wage but that they are paid a fair and equal wage that does not reflect a disparity in status of different sectors.

At the same time, ATL would also welcome long-term initiatives to ultimately break down the division of 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' Apprenticeship sectors (upholding such a division risks reinforcing gender segregation of the workplace). For example, it might be argued that hospitality and the customer service sector, which employ large numbers of

women, are not necessarily 'non-traditional' frameworks as suggested by the consultation document. On the contrary, women have 'traditionally' been concentrated in catering and servicing roles. In the context of this consultation, it is therefore difficult to understand why more young women should be encouraged into these sectors rather than into Construction, Information Technology, Motor Vehicle Maintenance and Engineering, which also offer "relatively high", if not higher, rates of pay together with clear paths for career progression.

9. Do you have any other comments?

ATL would like to see the Scottish Government, trade unions, employers and colleges working together in social partnership to set out a detailed implementation strategy to meet the demands of the proposed right to undertake an apprenticeship.