



Fellows Broadsheet

Special Edition

To coincide and conclude UK National Apprenticeship Week 2022 from 7-13 February 2022, we are delighted to publish a special edition of our Fellows Broadsheet. A thought-leadership article written by a member of our esteemed College of Fellows.

L'apprentissage vs The Apprenticeship Lessons from our friends in France

Jill Whittaker FIH is Managing Director and co-Founder of HIT Training. She is an award-winning director and has worked in the UK adult education sector specialising in apprenticeships and skills, for the last 20 years.

Jill entered the Institute in 2019. In this special edition of the Fellows Broadsheet, Jill considers the role and importance of apprenticeships in the UK and across the English Channel in France.

In the last five years, France has seen a 180% increase, from 250,000 to over 700,000, in the number of apprenticeships, whilst UK government statistics show that there has been a steady decline in participation since a high of 908,700 in 2016/17.

According to explore education statistics, this is “driven by a rapid decline in participation at intermediate level”, which is the entry level for most job roles equating to GCSE level.

However, it has been offset to some extent by an increase in higher apprenticeships at foundation degree, graduate degree, and master's degree levels, which have become available in recent years. Apprentice participation in the first quarter of the academic year 2021/22 is 555,900.

So, what are the differences between apprenticeships in the UK and France?

- In France, an apprentice is defined as a young professional who follows a training programme that draws on an alternation of work-based, in-company training and school-based training. In England, the programme is open to people of all ages, and the in-company training is combined with either day, or block release, or additional work-based learning provided by a training provider or an employer provider. The English system is more flexible to the needs of both apprentice and employer, but the ability to be slightly less formal may impact on the benefits perceived by the parent generation, who see college as a better route to education.
- In France, the concept of apprenticeship is defined by law in the remit of the apprenticeship contract, ‘Contrat d’Apprentissage’ and the professionalisation contract ‘Contrat de Professionnalisation’, which are the two main apprenticeship schemes in France. The former is the employment contract, the latter the apprenticeship training contract. Similar contracts exist in the English system.
- The ‘Contrat d’Apprentissage’ is a specific type of employment contract that has been available in France since 1919. It was modified and redefined in 2018. The ‘Contrat de Professionnalisation’ has existed in France since 2004. Prior to that, there was a very similar scheme called the ‘Contrat de Qualification’. The French system is long established with minimal changes for many years. The English system has been subject to many changes, and some employers, parents and potential apprentices find the changes challenging to keep up with.



- As in England, apprenticeships exist for apprentices aged 16+, although unlike England the majority of apprentices are under 30. In addition, in France apprenticeships are available at upper secondary school level. This is not the case in England. The French system allows for and encourages movement between levels of apprenticeships and into higher education, and whilst this is also possible in England, it is less well understood.
- International mobility is not a primary focus of English apprenticeships, whereas it is a priority in France. The French Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CCI), act as contact point for trans-national apprenticeship projects, such as the Erasmus+ funded “Movil App” projects that support the mobility of apprentices. England has left the Erasmus+ programme, and a fledgling project named The Turing Scheme was launched in 2021.
- More French apprenticeships are at higher levels; England has until recently had a strong history in intermediate-entry level apprenticeships. There has been a decline in intermediate apprenticeships in recent years. Particularly since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, with English employers choosing to invest in management and senior level apprenticeships, and to provide shorter, often, internal training schemes for their staff. This is expeditious for the employer but may not always provide transferable skills for the apprentice.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson MP has had little to say about the importance of apprenticeships in recent months.

Emmanuel Macron, the President of France, is a great supporter of the scheme, saying: “Led by Government, in addition to the apprentices, there are three partners who make apprenticeships work:

- the employer, who gives their time and expertise to further the learning and professionalism of the apprentice
- academic partners, for their input into skills and knowledge
- the family and the young people for inquiring into this method of learning.

The apprenticeships are defined by the leaders in that profession. We must mobilise together, to convince parents and prospective apprentices that an apprenticeship is a route of excellence.

To convince other businesses that apprenticeships are a great way to further the career of the apprentices and to benefit the business with their expertise, and to show that all such programmes of study are a route to excellence. Apprenticeships are one of the platforms that have allowed us to resist during the crisis.”

There are lessons here: minimal change, the active support of leaders and better understanding of an established system by all those involved, can lead to great results, even in a period of crisis.



Emmanuel Macron
@EmmanuelMacron

Officiel du gouvernement - France

Il y a 5 ans il y avait 250 000 apprentis par an. Aujourd'hui plus de 700 000. Soyons-en fiers, car l'apprentissage est une voie d'excellence.

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About the author

Jill is an award-winning director with a strong bias for growth and commercial success in unreliable market conditions. She has had a varied career, including experience in the not-for-profit and private sectors, and for the last 20 years has worked in the adult education sector specialising in apprenticeships and skills.

In 2006, Jill co-founded HIT Training Ltd together with colleagues from a previous company; HIT now employs 500 people and supports over 10,000 apprentices and 4,000 employers each year. HIT Training is listed in the Times Best Companies to Work For and was the Times Education Supplement's training provider of the year for 2018.

On a personal level, Jill was named Institute of Directors' Director of the Year for the South East & London and is listed in the Shine Awards 100 Most Influential Women in Hospitality.

Jill is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, the Institute of Hospitality, the Hospitality Professionals Association (HOSPA), the British Institute of Inkeeping and the RSA. With a continued passion for sharing great practice from around the world, she spends five months a year living in France. When not working, she enjoys skiing, sailing, good food and a nice pint of real ale.

Jill Whittaker FIH

