WORK BASED LEARNING

IMPACT STUDY

A STUDY PREPARED FOR THE
HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY

Work Based Learning
at Middlesex University

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1 Acknowledgements

Biographies

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Dr Abdulai Abukari presently works as a learning development tutor (lecturer) at the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University. His research interests cover a wide range of areas including work-based learning pedagogy and practice; service roles of contemporary higher education institutions and how institutions respond to the emerging knowledge society and knowledge economy especially through work-based learning and distance education; comparative and international education in developed and developing contexts, teacher training and development.

2 Executive summary

Introduction

This research study was commissioned by the Higher Education Academy to examine the impact of work based learning (WBL) from the perspective of employees and employers who had undertaken WBL programmes for postgraduate awards (masters and doctorates) and to make recommendations on the way to move forward and implications to all stakeholders.

The research study was undertaken by researchers from the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University based on a sample of 10 people who had graduated from work based learning master and professional doctorate programmes and their corresponding employers (where possible). Their WBL programmes involved a diverse range of people from a variety of organisations with different interests, motivations and expectations relating to the process and outcomes of the learning.

Key findings

Employee benefit

Personal benefits of the programmes were expressed by several employees especially the newfound confidence they had experienced from undertaking the programme. The term 'opportunity' was used to demonstrate how they had gained greater insight, developed themselves further both as workers (some as employees) and as selves. The programme had changed career aspirations because of the feeling of empowerment and confidence. Employees recorded a greater understanding of both their fields of expertise and generic understanding of management, leadership and generally how things work and better communications with other people. In particular there was evidence that increased knowledge of a particular area, writing skills, research skills and understanding of methodology and ability to publish had personal impact. Some had experienced the programme as life-changing. One had experienced a more long-term than immediate benefit.

Employer benefit

Overwhelmingly, the benefit to the employer was to raise the employers' credentials and prestige in the view of others. Other benefits found were:

- improved work efficiency

- ability to take on more demanding roles

- being sought after as an expert.

Direct impact on the participants' organisation or professional area came from work activity contained within their specific projects that made a real change to professional situations. They also varied widely in subject area, for example, sustainable development, healthcare, retail, banking and education.

Employee and employer benefit

Professional benefits to both employees and employers were apparent in that employees had significant awareness and expertise in a particular area; they were now seen as experts in the field with others in the organisation or professional field showing confidence in and acknowledgement of their expertise. The title of 'Dr' in particular was seen as prestigious for the company, a sign that the company took the area seriously. For one participant in a small organisation the opposite view was taken; there was negativity about the credential which eventually led to job loss but this in turn led to the employee becoming a consultant in the professional area. Another employee who recently completed the programme felt that the experience gained on the programme was yet to be utilised to its best effect. The credibility gained from the work context appeared to be important or more important to the employees and employers than that from the academic achievement.

Recommendations

Link individual and organisational learning more effectively How can universities work with organisations to create learning environments that can then capitalise on the learning? The tripartite relationship between employers, employees and HE providers could be developed and used positively to increase the impact and benefit of WBL. Programmes could be firmly linked to the needs and expectations (structural capital) with individual learning needs and organisational development needs. Programmes could provide individuals with opportunity for reward/development and also create a potential impact on organisational knowledge. The needs of the employees should be further taken up and analysed. The needs of the employers require much more work in closely thought through joint research and development between higher education institutions (HEIs) and organisations and other stakeholders.

Consider WBL pedagogy in more detail WBL could centre on people's current and prior learning and build from their current understanding where possible. This requires particular pedagogical understanding of people's learning at work and of the nature of knowledge in work settings. Starting points can be drawn from some of the existing literature that attempts to define WBL.

Develop methodologies for the worker as researcher The outcome and the nature of the methodologies followed by practitioners in their research and development activities would appear to be an important topic for higher education (HE) researchers to explore. The links between practitioner research and research methodologies need further investigation as this is a key area for practitioners to enhance their working practices especially at postgraduate and doctorate level.

Approaches to work-based projects At the heart of the WBL process is the work-based project. These projects show the results of improvement in practice, which should be based on evidence at all relevant levels – individual and organisational. Developing instruments to get this right would be particularly beneficial. The advantages of practitioner-research projects need more scrutiny by HE academics, employer organisations and other stakeholders.

A change in processes and procedures in HEIs HE providers should recognise the complexities of WBL and change their existing structures to

effectively accommodate it. Administrative structures and other procedures of many HE providers are still based on the more traditional approach and delivery, making it particularly difficult for work-based learners to benefit fully from programmes.

Subject discipline criteria and generic criteria provide differing approaches to WBL More research could be done on generic abilities at high levels and how these factor in postgraduate programmes.

A closer working partnership between HEIs, employers, employees and other stakeholders Critical reflections by stakeholders on how WBL programmes are built into overall learning strategies of organisations could enhance the fitness of and fitness-for-purpose component of programmes. This could be achieved through developing partnerships that are operated and guided by the principles of transparency, mutual agreement and benefits, and clear understanding of structures and strategies to ensure a balance of 'power and influence' in the process. Employers would develop interest and actively engage with their employees' WBL through involvement in the processes of design, delivery and assessment of the programmes. Professional bodies could engage in and reflect more on the outcomes of the WBL and engage in a reflective discussion with universities and employer organisations. Other stakeholders, for example the HEA, LSC and employer organisations, could be involved in these important partnerships that would all be working towards more effective learning for, in and through work. How the relevant partners understand and use these relationships and the values it has and might have in future are likely to be paramount to its success.

3 Aims and background

Aims

1 To examine the impact of WBL from the perspective of employees and employers or other stakeholders

2 To make recommendations on a way forward and provide implications for the Higher Education Academy, institutions and other relevant parties.

Background

Work based learning is increasingly acknowledged as a legitimate higher education activity (Nixon et al, 2006) that is attracting attention from national and international policymakers as an important means to achieve educational targets and national and regional economic competitiveness. However, it is viewed as an:

> "extremely complex approach to higher education"

Schmidt, 2006

which is conceptualised and practised differently across HE providers. WBL is situated within significant new paradigms such as lifelong learning, experiential learning and the knowledge-based economy which inform education circles and which are important terms of reference. WBL meets the need for education to serve better a country's economy in a competitive world market and is an efficient way to meet this need. The term 'learning' is often now used in a discourse that requires people to learn towards skilling and reskilling and in turn to be valuable employees.

Despite a generally perceived usefulness of the approach as a means to meet national aspirations and some significant research conducted to understand its nature (Brennan and Little, 1996; Foster and Stephenson, 1998; Boud and Solomon, 2001), there has been limited research to provide valid and reliable empirical evidence to support its longer term usefulness and impact. Most research conducted generally focuses on the benefits and/or impact while work-based learners are still in programmes and are usually related to undergraduate levels (for example Taylor et al, 2006; Little, 2006). Hence, an urgent need to involve in more research at all levels. This research project seeks to understand the nature of benefits and impact of WBL at the postgraduate and doctorate level for employees and employers after completion.

Overview of WBL at the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University

The Institute for Work Based Learning (IWBL) at Middlesex University defines work based learning at university level as a:

> "learning process which focuses university level critical thinking upon work (paid or unpaid) in order to facilitate the recognition, acquisition and application of individual knowledge, skills and abilities, to achieve specific outcomes of significance to the learner, their work and to the university"

Garnett, 2005

WBL Studies at masters and doctoral level at the IWBL emphasises learner-centredness and reflective practice. It views WBL knowledge as knowledge produced in the context of application in which the process is characterised by input from both internal and external partnerships, within a multidimensional scope (Costley, 2000); at the same time conceiving knowledge as not simply a means of advancing the utilitarian benefits of higher education but also a means of critical discourse on existing knowledge with a view to push the frontier of the higher education knowledge base.

Models of work based learning

WBL at Middlesex University has several different forms:

- the IWBL's own programmes

- programmes run by schools

- IWBL joint programmes with partner organisations.

The IWBL has a core group of academics who act as tutors and advisers on a full range of award-bearing programmes from certificate to doctorate. All these awards are defined in generic terms and are applicable to people in any kind of work situation at any level. There are two categories of WBL awards and either category could be based on **individual negotiated programmes** or **cohort designed programmes**:

- certificate to masters level in WBL Studies awards

- masters and doctorate level in Professional Studies awards

The term 'studies' relates to the generic abilities that are common to high-level ability and knowledge at work. Assessment is in relation to generic learning outcomes: for example, the ability to synthesise, analyse and evaluate, work in a team and autonomously identify and select appropriate resources. Participants undertake modules involving 'APEL' (Garnett et al, 2004), 'reflective writing activities, 'planning and learning agreements', 'research and development for professional practice' (Garnett et al, 2008). The unique approach to whole awards has been extremely successful over the past 15 years attracting large numbers at all levels and receiving a Queen's Anniversary Prize, QAA recognition at the highest level and HEFCE Centre for Excellence status.

The IWBL also works with all the schools of the University that have WBL modules or WBL modes of study as part of their subject-specific awards. For example, Middlesex University Business School's MA in Leadership and

Management Practice (WBL) with Lloyds TSB in 2005 (case T) and the School of Arts and Education where the MA Professional Practice (Case L) provides a highly flexible WBL postgraduate qualification.

In addition, the IWBL works with partner organisations outside the University to validate and jointly teach on programmes that share the principles and ethos of WBL. So, for example, the Ashridge doctorate in organisational consultancy is a DProf award that is assessed on work-based criteria as is the masters in Professional Studies in Leadership for Sustainable Development at Forum for the Future (cases R and S).

IWBL also has international centres and international partners that use all these three models of WBL.

Participants

As part of the agreed design and scope of the study, participants in the study were limited to employees who completed WBL programmes at postgraduate levels (individual negotiated programme or cohort-designed programmes). Similarly, based on a design from the Higher Education Academy, 10 employees (WBL graduates) and their corresponding employers (where possible) participated in the study. **Appendix A** provides the characteristics of the participants.

4 Methodology

The research was conducted within the broad remit of the Higher Education Academy guidelines; involving gathering data using semi-structured interview discussion guides for employees and employers that had seven distinct categories (see **Appendix B**).

Conceptual underpinning

The approach used throughout the inquiry is to understand the constructions that people (including the inquirers) hold, through analysis, interpretation, critique and iteration to arrive at findings that contain credible and improved understanding (Lincoln and Guba, 2000; Schwandt, 1998). Placing this perspective within the context of the WBL impact study, the research seeks to understand the individual views of employers and employees about the benefits and impact of WBL and then through reflective analysis offer some recommendations.

Data collection

The research manager and research assistant met to discuss the research approach and research activity. They liaised and shared data and the development of the research report throughout the process. The research assistant, an independent researcher who had no previous involvement with the respondents, arranged and conducted the semi-structured interviews. The participants in the study were 'purposive sampled' (Neuman, 2003); so in order to meet the 10-participant sample limit of employees (and their corresponding employers) that was representative of the nature of WBL awards at the University, it was important to strategically select people across the spectrum. In all, 10 WBL graduate employee interviews were conducted (see **Appendix A**) and of these:

- four had corresponding employers who were interviewed

- four were self-employed and so were also asked the employer questions

- two were so senior in their organisations that they did not consider that there was a relevant employer-like figure who could be interviewed. Efforts were made to find alternative participants such as their colleagues or other stakeholders but these attempts proved futile.

This meant that there would only be four independent sources for employer-related data, however two more interviews were conducted with individuals from a partner organisation to the University. The partner organisation had been involved in a collaborative masters programme, working with two of the students, and had access to data concerning the placements they had undertaken as part of their masters degree.

Data analysis

All interviewers used the interview format provided by the Higher Education Academy (see **Appendix B**). All interviews were electronically recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were sent to the respondents to be checked for accuracy. The raw data was then coded and an initial analysis that drew upon the responses to the seven distinct categories was prepared; no evaluative analysis was intended at this stage.

The anonymised data was sent to a group of academics and partner organisations who tutor on or engage with the different programmes represented in the sample and a focus group, constituting the research manager, research assistant, WBL practitioners from the IWBL and different partner organisations, took place one week later. The first focus group discussed what was considered to be the main issues that arose from the data and provided suggestions as to how these issues could be evaluated.

The next level of evaluation was integrating the suggestions of the focus group and keeping within the remit of the seven categories around which the interviews were based. The evaluation was then circulated to the focus group and a second focus group meeting was scheduled. The second focus group had a slightly different constitution to the first. During this meeting the impact and recommendations were discussed as well as suggestions and ideas about the structure of the report and issues arising from the research.

The focus group also wanted to acknowledge that the perspectives it brought to the analysis and evaluation would determine some of the outcomes. Key aspects of this discussion were that the focus of the teaching and learning on the programme was on education for work-based learners that engages with practical abilities and underpinning theories. Some of the intellectual activities embraced by the programmes of study involved were considered as academic skills that underlie and inform practice. Academic abilities gained by work-based learners were to critically analyse and to raise awareness concerning research and development activities within professional practice. Given this strong rationale for the group, as tutors and other stakeholders engaged in the programmes, it was acknowledged that these principles were likely to inform the data evaluation process.

The suggestions from the focus group were then integrated using the Higher Education Academy's final report guide to structure the final report. A draft report was sent to the focus group for further feedback and final comments.

The overall analysis of the data was based on a modified version of the interactive data analysis model suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). This involves an 'interactive cyclical process' of data reduction, data display and conclusion/ verification in which the research team strategically and creatively moves among these elements to make meaning of the data in relation to the research objectives. In this research, the research manager and research assistant were the core research team and interpreted the data from the interviews and the evaluations from the focus group to draw up the final report. According to Denzin (2004: 447),

> "In social sciences there is only interpretation. Nothing speaks for itself".

This statement draws attention to the core issue of how the researchers made sense of the mass of information generated from the fieldwork.

Data reading was based on the data reading strategies suggested by Mason (2002):

- **literal** interpretation of the data to get the exact meanings of words as a starting point

- **interpretive** reading to grasp an understanding of the text based on the context of each respondent

- **reflexive** reading based not only on the cases and their contexts, but also the experiences of the researchers as part of the process of investigation. One important role of the reflexive reading was not only to channel the researchers' views into the interpretation process but also to incorporate the views of the focus groups and to make critical reflections to check biases that could influence the process.

Ethical considerations

The research process was carefully planned in advance, with due regard to the sensitivities of the respondents and care for the respondents and co-researchers. Respondents were approached with regard to the possibility that they may not wish to participate in the research and with the option of not doing so without the feeling that they had somehow disappointed or 'let down' the researchers. Due care was taken in ensuring that respondents could change their answers and have control over the data they provided by asking them appropriately at each stage. Data was anonymised and a degree of confidentiality was built into the final report.

5 Results and analysis

This section presents statistical information about each of the cases and uses the headings given in the discussion guides to analyse the data:

- Context

- Motivation

- Needs

- Programme of study

- Benefits and impact

- Value for money.

Key findings are then drawn that emerge from the work.

Context

Table 1 below shows that the possibility for work-based learners changing their roles after completion of their programmes is likely (Aspects, 1). There are also indications that although many work-based learners build on their existing 'formal university qualifications' to undertake programmes (Aspects, 5), others undertake programmes based on their existing experiences and the accumulated knowledge (boxes 2 and 3) rather than formal university qualifications.

Postgraduate-level WBL at Middlesex University uses a flexible model that engages with the triad helix of employer-employee-provider notion of WBL through a learning agreement that can range in its function. The function ranges from inclusion of the employer in a close partnership agreement with the university to an individual having their agreement signed by a senior professional in the field whose main purpose is to endorse the work-based project as an appropriate research and development activity.

The complex array of people who undertake the WBL programmes includes:

- organisation-sponsored employees

- self-employed

- retired people (who want to investigate professional issues that confronted them during their more active years)

- unemployed (full-time students) who undertake WBL programmes through organisations that support 'placement'

- people who start the programme while working with one employer and change employer before or after completing.

It also deals with a variety of sectors such as private, public, retail, charities and financial institutions. This complexity is evident in the summaries of the case studies in Appendix A.

Table 1 Statistical information about respondents

Aspects of profile	No of responses	Responses
1 Job role	3	Same role when study began
	5	Changed role during or after completion
	2	Not working or in full-time job during programme
2 Length of time in role when study began	0	Less than one year
	2	1 to 3 years
	6	4+ years
	2	Not employed
3 Length of time with current organisation	1	Less than one year
	1	1 to 3 years
	7	4+ years
	1	Not in full-time employment
4 Previous jobs before programme	2	Previous jobs related to current
	0	Previous jobs not related to current
	8	Wide range of jobs
5 Highest qualifications before commencing WBL programme	2	Certificates, then to masters
	1	Diploma, then to masters
	2	Bachelors, then to masters
	5	Masters, then to DProf
6 Further professional development undertaken	2	Much
	1	Limited
	4	None
	2	General courses
	1	Conferences
7 Who paid for programme	4	Employer
	3	Self-financed
	2	Self-employed
	1	Split employer/self, proportion not known

The research shows that WBL as an area in HE was able to meet some of the current needs towards relating to 'complexity' (Stacey, 1996 Shaw, 2002 Wenger, 1998). One of the ways WBL has been able to do this is by acknowledging high-level experience through APEL and starting the programme at the actual point of the learners' current understanding. Thus legitimacy was given to previous and current complex work and through a reflective process learners were able to relate their WBL practice to theory.

The legitimacy of the student role rests in that students are free to make sense of their context. In this sense agency, positionality and context are key factors. Where WBL is embedded in organisational learning there can be a conflict of interest between employees and the employer, however in our sample the employees appeared content that they were in a position where they could generate significant structural capital within an organisation and often also, a professional field.

Motivation

While the main motivation for employees undertaking WBL were mostly more of personal enthusiasm, the desire to develop oneself and professional expertise, employers' motivation were more centred on the view that employees formed the cornerstone of organisations and the development of their skills and competency would invariably lead to improved productivity. This made it difficult to work out a perfect connection between employee motivation and employer motivation because different factors affected their interests.

A de-motivator found in the research was the administrative difficulties with the University encountered by some work-based learners and their employers. Universities have been slow in changing their structures and processes to meet the needs of older learners studying on a part-time basis.

Needs

Although there were varied views about the clarity of needs before undertaking the programmes, all employees had an idea about what they hoped to achieve at the end of the programme. This did not necessarily relate to needs in terms of the roles they were playing before undertaking the programme, but more of general professional development (only one respondent undertook a programme that was directly related to dealing with a specific issue that was being confronted in the workplace).

In most of the cases, the decision to undertake the study was employee-initiated, even in employer-provider partnership schemes it was more the willingness of the employees and their particular needs that drove the desire to take a higher education award. This was the reason why there was not any formal or informal process supported by the employer to identify the things they hoped to get out of the study in most of the cases. Employers who were involved with cohort programmes to some extent based the programmes on the needs of their organisations, although some of their employees appeared to go through the programme pursuing more personal/professional endeavours free from a close connection with the employer's needs. Again, this shows some variations in the needs of employees and employers and the employer–employee relationship for example, self-employed. Although some

employers also said that the individual development of the employee was the main purpose and need of the employer.

The overriding answer, however, to the questions concerning needs was that both employees and employers considered that the programmes met their needs.

Programme of study

The study was based on two types of postgraduate WBL programme:

- individually negotiated programmes
- cohort-designed programmes.

However, these have been merged in the analysis and in the report because they have similar characteristics in terms of the role of individual students in designing their programmes (individually negotiated); the main difference being that in the former, students undertook study as individuals from different organisations while in the latter, students undertook study as part of a group, usually from the same organisation.

Employees' reasons for choosing the programme of study were generally related to the flexibility of the WBL programmes in which study is at a distance, requiring purposeful activities related to the workplace, non-regular or no direct lecture sessions and the absence of pre-planned syllabuses. However, within this there were three main interrelated factors:

- convenience
- meeting individual learning needs
- an 'opportunity seized'.

The main reason emerging from the employers (where appropriate) for choosing WBL was that it was convenient and fitted well into work schedules and linking the theoretical and intellectual side of things to the more practical day-to-day issues facing business. The WBL awards were more directly relevant to work than awards that were more theoretically focused.

The reasons for employees choosing the specific HE provider were mainly due to existing contacts and/or affiliations between provider and employees or provider and employees' employer; and the monopoly of the HE provider over the programme at the given time. Reasons for the employers' choice of HE provider were similar to those of the employees. All respondents (who were employed) were supported in one way or another by their employers regardless of whether they had formal/informal discussion or not; support ranged from paying full or part of financial cost of the programme, offering time off work and use of stationery. Respondents who were self-employed or unemployed (full-time students) at the time of study paid the costs themselves. However, the level of employers' involvement in the design, delivery and/or assessment of the programme was limited in the sense that although two employers were in partnership with the University, it was limited to just the formal partnership with an informal helping hand given to employees. The most involved third party was the case where the University was in partnership with a training organisation that also had placement provision and was involved at different levels in the design, monitoring and assessment of the

programme. In addition, the self-employed individuals were actively involved (as employers) as a matter of course throughout the programme.

The WBL approach that is mainly used in the programmes of study includes a work-based project. The titles of the projects that each of these postgraduate students were engaged with in their work situation are shown in Appendix A. The work-based project uses the expertise of HE learning in for example, research, evaluation, synthesis and critical thinking to enable practitioners to use the workplace and its resources for development and innovation. The projects allowed the employees to solve problems but more importantly to articulate their learning and the learning of their organisation or professional area. The projects provided a clear trail of work-based activity that, to a certain extent, measured the extent of the learning undertaken during the work-based programme.

Some of the concerns relating to work-based projects undertaken for academic purposes are that the project becomes an academic construct that may not be embedded too clearly in the everyday processes of working rhythms. Projects, after all, even if interpreted broadly, are only one of the activities in which workers engage. In this sense the work-based project can be seen as mechanistic and quantifiable. However, the projects were able to provide a 'snapshot' of an individual or group of individual's ability to innovate, change or improve a working situation. It provided an opportunity to:

- delve into a theoretical and conceptual domain

- research and develop using an informed and rigorous process

- realise a range of possible pathways and possibilities for working practices.

The data show that the project offered depth of understanding, insight, confidence in themselves and confidence from their colleagues.

Any kind of reflective, thought-provoking educative experience may have made a difference to the employee or employer/organisation. A question is therefore whether a WBL programme has a greater and more relevant impact than any other programme of study. The products of the WBL masters and doctorate programmes can contribute to a WBL perspective on impact. The introduction of change in organisations can have both positive and negative outcomes. Employers often want compliance from employees who engage in WBL as well as innovative ideas. The critical faculties engendered through a higher education can sometimes be used to challenge organisational practices especially in that WBL confronts actual practice because the process of engagement is activity based usually in the work situation itself. WBL enabled this practical learning which may be then underpinned by theory, to be valued by both HE and the employers. Intangible benefits of WBL were very clearly identified, for example prestige and credibility. WBL is dependent on the context of the work situation; the diverse features of the particular employer/employment/organisation can make a great deal of difference.

Benefits and impact

The intrinsic value of WBL is a less tangible area to articulate in the research yet many of the respondents alluded to more intrinsic than extrinsic benefits. A benefit of WBL to the individual learner can sometimes be juxtaposed with the benefit to their organisation.

Personal benefits and impact were found by most employees as an important factor of the programme whereas just one employee did not answer 'Yes' or 'No' to personal benefit as an important factor of the programme. Several participants expressed a new-found confidence from undertaking the programme. The term 'opportunity' was used to demonstrate how they had almost 'accidentally' uncovered a way to gain greater insight, develop themselves further both as workers (some as employees) and as individuals. The programme had changed career aspirations because of the feeling of empowerment and confidence. Participants recorded a greater understanding of both their fields of expertise and generic understanding of management, leadership and generally how things and people work. In particular there was evidence that increased knowledge of a particular area, writing skills, research skills and understanding of methodology and ability to publish had personal impact. Some had experienced the programme as life-changing. One had experience a more long-term than immediate benefit.

Professional benefits of the programmes were evident through the comments of seven participants who found professional benefit an important factor; two participants did not answer 'Yes' or 'No' to professional benefit as an important factor of the programme.

Professional benefit was clearly thought to have significant impact on awareness and expertise in a particular area, an expert in the field with others in the organisation or professional field showing confidence in and acknowledgement of the participant's expertise. The title of 'Dr' in particular was seen as prestigious for the organisation – a sign that the organisation took the area seriously. For one participant, the organisation appeared to take the opposite view and was negative about the credential which eventually led to job loss but this, in turn, led to the participant becoming a consultant in the professional area. Another participant who recently completed the programme felt that the experience gained on the programme was yet to be utilised to its best effect.

Clear benefits to the employer were identified by eight participants who found employer benefit an important factor of the programme. Two participants did not answer 'Yes' or 'No' to employer benefit as an important factor of the programme.

Overwhelmingly, participants found the benefit to their employer was to raise the employers' credentials and prestige in the view of others. Other benefits were:

- improved work efficiency

- the ability to take on more demanding roles

- being sought after as an expert.

The impact of the WBL programme on employees was positive but challenging in some cases. The positive side was that some employees established themselves firmly in their organisations and areas of practice as experts; they had written books, conducted research and pushed the frontier of knowledge in those areas. However, there were indications that undertaking WBL could challenge employees' prospects and relationship with their employers. In two cases, there were fallouts between employer and employee as a result of undertaking the programme that led to employees losing their

jobs. Despite this, respondents benefited by establishing private organisations or gaining employment from other organisations.

Value for money

It is not possible to gain a precise measurement of the economic value of WBL to employers and employees at the postgraduate level. There is an accepted faith from employees and employers that learning and employee development is a positive reward for staff and that WBL is more directly related to the student's actual work than some other programmes of study. Such a scenario raises the question of the possible misuse of WBL, using WBL as a shortcut for employers. However as stated earlier the complexity of the workplace means there is no easy way to work out if the WBL was value for money for employer organisations.

In terms of the employees' financial gain there is a clear case for some of the participants whose attainment of masters or doctoral awards have positively impacted on the financial gains either as private consultants or changing to more financially rewarding roles or jobs.

An important value for money issue that emerged was how WBL can make the best use of resources (teaching and learning and work-based resources) and this is a learning issue as well as an economic one. If employers are to invest in HE learning, a clear case needs to be made for how WBL can use resources from a range of places. In making the case for how and where resources are accessed, the focus is both upon learning and on cost.

The answers to our questions about the cost of the programme were vague and appeared not to have great importance to postgraduate employees or their employers because the cost was relatively insignificant to them compared with
the perceived benefits that could be gained from the programme. Those interviewed were more interested in the related cost benefit of service improvement through employee performance. It is difficult to find precise examples for a business case that WBL is or is not cost-effective in terms of benefit to employees and employers.

The profitability of WBL to HEIs may to some extent be measured through existing tools and techniques, however a knowledge of WBL modules and practices is needed to fully understand the model; for example, how the costs relating to accreditation and flexibly taught elements might be factored in.

The disincentives of a lack of state funding and the current funding model have made this kind of study financially more difficult to undertake for employees where costs for self-development are hard to find.

Key findings of the benefits and impact of WBL

In most cases the WBL experience had caused change to the employees themselves and to their work whether this was direct employment or not. This is expressed in three areas that incorporate the perceptions that employees gained:

- of themselves personally and professionally

- through their perceived employer perspective

- through the actual employer perspective.

The impact was measured against the tangible and intangible outcomes of their WBL programmes.

Enhanced personal and professional confidence, aspirations and expertise

- Enhanced personal expertise was expressed mainly in terms of proven high-level intellectual skills, usually involving skills of synthesis, better judgement of levels of achievement and 'seeing the broader picture'. Their ability to act as self-motivated learners was also confirmed.

- Employees acknowledged the difficulties and self-drive necessary to develop themselves to masters and doctorate level, based on a work-based programme.

- Employees occupy significant positions such as managers/leaders in their organisations and work within complex and sensitive social and political environments that often have constraints and tight schedules that require the use of a rare combination of skills, knowledge, personal qualities and concern for values.

- Employees in the sample expressed their expertise and attributed much of it to the autonomy they had on the programme to use a range of higher education approaches in the context of their actual work.

- The will to continue to develop shows itself in the continuation of the employees' work-based projects as real-time ongoing activities at work, positive yet unforeseen effects on colleagues and clients, renewed interest in further learning, and productive engagement in debates relevant to the professional wider field.

Enhanced personal and professional credibility

- There was a perceived greater status with clients and colleagues and recognition from professional groups for the HE learning of their achievements and significantly increased self-confidence in themselves as employees and as professionals. In some cases enhanced credibility could be seen for their professional communities as well as for them as individuals.

- WBL programmes demand that employees have a certain positionality before they are allowed on the programme in terms of experience and status within their organisations or professional area, in that they have to be in a position to be able to impact on change.

- There was significant impact from the experience relating to the employees' enhanced credibility (real or perceived) in the eyes of others in their field who engaged more readily with their work once they had achieved masters and doctoral status. It is noted that the change in the employees themselves provided the impact. The employees had variously achieved greater status for themselves and their organisations from the perspective of their peers and within themselves regarding their self-esteem.

Direct benefit and impact to an organisation or professional area

- Direct impact on the organisation and/ or professional area came from work activity contained within their specific projects that made a real change to

professional situations. They also varied widely in topic area, for example, sustainable development, healthcare, retail, banking and education.

- Credibility from their work context was important or more important to them than academic achievement.

- The complexities of the programmes and the position of the employees within them make it particularly difficult to map out all the benefits and impact of employees' learning experiences for themselves and their organisations/ employers, and more importantly to have a measurable sense of the benefits and impact. For example in cases where employers are unable to outline the impact of work-based learners on organisations because some employees were employed after the programme.

6 Impact and recommendations

This section concludes with key impact factors drawn from the study followed by recommendations and implications for the Higher Education Academy, institutions and other relevant parties.

Impact

This research suggests that the impact of the programmes were both specific and general.

Benefit to employees WBL study is generally beneficial to employees. While it was difficult to differentiate between personal benefits and professional benefits of the programmes to employees, the broad personal benefits were:

- better understanding of issues related to their job roles

- developing self-confidence

- raising personal status (being called a doctor)

- building knowledge and skills of research and researching at the workplace.

The professional benefits to employees included enhancing their professional credentials and credibility, and establishing their expertise in their professional areas of practice.

Benefit to employers WBL benefits employers in a broad sense; employees think the learning experiences of employees have a positive benefit in terms of adding value to their (employees) job roles and raising the prestige and credentials of the organisations to existing and potential clients in ways that increased output and profit.

Benefit to professional knowledge Further research and publications in the area by mostly WBL doctoral graduates have led to enriching and expanding practitioner knowledge, based in areas such as training and development.

An expanding area for research methodology A key issue for the WBL employees/students was their fuller understanding of research methodology. A particular module, *Research and development for professional practice*, prepared them for research and development projects. The positionality of the worker was found to be important because the action involved in accessing data at work and then going on to develop and apply the research findings requires the agency of the researcher.

Academic knowledge used to enhance work practices Specific impact was found through the difference made through the WBL project implementation. Employers and employees found that the work-based project, when built upon the employee's existing work was able to bring about significant change and impact in a work setting.

Pedagogic practices appropriate for work-based learners The cohort-based learners had the added advantage of a close group of other learners providing:

- peer support

- more support from employers

- clear and common goals.

Those on individually negotiated programmes also found these advantages by engaging in their own networks of support and relying on themselves as autonomous learners to define more career-focused goals.

Work-based knowledge and complexity This study intimates that customised programmes of WBL are constructed for different reasons and that a variety of viewpoints especially those on the nature of knowledge at work, produce data from which it is difficult to generalise. WBL academics have been led by the learning needs of the employees and employers while the nature of the knowledge in which they engage has been treated with relatively few problems. Consequently, in customising WBL through an HE-employer learning package or through individual negotiated programmes, what emerges is a view of knowledge that is difficult to codify.

New and emerging theories of practice This research demonstrates the above emerging themes that relate to what is found important by employers and employees. A question that arises from the research is the extent to which theories of practice that shed new light on WBL may be emerging and how they relate to existing literature.

Recommendations

To strengthen the impact of work based learning and to make it more beneficial to all stakeholders, the following recommendations are offered.

Link individual and organisational learning more effectively How can universities work with organisations to create learning environments that capitalise on the learning? The tripartite relationship between employers, employees and HE providers could be developed upon and used positively to increase the impact and benefit of WBL. Programmes could be firmly linked to the needs and expectations (structural capital) with individual learning needs and organisational development needs. Programmes could provide individuals with opportunity for reward/development and also create a potential impact on organisational knowledge. The needs of the employees should be further taken up and analysed. The needs of the employers require much more work in closely thought through joint research and development between HEIs and organisations and other stakeholders.

Consider a WBL pedagogy in more detail WBL could centre on people's current and prior learning and build from their current understanding where possible. This requires particular pedagogical understanding of people's learning at work and of the nature of knowledge in work settings.

Starting points can be drawn from some of the existing literature that attempts to define WBL, for example the precepts of WBL as defined by Boud (2001) which were later adapted by SEEC (2003) for the Work Related Learning Network's precepts. There are also the QAA (2007) guidelines for WBL and placement learning that may offer a starting point.

Develop methodologies for the worker as researcher The outcome and the nature of the methodologies followed by practitioners in their research and development activities appears to be an important topic for higher education researchers to explore. The links between practitioner research and research methodologies need further investigation as this is a key area for practitioners to enhance their working practices especially at postgraduate and doctorate level.

Approaches to work-based projects At the heart of the WBL process is the work-based project. These projects show the results of improvement in practice, which should be based on evidence at all relevant levels – individual, organisational and so on. Developing instruments to get this right would be particularly beneficial. The advantages of practitioner-research projects need more scrutiny by HE academics, employer organisations and other stakeholders.

A change in processes and procedures in HEIs HE providers should recognise the complexities of WBL and change their existing structures to effectively accommodate it. Administrative structures and other procedures of many HE providers are still based on the more traditional approach and delivery and make it particularly difficult for work-based learners to benefit fully from programmes.

Subject discipline criteria and generic criteria provide differing approaches to WBL More research could be done on generic abilities at high levels and how these factor in postgraduate programmes (see also Costley and Armsby, 2006).

A closer working partnership between HEIs, employers, employees and other stakeholders Critical reflections by stakeholders on how WBL programmes are built into overall learning strategies of organisations could enhance the fitness-for-purpose component of programmes. This could be achieved through developing partnerships that are operated and guided by:

- principles of transparency, mutual agreement and benefits

- clear understanding of structures and strategies to ensure a balance of 'power and influence' in the process.

Employers would develop interest and actively engage with their employees' WBL through involvement in the processes of design, delivery and assessment of the programmes. Professional bodies could engage in and reflect more on the outcomes of the WBL and engage in a reflective discussion with universities and employer organisations. Other stakeholders such as the Higher Education Academy, the Learning and Skills Council and employer organisations could be involved in these important partnerships that would all be working towards more effective learning for, in and through work. How the relevant partners understand and use these relationships and the values it has and might have in future are likely to be paramount to its success.

7 Summary of case studies

A Individually negotiated programmes at postgraduate level

Case study L

Context
Candidate L completed an MA in Professional Practice (graphic design) and works with a public sector organisation which has a total of 3,500 staff. L has worked for the organisation for almost seven years and joined the WBL masters programme in the fourth year of work with the highest qualification of a BA in Graphic Design. L has worked with different other organisations prior to joining their current organisation.

The MA programme has been designed around the needs and aspirations of professionals working in cultural and creative industries and education who have substantial professional experience. This experience is evaluated through an APEL process to consolidate the students' learning to date. Students then proceed to undertake a major project located within their professional practice and which has professional credibility and value. The graduate benefits from enhanced critical skills and a professionally credible project output.

Motivation
L's motivation to pursue the WBL programme was more organisational; they wanted to develop to be able to work effectively:

> "to do further design, inclusive design… we have a lot of ethnic minority reaching into Northern Ireland and an aging population… we need to provide info accessible to all of them".

This motivation accrues from the trust bestowed by the organisation on its employees. This was evidenced when the employer states:

> "We believe, we value and develop our staff, and we believe that the staff we have are our greatest asset, and we rely and trust this staff to get the best."

However, L believes that a personal interest is essential "to get the best". Developing an expertise in the field was at the forefront rather than a new career pathway.

Needs

Although there was no formal process in place to identify the needs and expectation from the programme (mostly initiated by employee), there was convergence in the level of clarity of needs and expectation from the programme between L and employer. According to the employee:

> "I wanted to produce guidelines and designs for staff which will help provide inclusive service… to make things easier for minority groups to access our information to make it clearer to the community groups we work with".

Similarly the employer said:

> "We have an increasing number of people with visual impairment, learning difficulties and hearing difficulties; we are trying to communicate complicated information about their entitlement and what their expectations are from us as a housing body; and we are trying to keep it as simple as possible in terms of the English we use. But we also need to be sure that materials are visually appropriate for the people who need simple information well laid out in a way that it is easy for them to assimilate and understand. And really the work L did during the programme was the prime motivator for us."

Programme of study

The chief reasons for choosing the programme of study and the HE provider were mainly down to convenience: the mode of study and the way the particular provider organised and ran the programme were conducive to tight work schedules. For example,

> "Because it let me work from Northern Ireland and not many MA programmes will actually work within work and from the distance without actually having to attend in-house lectures or come over for study groups".

The employer noted that:

> "L did a lot of research on the internet and got good feedback from X institution in that they had people in the university, senior academic people who talk to them on the telephone and by email … and gave them useful information."

While L emphasised the usefulness of the process of the programme, the employer believes that it met the organisational needs in that it was related to the employee's job role and actually showed significant improvement in the work. On the question of employer support for the programme, both employee and employer stated that the programme was supported by the employer in terms of paying the full fee, time out and allowing the use of organisation's resources such as stationery.

According to the employer:

> "Indeed, the organisation paid their fees, let them have leave to carry out any task they had to do in England, allowed them study leave and use of our computer system to work on the project."

Furthermore, the employer stated that the organisation worked with the employee to ensure that the programme was appropriate to what the organisation wanted.

Benefits and impact

The employee stated that the personal and professional benefits of the programme were that it brought about a better understanding of issues by looking at them from different angles through the use of the skills and competences acquired:

> "Try to see the way round them and work on them one by one".

The employer believed that L benefited:

> "in that they were on a daily basis preparing the materials and was able to use ideas and the research they'd undertaken from the study."

Responses from both the employee and employer indicated that the programme was beneficial to the organisation and brought some changes, for example the employer stated:

> "Yes, because the benefit is really in two ways, one way is the achieving of well-being and the achievement L had in getting their masters degree – that was very good and that was a confident booster. The other way was in terms of the research they undertook for the study which is directly relevant to our publication scheme."

The employee and the employer also believed that the programme provided value for money because it gave L absolute focus and access to different ways in which the organisation's publications scheme might be modified or assisted and it was deemed to be a good use of time and good value for money. While the employee ruled out any possibility of undertaking any further studies, the employer is optimistic of sending more staff for similar programmes in the future.

Case study M

Context

Candidate M has established and is currently the sole employee of a private consultancy firm; prior to this M worked as a director of academic study at a college in Australia during and shortly after completion of a DProf programme in WBL. M had worked for the organisation for almost 18 months before joining the programme, and for other organisations prior to the current role as a freelance consultant. Their highest qualification prior to the DProf programme was an MA.

Motivation

The main motivation for M taking the DProf programme was a strong personal desire to obtain a doctorate, for example M stated:

> "I wanted to get a doctorate – that was my motivation. I was in an academic area and I needed a doctorate really to be seen as serious."

It was not possible to gain a corresponding employer perspective on motivation: M left their employer shortly before completing the programme (due to disagreements between them) and the question was not applicable to a private firm as it had only been established a year ago (rest of employer discussion
guide not applicable). Motivation was also centred on the desire to gain expertise in an already established career; hence in terms of specification of needs/ expectations with regards to programme content, M was not too clear about their needs and expectations.

Programme of study

The main reason for choosing the programme of study and the HE provider were mainly down to convenience and its flexible nature; M stated that the main reason for choosing the programme was that there was not enough time to do a PhD which required specific on-campus activities such as the programme at Y institute:

> "Because Y institute was much harder for me to have completed it, because I live in Australia and as part of their arrangement you had to complete certain amount of seminars face-to-face and that was too hard to really concentrate so it made more sense to go to X that didn't have that requirement."

Benefits and impact

In terms of the extent to which programme met needs, M was quick to state:

> "It served me very well, I mean, in the sense I got something practical out of it as well... in the sense that I developed training programmes I was then able to run and evaluate and it is still running. And yes it certainly met my needs."

Although M left their employer during the programme the company offered support in the form of allowing time off to work on project and additional study leave to complete. On the personal benefits and impact of the programme, M stated that it was beneficial in that it helped developed a structural way of thinking and confidence in dealing with issues at work.

The professional benefits was more of a backlash in the sense that gaining the DProf qualification resulted in being dismissed from the organisation, even though the benefits and impact of the programme was beginning to bear fruits:

> "I think that it is still sort of coming; I didn't in my place of work, in fact it kind of backfired on me more anyway. But what I am beginning to realise is that now I am freelance ... yes, certainly people are beginning to

> approach me now to give either opinions or workshops or all kind of things like that."

The benefit of the programme to the employer was absolute, because the organisation was going through accreditation processes and capitalised on it to say that they had a staff member who had a doctorate; this meant that they could build a prestigious relationship with universities. Again, the changes that have occurred as a result of the programme are varied:

> "Yes a lot has changed; I lost my job, probably not the best thing anyway. Yes, I think it is still evolving. That is why I really sort of believe. I mean, just even the last six months has been a lot of change for me. Lots of people are approaching me now to help them out with certain things and to develop certain projects. So in some way I needed to leave my job in order to develop further."

M could not remember the exact cost of the programme, but felt it was nonetheless an interesting and an important milestone. As to whether the employer thought it was a good use of time or value for money, the respondent felt that they probably did not since the opportunity was not seized to fully utilise the expertise gained from the programme; instead the organisation delegated a lot of M's responsibilities to another staff member.

M did not indicate current involvement in any study or any plan for further studies:

> "Essentially it didn't have the best advantage for me; in the short term but I think in the long term it will certainly have an impact in my career direction.
> I certainly believe that."

Case study N

Context
N enrolled on and completed an MA programme in WBL (after resigning from their previous position as a chief executive) and now works locally as a freelance consultant and a mentor while working towards establishing a consultancy firm. They had worked with their previous organisation as a chief executive for 19 years, and the highest qualification prior to joining the programme was a diploma in applied project management.

Motivation

N's motivation to pursue the WBL programme was personal with a career aspiration of hoping to use the programme to enhance their role in consultancy work:

> "I was capable, and was told I was capable of doing the consultancy work. But the fact that I did not have an academic qualification would have made others who didn't know me perhaps undervalue what I was able to offer."

Programme of study

There was no particular formal or informal process as N was self-employed although the views of colleagues and acquaintances were sought. The main reason for choosing the programme of study was that it was convenient and addressed N's needs:

> "WBL is practical for anybody in a similar situation. It is adaptable and it caters for students' needs not for any college."

The source of information about and choice of HE provider was directly influenced by friends. N argued that the programme perfectly met the intended needs because it created the opportunity to design the programme to investigate the issues confronted in real-life work. As a self-employed worker, N personally paid the cost of programme and said that it was a good use of time and value for money.

Benefits and impact

Regarding the benefits and impact of the programme, N felt it was absolutely beneficial because it was a life fulfilment; a tremendous achievement and they felt optimistic of the future professional benefit. The changes have been more personal in that it created a feeling of self-confidence and acceptance for having an academic qualification. Although N believed that the programme was a good use of time and value for money, they acknowledged that the advice of experienced leaders and mentors was a significant factor on overall professional development. As to whether N would consider undertaking further studies, they noted:

> "I have looked at it; I am not too sure as yet. I will definitely not say 'No, I won't do any more'. I had looked at the doctorate but in talking to people I think that is not really debatable, I might consider doing another masters or something else like that."

Case study O

Context

O is a director of their own company which is a health management consultancy organisation established seven years ago. The organisation has a total staff of three. Prior to this O worked as a director in the National Health Service learning unit and also with different other organisations including an oil company. The highest qualification that O held before enrolling into the DProf programme was a postgraduate degree.

Motivation

O's motivation for doing the programme was based on personal interest in the area:

> "I was interested in further research on my topic of interest… my interest is in how good practice spreads".

As a self-employed worker, O said the motivation behind the organisation's possible support of its employees learning and development would be to enhance productivity through better work. Motivation was also based on expanding and consolidating expertise in their existing career rather than developing a new career path; so in terms of needs/expectations O was very clear about that and wanted to research their area of interest – how good practice spreads). There was no formal or informal process supported by the employer to identify the needs.

Programme of study

While the reason for choosing the WBL programme was mainly the convenience in the mode of study –

> "Because I could do it as a distance-learning programme"

– the choice of the HE provider was more of an opportunity seized in that at the time only two HEIs were running WBL programmes in the United Kingdom; the proximity of X institution contributed greatly to O's choice. The question of reasons for employer choice of programme, provider and related ones are not applicable because the organisation has not sponsored anybody for WBL; O is a DProf graduate who had established their organisation after the programme. However, in terms of the extent to which the programme met their needs and expectations, O said:

> "It met my expectations in that I eventually got through and managed my DProf; I don't think I had any expectation of the programme. It didn't meet my expectation in terms of materials – I used to work with the Open University, and I think it didn't meet my expectations."

Benefits and impact

According to O the benefits and impact of the programme were marginal and that the benefits and impact were probably from the work being done after rather than during it in that more books were written after the programme, with the real change being sticking to one expert area and developing expertise in it. As to the cost of the programme, it was too long ago for O to remember the cost but they stressed that even though the then employer paid half of the cost of the study:

> "I did think it was good use of my time, yes. It was the qualification that I wanted so that was why it was a good use of my time."

During the period of study, O did not use any work time or resources from the then employer, hence their comment:

> "So I don't think my employers thought about it. I left the organisation probably before I completed it. I paid the last amount myself."

O was emphatic that they did not intend to undertake any further studies.

Case study P

Context

P completed a DProf programme. Currently a director of a learning development organisation (one of Europe's largest training companies), they have worked with the company for seven years. P started as a design engineer in the aircraft industry, worked as a naval officer for 20 years and as a professor in the United States for four years. The highest qualification that P held prior to undertaking the programme was a masters degree.

Motivation

P's main motivation for undertaking the programme was a strong personal interest sustained by employer goodwill and support:

> "Both, it's interesting. I desperately felt that I needed to learn again. I was so busy that I would not have engaged in the reading if I didn't have something to make me do it. At the same time the company had recognised that I was writing stuff and they wanted to increase my profile in the industry and they wanted to find some reward for me either than just money and they were ready to support further studies. So they were very happy with it and paid for it."

P viewed the programme not only as career development in terms of "just about climbing the ladder" but "about enriching" oneself.

Needs

Although P was very clear about expectations prior to the programme, there was no formal or informal process supported by the employer to identify needs – it was basically a personal initiative.

Programme of study

P's reasons for choosing the WBL and the HE provider was an "opportunity grabbed" as a result of associating with WBL practitioners, getting first-hand information about it and realising its usefulness:

> "Basically I have been looking for a programme for some years and had never found one that suited me…I contracted J from X institution to do a job for my organisation. After the job J said to me, 'Do you know about the WBL programme, this work you are doing is of doctoral standard why aren't you in the programme?'. So basically it was an accident and it was because I had built a relationship with J who was a professor at that time."

P noted that the programme met their expectations in that its structure and flexibility was very suitable and useful, and more importantly it was good use of their time and value for money.

Benefits and impact

P noted that the programme was beneficial in the personal and professional sense in that personally it increased interest in research and publishing and professionally it raised their status as a valued professional who is an expert in the area of learning and development:

> "I put the title on my business card because it impresses clients, especially when... I have some clients who talk about 'Doctor so and so came in', and the sales people just love it."

According to P the benefits of the programme to the organisation were overwhelming:

> "My own company was at the quality end, the high end. Our outfit was considered to be at the supermarket end. What the company really values is having someone like me around because it moves them up the food chain. They value having the ability to project me as a means of saying 'Look at how we've changed'. So the company really values having someone like me with the highest qualification, the highest thinking, someone who the company can present as a leading thinker in its area."

The real changes the WBL programme brought about are:

> "We've introduced new ideas into our consultancy practice. I have written several papers, White papers… so there have really been changes there. I think on a personal level it also slightly increased my dissatisfaction; now there are a couple of things I need to do, I need to write a couple of books. So there are new targets."

P thinks that as a lifelong learner there are possibilities of engaging in further studies but not at higher levels as the doctorate could be the highest qualification.

Case study Q

Context

Q is a consultant in education and training and currently the director (the only employee) of their own (private) consultancy firm (established 15 years ago) which works for major training organisations such as the Qualification and Curriculum Authority. Q enrolled on the DProf programme five years after the organisation's establishment. The summary is based on Q's responses as both the employer and employee. Q's original degree was in horticulture, taught at college level, and worked as a training manager with a local authority before becoming self-employed within the field of education and training.

Motivation

According to Q, a strong desire to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation's operation and a strong personal interest in developing their expertise and credentials in consultancy were the main motivators:

> "It was a bit of both (personal and employer motivation) because I think my main motivation was initially about the process. There were two other things: one of them was working in the field that I do, having that title 'Doctor' is actually quite useful because it sort of marks you out as somebody who is pretty serious about what they do, and it gives you the credibility… So there was definitely a sort of business motivation about it".

From the employer's viewpoint, Q said that the motivation was based on the desire to develop a "high-quality, high-expertise consultancy" which is clearly a good investment in professional development compared with other education and training consultancy firms that operate on the periphery. In a sense, undertaking the study was more about developing expertise than embarking on a new career path.

Needs

There was no formal or informal discussion to identify the needs as Q is self-employed and their expectations from the programme were not too clear – only a broad desire of wanting to get into it as a process to explore:

> "So I had bit more of an exploratory attitude to it. I was not saying 'This will achieve X, Y or Z'."

This was similar to the responses given as an employer on the organisation's clarity about the needs it was trying to achieve.

Programme of study

The main reason for choosing the programme of study and HE provider was just by chance, an opportunity utilised through associating with a person-related linked to the provider who offered some advice:

> "Well, partly it came up because of J who drew my attention to it. I then went out to look at some of the other things on offer like the action learning PhD at Buckingham University. There wasn't another DProf around, I think at that time X was the pioneer."

Responding as an employer, Q stated the main motivation as:

> "Because it does fit well with a heavy workload. It is not like saying 'I've got to spend one or two days a week or a big block of time, certain times going away to study', it actually links in with work. It became all much more distinguishable from real work; so it had this sort of element of being genuinely work-based."

As an employer and employee, it was also emphasised that the programme met their needs and expectation:

> "I think, yes it did. And I think the experience was very useful, the chance to reflect and to think why I was doing this, what I want to get out of it...".

The programme provided a broad framework to explore the area of research in depth. The cost was fully paid by Q as an employer because the obvious benefits would be to the benefit of the business.

Benefits and impact

Q said the programme was personally and professionally beneficial because on the process side the project offered a lot more depth than one would have done if it was purely a bit of consultancy. It also offered more understanding and insight into things related to the job:

> "I almost know now that I have got a sort of level of confidence when I am talking to the leading experts in the field and I feel I am one of them."

The benefit to the organisation has been very significant in that the project has informed all the activities in the consultancy work, providing a high standard of consultancy that has raised the credentials and prestige of the organisation. Q's view as an employer and employee was that undertaking the programme was a good use of time and represented value for money because the time used in the study was directly beneficial to the organisation. More importantly the outcome of the programme informed the activities of the organisation which increased the number of contracts and business activities:

> "Yes, I mean the kinds of thing that sort of came out of that, I think are the types of project that I get involved in tend to involve the more higher level thinking ones. The stuff where they want someone who is going to come out with something different, they don't just want a company to go in and do a standard consultancy. They want someone who can put a different view on things, who has got a set of research skills that can bring in a little bit of foresight and creative approach. Which I think all links up to the sort of stuff I did with the project for the doctorate."

While Q was not very sure about undertaking any further study at any level in the future, there was a desire to venture into doing similar innovative programmes:

> "Not at the moment partly because I think, well, in terms of level I have hit the top… but if someone outside the University develops something equivalent to doctoral level, I might put myself forward as a guinea pig to test it out and to do something on that piece of work. So I am very much open about that. And if I change direction maybe in 10 years' time I may well look at different avenues in terms of creative writing or that type of editing."

B Cohort programmes at postgraduate level

Case study R

Context

R is an operation manager in one of the largest retail stores in the United Kingdom. They completed a masters run collaboratively between an HE provider and a training partner, the title of which is "Masters in Professional Studies for leadership in sustainable development. It is a cohort-based programme with Forum for the Future (a sustainable development charity that works in partnership with organisations in the public and private sector). Each year, 12 graduates undertake the programme on a full-time basis for one calendar year. Forum for the Future delivers the programme with quality assurance support from IWBL. There are six one-month placements in different sectors, for example, government, media, finance or non-governmental organisations, where participants have mentors. The course encourages reflexive thinking and provides knowledge content on sustainable development and leadership. There is also a group project in which a proposal for a possible real-world project with sustainable development as the main aim is presented orally and as a business proposition in writing.

R worked for a supermarket as part of a one-month placement and later found full-time employment there as an operations manager. The employer interview was a combination of the education manager of the training partner and current employer who has about 15,000 staff for that department alone and more than 200,000 as a whole. The two 'employers' were used to cover the gaps that appeared as a result of the nature of the WBL programme whereby at the time of the programme students are not employed to any organisation but only have 'placement mentors' in different organisations they do the placement.

Motivation

R's motivation for the programme was a combination of factors – chance coupled with interest in environmental issues:

> "The idea of it came from a friend of mine who did the course… . In terms of motivation and why I thought it was the right thing to do, when I was at the university I got very interested in the relationship between the environment and business. So I wanted to find out more about that basically".

As a sustainable development organisation, the training partners' motivation for partnering to train people through the WBL path was to get trainees to gain learning experiences through engaging in real-life work situations to get first-hand information of potential environmental issues and how to deal with them.

Needs

Although R was not clear about their career path or needs before going into the programme, there was a sort of direction towards environment. There was no formal or informal process to identify the expected outcomes from the programme with the employer because R enrolled into the programme as a personal choice.

Programme of study

The reasons for choosing the programme of study and the HE provider were influenced by colleagues and the prestigious status of the training partner:

> "I chose it for two reasons: one was because of the structure of the programme and the excellent work placements, and secondly because Z has an excellent reputation within the sustainable development community and I thought it was a better place to learn."

According to the MA manager of the training partner the reason for choosing X institution as a partner for the WBL programme was that it accredited WBL and was flexible enough to put together a WBL masters programme. R noted that although the expectations and needs were not too clear, the programme:

> "exceeded my expectation in terms of learning through the work placement that was really very good indeed. And I can say that it exceeded my expectation in the sort of content and quality and the sort of immersion in the issue and the different issues and the different problems that are being faced and challenges at the moment."

The partner organisation was also quite sure the programme met the overall mission of the organisation. R paid for the cost of the programme and thought that it was a good use of time and value for money.

Benefits and impact

R thought the programme had a wide range of personal benefits and impact:

> "It gave me a good level of understanding about sustainable development, and engendered in me a real sense of excitement and enthusiasm and urgency about the issues which we are facing in society at the moment".

This impacted on R's role in their current organisation as illustrated by their employer:

> "R really got home to me and the chief executive that we can't divorce the two, that for you to do something that is going to help the environment it also has to be part of the business plan and feed into what you want to do, otherwise you are not going to do anything. I think that really speaks in my memory as one of the points where R made a really big impact. I think since then we've taken that route a lot more and we've had people join since."

R has the view that for WBL to have real impact, it should be extended across the country.

Case study S

Context

S completed a DProf programme and has been the head of science and innovation in a top UK government thinktank since 2001. Prior to this role S was a senior policy adviser in an environmental sustainable NGO. As a senior fellow and the longest-serving employee of the organisation S did not consider that there was a relevant employer-type figure who could be interviewed. S took the Masters in Professional Studies for leadership in sustainable development and went on to gain employment with the government thinktank; they then took the opportunity to come back to the University and using the MProf as part one of the doctorate, undertook the generic Doctorate in Professional Studies. However, the interview is based upon the doctorate as a whole and S refers back to the MProf but the emphasis is mainly on the DProf.

Motivation

The main factors that motivated the respondent to undertake the WBL programme were to strengthen academic capabilities and the compatibility or convenience to job schedules:

> "I suppose two things. First, the desire to keep one foot in academia while I was also working because my work was a research job, I was keen also to have a kind of link to more formal academic study and the DProf was a good way to do that while still being able to obviously carry on my job; carry on working. Second, the research that I had done in my job could quite easily be adapted into the DProf research. So there was a sort of good opportunity to make more of it and use it in both different capacities."

Needs

Even though S had an informal discussion with colleagues, their identification of needs and expectation from programme was personally initiated.

Programme of study

The reason for S choosing the programme of study and the HE provider was an opportunity taken:

> "Well, as I said, it came out of the link that already existed between X University and my previous employer which was set up in 1996 when the WBL programme was just still quite new. They developed this joint programme in a whole area of environment and sustainable development".

The cost of the programme was paid by the employer and S thought it met the needs and expectation, and was a good use of time and value for money.

Benefits and impact

According to S, the programme was personally and professionally beneficial in that:

> "I benefited in two ways: intellectually definitely I learnt some new things particularly on the methodologically side that I would not have otherwise learnt. So that was interesting and useful. And secondly, it was rewarding to have an opportunity to develop and deepen the research that I was doing in my job in that small formal academic setting. So it was a good thing to do."

S also thought it was beneficial to employer because:

> "Having the DProf has enabled us to show that we have among the staff people who have higher qualifications and that helps in one way in applying for other research funding. So, for example I have had ERSC funding for projects that I have done subsequently and probably I wouldn't be eligible for that money if I hadn't taken a higher degree like that."

Case study T

Context

Middlesex University Business School accredited an action learning-based leadership programme for senior managers in Lloyds TSB. The newly validated MA in Leadership and Management Practice (WBL) requires the managers to complete a combined *Research and planning module*' (20 credits) and a final project/dissertation (60 credits). T is a member of the cohort that completed the MA Leadership and Management Practice and has been a manager of finance for the last three years in a financial institution in the United Kingdom that has a total staff of more than 75,000. The highest qualification held by T prior to entering the programme was a certificate in mentoring.

Motivation

The main motivation for pursuing the programme of study was personal:

> "I think it was a real personal drive to demonstrate that I had the desire to develop myself. And also the fact that I had never gone to university it should be a personal thing in terms of proving to myself that I could have done it."

The employer noted that personal development is a critical responsibility to both individual staff and the line managers and it is seen as being at the forefront of what drives the company.

Needs

T viewed the programme as a way of developing expertise rather than taking a career path, hence there was no specific need at the onset apart from the provider trying to help them clarify what they hoped to achieve.

Programme of study

The main related reason for choosing the programme was its compatibility with work schedules:

> "Well, at the time I was considering either going for this or doing an MBA.
> I think the issue of the MBA was that it was a much more academic qualification, whereas the WBL was something I could fit into my day-to-day role. So, not only did I achieve a qualification but it was part of my daily activities."

The programme was initiated by the organisation; senior managers were invited to take part if they wished and the employer paid for the cost and to some extent helped in the design of the programme. According to the employer:

> "It was an ideal fit for us insomuch that it allow very much the theory, the intellect, the intellectual side of things to be overlaid unto the more practical day to day issues facing every business and to be able to tackle every individual learning question, applying the theory and learning from it."

While the employee felt that the programme met needs and expectations, the employer noted that it was very difficult to put real value on it from the business perspective and that it was the individual who gained from it.

Benefits and impact

T noted that the programme was beneficial in that it:

> "made me look at things in different ways and gave me the opportunity to understand particularly in the area that I was studying. How I impact on others really, and why I do the things I do and the way I do them."

While T thought that it was beneficial to the employer, the employer saw the benefits in terms of the impact it had on the way the employee performed assigned duties. Both employee and employer felt that the programme was a good use of time and value for money.

Case study U

Context

U completed an MA in WBL Studies and is starting a new job as a social development manager in a private company. Prior to this, U worked with a retail company that partially sponsored the programme for seven years but then resigned for personal reasons. All efforts to link up with the former employer for an interview proved futile, hence the perspectives are based solely on the employee's responses.

Motivation

According to U although the programme was initiated by the former employer, the main motivation for doing it was personal and an opportunity seized to become an expert in the area:

> "When the programme started with J and the University it was an opportunity for me again to become an expert in my field in terms of the role I'd done with J. It gave me an ideal opportunity to learn the business in detail and to become an expert in my field. And that really was what motivated me because I wanted to know everything there was to know about the business."

Needs

U was very clear about their needs and expectations; the company instituted a process through which employees could progress professionally.

Programme of study

The choice of the programme and the HE provider was the initiative of the company which also paid half of the cost. U thought the programme met their needs and expectations in terms of support offered by the provider during the course; and it was a good use of time and value for money.

Impact and benefits

U said the programme provided enormous personal benefits:

> "It completely changed me as a person, my whole aspiration in terms of my career completely changed. And it has given me the opportunity to take on some really good challenges as well, giving me confidence to take on bigger challenges. Second, I think as potential employers they actually recognise and regard the award highly".

U thought that the employer benefited:

> "because I was getting better business results for them; I knew how to do my job properly."

C Selection of (edited) quotes from case studies on the benefits and impact of WBL

Personal benefits and impact

Nine participants found personal benefit an important factor of the programme:

"It was a life fulfilment to have done this; it was tremendous to be first of all accepted for it and to be awarded. And it is very, very personal."

"It also made me read a lot of stuff that I might not have read otherwise and because of that I think I am probably doing things now that I probably wouldn't have been doing if I hadn't gone through the programme. Since then I have done quite a bit of work and research in the area…, and I have written some papers… and I have designed programmes and now I have clients ring from around the world. That is a spin-off and there are also some elements of my work that I would not have felt comfortable had it not been for this experience."

"I went into this project in a lot more depth than I would have done if it was purely a bit of consultancy. I got some theory …I got a sort of academic understanding through writing a series of papers and that developed my insight of things."

"I gained a really good level of… background understanding … it engendered in me a real sense of excitement and enthusiasm and urgency about the issues which we are facing in society at the moment … it gave me a fantastic network … it gives me some credibility… here are my credentials and they go 'Ah! Forum for the Future? Excellent! Middlesex University? Excellent!'"

"Personally it was intellectually rewarding to have the opportunity to deepen the research …if you are interested in your research then it is good to have an opportunity to think about it more, and think about it in different ways… I learnt some new things particularly on the methodological side that I would not have otherwise learnt… it was rewarding to have an opportunity to develop and deepen the research that I was doing in my job."

"It made me look at things in different ways and gave me the opportunity to understand particularly in the area that I was studying in… how I impact on others really, and why I do the things I do the way I do them. So there was a sort of journey I suppose I better understood myself. It helped me and helped others as well."

"It completely changed me as a person, my whole aspiration in terms of my career completely changed. And it has given me the opportunity to take on some really good challenges as well, it has given me confidence to take on bigger challenges and second, I think as potential employers they actually recognised and regard the award very highly that I've just achieved which also motivated them driving me that little further because they know you are capable of
being there."

"**I** am a lot more understanding of things… I look at things from different angles."

One participant did not answer 'Yes' or 'No' to personal benefit as an important factor of the programme:
"**I** will say marginally (pause) it is difficult for it is a long time ago; but I will say I have moved on for such a long time, have written more books since, so I probably benefited more from the work I have done after it than the work I did during it. I benefited from some of the discipline."

Professional benefits

Seven participants found professional benefit an important factor of the programme:
"**I** think my company benefited, I put the title on my business card because it impresses clients, especially when... I have some clients who talk 'Oh about doctor so and so came in', and the sales people just love it. So for that reason…it just benefits the company."

"**I** tended to be asked to do things and get involved in things that I think if I hadn't gone through that process of having got the doctorate I wouldn't have supervised someone's DProf. And I was asked to come in and review a doctorate in another university and asked to referee another journal and bits and pieces like that just broaden the scope of my network."

"**Y**es, with the background understanding and with the sort of the credibility and the network. I have talked about the environment and sustainable development a lot in my job in tesco.com and I think I can't claim any great impact there but I can say that people are more aware of these issues and they take them more seriously and there is a change of culture which is happening not entirely due to me."

"**I** was thinking about [research] in a different way doing the DProf than when I was doing the research in my job. Because in my job I would have been doing it in a more instrumental way… whereas when I was thinking about it from my DProf, I was able to reflect a bit more deeply on the research process and my role in it as a researcher and all those sorts of question you ask yourself as a researcher."

"**M**y subject for the dissertation was 'change and transition' and effectively I was shutting down a business unit; they put me out of the job. But I think partly because I was doing this and the organisation saw that there was a real investment and it would be a shame to lose that… I was, as a consequence, offered another opportunity within the business that I may not have been offered if I hadn't been doing the programme."

"**I** can see how things can be improved and sometimes they aren't and I would like them to be."

"**I** benefited from the fact that I stuck to one topic [or area of expertise]."

One participant answered 'No' to professional benefit as an important factor of the programme:

"That is still sort of coming; I didn't in my place of work, in fact it kind of backfired on me anyway. But what I am beginning to realise is that now I am freelance, yes certainly people are beginning to approach me now to give either opinions or workshops or all kinds of things like that."

Q What do you mean by 'backfired'?
"I got dismissed from my work about a year after I finished my doctorate, and a lot of people said that was because nobody else had a doctorate; the people who owned the organisation didn't have a doctorate, so there was a sense of professional jealousy. This influenced me to go in for my own consultancy."

Two participants did not answer 'Yes' or 'No' to professional benefit as an important factor of the programme:
"Yes I am and I will benefit. As I said, I haven't set up the consultancy yet… because I have completed my masters on this particular subject which is important. I think anything I offer them would be regarded in a much better light. And also what I am offering is much more structured because of my study; it would have been more haphazard beforehand."

"Challenging question. I could have done but the opportunities weren't there for me within the organisation. I have actually benefited from the programme by taking corrective action on my own career … even though … the organisation initiated the whole programme for me, when I had done my final research project, they didn't take much interest as to what they potentially could have done on it."

Analysis of professional benefit

Professional benefit was clearly thought of as having significant awareness and expertise in a particular area, an expert in the field with others in the organisation or professional field showing confidence in and acknowledgement of the participants' expertise. The title of 'Dr' in particular was seen as prestigious for the company, a sign that the company took the area seriously. For one participant the organisation appeared to take the opposite view and was negative about the credential which eventually led to job loss but this in turn led to the participant becoming a consultant in the professional area. Another participant who recently completed the programme felt that the experience gained on the programme was yet to be utilised to its best effect.

Benefit to employer

Eight participants found employer benefit an important factor of the programme:
"People come to me to ask me my opinion on things to do with disability and I have many contacts through organisations of some people I wouldn't normally have contacts with and think that normally helps with some aspiration."
"Absolutely, the organisation benefited. Because they were going through accreditation processes at that time, that meant that they could say that they had a doctor on their staff which they didn't have before, it meant that other universities they were talking to, with the relationship they could build up with this one."

"We merged with another company recently … my own company … was at the quality end … not what I do but the ability to project me as a means of saying, 'Look at how we've changed'. So the company really value having someone like me with the highest qualification, the highest thinking who they can present as a leading thinker in their area. And that's what they want to do. If I were to move on, I think they now recognise the value of having it and they will like to grow somebody else to do that."

"They want someone who is going to come out with something different, they don't just want say a company to go in and do a standard consultancy. They want someone who can put a different view on things, has got a set of research skills that can bring in a little bit of foresight and a creative approach. Which I think all links up to the sort of stuff I did with the project at the doctorate… if people don't know me it just adds to a little bit of credibility. When I am competing as a sole practitioner consultant with either a university bid or with a firm of about 250 people and why should they look at me. There is just that one thing that gives you a little bit of edge."

"At a very practical level it's been good. Having the DProf has enabled us to show that we have among the staff people who have higher qualifications and that helps in applying for other research funding and that sort of thing. So, for example I have had ERSC funding for projects that I have done subsequently and probably I wouldn't be eligible for that money if I hadn't taken a higher degree like that."

"I think the organisation has benefited in as much that taking the action I did which I wouldn't have done if I hadn't been doing the work based learning programme, it helped me manage existing projects more effectively and helped me help others."

"Well, definitely because I was getting better business results for them, because I knew how to do my job properly. In terms of my final award they could have benefited more."

Two participants did not answer 'Yes' or 'No' to employer benefit as an important factor of the programme:
"My organisation, probably yes. Probably in the job that I do now, it is expected that I have that doctoral level for me to do what I do."

"Well, it is a difficult question. I think the only real impact that I could claim on my organisation from my masters is just an increased awareness of the issues and recognition that it should be taken seriously … I haven't had a massive impact in practical terms but I can say that my colleagues and my bosses and my chief executive and the organisation are aware that I believe that [sustainable development is] very important and they are open and accepting of the efforts I have made to shape my work in that direction. So when I say well we are going to have a packaging review for, say, flowers … we need to make sure that the packaging … only comes from sustainable sources. They now take that seriously, whereas two years ago they would be, like, this is too expensive, an extra cost which we cannot afford."

Analysis of employer benefit

Overwhelmingly, participants found the benefit to their employer was to raise the employers' credentials and prestige in the view of others. Other benefits found were improved work efficiency, the ability to take on more demanding roles and being sought after as an expert.

Analysis of employer benefit

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Appendix A Summary of case studies used

		Title of work-based project	Sector	Award
Individually negotiated programme				
L		A communications framework for inclusivity: an action research approach to providing information	**Public** Graphic designer	MA in Professional Practice
M		Development of a counselling and psychotherapy supervision training programme within an Australian educational context	**Private** Consultant psychotherapist	Doctor of Professional Studies
N		Developing changes for Irish non-profit organisations	**Private** Consultant – Charities	MA Work Based Learning Studies
O		An investigation, evaluation and development of techniques to enable the spread and adoption of innovative practices, based on the Trent region older people services project	**Private** Consultant – Health management	Doctor of Professional Studies
P		Adopting a holistic approach to the valuation of learning programmes deployed in corporate environments	**Public** Education and training	Doctor of Professional Studies
Q		The development of the professional accreditation of conservator – restorers	**Private** Education and training	Doctor of Professional Studies
Cohort-designed programme				
R		Not applicable [Forum for the Future MProf programmes do not require students to present a final project]	**Retail**	MA Professional Studies (Leadership in sustainable development)
S		Digital futures: e-commerce and sustainable development (individually negotiated programme). The masters element of the programme was cohort-based (same as R)	**Public** Thinktank	Doctor of Professional Studies
T		The one certainty in life – an action research inquiry: improving Lloyds TSB asset finance division's capability to help people through change and transition	**Financial institution** Manager	MA in Leadership and Management Practice (WBS)
U		Marks and Spencer food section managers – The enablers to delivery of exceptional individual work performance	**Retail** Manager	MA Studies WBL (Retail management)

Appendix B Interview Discussion Guide

Introduction
The Higher Education Academy is funding a number of higher education institutions to conduct a study focused on the experience of employees and their employers engaged in work-based learning. The study will also consider the impact that this learning has for them. This discussion guide has been designed to capture employee (learner) and employer perspectives.

Employee interview questions

Section A: Context [Refer to CV or information sheet]	
1. What is your current role? *Is this the same role you had when you began the programme of study?* *If no, what was your role at the time?*	
2. How long have/had you been in your role when you began the programme of study?	
3. How long have you worked for your current organisation? *[Please clarify whether it is the same organisation as when they began their programme of study]*	
4. What previous roles/jobs have you had prior to the one when you began the	

programme of study?	
5. What qualifications do you have (e.g. undergraduate degree)? *And, what was the highest level of qualification you had when you began the programme of study?*	
6. Have you undertaken any other professional development? *If yes, what specifically?* *If no, why not?*	

Section B: Motivation

7. What motivated you to undertake the programme of study? *[Please explore the extent to which their motivation was self-generated or was more to do with their employer]*	
8. Did you have a sense of a career and career path when you began the programme of study? *If yes, what were your career aspirations? And, have these changed since?*	

Section C: Needs

9. Prior to beginning the programme of study were	

you clear about you hoped to get out of the learning and development? *If yes, what were your expectations?*	
10. Was there any formal/informal process (supported by your employer) to help you to identify what you hoped to get out of the programme of study?	

Section D: Programme of study	
11. Why did you choose this particular programme of study?	
12. How did you hear about this particular programme of study?	
13. Why did you choose the particular HE provider?	
14. Did you consider other options? *If so, what other options were considered?*	
15. To what extent did the programme of study meet your expectations and needs? *And, in what ways?*	

16. Did your employer support you in undertaking the programme of study? *If so, in what ways?* *If not, why do you think this was the case? And, what support would you have benefited from?*	

Section E: Benefits and impact

17. Did you benefit personally from the learning and development? *If so, in what ways?* *If not, had you expected to benefit? And, why do you think this was the case?* *[Please provide evidence to support your answers]*	
18. Did you benefit professionally from the learning and development? *If so, in what ways?* *If not, had you expected to benefit? And, why do you think this was the case?* *[Please provide evidence to support your answers]*	
19. Has your organisation benefited from you undertaking study at a higher level?	

If so, in what ways? How do you think? *If not, why do you think this has been the case?* *[Please provide evidence to support your answers]*	
20. Has anything changed as a result? If so, what has changed as a result and what has been the impact? *[Please provide evidence to support your answer]*	
21. Is there anything else that had a significant impact on your performance at work?	

Section F: Value for money	
22. What was the financial cost of the programme of study? *And, who paid and in what proportions?*	
23. Was it good use of your time? *If so, why?* *If not, why do you think this was the case?*	
24. Do you think your employer thought it was good use of your time/value for money?	

25. Are you considering further study at any level in the future? *If so, what are you considering?*	
26. Would you consider or are you currently undertaking further higher level study? *If so, what?*	

Section G: Other
27. Is there anything else you would like to add?

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