



Still more (better paid) jobs for the boys

Apprenticeships and Gender Segregation

Introduction

In recent years, the issue of occupational segregation in Apprenticeships has received increasing attention. It is now three years since the Equal Opportunities Commission published the final report of its investigation into Apprenticeships and occupational segregation, 'Free to Choose: Tackling Gender Barriers to Better Jobs'. Two years ago, the Women and Work Commission recognised the same issue. Yet as this report shows, little has changed and in some areas the situation has worsened.

This report highlights the gendered nature of Apprenticeships, arguing that while a significant number of Apprenticeship places have opened up for women, this is not the case in the traditionally male dominated sectors, which also tend to be higher paid. Along with assessing the extent to which occupational segregation has changed over the last few years, the report also considers whether large employers fare better than employers as a whole in breaking down occupational segregation in Apprenticeships. The report also identifies gendered patterns in Apprenticeship pay and conditions. In order to address the issue of gender equality in Apprenticeships, the report concludes that radical action is needed, with a six-point plan to achieve change.

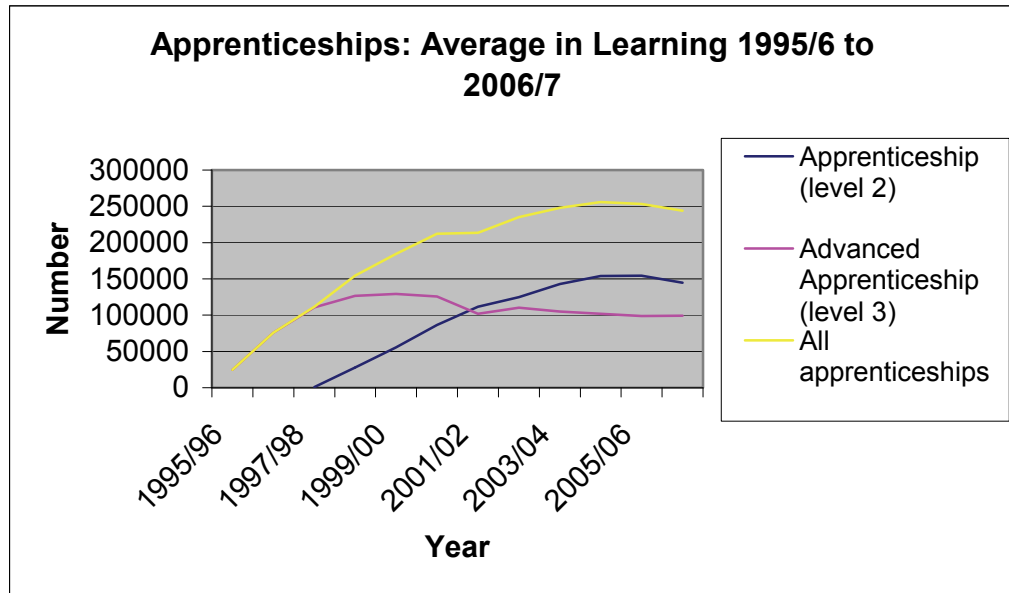
Apprenticeships – a highly gendered picture

Overall, there are slightly more men on Apprenticeship programmes than women. During 2006/07, 54.2% of people starting Apprenticeships were men, and 45.8% were women. Opening up Apprenticeships from traditional craft-based programmes to a wider range of occupations has provided more opportunities for women to 'earn and learn' and have their skills and achievements recognised through an Apprenticeship. However as discussed below, there are distinctly gendered patterns in Apprenticeships, and women often miss out on high quality programmes and are more likely to have poor pay and conditions.

Apprenticeships are available at both level 2 ('Apprenticeship') and at level 3 ('Advanced Apprenticeship'). Apprenticeships were only available at level 3 until 1998, when 'Foundation Modern Apprenticeships' were introduced at level 2. Chart 1 below shows the numbers of apprentices in learning between 1995/06 and 2006/07.

This demonstrates an overall growth trend Apprenticeships, despite a slight recent fall. It also shows the rapid increase in Apprenticeships at level 2, and that Advanced Apprenticeship numbers have remained steady over recent years despite a slight drop in around 2000. These figures provide the context for the distribution of Apprenticeships between men and women.

Chart 1 – Apprenticeships: Average in Learning 1995/96-2006/07



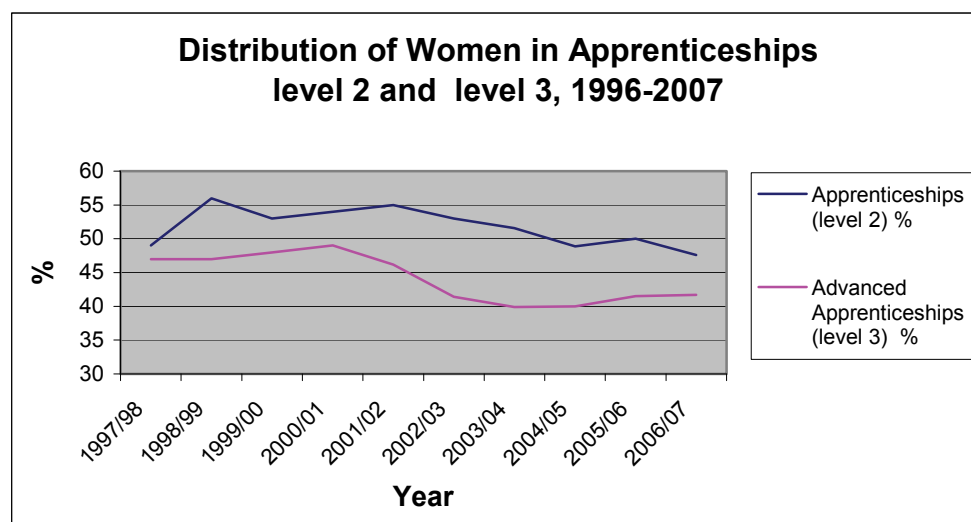
Source: www.apprenticeships.org.uk and Statistical First Release, Government Supported, Work Based Learning for Young People in England 2001/02, Volumes and Outcomes, SFR 27/2002, 24 October 2002

Women are more likely to be in lower level Apprenticeships

When considering the proportion of women undertaking Apprenticeships at level 2 and level 3, it is clear that women are less likely to be undertaking the higher level Advanced Apprenticeship. In 2006/07, women made up 41.7 per cent of Advanced Apprenticeships, and 47.6% of Apprenticeships. This pattern has been broadly replicated over the past decade, as Chart 2 below demonstrates.

Over the past few years there has been a slight increase in the proportion of women in Advanced Apprenticeships, and a slight decrease in the proportion of women undertaking Apprenticeships at level 2. This demonstrates a slight narrowing of the gap between women undertaking Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships.

Chart 2 Distribution of women in Apprenticeships, level 2 and 3 (1996-2007)



Source: www.apprenticeships.org.uk and Statistical First Release, TEC/LSC Delivered Government Supported Work-Based Learning – England, Volumes and Outcomes, 22 March 2002.

Apprenticeships and occupational segregation

When considering Apprenticeships by sector, the picture becomes even more gendered. As identified by both the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Women and Work Commission, Apprenticeships are strongly segmented along gender lines. The table below shows the proportion of women starting the 10 most common Apprenticeship frameworks in 2002/03 and 2006/07. The figures demonstrate the extent of gender segregation in key Apprenticeship frameworks. In 2006/07, the most gender segregated Apprenticeships were construction (1.3 per cent women), vehicle maintenance (1.4 per cent women) and engineering (2.5 per cent women).

The table also includes figures from 2002/03 to examine if gender segregation has changed since that time. Figures show there has been little shift in this period, and indeed in some of the most segregated sectors, the situation has deteriorated. This is particularly the case in engineering and vehicle repair and maintenance. In 2002/03, 4.5 per cent of engineering apprentices were women, compared to 2.5 per cent in 2006/07, representing a two per cent drop. The proportion of women in vehicle manufacturing and repair has dropped from 2.9 per cent in 2002/03 to 1.4 per cent in 2006/07. There has been no change in construction, with only 1.3 per cent women in both periods.

In sectors with few male apprentices, particularly childcare and hairdressing, again nothing much has changed. In 2006/07, 97.1 per cent of apprentices in children's care learning and development were women, a decline of only 0.2 per cent since 2002/03. In 2006/07, 91.7 per cent of people starting hairdressing Apprenticeships were women, only 0.2 per cent fewer than in 2002/03.

Table 1: Apprenticeship starts – proportion of women apprentices in top 10 frameworks, 2002/03 and 2006/07

Apprenticeship Framework	% women apprentices (level 2 and level 3)		
	2002/03	2006/07	% change
Construction	1.3	1.3	0
Hairdressing	92.6	91.7	-0.9
Business Administration	78.6	79	0.4
Customer Service	68.2	67	-1.2
Hospitality and Catering	50.6	50.6	0
Children's Care Learning and Development	97.3	97.1	-0.2
Engineering	4.6	2.6	-2
Health and Social Care	88.9	89.7	0.8
Retail	65.8	66.4	0.6
Vehicle Maintenance and Repair	2.9	1.4	-1.5

Source: www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Are big employers better at addressing occupational segregation?

Apprenticeship data is largely limited to individual learner records, so much more is known about individual apprentices than the employers that offer Apprenticeship places. However one way of gaining insight into how employers fare in addressing occupational segregation is to look at those employers contracting directly with the Learning and Skills Council's National Employer Service (NES). This service is available to employers with over 5,000 employees. Just under one fifth (19.3 per cent) of all Apprenticeship starts in 2006/07 were through the NES.

Larger employers are often said to be more effective at tackling issues such as occupational segregation. If this were the case, we would expect NES employers to have better figures on occupational segregation. The table below looks at the 10 largest Apprenticeship frameworks taken up through the NES. Interestingly, women only comprise around one fifth (20.1 per cent) of all apprentices taken on via the NES. This suggests that the largest occupational sectors involved via the NES are highly gendered.

Of the ten most popular Apprenticeship frameworks with NES employers, six had less than 11 per cent women apprentices. Even more strikingly, four of the five most popular Apprenticeships taken up via the NES have less than four per cent women. These are construction (1.2 per cent), vehicle maintenance (1.3 per cent), engineering (3.5 per cent) and electrotechnical (1.5 per cent). These figures are contained in table 2, below.

Table 2: % women apprentice starts in National Employer Service, 2006/07

	National Employer Service starts % women apprentices (level 2 and level 3)
Apprenticeship Framework	
Construction	1.2
Vehicle Maintenance	1.3
Engineering	3.5
Customer Service	52.4
Electrotechnical	1.5
Driving Goods Vehicles	7.9
IT User	10.7
Retail	57.3
Hairdressing	84.2
Hospitality and Catering	49.2
Total	20.1

Source: www.apprenticeships.org.uk

It is also useful to compare directly the proportion of women between the NES and Apprenticeships as a whole. The table below makes this comparison for some of the largest Apprenticeship frameworks, along with the percentage difference.

Table 3: 2006/07 Apprenticeship starts: women in the NES compared to total women Apprenticeships in key sectors

	% women apprentices (level 2 and level 3)		
	NES 2006/07	All Apprenticeships 2006/07	% difference
Apprenticeship Framework			
Male dominated			
Construction	1.2	1.3	-0.1
Engineering	3.5	2.5	1
Vehicle Maintenance and Repair	1.3	1.4	-0.1
Female dominated			
Hairdressing	84.2	91.7	-7.5
Retail	57.3	66.4	-9.1
Customer Service	52.4	67	-14.6

Source: www.apprenticeships.org.uk

The table demonstrates that in sectors that are strongly dominated by men, there is little difference between NES Apprenticeships and Apprenticeships as a whole. In engineering there are slightly more women apprentices engaged through the NES, 3.5 per cent compared to 2.5 per cent. However it should be remembered that this is still lower than women engineers in Apprenticeships as a whole in 2002/03, which was 4.5 per cent. In construction and vehicle maintenance and

repair, there is very little difference although there are slightly fewer women engaged in these sectors via the NES.

Where there is more of a difference is in the sectors that are either strongly female dominated (hairdressing) or with around two-thirds women across Apprenticeships as a whole (retail and customer service). In all of these cases, there are more male apprentices engaged via the NES. This is most significant in customer service, where there are 14.6 per cent more men engaged via the NES, which makes the distribution of Apprenticeships between men and women close to equal.

One of the most female dominated Apprenticeships is hairdressing, with 91.7 per cent of people starting Apprenticeships in 2006/07 being women. In the NES, 84.2 per cent of hairdressing apprentices were women, 9.1 per cent less than Apprenticeships as a whole.

There does seem to be a pattern in NES Apprenticeships, where more men have entered Apprenticeships in female dominated areas. However in male dominated Apprenticeships, women have made little or no inroads via the NES. In searching for explanations, one reason could be that larger organisations pay more and therefore attract more male apprentices. These findings lead to the conclusion that at present, big is not necessarily better for women in accessing non-traditional Apprenticeships.

Apprenticeship pay

The most recent publicly available data on apprentice pay is from the Department for Education and Skills 2005 apprentice pay survey. That survey demonstrated that average apprentice pay was £137 per week. However some apprentices received very low pay, and that at the time of the survey there were a number of sectors where a significant percentage of apprentices earned less than £80 per week, including early years (49 percent), hairdressing (41 percent), retail (26 percent), health and social care (22 percent) and business administration (22 percent). The average hairdressing apprentice earned £90 per week in 2005 - an estimated £2.73 per hour.

Low pay in Apprenticeships is particularly gendered. As identified by the DfES survey, the gender pay gap in Apprenticeships is 26 per cent, making the gender pay gap in Apprenticeships higher than in the broader labour market. The two lowest paying sectors, hairdressing and early years care, employ 92 per cent and 97 per cent women respectively.

Most apprentices are exempt from the minimum wage, but in 2005 the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) established a minimum payment of £80 a week for apprentices. While this rate has helped to protect some apprentices from unscrupulous employers, a pay rise is long overdue. The TUC would like to see the minimum rate for apprentices to be increased to £110 a week, which would roughly be in line with the minimum wage rate youth rate (£3.40). As women apprentices are more likely to be low paid, this increase would most clearly benefit women.

Equality in Apprenticeships – recommendations for a way forward

While there has been political attention to the issue of occupational segregation and Apprenticeships, it is clear that the issue has not yet been properly addressed. There is unlikely to be one ‘silver bullet’, therefore the TUC sets out a six point action plan below.

The Apprenticeships Review published by Government in January 2008 recognised the equality and diversity challenges within Apprenticeships, and set out a number of recommendations including piloting to achieve ‘critical mass’ of ‘atypical’ apprentices, as well as a programme to provide mentoring support to atypical apprentices.

- Building on the initiatives outlined in the Apprenticeships review, the TUC believes the Government should establish a national equality and diversity strategy with high-level political support and accountability. The strategy should be underpinned by practical action to target particular groups, sectors and localities. The strategy should adopt a holistic approach that addresses issues such as the career choices people make, through to ensuring that the organisation of work can support people entering workplaces where their gender is ‘atypical’. This strategy should include measures that target the National Employer Service.
- The Government should make proactive use of existing mechanisms to promote equality and diversity in Apprenticeships. In particular, using procurement policy to promote equality in Apprenticeships provides a huge opportunity to tackle occupational segregation. Other mechanisms that could be put in place include targets for Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), which could be linked to Government funding of SSCs. Establishing targets Regional Development Agencies could also be explored.
- As women are more likely to be in low paid Apprenticeships than men, up-rating the £80 minimum pay rate for Apprenticeships would benefit women most. The minimum should urgently be up-rated to at least £110 per week.
- Trade unions can support equality and diversity in Apprenticeships. Joint work between unions and employers should be encouraged and supported by Government. In particular, unions could do more in this area with statutory rights to collective bargaining over training, and the Government should re-consider this issue.
- The Government should further expand adult apprenticeships. Older women are more likely to take up non-traditional roles, therefore expansion of the programme would help break down occupational segregation.
- The Government should fully explore how the public sector gender equality duty can ensure gender equality in Apprenticeships.