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From classroom to workplace: Leveraging best practices in teacher training for apprenticeship curriculum design

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## Introduction

*We know that* apprenticeships should link academic learning to workplace skills (Fuller & Unwin, 2011) — and quite widely, how do we help apprentices develop <u>academically,</u> <u>professionally and personally</u>

*Quite often* theory and practice often are poorly aligned

*I wanted to* explore how structured curriculum design improves End-Point Assessment (EPA) outcomes, apprentice knowledge and confidence



### **Theoretical Foundations**

Deliberate Practice (Ericsson et al., 1993): Goal-oriented, feedback-rich practice

Spiral Curriculum (Bruner, 1960): Revisiting concepts with increasing complexity

**Experiential Learning** (Kolb, 1984): Learning through reflection and real-world application

**Rosenshine's Principles** (2012): Guided practice + review = retention



### **Theoretical Foundations – Curriculum (Re)design**

<u>New features</u>: Scaffolded tasks, retrieval practice, structured reflection

Blended learning: Combining synchronous and independent study (Hrastinski, 2019)

Stronger alignment between learning and teaching

All of the above hinging on the important question of the "why" of pedagogy



The UK government's priorities for education are intrinsically linked to broader societal and economic goals, especially regarding employment and the labour market. The government's focus on improving skills in English, maths, and digital literacy aims to enhance workforce competitiveness in a rapidly changing global economy. As of 2024, the UK employment rate is around 75%, with significant strides made in reducing unemployment to 4% (House of Commons Library E) E-These educational priorities aim to address skill shortages across sectors, aligning with the government's drive to fill over 840,000 vacancies across the economy. By equipping learners with essential skills, the government not only fosters individual employability but also supports national economic growth and social mobility.

Embedding English as a key skill in education is crucial, as literacy directly impacts learners' ability to access, engage with, and progress in their education and employment. According to government data, literacy levels in the UK show that around 16.4% of adults are classified as having 'very poor literacy skills', which significantly limits their job prospects and earning potential (ONS. 2023). Geovernment policies emphasise raising literacy standards to equip learners with the communication skills required for modern workplaces and to improve overall social inclusion, as literacy is foundational for lifelong learning and active participation in society.

Similarly, embedding maths as a core skill in education is vital for economic participation and personal financial literacy. As of recent reports, around 49% of the UK's working-age population is estimated to have numeracy skills equivalent to that of a primary school child (ONS. 2023), 🗁 To combat this, the UK government has prioritised numeracy development in educational settings, recognising that proficiency in maths is key not only for technical jobs but also for everyday decision-making. The "Multiply" initiative, launched to address adult numeracy, is one example of the government's strategic response to this issue, aiming to boost economic productivity by reducing the skills gap.

Digital literacy is equally important in today's technology-driven economy. With the rise of remote work and digital services, a lack of digital skills can significantly hinder employability. The government recognises digital literacy as a critical priority, especially given that 11 million people in the UK lack basic digital skills (ONS, 2023), G-Government initiatives focus on integrating digital education from early years through to adult learning, addressing issues of digital poverty and ensuring that all learners are equipped to thrive in a tech-centric world. The focus on digital literacy not only aims to meet the needs of modern workplaces but also to combat social exclusion, as digital access increasingly becomes a basic requirement for day-to-day life.



Next 🕨



Mixed-methods study

Two cohorts compared:

- Cohort 1 (n=12): Traditional model (2020-2022)
- Cohort 2 (n=9): Redesigned model (2022-2024)

**EPA results & tripartite reviews** 



# **Initial Key Findings**

## **EPA** distinction rates:

- Cohort 1: 25% (4/12 apprentices received a distinction, 8/12 received a pass)
- Cohort 2: 100% (9/9 apprentices received a distinction)

### **Reported benefits:**

- Improved confidence as an educator but also how to justify pedagogical practices
- Better knowledge retention able to apply to EPA, how Week 1 linked to Week 2, to Week 20
- Stronger workplace adaptability *mentors able to support apprentices in a more formal, structured and deliberate-practice approach*





[*Apprentice*] has also reflected on how to meaningfully embed Functional Skills into her sessions and is actively seeking opportunities for professional development, including interest in upcoming staff workshops—demonstrating a behaviour of continuous development and collaboration (B3, B5). Her enthusiasm and growing practical knowledge reflect a commitment to deepening pedagogical skill through ongoing experience (S15, S24).



## **Reflections & Challenges**

Success depends on	Limitations
High-quality mentoring	Small sample size
Curriculum coherence	Diverse workplace contexts
Time for reflective practice	Timeline and global events (pandemic)



### **Implications and Future Directions**

- Structured, reflective learning boosts EPA outcomes (Poole et al., 2023)
- Model offers a scalable approach for wider apprenticeship reform
- Future research: Apply across sectors to validate impact



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# Thank You

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