Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education:

Review of the Senior Leader Master's Degree Apprenticeships

Response from the Chartered Association of Business Schools

3 April 2020

Senior Leader Master's Degree Apprenticeships (SLMDA)

The Chartered Association of Business Schools is pleased to make a submission regarding the Review of the SLMDA as ordered by the Secretary of State for Education.

1. Business schools have been at the forefront of degree apprenticeships and their take up by universities. This is largely as a consequence of their close relationships with local, national and international businesses and their readiness to provide the training and qualifications businesses require their workforce to have. A number of business schools also engaged with the trailblazer group in the creation of this standard.

2. As per previous correspondence and conversations, the argument in favour of degree apprenticeships in Management are well documented and known. I do not plan to reiterate them here, but will accept them as read. Here we are providing further evidence of the need for and importance of the SLMDA. You will already be aware of the relatively small numbers of SLMD apprentices, so we conducted a survey of our members to provide further data to inform the review.

Our survey

3. We received information from 23 providers of the SLMDA, which collectively have seen 2,716 starters on the programme since it began. Over the last two years, the average number of SLMDA students has been fairly steady per school (48 and 49) suggesting runaway growth is not happening.

4. The average age of starters is 37, suggesting that these are mature students, most likely already in employment. Whilst many of these already have an undergraduate degree, some do not. This is an opportunity for those who had previously missed out on the chance of higher education. It is also the case that many of those with an undergraduate degree already, have it in an unrelated subject, for example nursing or engineering. It goes to the heart of the universality of management.

5. Just 15 of the 2,716 starters were already in a Chief Executive role, which is less than 1%. The greatest number of participants are either new managers or middle managers. This clearly indicates that businesses are using the SLMDA to upskill their workforce.

6. Where data is collected and using postcode data, on average just over 20% of participants come from the lowest two quintiles of deprivation.

7. Two schools do not collect data on what sector the students come from. From the others, 63% of students are from the public sector and less than 7% from large corporates. The remainder are from charities, social enterprises and SMEs.

8. For some students, but by no means all, the awarding of the MBA is important, some are very happy with an MSc. In all cases, the degree element is vital.

DfE Research

9. It is also worth reflecting on some of the findings from the DfE's Research Reports released in March 2020. In the Employers evaluation report it was cited that "the most common

reason for employers to offer higher or degree level qualifications was to help staff develop new skills (66%), followed by offering progression as part of a strategy to develop the workforce (39%)."

10. In the same report only 25% of employers offering degree apprenticeships said they used them to replace a programme of other work-based learning at these levels. This compares with 57% for L6+ non-degree apprenticeships, indicating that the degree element is offering something new.

11. The Leaners evaluation showed that "obtaining a degree qualification was an important factor for nearly all Degree apprentices (94%).

12. "Non-degree apprentices at Level 6 and above had the lowest levels of overall satisfaction (72%)", whereas "Degree apprentices were the most likely to be satisfied (94%)." Degree apprentices were also most likely of all apprentices to be advocates of apprenticeships (88%).

13. Importantly, 94% of Degree apprentices "thought their apprenticeships had prepared them very of fairly well for their planned next activity".

Specific quotes from our members:

14. "approximately 30% of our SLMDA apprentices did not have the chance to pursue a degree upon leaving school and how have had the opportunity to gain a career-defining qualification via the apprenticeship programme and to progress to higher levels within their organisations."

15. "MBA style development is proving very popular with the apprentices and their employers. All the apprentices say that they are acquiring a great deal of new knowledge as well as skills and the chance to develop leadership behaviours. They speak of this using phrases such "opened my eyes", "had not realised what I did not know". They have evidenced to us how the programme is creating work place added value even while they are in its earliest stages."

16. "The work based project at the end will have a really significant impact and deploy the newly developed Senior Leader, supported by the expertise of the Business School, to make an improvement in their organisation which, even by itself, will justify the spend on the MBA. We can posit that a significant part of the productivity shortfall in the UK economy is related to weak management rather than shortage of functional skills. The CMDA and the SLDA together help greatly to address the problem."

17. "Many of our apprentices are public sector; the possibility of applying the apprenticeship levy to senior leader training has enabled them to make significant improvements in their senior level learning and development programmes that could not easily have been funded otherwise. In the case of one organisation it directly addresses the key points made in critical quality reports in recent years."

18. "Senior leadership is not a fixed role which can be achieved and then delivered, it is all about ever broader and deeper personal contribution by way of innovation, creativity and personal leadership. Leadership is to do with change and improvement of the organisation in order to reposition and reorient it as the business environment changes thus anyone in a leadership role can and should be continuously upskilling within their existing role quite apart from any future more senior roles that may become available."

19. "SLMDA standard is an important tool to enable senior managers to upgrade their skills and knowledge. It allows people to fill a gap in their formal education compared to other European countries, where a masters-level education is the norm, rather than the exception, within a business/management school setting. Our contact with local and regional employers suggests a high level of pent up demand for a SLMDA-based MBA degree. Limiting access to degree-level apprenticeships removes the business case to run such degrees in a university and would consequently lead to the withdrawal of the management school from any such activities. We are not offering or are planning to offer higher apprenticeships (L5 and below)."

20. "Also we need this type of initiative to tackle the productivity puzzle, as well as diversity agendas. Through our high intensity and highly supported programme we are not just polishing off prior competencies but developing new ones to cope with a rapidly changing business landscape."

21. "The XXX Trust has consistently partnered with Employers who are working to identify or have identified their future leaders through robust screening and application processes. We know that businesses are facing unprecedented change and transformation and employers are turning to the SLMDA standard to support their future leaders in developing, skills, knowledge, behaviours and in depth understanding of the latest theories, research and thinking. The MBA and MSc Apprenticeships are delivered by our own world class faculty all of which are experienced practitioners who have worked at the highest levels in all sectors. Their delivery style is based on 'real world' experience backed by their own research and in-depth expertise. Following our Annual Client Survey (December 2019) Top 5 skills or areas of expertise that are most important for the workforce today: 1. Leadership 2. Communication 3. Digital 4. Agility 5. Self-awareness. We, therefore work with our clients to understand their organisational challenges and how to apply the learning delivered throughout the standard. We know that employers underpin the learning from the standard into targeted outcomes for their organisation. In addition to the applied learning throughout the standard each apprentice will formulate and execute their own work-based project for the last 6 months of their apprenticeship, in preparation for their final submission and to prepare for the end point assessment."

Examples of Apprentices final projects (note - XXX replacing Employer name)

The projects cover a wide range of organisational development areas: Sustainability, Diversity, Community, Future of Work, Technology, Internet of Things and Financial Sustainability. This is a small collection of the diversity and relevance of the work being undertaken through the SLMDA.

Project title: How do XXX need to change as a business to fully harness the potential of technology to deliver efficiency and benefits for its customers?

Project purpose: To develop a set of recommendations for XXX, informed by research and backed by academic models, to ensure it is using technology to deliver efficiency and customer benefits.

Project objectives:

- Assess the changing landscape in relation to technology and its impact on the XXX business and wider ecosystem.
- Research and analyse XXX goals, objectives, barriers to success and use of technology today.
- Provide a set of recommendations focussed on increasing efficiency and delivering benefits to customers.

Project title*: To what extent do XXX strategy for sustainability, mission statement, stated values and practices meet its pressing environmental responsibility as the biggest provider of social housing in Europe with particular reference to its existing stock?*

Project purpose: The overarching aim is to assess XXX delivery of carbon reductions against both the aims of internal strategies/ policies and other European providers of social housing.

Project Objectives:

- establish what potential exists to reduce carbon emissions in the residential sector
- benchmark XXX's current policies and performance against competitors
- make recommendations to inform future direction

Project title*: How can a home repair service be tailored to meet the challenges of a modern inner city?*

Project purpose and objectives:

- To clearly identify the current and potential future challenges that XXX face in the delivery of an inner-City repairs service.
- Establish practical solutions to the issues identified by researching alternative approaches and determine where technology could be utilised to reduce the impact of potential future changes.
- Identify the barriers to implementation of these solutions that XXX may face and how these can be overcome.

Project title: *To what extent is the HR function designed and structured to support the future of work at XXX?*

Project Purpose: To identify the key HR challenges for XXX and determine ways to improve employee experience

Project purpose:

- Define key workplace trends affecting XXX,
- Identify workplace HR practices that can be improved to enhance employee experience,
- Recommend how XXX's HR function should be structured to provide increased value and support changing workplace trends.

Project title*: Is IoT technology the key to social landlords being able to meet customer expectation in a rapidly emerging digital age?*

Project purpose: to test the value of the potential benefits of smart technology within a social housing context and consider if IoT enabled assets such as smart boilers will need to be integrated in to service the delivery model in order to meet customer expectations.

Project objectives:

- Is this something social housing customers really want?
- Is it a realistic, cost efficient solution for a social landlord?
- What would XXX need to do to truly deliver smart services?
- What impact could this have on the wider social housing environment?"

The current context

We know from our research that without the degree element most business schools would not be able to continue offering apprenticeships. The DfE's own research shows the importance of the degree element to learners. We also know that businesses want the staff to have a qualification at this level and they certainly want them to have the knowledge and skills at this level.

All of that was true before COVID-19 struck bringing in to question the viability of many businesses across the UK and beyond, regardless of size. This is not the time to discourage the uptake of management and leadership skills and qualifications, indeed, the need is greater than ever as we will need to rebuild the economy when this is over. The current situation only goes to highlight the need to always look to build capability of the business leaders in the UK.

We would be happy to help with any other evidence gathering you would find useful.

Yours Sincerely

Anne Kiem
Chief Executive