



# APM's Skills Manifesto

## An Agenda for Skills Investment

Ahead of the June General Election, **the Association for Project Management, the Chartered body for the project profession**, has identified *seven* policy issues that the next government will need to tackle to ensure that the UK is well positioned to develop and maintain the skills base required by today's emerging workforce to compete on the global stage.

Underpinning APM's Manifesto is the need to strengthen the transition from education into work by providing a good skills grounding to build upon – both vocational and academic – whilst empowering the next generation to make informed career choices. We believe the following themes should be foremost in the next Government's thinking:

### Call to action:

1. **A stable policy framework – resist the temptation to continually tinker with skills policy**
2. **Apprenticeships – work with industry and professional bodies to further promote the benefits to employers and potential apprentices**
3. **Recognition for professional bodies – make better use of the UK's expertise and experience**
4. **Create and maintain an audit of UK current and future skills deficits**
5. **Stronger core skills – improve literacy and numeracy of those leaving our secondary education system**
6. **Improved careers guidance – providing support to develop this process for the young workforce**
7. **Invest in digital skills**

# An Agenda for Skills Investment

The Association for Project Management (APM) is the Chartered body for the project profession and its vision is to create a world in which all projects succeed.

In today's society, we need to deliver more for less and in these extraordinary times we need to manage change effectively, efficiently and to capitalise on the opportunities available while driving forward new and innovative achievements.

A key challenge is identifying current and likely skills gaps across all trades and professions, such as project management, to help deliver future prosperity and growth.

Our Manifesto outlines how APM and the project management profession are embracing the next generation by driving forward an agenda for skills investment.

## **1. A stable policy framework**

We recognise that all governments need to implement manifesto promises, and we are not calling for the status quo.

Since the 1980s the further education (FE) sector has been subject to just short of 30 major pieces of legislation – with 48 secretaries of state handling responsibility for FE. No organisation has survived longer than a decade. A stable policy framework is long overdue.

The incoming government must resist the temptation to continually tinker with skills policy and structures. Many of the recent changes to apprenticeships, including the introduction of the Levy – operational from April 2017 – and proposed technical education (T levels) are positive, but will benefit from both bedding in and building buy-in from employers and students alike.

Stability provides certainty, which is what employers, providers and learners are crying out for but a 'one size fits all' approach does not work. Each sector of our economy has different requirements and policy needs to reflect that. Collaboration is essential to successful policy and this extends to government departments. This represents a realistic objective as over the past few years there has been a welcome consensus across the parties on much of what constitutes the building blocks of a common skills policy.

## **2. Apprenticeships**

APM is committed to supporting the project management profession in attracting the best, brightest and most diverse talent for the future, as well as developing those already in the sector.

Apprenticeships are a valuable way to achieve this but if they are to fulfil their potential then they must include career progression opportunities for the learner.

The introduction of the apprenticeship levy [on the 6 April 2017] has pushed apprenticeships towards the top of the skills agenda and has secured increased (future) business investment in skills.

There is still some way to go if we are to bridge the gap between attitudes towards university and vocational pathways to higher skills. There are promising signs that many employers, students and potential apprentices see apprenticeships as a valuable earn-and-learn route to a good career, with apprenticeship starts rising sharply. However some stakeholders, particularly including parents, still need to be won over.

More must be done to promote apprenticeships through the demonstration of clear and potentially successful career pathways for young people. By revitalising the concept and opportunities of career-led learning, apprenticeships will become a well-regarded route of first choice for those looking to enter industry, while those recruiting will benefit from a pipeline of skilled, industry ready young professionals.

We call on all parties to commit to promoting parity of esteem between vocational/technical pathways and academic education.

## **3. Recognising the expertise of professional bodies and professional education**

We welcome the recognition of professional bodies in the reshaping of the apprenticeships system, though more can still be done to utilise our expertise and support the valuable work professional bodies undertake in the skills eco-system.

Professional bodies have unrivalled experience of developing standards and expertise in creating relevant and respected qualifications, and enjoy long-standing employer relationships. We have a proven record of providing employers with the standards and exams they want and trust. Significantly, professional bodies exist at little or no cost to the taxpayer and policy makers should look to utilise this expertise from these willing partners. Professional education blends academic rigour with practical application. It is continually shaped by the professions and is recognised as a major advantage in competitive global markets.

## **4. Stronger core skills – improve literacy and numeracy of those leaving our education system**

Employers are keen to concentrate on developing each individual's technical skills. However, too many report having to offer remedial literacy and numeracy training. With one child in five still leaving primary school without reaching expected standards in reading, writing and maths combined, more work is clearly still required. This is particularly concerning as the evidence demonstrates that young people do not catch up once an attainment gap exists.

The education system must provide students with a strong grounding in the basics that employers require and which provide the basis for a successful future (literacy, numeracy, and IT as well as core practical skills such as project management).

APM welcomed the current government's assurance that funding would be available if an apprentice needed additional training to meet Level 2 in English and Maths. The next government must fully implement the proposals in the *Sainsbury Review of Technical Education* – ensuring that the new technical routes are indeed high-quality and have a *common core* which includes numeracy, literacy, and core practical and digital skills.

## **5. Improved careers guidance – providing support to develop the process for the young**

It is imperative that across the UK the provision of careers advice keeps abreast of the changing world of work. Change is a constant in the workplace and we don't know what the future holds but the next generation must be prepared to adapt and develop new skills. We need a workforce that continues to learn.

Careers advice must provide a dynamic connection between the classroom and workplace in order for students to *better understand* career options. Employers need to be encouraged to provide meaningful opportunities, as a central part of a functioning careers guidance system. Getting this right is not just the responsibility of government. Employers, educational and professional bodies like APM have an important role to play in making sure the next generation have the means to make informed career choices.

That Ofsted now considers the quality of careers education in its evaluation of schools in England is a welcome step, but the long awaited careers strategy – setting out a vision to 2020 and focusing on careers education throughout the school and college system must be published as soon as possible. This new strategy must acknowledge the role of project management in increasing productivity in the UK. The newly created Careers and Enterprise Company in England is in its infancy but could play a crucial role in partnership with employers, professional and other bodies in improving the education-to-work transition.

## 6. Create and maintain an audit of UK current and future skills deficit

As we argued in our submission to the Industrial Strategy Green Paper we believe that it makes sense for the Government to develop and maintain an audit of current and likely future skills deficits for key skills and profession pipelines like project management which are essential to delivering future prosperity and growth. APM, along with other professional bodies, could be instrumental in providing data to help build this capability.

## 7. Invest in digital skills

Basic digital skills are a powerful social enabler – connecting people to their communities more effectively as well as improving their career options and opportunities. Skills gaps in digital cost the economy around £63bn a year in lost income. With almost 90% of new jobs requiring digital skills, and with three quarters of employers stating that they are unwilling to interview candidates who do not have basic IT skills, investing in digital skills has never been more important (House of Commons Science and Technology Committee Digital skills crisis Second Report of Session 2016–17).

APM welcomed the publication of the last government's *Digital Strategy* and the Digital Skills Partnership was an important policy development.

The next government must implement the recommendations of the Shadbolt Review to ensure that computer science students have the real-world, up-to-date skills needed for the digital economy. The next government must also empower Local Enterprise Partnerships to build upon existing work to draft digital skills strategies, in partnership with relevant local and combined authorities and the third and private sectors. These strategies should map local digital skills provision. The next government must also commit to providing funding for career and professional development training (CPD) for all teachers. In particular this should be targeted at those teaching the new coding curriculum introduced for students from Key Stage One onwards as this is a key skill for the next generation of project professionals.

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