

Institution: University College London		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 23 Education		
Title of case study: LLAKES Research: Making an Impact on UK and International Policy for Skills Acquisition, Outcomes and Job Quality		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2008–2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Andy Green	Professor of Comparative Social Science, PI of ESRC LLAKES Centre	January 1991 to present
Alison Fuller	Professor of Vocational Education and Work	September 2013 to present
Karen Evans	Professor Emerita	2001–2016; 2016 to present
Francis Green	Professor of Work and Education Economics	January 2010 to present
Lorna Unwin	Professor Emerita	2006–2013; 2013 to present
Golo Henseke	Senior Research Officer	March 2014 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015–2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>The world-class interdisciplinary and comparative research of the Centre for Learning and Life Chances (LLAKES) has supported innovation in education and training through major impacts on UK and international policy. The research has evidenced international differences in skills acquisition and job quality, providing policy makers, practitioners and employers with intelligence-based, adaptable frameworks to enhance policy and practice. It has developed new ideas on critical global problems regarding workplace capacity to support training, skills inequalities, and life-course progression. It has also placed learners' needs at the centre of educational policy through path breaking recent work on the socially differentiated impact of COVID-19 on pupils' learning.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Context: The research on skills acquisition, skills outcomes and job quality was carried out between 2008 and 2020 by LLAKES, the ESRC Centre based at UCL Institute of Education. LLAKES conducts interdisciplinary, comparative and mixed-method research on the connections between lifelong learning and the promotion of economic competitiveness and social cohesion. The major grants which supported the research included: LLAKES 1 (ESRC; GBP4,018,935; 2008-2012); Social Benefits of VET (CEDEFOP; GBP189,000; 2008-2011); LLAKES 2 (ESRC; GBP4,304,426; 2013-2018); Skills and Employment Survey (UKCES/ESRC; GBP996,662; 2017-2019); Does Apprenticeship Work for Adults? (Nuffield; GBP23,700; 2013-2014); Centre Legacy Funding (ESRC; GBP91,455; 2019-2024); Student Knowledge Exchange (OfS/RE, GBP828,755; 2020 to 2022).</p> <p>Methodology: <u>Education and training systems:</u> Research by Andy Green and Pensiero between 2014 and 2017 (R1) used a quasi-cohort analysis of data in two major international surveys to measure changes across countries in literacy and numeracy skills levels and distributions amongst young people aged 16 plus. The analysis created a typology of upper secondary education and training systems and their characteristics to explain the substantial variation in outcomes across countries. Francis Green used data from Understanding Society, including from the special</p>		

module on pupils' homework in the April 2020 survey, to analyse the patterns of home learning during the 2020 lockdown (**R2**).

Apprenticeships: Fuller and Unwin's research on government-supported apprenticeships has been among the UK's leading sources of analysis in this field since the early 2000s. They developed the now widely used 'expansive-restrictive' conceptual framework as a tool for analysing apprenticeship quality, including how well it performs as a platform for career progression and social mobility (**R3**). Between 2013 and 2015 they conducted the first major research project on Adult Apprenticeships in the UK, undertaking qualitative case studies in five sectors and analysing official administrative data to reveal patterns of participation by gender, age band, level and sector (**R4**).

Job quality: The Skills and Employment Survey (SES) 2012, hosted by LLAKES, was the sixth in a series of representative sample surveys of workers in Britain. With a follow-up survey led by Francis Green, and new survey questions on the impact of the recession, it was now possible to conduct longitudinal analyses of the changing pattern of workplace training, skills and job quality over 25 years (**R5**). The team developed seven indicators of job quality which were used in conjunction with the European Working Conditions Surveys and other data and enabled job quality to be investigated in 15 countries (**R6**).

Key findings:

Education and training systems: Countries most successful in raising literacy and numeracy levels, and in reducing skills inequalities, have more integrated systems, with relative parity of esteem between academic and vocational tracks, and high rates of participation in long-cycle upper secondary programmes. They also tend to have broader common core curricula with mandatory numeracy and literacy learning across all tracks. Countries with more fragmented systems, such as England, were less successful in raising skills levels and reducing inequality (**R1**). Mean literacy and numeracy scores amongst young adults aged 16–24 in England in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Survey of Adult Skills (SAS) were lower than in all but two sampled countries and inequalities were higher than in any other country. Remarkably, 16-24-year-olds scored no higher than those aged 55–65 in literacy and numeracy, unlike in all other countries bar two where the younger cohorts scored substantially better. Francis Green's analysis of home learning patterns during the lockdown showed that UK pupils did only 2.5 hours of school work per day on average. This was much less than previously thought, with large inequalities by region, social class and type of school attended (**R2**).

Apprenticeships: Most adult apprentices are existing employees pursuing 'restrictive' apprenticeships within their existing occupations, with little evidence of new learning or career progression. By contrast, in the minority of cases where adult apprentices were experiencing 'expansive apprenticeships', the provision was highly valued (**R3**). The team's recent policy analysis highlights limitations in the ability of apprenticeships for both young people and adults to support social mobility and progression, and makes recommendations for improvement, including for strengthening the requirement for off-site learning and ensuring apprentices develop substantial new occupational expertise beyond the confines of a narrow job role (**R4**).

Job quality: The SES research showed that the volume of work-based training in the UK approximately halved between 1998 and 2010 and continued to decline thereafter (**R5**). At the European level, the research found that work 'intensity' had risen in most countries, while eight of the 15 countries had seen improvement in 'Work Quality' - a measure capturing levels of intellectual challenge, worker autonomy and other aspects of personal stimulation within jobs. However, within the UK, France and Germany there had been no improvement. The 'social corporatist' countries, such as Sweden, had both the highest levels of 'Work Quality' and the least variation in this among workers (**R6**).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1 Green, A., Green, F. & Pensiero, N. (2015) Cross-Country Variation in Adult Skills Inequality: Why are Skill Levels and Opportunities so Unequal in Anglophone Countries? *Comparative Education Review*, 59 (4) (featured article), 595–618. <https://doi.org/10.1086/683101>

R2 Green, F. (2020) *Schoolwork in Lockdown: New Evidence on the Epidemic of Educational Poverty*. LLAKES Research Paper 67, UCL Institute of Education, London. <https://www.llakes.ac.uk/sites/default/files/LLAKES%20Working%20Paper%2067.pdf>

R3 Fuller, A., Leonard, P., Unwin, L. & Davey, G. (2015) *Does Apprenticeship Work for Adults? The Experiences of Adult Apprentices in England*. www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/Adult%20Apprenticeship.pdf

R4 Fuller, A. & Unwin, L. (2017) Apprenticeship Quality and Social Mobility. In Sutton Trust, *Better Apprenticeships*, Sutton Trust, London. www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Better-Apprenticeships-1.pdf

R5 Green, F., Felstead, A., Gallie, D., Inanc, H. & Jewson, N. (2016) The Declining Volume of Workers' Training in Britain, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 54(2), 422–48. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjir.12130>

R6 Green, F., Mostafa, T., Parent-Thirion, A., Vermeylen, G., Houten, G. V., Biletta, I. & Lyly-Yrjanainen, M. (2013) Is Job Quality Becoming More Unequal?, *Industrial & Labor Relations Review*, 66(4), 753–84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001979391306600402>

Quality indicators: LLAKES research awarded after rigorous peer-reviewed funding via multiple awards from ESRC, Nuffield and CEDEFOP.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Principal beneficiaries: Policy makers in governments and their agencies in the UK and Europe; the OECD and other international policy organisations; the public, through better understanding of important policy issues; and a great many students, apprentices, workers, trade unions and employers through the uptake of findings to enhance provision.

Reach and significance: LLAKES research on education, training and work has been widely taken up in the media and by policy-makers, stakeholders and professional practitioners. Research and submissions to UK Government consultations by Fuller, Andy Green, Francis Green and Unwin are cited 158 times across 70 public policy documents, including: the final report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Social Mobility (**S1**); the Augar review report (**S2**); and two reports from the Government Office for Science (**S3**). The LLAKES' papers discussed here were covered 88 times in national broadcast, print and on-line media, contributing to building public understanding of these important policy areas. LLAKES has also influenced policy through the 147 public seminars it organised for stakeholders and end-users and the 31 'masterclasses' with policy-makers it hosted with the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS).

The exceptional breadth and reach of LLAKES interdisciplinary and comparative research have significantly enhanced understanding, both in the UK (**S1-S4**) and internationally (**S5-S8**), of the interaction of learning and the workplace, with consequent impacts on policy-making, on the quality of policy analysis, and on practice on the ground as set out below (**S1-S10**). The former Director of UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning attests to the 'wide-ranging policy impact of research in the LLAKES Centre' and 'its impact on some of the most influential reports of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning....' (**S6**).

Impacts on UK education policy: LLAKES comparative analysis of the characteristics and outcomes of different education and training systems has influenced UK policy by focusing attention on gaps and vulnerabilities in UK policy and practice (**R1-R5**) (**S1-S4**). Work on the uneven quality of post-16 education and training and the declining volume of training in UK workplaces (**R1, R4, R5**) has contributed to the body of evidence that has influenced the UK Government to: a) improve apprenticeship quality; b) ensure higher standards in core skills in

the upper secondary phase; c) enhance the transparency of vocational pathways and d) raise the quality and esteem of Adult and Further Education (FE) provision and re-balance policy priorities between this sector and Higher Education.

The work is cited in the 2019 Augar review (**S2**) in support of recommendations for strengthening apprenticeships and restoring investment in lifelong learning. The relevance of this work to UK industry is underlined by an endorsement from the Education and Skills Director of the defence firm BAE Systems. He said that the research was *'very much valued'*, commenting that *'at a time of unprecedented change in Government policy in this arena, it is helpful to have evidence based research to inform the policy discussion and especially so on the value of qualifications within apprenticeships'* (**S9**).

LLAKES research has also influenced the development of the policies for FE sector in the Government's (2021) White Paper on skills. Andy Green and Francis Green presented their findings on comparative UK skills deficits, based on their early analysis of the OECD's Survey of Adult Skills data, to policy-makers at DBIS on 25.2.2014. The Secretary of State for Education's strategic speech to the Social Market Foundation (**S4**), trailing measures in the White Paper, cited Green and Green's research findings - on the relatively high rates of graduate under-employment and the lack of intergenerational improvement in the core skills of young adults in England (**R1**) - in support of his argument for a radical re-focusing of policy priorities towards enhancing high quality higher technical education in the FE sector.

The LLAKES report (**R2**) revealing the limited home learning of pupils during the lockdown received wide media coverage and prompted a question in the House of Lords on June 18 2020 that directly cited the research. The Chair of the Education Select Committee cited the research in support of his recommendations for new learning catch-up policies in a speech in Parliament (2.7.2020) and in a subsequent article in The Times Online (3.7.2020).

Impacts on global education policy: LLAKES research on education, skills and job quality has also influenced the policy and research practices of major international organisations. Key to this has been the creation of frameworks that identify robust, evidence-informed features of well-functioning systems, which can then be used to underpin policy, monitoring and capacity building interventions. The seven indicators of job quality (**R6**) have proved particularly influential. Francis Green and colleagues wrote reports for, and participated in, expert committees of the OECD and Foundation for Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) (**S7**) and their findings informed a European Parliament Resolution on work-life balance recommending the monitoring of the seven indicators (**S8**). A Senior Research Manager at Eurofound confirmed that: *'the framework for job quality ... was used in all Eurofound's research on job quality...when Eurofound developed in cooperation with the International Labour Organisation (the "ILO") its report on working conditions in a global perspective (2019)... we decided to present the findings alongside the 7 dimensions of job quality you developed'* (**S7**).

Andy Green and Francis Green contributed to the development of an OECD Skills Strategy in 2011, which informed the ongoing conceptual development of the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competences (PIAAC) (**S5**). Francis Green worked with OECD in developing indicators for a special module on skills utilisation in the PIAAC survey. These indicators, which were informed by his 'job requirements' approach (**R6**), were included in the 2014 and 2017 rounds of the survey (**S5**). Evans and Andy Green made ongoing research and policy contributions (e.g. drawing on **R1**) to the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub, which is an integral part of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), an intergovernmental process founded in 1996 to foster dialogue and cooperation between 53 member countries in Asia and Europe. They assisted the Hub's directorate in developing policy recommendations on lifelong learning strategies and influencing the policies adopted by UNESCO in their *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*. The former director of UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning confirmed that *'the Centre has contributed significantly to the development of the Hub by framing and developing the agendas and publications of its Research Networks in ways that have*

enabled the Hub's Directorate and Advisory Board to become an important source for policy recommendations concerning competence development and effective LLL strategies' (S6).

Impacts on Practice: Equally important has been the influence on practice. Key to this achievement has been the team's focus on identifying the key characteristics of high quality training and education. By working closely with employers, practitioners and learners, they have successfully challenged negative and constraining practices and made a robustly evidenced case for the importance of 'expansive' educational strategies which generate more powerful progression and outcomes for learners.

Fuller and Unwin's research (**R3, R4**) has led to a greater focus on apprenticeships at the 'expansive' end of the team's 'restrictive-expansive' continuum. The concept has been used by organisations supporting and delivering apprenticeships at home and abroad, including Citizens UK, the Sutton Trust, the Learning and Work Institute, the Australian National Centre for Vocational Education Research and by an estimated 120 Independent Training Organisations referencing the 'expansive apprenticeship' concept in their on-line vision statements.

The team made a pivotal contribution to Citizens UK *Good Jobs Campaign*, (2015–2018) which has supported 645 young people into job placements, internships and apprenticeships. Their ideas have also contributed substantially to promoting innovation and new forms of professionalism in the FE sector, not least through providing the basis for advice sent by the National Education Union (NEU) to 12,000 union members across FE and sixth-form colleges. The Union's National Official for post-16 education described the impact of their research on the NEU's approach to professionalism as '*crucial*', leading to '*a paradigm shift in our work*'. He added: '*It has enabled a way of talking about professionalism in the sector at workplace level to be key to unlocking innovation, collaboration and productivity. As the sector is beset with a fairly 'restrictive' set of assumptions this is by no means a simple or straightforward task*' (**S10**).

These contributions to professional practice have helped to unlock the potential of workforce development for enhancing career progression and thus life-course mobility. They are underpinned by the LLAKES research on education and training systems, which identifies the system characteristics that reproduce intergenerational inequalities and how they have been exacerbated during the pandemic. Taken together, the findings illustrate the added value to policy of LLAKES' interdisciplinary and comparative approach to unravelling the interconnections between education and work, and policy and practice.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

S1 House of Lords Select Committee on Social Mobility (2016) [*Overlooked and Left Behind: Improving the Transition from School to Work for the Majority of Young People*](#), Report of Session 2015–16. London (cited 26 times).

S2 [*Independent Panel Report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding*](#) (Augar report), 2019 (cited 11 times in report).

S3 [*Government Office for Science \(2017\) Future of Skills and Lifelong Learning*](#) (cited 9 times in report).

S4 [*Education Secretary's speech to Social Market Foundation*](#), 9 July 2020.

S5 Testimonial: Senior Analyst, Education and Skills Directorate, OECD.

S6 Testimonial: Director of UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2011–17.

S7 Testimonial: Senior Research Manager, Eurofound.

S8 European Parliament Resolution on creating labour market conditions favourable for work-life balance.

S9 Testimonial: Education and Skills Director, BAE Systems.

S10 Testimonial: National Official for Post 16, National Education Union.