

## **Apprenticeship and Well-being**

### **Talk by Richard Layard**

- Britain does well for the most academically-minded half of the population, and poorly for the other half. What the second group need are opportunities to learn in a way that is connected to work and if possible provides an income at the same time. This means apprenticeship.
- Unless the problem of low skill is tackled effectively, there will be further increases in inequality, due to the steady decline in the relative demand for low-skilled labour. And greater inequality will have negative impacts on well-being.
- Britain has a longer tail of low-skilled adults than any other North European country. This is not due to our schools, since at 14/15 our children do comparatively well in the PISA and TIMSS tests. It is due to our failure to educate so many of our young people beyond the age of 16/17. The lack of attractive opportunities provided to this group is grossly unfair.
- There is also a strong economic case for apprenticeship. The social rate of return to apprenticeship is much higher than to full-time academic education. It should be more vigorously promoted.

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- Current government policy is on the right lines. It involves compulsion (by 2015) on all youngsters under 18 to be in part- or full-time education. It also guarantees (by 2015) access to apprenticeship for all with 5 GCSE passes at any grade. This will be the main route through which the additional participation in education will be achieved.
- To find enough apprenticeship places (for at least 20% of youngsters under 18) will be a major challenge. It will require, as in other countries, that employers are directly offered payment for taking on apprentices. In addition, where a young person would qualify for an Education Maintenance Allowance if he chose full-time education, the equivalent amount should be paid to his employer if he is an apprentice.
- This whole policy, if properly implemented, will be one of the most important achievements of this Parliament – making Britain a more equal and more efficient nation.