



**Delivering the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship:
What are the challenges and implications for good practice?**

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Abstract

Purpose

The Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship (CMDA) was approved for delivery in the UK in 2015 (IfATE, 2023). The CMDA offers future managers the opportunity to gain a recognised degree as well as the practical skills to thrive in today's competitive job market. A number of studies have been written on the development phase of the CMDA in various institutions, but to date no systematic review exists to provide an overview of commonalities and insights gained across these studies. This review aims to fill this gap.

Design/methodology/approach

A systematic literature review was used to identify studies written on the CMDA since its introduction. Twelve papers met our selection criteria, and thematic coding was used to analyse and present findings.

Findings

Findings were grouped into 5 themes: i) curriculum design; ii) programme delivery and support for apprentices; iii) portfolio of evidence and end-point assessment; iv) working with employers, and v) recruitment and onboarding.

Originality/value

This review is the first synthesis to date of literature written on the CMDA. Our analysis has allowed us to formulate recommendations for future practice that will be of use to providers in the next phase of the CMDA's development.

Keywords

Chartered Manager, Management education, Degree apprenticeship, Work-based learning, Tripartite relationship, Systematic literature review

Article classification

Literature Review

Introduction

The landscape of management education is undergoing a transformative shift, fuelled by the rising demand for skilled professionals equipped to navigate the complexities of the contemporary business world. In response to this demand, the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship (CMDA) has emerged as a pioneering initiative, bridging the gap between academic theory and practical workplace experience while offering opportunities for widening participation in higher level education. Positioned at the forefront of the UK's management education landscape, the CMDA is intended to shape the future of ambitious managers, providing them with a recognised degree and the practical skills to thrive in today's competitive job market. However, amidst its potential for success, the CMDA confronts an array of challenges that affect the parties involved, namely the apprentices, the providers, and the employers. Approved for delivery in 2015 and now moving towards a new phase with plans for a revised standard (IfATE, 2023), this is a key moment in the development of the CMDA. This makes it imperative that we have a clear understanding of the challenges encountered so far in order to maximise the effectiveness of the programme going forwards.

Given the role of degree apprenticeships (DAs) including the CMDA in boosting UK industry productivity, we need to understand the challenges that have been faced during the emergence of the qualification in order to implement best practice during the next phase. While there exists a substantial body of academic literature exploring apprenticeships and indeed DAs, our initial scoping searches revealed a limited number of studies specifically about the CMDA. Moreover, no systematic review has yet been conducted to synthesise these studies. This represents a significant gap in the existing literature considering the relevance of this topic for an increasing number of UK providers. To address this gap, we undertook a literature review that focuses exclusively on the challenges surrounding the delivery of the CMDA and existing understandings of good practice, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of this important educational pathway.

This paper contextualises key issues relating to the development of the CMDA to date before outlining the systematic literature review applied. Findings regarding CMDA challenges are then summarised. Based on these findings, we discuss implications for good practice that will be of value to Higher Education Institution (HEI) providers, practitioners and developers of this qualification. Finally, conclusions are drawn along with suggestions for further research.

Contextualisation and background to the CMDA

Apprenticeships as a means of enhancing productivity in industry have long been part of the UK education and training landscape and are currently defined by the Department for Education as:

‘a job with training. Through an apprenticeship, an apprentice will gain the technical knowledge, practical experience and wider skills and behaviours that they need to be competent in their immediate job and future career. The apprentice will gain this through:

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3 [....] Formal off-the-job training (which is the responsibility of the provider)

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5 [....] The opportunity to apply these new skills in a real work environment, in
6 a productive job role (which is the responsibility of the apprentice's
7 employer)'

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10 (DfE, 2023, p.28)

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12 A UK skills gap and productivity lag was identified in 2015 (HM Customs, 2015, cited
13 in Hughes and Saieva, 2019, p.227), putting the spotlight on improving apprenticeship
14 provision nationally. DAs were therefore introduced in the UK in 2014 in response to the
15 Richard Review of Apprenticeships (2012). Mulkeen *et al.* (2017, p.2) note that the aim of this
16 new provision was to increase the number of apprentices to over 3 million by 2020 by offering
17 ‘an alternative way to professionalism and extending parity and equality of opportunity for
18 those choosing to undertake an undergraduate or postgraduate programme through a non-
19 traditional route’. Since the government’s introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017,
20 there is increased pressure on HEIs to deliver sustainable DAs to meet these government
21 targets. As part of this expansion, the CMDA was approved for delivery in 2015 with the
22 potential to respond to the gap in provision in management education. However, the DA
23 framework also presents new challenges to HEI providers due to its non-traditional content
24 and delivery, the need to work closely with employers, and the unique nature of the
25 apprentice profile.

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27 DAs are designed to allow apprentices not only to gain membership of a professional,
28 statutory, and regulatory body, but also to obtain a bachelor’s degree (level 6) or master’s
29 degree (level 7). Furthermore, degree apprentices must have a contract of employment, be
30 paid at least the appropriate minimum wage, have an apprenticeship agreement with their
31 employer, be allowed structured off-the-job training (OTJ) and must complete an end-point
32 assessment (EPA) via an approved organisation. In line with these requirements, the CMDA –
33 like all DAs – differs from traditional degrees in the nature of the academic learning content,
34 which is based on a work-based learning (WBL) model. This means that CMDA apprentices
35 study with a provider and gather evidence in the workplace to show how they have applied
36 their learning in their industry context. This is presented in their EPA portfolio of evidence
37 that demonstrates that they have gained the required ‘knowledge, skills and behaviours’ that
38 correspond to the Chartered Manager apprenticeship standard (IfATE, 2023). Areas of
39 competence in the standard include operational strategy, project management, business
40 finance, sales and marketing, technologies, communication and collaboration, and leading
41 and managing people, but also a range of skills that are potentially less easy to measure and
42 assess such as ‘awareness of self and others’, ‘management of self’, decision-making and
43 developing responsibility (IfATE, 2023). The descriptors for many of these elements imply the
44 need to develop a reflective and self-aware learning style and an ability to understand and
45 adopt different management models, as well as an ability to undertake meaningful research
46 and analysis.

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48 It is important to note, however, that entrants onto the CMDA typically differ from
49 students entering more traditional academic programmes. As one provider points out, they

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3 are 'diverse in age, previous academic experience, management roles and local organisations.
4 Some have not undertaken any kind of formal study for some time' (Quew Jones and Brook,
5 2019, p.296). This implies that although apprentices may have a wealth of industry-specific
6 experience, the HEI provider will need to support them to develop the necessary academic
7 and reflective skills to successfully gain their qualification. Moreover, there is an additional
8 relationship between apprentice and employer that does not exist in the case of the
9 traditional student experience since the employer is instrumental in enrolling the apprentice
10 onto the programme. This employer investment potentially adds pressure on the apprentice
11 to succeed on the CMDA.
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16 A strong relationship between stakeholders is therefore needed to ensure appropriate
17 design and delivery of the CMDA: 'Employers, universities and professional bodies can come
18 together to co-design a fully integrated degree course specifically for apprentices, which
19 delivers and tests both academic learning and on-the-job training' (Department for Business,
20 Innovation and Skills, 2015, p. 13, in Lester and Bravenboer, 2020, p.18). While this
21 collaboration offers opportunity for innovation, 'for many academics and administrators in
22 the universities, this is a daunting, complex task' (Aggarwal and Aggarwal, 2021, p.220). The
23 nature of the tripartite relationship between the employer, the HEI, and the apprentice is
24 therefore an area to be explored in this review.
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29 Methodology

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31 The systematic literature review (SLR) process in this study adheres to the three macro stages
32 for planning, conducting and reporting on the literature, as outlined by Tranfield *et al.* (2003)
33 and Tranfield *et al.* (2004), as well as the Prisma Statement Flow Diagram (Moher *et al.*, 2009).
34 Table I presents the review protocol, which provides a comprehensive account of the entire
35 review process, including an overview of databases searched, search string used, screening
36 processes applied, tools used, and our decision to use a thematic presentation of our findings.
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42 **INSERT: Table I. Systematic Literature Review protocol**

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45 To address the research aim, one review question (RQ) was designed: *What are the*
46 *challenges faced by Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship Programmes and what*
47 *recommendations can be identified for good practice in these areas?* Figure 1 illustrates each
48 step of our screening and selection of papers following the PRISMA approach (Moher *et al.*,
49 2009). Table II lists the inclusion criteria developed during our planning stage.
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55 **INSERT: Figure 1. Prisma flow diagram (adapted from Moher *et al.*, 2009)**

56 **INSERT: Table II. Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

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5 Although the CMDA was approved in the UK in 2015, we set a period of 10 years (from
6 2012 to 2022) to ensure that no relevant paper or initial discussion was missed. Our search
7 identified a total of 352 articles. 127 duplicates were removed and the titles and abstracts of
8 the remaining 225 articles were screened by the 4 members of the project team. During this
9 first screening, 149 articles were excluded as they did not meet all inclusion criteria. It is worth
10 noting that certain database filters appeared to be incomplete, resulting in the presence of
11 theses and book chapters within the search results. Thus, 76 were identified as potentially
12 relevant. In the subsequent screening round, the full texts of these articles were reviewed,
13 resulting in a final selection of 12 articles (see Appendix, Table V for full list). Each of these
14 was evaluated by at least two members of the team to ensure comprehensive assessment.
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19 We coded the 12 studies using the phases for thematic analysis described by Nowell
20 *et al.* (2017): familiarising with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing
21 themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. Our team was divided into 2
22 groups using different tools based on their knowledge and experience. One group made use
23 of NVivo software whilst the other used an excel spreadsheet to read and code data. The first
24 3 phases of Nowell were conducted separately to maximise the researchers' expertise in each
25 of the tools. The remaining stages were then conducted through a collaborative coding
26 process, which identified 5 main themes (Table III).
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33 **INSERT: Table III. Study themes**

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36 The thematic analysis followed Ozuem *et al.* (2022)'s approach, which encompasses
37 scoping, data segmentation, categorising the segment text, developing and refining
38 categories and naming-making and consolidation. It is important to note that the team
39 collaborated throughout to ensure consistency in selection and analysis, thereby
40 guaranteeing the reliability and integrity of the study.
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44 **Findings**

45 Table V summarises the distribution of our identified themes across studies, and our narrative
46 account of these 5 themes reflects the key points made. There is inevitably some overlap
47 between the themes, and we have indicated those where relevant.
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53 **INSERT: Table IV. Distribution of themes across studies**

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57 ***Theme 1: Curriculum design***

58 This section collates findings relating to curriculum including module design, materials,
59 assessment, and apprentice experience of these. Studies written during the early phase of
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3 introducing the CMDA identified issues with mapping the degree programme and workplace
4 experience to the CMDA standard (Daley *et al.*, 2016; Hughes and Saieva, 2019; Rowe *et al.*,
5 2016; Welbourn *et al.*, 2019). These pathfinding studies provide indications of many
6 challenges that later studies continue to tackle.
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9 Daley *et al.* (2016), who worked with one large employer to custom-design one of the
10 early CMDA programmes, describe a process of mapping existing degree modules against
11 CMDA learning outcomes and assessment criteria as well as the CMI level 5 diploma. The
12 mapping document was made available to employers and apprentices to ensure that the
13 connection between modules and the outcomes required by the CMDA standard was clear.
14 Identified gaps were discussed with both teaching teams and employers to ensure that
15 apprentices would have sufficient opportunity to provide evidence of learning across the
16 standard for their EPA. The study highlights the importance of collaboration with employers
17 at design stage (see also Theme 4) and the benefits of custom-built programmes. Rowe *et al.*
18 (2016), who undertook a similar mapping process, add that design success factors include the
19 provider having prior experience in delivering WBL modules and 'negotiation skills' to
20 implement the necessary 'plethora of learning outcomes'. Additionally, they highlight the
21 importance of flexibility in innovating and developing modules to align to a range of different
22 employers and indeed compatible with other professional bodies or sectors rather than being
23 restricted to one qualified professional status.
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30 Hughes and Saieva (2019) and Welbourn *et al.* (2019) also note that traditional
31 curriculum design and delivery require adaptation, customisation, and innovation to suit the
32 purposes of the CMDA and the WBL needs of apprentices and employers: 'In a context of
33 university systems and processes geared towards delivering a uniform quality of student
34 experience on campus, the task of offering high-quality workforce development that meets
35 the specific needs of an employer may well prove challenging to the HEI's capacity and
36 capability' (Welbourn *et al.*, 2019, p.410). Hughes and Saieva (2019) add that employers are
37 diverse, ranging from large public sector organisations to small entrepreneurial businesses,
38 so course materials require tailoring to specific workplaces (see also Theme 4). Similarly, as
39 many apprentices have not had traditional academic training (see Theme 5), the programme
40 needs to be designed to integrate 'strong support mechanisms' to help with 'academic
41 writing, referencing and how to collate this work-based evidence so as to meet the
42 Gateway[1] requirements' (*ibid.*, p.232). These factors mean that DA providers must be open
43 to 'operational innovation' (Welbourn *et al.*, 2019, p.412) in order to differentiate their
44 provision from traditional campus education and adapt to changing industry demands.
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49 Another key aspect of curriculum design considered in the studies is pedagogical
50 models. As identified by the early studies (Daley *et al.*, 2016; Rowe *et al.*, 2016), the nature of
51 the CMDA means that, unlike traditional HE routes, the programme is heavily oriented
52 towards WBL, which incorporates a need for reflective thinking and writing. Konstantinou and
53 Miller (2020; 2021) explore reflective practice and self-managed learning (SML)/problem-
54 based learning (PBL), drawing on Boud *et al.* (2006)'s concept of 'productive reflection' to
55 emphasise the importance of these work-integrated learning (WIL) tools in making the
56 connection between the classroom and the workplace context. Apprentices appreciated that
57 SML and PBL modules allowed them to connect theory to practice in their industry context,
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3 but some difficulties were posed by conflicting demands of workplace and classroom (e.g.
4 different timeframes/deadlines). On the whole, SML and WIL were less successful in the
5 public sector than in smaller company contexts where the line manager could be more
6 directly engaged, projects could be tailored personally, and apprentices could see the impact
7 of their learning on the workplace. Where apprentices could not see this impact, 'WIL was
8 more of an abstract concept' (Konstantinou and Miller, 2020, p.773). In a further study, the
9 same authors apply WIL and reflective models to an innovative summative assessment format
10 (based on a 12-week PBL investigation) that ensures alignment of 'the needs of graduates and
11 their employers' and thus promotes employability (Miller and Konstantinou, 2022, p.4). When
12 integrated successfully across the classroom and workplace and into assessment, reflective
13 WIL practices help apprentices in 'developing a professional identity and [...] advancing their
14 career' (Konstantinou and Miller, 2020, p.777). To achieve this, redesign of traditional
15 modules and assessment as well as closer cooperation between the stakeholders involved in
16 delivering DAs are essential (Konstantinou and Miller, 2020).

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22 In a similar way, Quew Jones and Brook (2019)'s action learning framework gives
23 apprentices the opportunity to engage in discussion and reflection during provider-led action
24 learning meetings. In their pilot, after signing a learning contract outlining a specific output
25 they had agreed to produce for their company (e.g. a marketing plan or work-based event),
26 apprentices benefitted from this 'safe space' to 'discuss problems they encountered along
27 the way with their project' with fellow apprentices (2019, p.299). Additionally, a further
28 action learning case study at the same HEI (Rhodes and Brook, 2021) highlights the value of
29 using reflective journalling to aid collaborative reflection; in this case, apprentices used
30 WhatsApp as a journalling tool, which was particularly useful during the Covid-19 pandemic
31 and could also be deployed in distance learning. Key benefits of the action learning approach
32 included development of questioning skills, reflexivity, peer mentoring, a sense of teamwork,
33 and increased self-accountability (Quew Jones and Brook, 2019).

34 35 36 37 38 39 *Theme 2: Programme delivery and support for apprentices*

40 The included studies present findings and reflections related to specific delivery and support
41 requirements of apprentices on DAs compared to students on traditional pathways. Areas of
42 focus include the OTJ training hours allocated to the apprentice, workload demands, support
43 from the provider tutor and professional support staff.

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46 From the employer perspective, there was a perception that the requirement to
47 allocate 20% OTJ was 'prescriptive and inflexible' and potentially conflicts with company
48 needs (Hughes and Saieva, 2019). The main concern from the apprentice perspective was
49 workload, which is perceived to be heavy (Hughes and Saieva, 2019). Apprentices can also be
50 affected by in-company issues such as rapid turnover in line managers, meaning that they do
51 not receive enough or consistent guidance within the employing organisation (Konstantinou
52 and Miller, 2020; Quew Jones, 2022) (see also Theme 4). Hughes and Saieva (2019) found that
53 flexibility and communication was essential in addressing these types of issue, both during
54 the onboarding process (see Theme 5) and beyond.

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3 A number of the articles confirm that apprentices do not typically have recent
4 academic experience (see Theme 5), which means that targeted support is required to
5 develop the necessary skills for programme completion: 'Often it was the apprentice's first
6 time in H.E. so initially unsure [...] how to interact with the knowledge they are gaining' (Quew
7 Jones, 2022, p.154). In their action learning pilot, Quew Jones and Brook (2019) identified
8 reflective writing as an important focus for support, and built additional time and tasks into
9 their DA to address this need (see also Theme 1).
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13 Workplace mentoring was found to be an invaluable form of support in the DA
14 environment, where 'The centrality of the interface of work and learning and the workplace
15 mentor's crucial role in facilitating this places them in a key position to determine the quality
16 of the apprenticeship provision and successful outcomes' (Roberts *et al.*, 2019, p.212). While
17 this type of mentoring lies within the workplace domain, and therefore links to our theme 4,
18 this case study led the provider to develop a model for good practice based on 5 domains:
19 'providing induction, setting workplace expectations of professionalism, proactively
20 facilitating learning within and outside of the workplace, encouraging engagement with
21 support networks and supporting the achievement of the apprenticeship standard' (*ibid.*,
22 p.216). Similarly, in the provider context, Quew Jones and Brook (2019, p.303) noted that
23 inviting past apprentices back to speak about their WBL experiences was a constructive form
24 of support for current apprentices.
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29 Konstantinou and Miller (2021, p.14) also observed the importance of peer support,
30 which was perhaps heightened during the online context enforced by the Covid pandemic:
31 'teamwork and sharing tasks became even more important to them'. This can be likened to
32 findings by Rhodes and Brook (2021), where one of the case study co-authors was a former
33 apprentice who continued to use WhatsApp groups as a way of continuing to develop peer-
34 support and learning beyond the pilot scheme. These authors observed success when the
35 programme framework itself encourages apprentices to be proactive in adopting and
36 adapting support networks and channels.
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41 ***Theme 3: Portfolio of evidence and End-Point Assessment***

42 There is clear evidence that providers have struggled with the implementation of the EPA and
43 accompanying portfolio of evidence, largely because of a lack of initial guidance from
44 government sources and a delay in announcing who would act as end-point assessor in the
45 early phases of establishing CMDA programs (Rowe *et al.*, 2016, p.361). Schedlitzki (2019,
46 p.243) further points out the mismatch between the rigidity of the CMDA standard and the
47 reflective practice that is embedded in the programme: 'the standard sets out in "black and
48 white" who a leader or manager should be and only those who can evidence that they indeed
49 know all the things and are able to do all the things and behave in exactly the way that the
50 standard sets out will be able to complete their apprenticeships'. Schedlitzki goes on to note
51 that the 'concreteness' of the competency framework, which aims to describe ideal practice,
52 creates a tension between development and assessment that continues to pose a challenge.
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57 Hughes and Saieva (2019, p.226) reported that apprentices struggled to manage the
58 amount of evidence needed for the EPA. This relates to both overall workload and the
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opportunity within different workplaces to gain experience of the required competencies. Quew Jones and Brook (2019, p.301) found that the processes involved in their action learning pilot scheme were beneficial in enabling apprentices to engage with ‘some of those “harder to assess” competences required of the chartered manager’. Skills developed included questioning style, teamwork and communication, listening skills, peer mentoring, and accountability for own progress. Their approach may be a model for successfully engaging apprentices in developing the skills needed for their portfolio of evidence.

Similarly, Schedlitzki (2019) also focuses on evidencing and assessing critical reflection in the context of developing and evidencing leadership identity. Schedlitzki notes that manager development programmes are often not aligned with the workplace culture and context of learners, so apprentices struggle to apply their knowledge and skills to the workplace and consequently find it difficult to fulfil their ‘aspirational leader identities’. Learning portfolios can be used as ‘critical reflection tools [...] to develop reflexive and sustainable leadership practice. [They] have the potential capacity to move learners [...] towards embracing deep, situated learning practices’ (Schedlitzki, 2019, p.238). Assessment via the portfolio of evidence should be a tool to ‘enable learners to see effective leadership as a socially constructed phenomenon rather than the outcome of developing fixed competencies. Whilst the competencies set out in the apprenticeship standards provide a definition of effective leadership, they require further cultural interpretation and the creation of organisationally situated meaning of competencies through reflective practice’ (*ibid.*, p.242). Schedlitzki further recommends the use of Kolb’s (1984) learning cycles as a framework for the development and implementation of reflective curriculum and portfolios of evidence in leadership DAs (Schedlitzki, 2019, p. 245).

Theme 4: Working with employers

The relationship between stakeholders is central to the CMDA, with employer and HEI provider working together closely to deliver the programme and enable the apprentice to successfully apply their academic learning in the workplace and ultimately achieve their qualification. This three-way collaboration encompasses the apprentice, the HEI provider, and the apprentice’s employing organisation. At the apprentice’s level, it is embodied in the ‘tripartite’ relationship between the apprentice, their line manager and their provider tutor.

The studies suggest that employers have struggled to understand the nature and importance of the employer involvement and input that is required to successfully maximise apprentice learning. Konstantinou and Miller (2020, p.778, citing Ajjawi et al., 2019, p.314) acknowledge ‘a lack of shared endeavour and coordination among the key stakeholders – student, university and industry’. They point out that this lack of understanding and coordination leads to misalignment of expectations across the university and workplace settings, where task timelines and deadlines for example may not match. The impact of these mismatches on the apprentice is that they will experience difficulty in ‘transfer[ing] what is gained in the academic environment back into the workplace and to meet the requirement to practice new skills and behaviours’ (Quew Jones and Brook, 2019, p.296). To develop a

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3 successful “dual identity” as worker and learner (*ibid.*; see also Quew Jones, 2022),
4 coordinated support from all stakeholders is needed.
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6 The literature demonstrates that providers have sought to encourage ‘a strong
7 relationship setting to embed the ideology that it was a tripartite relationship and to ensure
8 support for all parties’ (Hughes and Saieva, 2019, p.231). ‘Closer cooperation’ (Konstantinou
9 and Miller, 2020, p.778) is needed right from the design of the DA, through onboarding and
10 delivery (see also Themes 1, 5). Quew Jones and Brook emphasise that the employer must be
11 able to perceive added value for their organisation, and that this requires ‘meaningful
12 collaboration with employers [...] especially concerning the work-based features of the
13 programme’ since this is likely to be a new concept for line managers (Quew Jones and Brook,
14 2019, p.296; see also Quew Jones, 2022). Early communication between all parties is needed
15 to ensure that busy line managers understand the dividends that their support for their
16 apprentices will pay. Without this understanding, line managers – who are not paid per se for
17 their involvement in delivering the programme – are less likely to support the programme
18 (Quew Jones, 2022). Partnering with HEIs in this way is still a new venture, and providers have
19 taken the lead in highlighting the value of the DA to the employer and in innovating new ways
20 of collaborating. One pilot scheme used action learning sets to engage apprentices
21 themselves in designing ways of promoting manager participation. One result was the
22 introduction of workplace Ambassadors or Champions who work to ensure the levy is being
23 utilised appropriately and to offer support to both apprentices and managers to encourage
24 best practice (Quew Jones, 2022).
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32 As Rowe *et al.* (2016) sum it up, experience shows that a collaborative tripartite
33 relationship is needed to facilitate a sense of ownership and engagement at all levels of the
34 CMDA, from building curriculum design through to accreditation processes. The focus must
35 be user-oriented and employer-driven to alleviate concerns about productivity, relevance,
36 and added value. Welbourn *et al.* (2019, p.411) draw attention to the high stakes involved for
37 the provider: “Getting things wrong” with a major employer brings high reputational damage
38 to a university that will typically ripple through the sector and the well-networked
39 marketplace of DA suppliers’. To remain competitive in this growing market, providers – who
40 are accustomed to operating within the traditional frameworks of higher education – will
41 have to apply innovative pedagogy and consider new solutions such as custom-built DAs
42 designed in collaboration with employers.
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49 ***Theme 5: Recruitment and onboarding***

50 In this section we look at issues surrounding the impact of recruiting the right apprentices,
51 implementing appropriate onboarding processes, and issues relating to apprentice profile
52 and suitability. In the studies reviewed, some providers struggled with systems for processing
53 onboarding, particularly in the early phases of introducing the CMDA, when systems and
54 information were still incomplete (Rowe *et al.*, 2016; Welbourn *et al.*, 2019). Building a strong
55 communicative relationship with the employer (see also Theme 4) was central to managing
56 the impact of misunderstandings and educating the employer about how to access funding
57 and other processes (Daley *et al.*, 2016). Hughes and Saieva (2019, p.230) describe their
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3 process of pre-emptive communication with employers: '[We], therefore, carefully collated
4 these concerns and began, in our talks to employers, to interweave answers to the questions
5 before they were even raised'. This enabled the provider to alleviate employer concerns such
6 as losing staff after investing in them, and to educate employers for example about the added
7 value to their company and workforce. Welbourn *et al.* (2019, p.409) further note that many
8 'front runner' institutions have set up 'stand-alone units with responsibility for leading and
9 managing the development of DAs with companies'. The 'flexibility, responsiveness and
10 professionalism' (*ibid.*) that this facility offers appears to have been successful, and again
11 reinforces the need for providers to respond proactively and creatively to employer needs.
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16 Both apprentice and employer expectations about achievement also need to be
17 managed as part of the onboarding process. Hughes and Saieva (2016) found that many
18 apprentices are high workplace achievers who set themselves high goals, but the lack of
19 (recent) academic experience can lead to low grades and in turn to frustration and ultimately
20 withdrawal. This relates to the need for appropriate support mechanisms (see Theme 2) and
21 curriculum design (Theme 1), but also requires management at onboarding stage.
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25 Finally, as part of the recruitment and onboarding process, it is important to
26 understand the apprentice profile and needs and assess them for suitability against the
27 requirements and demands of the CMDA. Quew Jones and Brook (2019, p.296) note that
28 applicants are 'diverse in age, previous academic experience, management roles and local
29 organisations. Some have not undertaken any kind of formal study for some time. They are
30 "earning whilst they are learning" which results in an extremely busy work and study schedule
31 which must be effectively managed for them to succeed'. Providers are therefore well advised
32 to 'work in tandem with employers' to assess apprentice applications based on both
33 qualifications and experience (Rowe *et al.*, 2016, p.364). As Welbourn *et al.* (2019, p.411)
34 anticipate, effective recruitment and selection of apprentices is becoming 'crucial, particularly
35 as organisations shift their focus to the harnessing of new and emerging talent and not just
36 developing existing middle management'. This is particularly significant in the context of the
37 ongoing skills gap in which, as Roberts *et al.* (2019) note, employers continue to struggle to
38 recruit workers with appropriate skills, knowledge, and understanding.
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43 Discussion and implications for practice

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45 This project provides a first review of studies written on the CMDA, mapping out existing
46 knowledge about challenges and lessons learnt. As highlighted in our introduction, the CMDA
47 standard is currently under review (IfATE, 2023), making it timely to bring together the
48 insights gained from these studies. Providers will be able to draw on the experiences of others
49 working with the initial standard to feed into programme revisions when the new CMDA
50 standard is available. Based on our findings, the following three areas were identified to form
51 a valuable basis for good practice going forward.
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54 1. Maximise provider-employer collaboration for a successful CMDA

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56 In organising and writing up our findings, one of the difficulties lay in the fact that the role of
57 the employer spanned all five themes and was difficult to define and isolate. This is because
58 the employer is crucial in collaborating with the provider to build suitable programme
59 structures and learning opportunities for their company context, recruiting appropriate
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3 apprentices, implementing onboarding and ongoing support mechanisms within the
4 workplace, ensuring that OTJ training time is facilitated and that line managers are trained
5 and engage with apprentices appropriately. Thus, wherever possible, a successful CMDA
6 programme should be tailored to the specific industry context, taking into account a range of
7 characteristics including the size and structure of the employing company, its field of industry,
8 and whether it is private or public sector.
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11 Additionally, employers may have specific requirements such as flexibility in
12 programme length and start date, inclusion of content that is relevant to their company, or
13 scheduling assessments around business year fluctuations. Whilst for some providers it will
14 prove challenging to custom-build to this extent, to maximise successful collaboration it is
15 clear that the HEI provider needs to liaise closely with employers, listen to their needs and
16 build strong relationships. Employers may also have misperceptions about the nature of the
17 CMDA, the suitability of their employees for the qualification, or fears about the likely return
18 on their investment into the programme. Conducting pre-emptive meetings with employers
19 to enable the HEI to map programmes around these needs can potentially improve apprentice
20 success rates and satisfaction. A number of front-runner HEI providers are already creating
21 business units for managing DAs in collaboration with companies, which appears to be an
22 effective mechanism.
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27 *2. Embrace innovative curriculum design and pedagogies to bridge the gap between* 28 *workplace and classroom* 29 30

31 It is also clear that HEI providers need to be open to 'operational innovation' (Welbourn *et*
32 *al.*, 2019). Therefore, to satisfy requirements of the employing organisations and meet ever-
33 changing market demands, providers must differentiate their CMDA provision from
34 traditional campus-based degree delivery. Successful providers are already building
35 innovation in at all levels, including module content and design, choice of learning tools and
36 models, and mode of delivery. It has become clear that innovation in CMDA design implies
37 not just offering a choice between optional modules within a pre-existing degree programme.
38 Instead, there is a need to reimagine industry-specific modules based firmly on appropriate
39 WBL pedagogies that allow apprentices to develop the criticality and reflective skills needed
40 to bridge the divide between classroom and workplace and ultimately to fulfil the specific
41 criteria of the Chartered Manager standard.
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46 Many of the studies reported here have achieved success of this nature by
47 experimenting with tools such as reflective journalling, action learning sets, workplace
48 mentoring, or peer support initiatives. Moreover, providers should be aware that apprentices
49 themselves tend to differ in profile from traditional campus-based students, perhaps most
50 significantly in the mismatch between their wealth of industry experience compared to their
51 lack of academic experience. Support mechanisms should be tailored to apprentice needs and
52 should allow them to develop the critical thinking and writing skills needed to achieve success
53 in their portfolio of evidence. Appropriate learning models can enable apprentices to
54 continuously evaluate and evidence their role development and aspiring leadership identity
55 and practice in a reflective manner. In this way, apprentices can be effectively supported to
56 build their portfolio throughout their study on the programme.
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3. Foster knowledge exchange for good practice

The findings reported demonstrate that providers have already undertaken valuable exploratory studies that identify learning tools and models that can be successfully applied to support CMDA delivery. We recommend that the findings from the existing literature can be used as a basis for productive further discussion, networking, and collaboration between providers and other stakeholders beyond the employers to ensure improved delivery going forward. It is also important that these lessons from experience are fed into the development of the new CMDA standard, and then used by providers when they have the opportunity to revise their programmes once the new standard is delivered.

We hope that this review, in bringing together the research that has been done to date, will also encourage providers to carry out and disseminate further research. Thus, they can participate in informing the new standard and continuing to improve good practice in the field of management education.

Conclusions

This review has explored existing knowledge surrounding the UK CMDA programme. Challenges have been discussed through 5 key themes (Curriculum design, Programme delivery & support, Portfolio & EPA, Working with employers, and Recruitment & onboarding) and implications for practice have been identified in 3 areas (collaboration, innovative curriculum design & pedagogies, and knowledge exchange).

The scope of our review limited us to papers focused only on the CMDA, rather than those using it as supporting scaffolding to more general arguments about WBL or educative practices in universities. We hope that others will follow this lead and seek out ways of applying the programme-specific knowledge presented in this paper more widely to thinking about today's landscape of DAs. Another area beyond our scope was the identification of papers focusing on policy and its implications for the future of the CMDA.

As well as identifying challenges and existing good practice, and their implications for the future of the CMDA, our review has highlighted areas that merit further research. One area for exploration is how different employer profiles, such as company size and public versus private sector, affect curriculum design and implementation. Further study in this area will help providers collaborate with employers to successfully custom-build programmes to suit market needs. Secondly, assessment of learning and completion of the portfolio of evidence was a recurrent source of discussion and in some cases dissatisfaction in the studies reported here. For this reason, we call for further study into the design of WBL curricula and how to effectively assess learning against the Chartered Manager standard.

Finally, where creative and innovative interventions such as those listed in our discussion above have already been adopted, there is evidence of apprentice satisfaction (Daley *et al.*, 2016), increased confidence (Hughes and Saieva, 2019), employer satisfaction (Daley *et al.*, 2016; Quew Jones & Brook, 2019), a sense of value added (Hughes and Saieva, 2019). We end therefore with a call to providers to seek to obtain and analyse feedback from employers and apprentices. Useful areas would include interviews with withdrawn apprentices, discussion of apprentices' experience managing their portfolios, and employer surveys on whether providers consider their perspectives sufficiently or the 'value' they

perceive to be offered from the apprenticeship qualification. Feedback on these areas will enable us to build on our understanding of the impacts of good practice as well as areas for continued improvement as we move into the next phase of CMDA provision in the UK.

Notes

[1] 'Gateway' refers to a stage gate assessment to determine readiness to complete the apprenticeship.

Appendix

Table V. Summary of included studies

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Table I. Systematic Literature Review protocol

Macro stages	Steps	Details
Planning the review	Review question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - development of review question to guide the search - development of search strings based on pilot searches and collaborative discussion
	Location of studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - final search string agreed: <i>“degree apprentice*” AND (management OR business) [syntax adjusted as needed to align with the search parameters of each database]</i> - search on: <i>ABI, EBSCO, Emerald, Science Direct, Scopus and Web of Science. Google Scholar and the Open University library catalogues were also searched as additional checks</i> - search fields: <i>title, abstract and keywords</i> - search period: <i>April 2012 to April 2022</i> - accessibility: <i>OU subscription or Open Access only</i> - languages: <i>English only</i> - source: <i>peer-reviewed journals</i>
Conducting the review	Selection and evaluation of studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Filter 1: titles and abstracts screening</i> - <i>Filter 2: full paper screening (see Table 2 for inclusion/exclusion criteria)</i> - <i>Filter 3: full paper reading</i>
	Analysis and synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>use NVIVO (qualitative software) and excel spreadsheet to analyse the content and identify themes</i> - <i>thematic analysis based on literature review by comparing data from the 12 papers selected</i>
Reporting and dissemination	Presentation of results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>answer the RQ from what is known in the literature within the key themes identified</i> - <i>highlight relevant challenges and gaps to build the research agenda</i>

Figure 1. Prisma flow diagram (adapted from Moher *et al.*, 2009)

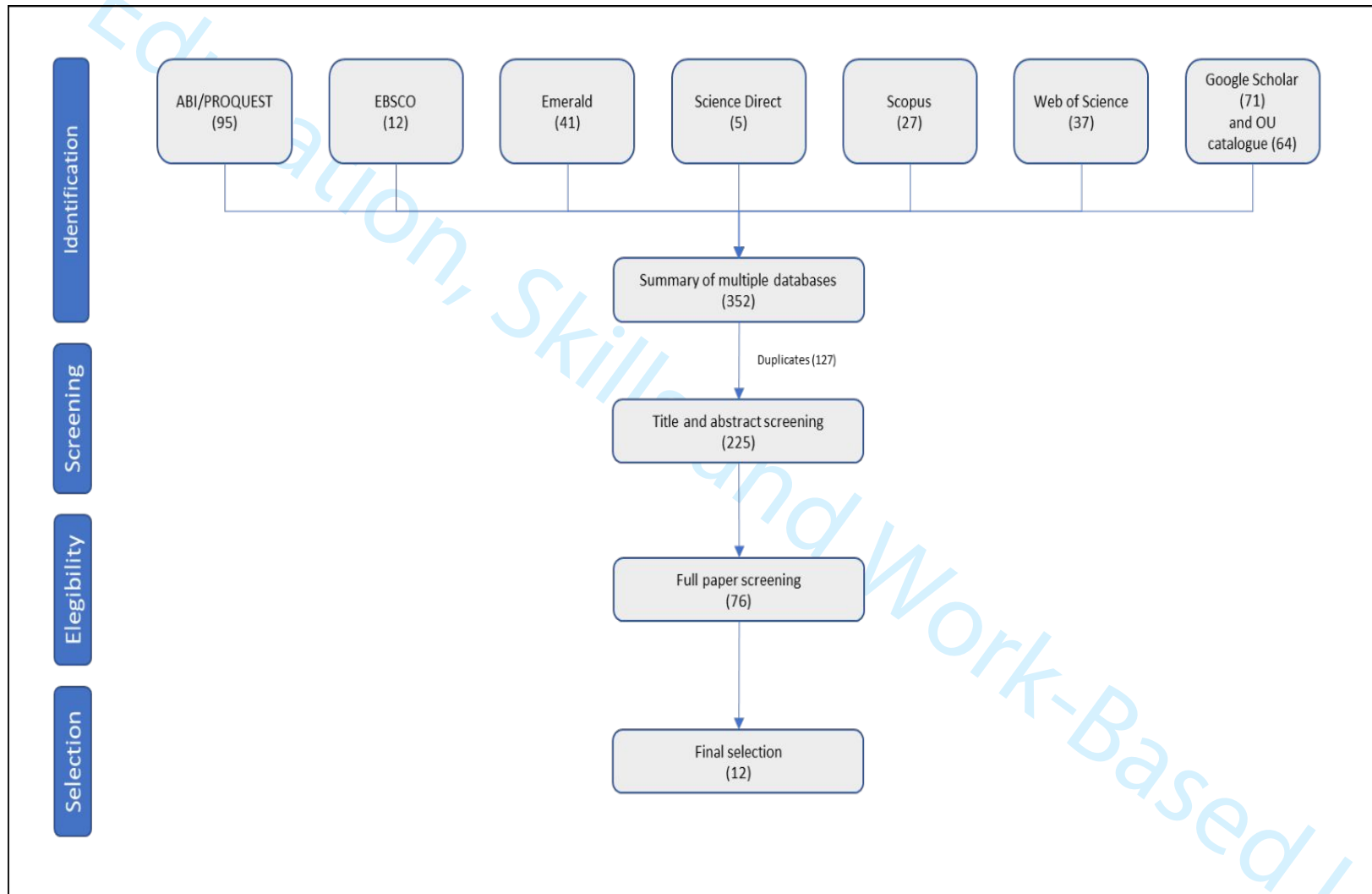


Table II. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Include any item that is:	Exclude any item that is:
A peer-reviewed journal article	Not a peer-reviewed journal article
Published in English	Not published in English
Published between April 2012 and April 2022	Not published between 2012 to 2022
Published from/about any location including non-English-speaking locations	Not about DAs (e.g. are about other types of degree, non-degree apprenticeships)
About the CMDA or other undergraduate management/business degree apprenticeship	About DAs in subjects that are not management or specifically CMDA
Considers the apprentice experience from a student, employer or provider perspective	Does not consider the apprentice experience from a student, employer or provider perspective. For example, it may only consider policy or governmental frameworks and targets

Table III. Study themes

	Theme	Description
1	1 Curriculum design	Module materials, assessment, and design, including apprentice experience of these
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3	2 Programme delivery & support	Including workload, off-the-job training hours (OTJ), provider tutor and professional support staff
4		
5	3 Portfolio of evidence & End Point Assessment (EPA)	Generating 'good' portfolio of evidence for the End Point Assessment
6		
7	4 Working with Employers	Employer engagement; OTJ allowance; discussion about generating and applying learning in the workplace
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9	5 Recruitment & onboarding	Getting the right apprentices onto the program; implementing appropriate onboarding processes; including apprentice profile/suitability
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Table IV. Distribution of themes across studies

Reference	Theme 1 Curriculum design	Theme 2 Programme delivery & support	Theme 3 Portfolio & EPA	Theme 4 Working with Employers	Theme 5 Recruitment & onboarding
Daley <i>et al.</i> (2016)	✓		✓	✓	✓
Hughes and Saieva (2019)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Konstantinou and Miller (2020)	✓	✓		✓	✓
Konstantinou and Miller (2021)	✓	✓			
Miller and Konstantinou (2022)	✓				
Quew Jones and Brook (2019)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quew Jones (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Rhodes and Brook (2021)	✓	✓			✓
Roberts <i>et al.</i> (2019)		✓			✓
Rowe <i>et al.</i> (2016)	✓		✓	✓	✓
Schedlitzki (2019)	✓		✓		
Welbourn <i>et al.</i> (2019)	✓			✓	✓

Table V. Summary of included studies

Author (year)	Title	CMDA Phase	Theme	Framing	Content
Daley <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Sheffield Hallam University and Nestlé. Developing future leaders with the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship – a partnership approach	Building	Building curriculum Working with employers	Lessons from experience	How to build a programme with an employer; issues with mapping
Hughes and Saieva (2019)	Degree apprenticeships - an opportunity for all?	Building	Building curriculum Working with employers	Lessons from experience	How to build an effective DA
Rowe <i>et al.</i> (2016)	The Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship: trials and tribulations	Building	Curriculum design	Lessons from experience	Setting up a DA with an employer
Konstantinou and Miller (2020)	Investigating work-integrated learning and its relevance to skills development in degree apprenticeships	Delivery	Curriculum detail	Sharing best practice	Developing and delivering 'self-managed learning' through projects & curriculum
Konstantinou and Miller (2021)	Self-managed and work-based learning: problematising the workplace–classroom skills gap	Delivery	Curriculum detail	Sharing best practice	Problem-based learning curriculum
Miller and Konstantinou (2022)	Using reflective, authentic assessments to embed	Delivery	Curriculum detail	Sharing best practice	Problem-based learning

	employability skills in higher education				
Quew Jones and Brook (2019)	Account of practice: using action learning to develop and educate undergraduate management degree apprentices	Delivery	Curriculum detail	Sharing best practice	Sharing experiences of action learning
Quew Jones (2022)	Enhancing apprenticeships within the Higher Education curriculum – an Action Learning and Action Research study	Delivery	Curricula collaboration with employers	Sharing experience	The role of the Ambassadors in organisations to maximise apprenticeship effectiveness
Rhodes and Brook (2021)	Reflective journaling and WhatsApping as part of a management degree apprentice's action learning practice	Delivery	Curriculum detail	Sharing best practice	Reflective journalling and WhatsApp groups
Roberts et al. (2019)	Workplace mentoring of degree apprentices: developing principles for practice	Delivery	Working with employers	Developing principles of practice	Workplace mentoring
Schedlitzki (2019)	Developing apprentice leaders through critical reflection	Reflections on benefits of DA	Integrating the standard	Highlighting effectiveness	DAs as a tool for contextualised leadership development
Welbourn et al. (2019)	Degree apprenticeships: Reflecting on university–employer partnership practice to improve workforce development in the United Kingdom	Reflections on benefits of DA	Curricula collaboration Employer collaboration	Highlighting effectiveness	DAs for workforce development

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