

What is a profession?

Bill Jermey questions the definition of a ‘professional’ and discusses how the food industry needs to raise its game in order for its workers to be granted the status.



Properly put together apprenticeships are at last being recognised, not just in the UK, but around the world as a valuable route to becoming qualified in a wide range of professions.

With too many young people encouraged to go to university, and rack up huge student loans, apprenticeships are increasingly seen as a viable alternative – an excellent way to develop a career whilst earning an income.

I recently attended an international conference on apprenticeships in Malta.

I noticed recently that the education supplement of a national newspaper was advertising courses for professionals. I was surprised to find how restricted the range on offer was, so decided to investigate and discovered that there are five traditionally accepted professions: lawyer, doctor, priest, architect and engineer.

What about nurse, scientist, teacher, journalist, butcher, baker, candlestick maker? Are we all amateurs? Times have changed and some of these are now accepted as “professions” – even journalists! But no craft based occupations appear to have reached that status, and sadly engineers don’t have the status they enjoyed in Victorian times.

There are many professional bodies offering continuing professional development (CPD) and enhancing the status of qualified people, who are working hard to deliver invaluable goods and services to the wider public and we deserve to be recognised as professionals.

Why should the social status of a person be defined by the profession they work in? All are highly skilled and can have as high a level of education as anyone in the traditionally recognised “elite” professions.

The speakers and attendees were all involved in promoting apprenticeships, or the apprentices themselves. The stories were uplifting and encouraging. One speaker told us that we were a “drop in the ocean”, but that in time we “drops” would grow and become the ocean!

Qualified people who are working to deliver invaluable services to the public deserve to be recognised as professionals.

For business, developing apprentices should not be seen, in this country, as merely necessary to reclaim the apprentice levy, but as a way to actively encourage people to join our organisations and develop future leaders with an in-depth understanding of what makes us tick – whatever we do.

In the food industry, having a long term view is increasingly important. We need to raise our game to be recognised as professionals! One definition of a profession I came across was an occupation that gave the person “dignity”. Interesting that the Institute of Meat was established in 1946 and awarded a seal with the motto: *Per doctrinam ad dignitatum* (through education to dignity!) **FMT**



> Apprenticeships are increasingly being seen as a valuable alternative to university.

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