University of Southampton

FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Southampton Education School

'ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE': ACTING OUT THE GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME IN ENGLAND

By

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ABSTRACT

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Since 'Modern Apprenticeships' were first introduced in England in 1994, government-supported apprenticeships have gone undergone a series of transformations leading to them being underpinned since 2009 by statute and taking a central role in the current UK Government's state-led vocational skills and education programmes for England. Accordingly, the numbers of people starting and completing apprenticeship programmes each year has increased rapidly, but these increases have also seen expansion in the support structures provided by central government, organisations and businesses. It is these 'support structures' that are the focus of this thesis; uncovering who the actors are and what roles they perform in the provision of England's government-supported apprenticeship programme.

Conducting interviews with a variety of people and organisations from government through to employers, this thesis considers apprenticeship in England by way of the public and private organisations that perform these varying roles. Beginning with two quotations which between them offer ideas of structure ('script') and agency ('improvisation'), the research introduces an innovative use of an ancient symbol called a 'triquetra' ('three cornered') to create an 'Apprenticeship Triquetra'.   In the 'Apprenticeship Triquetra', three initial groups of actors – government, employers and training providers – and the many other organisations and businesses that operate in the spaces between them, are juxtaposed with their functional counterparts of governance, employment and education. The Apprenticeship Triquetra then explores the relationships between these 'actors' and 'factors' through sociological theories of Foucault's (1978) *governmentality* thesis and *Actor Network Theory* (Latour, 1987; Law, 1987).   By adding a historical lens to the concepts and theories and drawing a

distinction between the apprenticeship 'programme' and the apprenticeship 'system', apprenticeship is shown to be a site of complex social interactions and vested interests. This multifaceted research presents a unique critique of apprenticeships in England and concludes with three findings. The first is that there appears to be a concerning level of commodification that has developed in the apprenticeship system. The second finding relates to *the way in which the power of the government has been used* to direct the apprenticeship programme and system. The third finding constitutes that of an observation born out of this thesis' historical and contemporary narratives: apprenticeship acts as a social barometer reflecting broader social contexts.

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Ian Laurie, declare that the thesis entitled

'All The World's A Stage': Acting out the government-supported apprenticeship programme in England

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;

- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;

- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;

- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;

- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

- parts of this work have been published as:

Laurie, I. (2010), 'The Triquetra and Apprenticeships: Investigating policy relations', paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Warwick, 1-4 September 2010

Signed: …………………………………………………………………….

Date:……………………………………………………………………

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List of Acronyms

AAN	Apprenticeship Ambassador Network
ACE	Arts Council England
AELP	Association of Employment and Learning Providers
AGE	Apprenticeship Grant for Employers
AoC	Association of Colleges
AO	[Qualification] Awarding Organisations
ASCL 2009	Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009
ASSC	Alliance of Sector Skills Councils
ATA	Apprenticeship Training Agency
BECTU	Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
CENH	Creative [Industries] Employer Network Hub
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
EFA	Education Funding Agency
GTA	Group Training Associations
IA	Issuing Authority
ITA 1964	Industrial Training Act 1964
JAU	Joint Apprenticeship Unit
JP	Justice of the Peace
LNH	Local Network Hub
LPP	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
MA	Modern Apprenticeship
NAS	National Apprenticeship Service
NNH	National Network Hub
NOS	National Occupational Standards
NSA	National Skills Academy
PTP	Private Training Provider
SFA	Skills Funding Agency
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SFR	Statistical First Release
SSC	Sector Skills Councils
TUC	Trade Union Congress
UKCES	UK Commission for Employment and Skills
USDAW	Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers

YPLA   Young People's Learning Agency

Chapter 1

England's Apprenticeship Programme as Theatre

Introduction

All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players:

They have their exits and their entrances;

And one man in his time plays many parts

(From Shakespeare's (c. 1600) character, Jaques, in *As You Like It* (Marshall (2004), Act 2, Scene 7, Lines 140-143)

> **You can improvise a scene or a one-act play. And because, by following each other's lead, neither of you are really in control. It's more of a mutual discovery than a solo adventure. What happens in a scene is often as much a surprise to you as it is to the audience.**

> (Stephen Colbert, 2006, American political satirist and performer of improvisational theatre talking to graduates on receiving his honorary Doctorate)

The above two quotations present unlikely yet thought-provoking and contrasting perspectives from which to study England's current government-supported apprenticeship programme and in particular the people and organisations involved in the provision of these apprenticeships. In these often quoted lines, Shakespeare's character Jaques likened the activities of men and women to stage performances. In citing just these four lines, however, Shakespeare's words are being taken out of context, for in uttering these now familiar lines, the character Jaques is setting the scene for his satirical observation that follows on the 'seven ages' or 'acts' of a human's life as he or she moves from new-born infant to death in old age. Yet, what happens to the person within and between each 'age'? Where did they live; what education did they receive; what was their occupation; who were their employers; how could their social networks be characterised (e.g. supportive or uncaring; enabling or

obstructive)? Jaques' four lines raise further questions. For instance, if all the men and women are 'merely players' then how do the *players* know when and where to enter and exit the stage? Who are the actors and the characters? How and by whom are roles ascribed? What exactly *are* their roles? What does the stage look like? And who writes the script and directs the performance?

But what if the characters, script, stage direction and roles were being made up as the performance went on, as with the improvisational approach? What happens then? The answer is that it becomes very difficult to predict the outcome. It is most probable that in reality there exists an uncertain combination between acting to a script and improvising, within which the certainties of the first are mitigated by the messiness of the latter. What underpins both quotations, although it is not expressed by either speaker, is that some people and organisations will have less capacity to act in accordance with their own desires and therefore have little choice but to act in accordance with 'the script'. (To confuse matters more, the actors may even move along the continuum between 'script' and 'improvisation' at different times and/or different places). With these distinctions in mind, it is possible to think of Jaques' words as the equivalent of acting according to a set 'script' and therefore providing a form of long distance control; while in the improvisational approach people are acting partially in accordance with the script and then using and adapting it according to their own situations and needs.

Research questions

The two quotations, and the questions which arose from the ensuing discussion, provide ideal ways of thinking about England's government-supported apprenticeship programme and raises the question that this thesis sets out to address. The primary research question is divided into two interrelated parts:

> What roles do the actors in the English apprenticeship system play in the
> government's apprenticeship programme and what effect does the system
> have on government-supported apprenticeships? (The distinction between
> 'programme' and 'system' is discussed below.)

The first half of the research question, 'What roles do the actors in England's government-supported apprenticeship system play in the government's apprenticeship programme*?*' seeks to identify the key actors and their roles in order to present an original concept of apprenticeship based around these key actors. With a focus on retail and creative and cultural as case studies, the research shows how 'apprenticeship' is being perceived and applied differently by the businesses and organisations that operate within the two sectors. The second part of the research

question then asks 'what effect does the system have on government-supported apprenticeships?' Separating the research question into two parts necessitates two initial ontological assumptions (further ontologies are explained below). First, that it is possible to separate the *programme* from the *system*, more of which will be explained below. The second assumption is that it is necessary to answer the first part of the question before the second part can be addressed; for without fully understanding the existence and activities of the actors, it cannot be known what effect, if any, they will have on the programme. The government's apprenticeship programme is therefore shown as a site for both acquiescence and contestation as actors are encouraged to participate in the programme and yet can develop their own roles within the broader system.

Despite this room for actors to improvise, the government retains considerable power in the form of funding streams for apprenticeship and can withdraw funding with little notice. Therefore, power, expressed through governance, is shown as a constant and ever present theme running through institutional apprenticeships (see below for a definition of how power is used in this thesis). Internationally, many national governments have over the last two decades sought to establish new forms of apprenticeship which reflect the needs of today's occupational structures and education systems whilst maintaining many of the traditional values associated with apprenticeship (Guile and Young, 1998). Apprenticeship is therefore as much an 'idea' as it is a practical model of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991:30). England's own apprenticeship programme has in recent years become the central strategy underpinning the UK Government's vocational education and training policies.

In order to address the research questions fully, the thesis asks 'who?'; 'what?'; and 'why?':

- *Who* the actors in the apprenticeship system are.

- *What* roles these actors perform.

- *Why* they are involved in the apprenticeship programme.

To answer the main research question and the above sub-questions, this thesis:

- Shows how different actors have been central to apprenticeship over the centuries.

- Develops a conceptual framework through which to think creatively about apprenticeships.

- Provides a narrative through which a range of actors within the apprenticeship system can relate their thoughts and experiences of apprenticeship in order to gain greater insights into the current apprenticeship programme.

It is through the application and analysis of these objectives that the apprenticeship system can be better understood.

Points of clarification

Before discussing the background to the research question, some points of clarification are required.

Focus on *Apprenticeship*

The research conducted for and the data presented in this thesis pertain specifically to *apprenticeship*. While there are obvious parallels with the broader debates surrounding Vocational Education and Training (VET) and the government's handling of VET-programmes – for example, the shift towards collaboration and shared responsibility for skills between 'Government [...] employers and citizens' (BIS, 2010:3) – there are two very good reasons for focusing on apprenticeships. The first reason is that apprenticeships have been used for many centuries, both in England and internationally. The second rationale for this focus is that since 1994 UK Governments have, in line with international shifts (INAP, 2012), increasingly used apprenticeship through which to channel VET policies in England. The combination of these two factors has resulted in apprenticeship becoming 'the pivot around which the rest of the skills system turns' (Hansard – John Hayes, speaking as the then Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, Hansard 19th Dec 2011, col.1106). Apprenticeship is therefore a major focus for government skills policy with growing numbers of people – apprentices and businesses – being drawn into the apprenticeship system and so warrants the particular attention given in this thesis.

Apprenticeships in England only

Unless otherwise stated, the research focuses on government-supported apprenticeships in *England* rather than the UK, as apprenticeship policy in the UK is devolved to the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly and so different policies and legislation may apply in each of the devolved nations.

Institutional apprenticeships

Again, unless otherwise stated, all references to apprenticeship in this thesis refer to *institutional apprenticeships*. In using the term 'institutional apprenticeships', I am referring to apprenticeships which have been organised to fit into the social structures, cultures, patterns, routines, skills, occupations, sectors, vested interests, regulatory frameworks and disciplines of organised labour through which apprenticeships have become established as a social phenomenon (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Snell, 1996; Guile and Young, 1998).

Apprentices

Early in the research process, I took the decision not to include apprentices in the sampling frame in order to focus on the people and organisations that between them *provide* apprenticeships. While the original funding application (Appendix B) included apprentices in the sample population, it quickly became apparent that there were few or no apprentices working in the Southampton area in either retail or creative and cultural in 2009 and 2010, the years in which the research began. Furthermore, one of the strengths of this thesis is that it has given a variety of actors engaged in the provision of apprenticeships the opportunity to participate in the research. The focus on the apprenticeship system rather than either the apprentices or apprenticeship as a model of learning has been one of its contributions to developing original insights and thought on apprenticeship. Apprentices are undoubtedly affected by the actions of these actors; therefore, the focus is justified as it will undoubtedly raise questions as to the quality of the apprenticeships that are offered to apprentices. In this context, apprentices can be *end result* of the programme (in human terms, rather than in the provision of skills or qualifications) and are therefore outside of the scope of enquiry of the research.

Actors and 'Actants'

The term 'actors' refers to all organisations, businesses and individuals, inside and outside of government, engaged in the apprenticeship programme and whose activities and relationships constitute the apprenticeship system. The actors are therefore those people and organisations that 'enable' apprenticeships to take place. The term 'Actants' is used at times in line with this thesis' use of Actor Network Theory (ANT) to indicate the roles of and interactions that takes place between humans and non-human entities.

The sectors

'Retail' and 'creative and cultural' provide two sector-based case studies, both of which were initially selected for study by the LLAKES research team and included in the original studentship offer (see Appendix A). Between them, these two sectors show different sides to the current apprenticeship system: retail because of its longer standing use of apprenticeships and its focus on Level 2 frameworks (see Chapter 4 for a discussion on the meaning of frameworks and other definitions); creative and cultural because of its cultural resistance to non-academic routes into the sector. While LLAKES provided considerable leeway as to how the research was conducted and I have taken the focus away from the original research plan (Appendix B), I decided that these two sectors provided sufficient room for discussions about the broader implications of the roles the organisations played within the sectors and so I have maintained this sectoral focus throughout the research period. It has been suggested that the inclusion of one of the traditional sectors, e.g. engineering, might have provided an interesting comparator from which to analyse and compare these newer sectors, I believe that to have done so would have stretched the finite resources available to a single researcher. However, such a comparative focus certainly provides scope for further research.

Sectors are problematic areas for research and Chapter 4 discusses the issues of the sectoral approach in more detail. Despite these shortcomings, the focus on sectors does serve to reveal the different cultural histories, skills needs and potential barriers inherent in different areas of industry inherent in the apprenticeship system.

Government-supported apprenticeships

The term 'Government-supported apprenticeships' (Fuller and Unwin, 2009; Brockmann et al, 2010) refers to all apprenticeship programmes arising from the Modern Apprenticeship programme introduced in England in 1994, but which today comply with the statutory minimum standards (as set out in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009) and for which training providers register apprentices and receive government funding. (Chapter 4 contains a detailed discussion of the individual elements that constitute government-supported apprenticeships.)

Separating the apprenticeship programme from the apprenticeship system

The research question (above) differentiates between the apprenticeship *programme* and the apprenticeship *system*. The distinction in this thesis between programme and system is an important one because of the way it draws attention to two different yet complementary aspects of apprenticeship. The programme thereby refers to the

government's policies, statements, statutes, statutory requirements and funding mechanisms which between them serve to constitute the government's support and management of institutional apprenticeships. The apprenticeship system refers to the networks of actors and their activities as they participate in the apprenticeship programme. The difference can be likened to the programme being 'the script', while the system is more akin to 'the performance'. This thesis focuses on the actors involved in the system as they engage in the programme. The distinction between programme and system therefore provides a useful analytical tool for the thesis. To develop the theatre metaphor, programme and system are in some respects inextricably related to the other and yet they can be separated conceptually for the purposes of analysis in the same way that onstage an actor's performance can be judged on its own merits and as part of the play in which the actor is performing.

However, it is clear that making such a conceptual distinction between programme and system is one that is not supported in either the academic literature or in government policy documents, where the terms are often used interchangeably. Perhaps the closest example is from Fuller and Unwin's publications in which distinctions are made between apprenticeship in Britain as 'an instrument of government policy and an institution within the *VET system* of nation states' (2011c:261 – emphasis added) and apprenticeship as a '*programme*' (Fuller and Unwin, 2009:414 – emphasis added) or as a series of '*programmes*' which can encompass: employer-specific apprenticeships (e.g. Rolls Royce); different 'levels' of apprenticeships according to the qualifications they contain; and age groups (Fuller and Unwin, 2009:412). Elsewhere, Guile (2006) referred to 'apprenticeship *programmes*'; Hogarth et al (2011) used both 'Apprenticeship *system*' (p45) and '*programme*' in the same paper (p42), as did the Skills Commission's report on apprenticeship in 2009 (pp4, 5). Two government policy documents refer respectively to the 'Apprenticeship *programme*' (BIS, 2011d:4) and the 'Apprenticeship *system*' (Rhodes, 2012:3). (Emphases added in all quotes.) So it is interesting that when the current apprenticeship programme was first being trialled in 1994 as 'Modern Apprenticeships' (MA), the government was keen to make it clear that:

> Modern apprenticeships [sic] will not be a 'programme' from the old days, one devised, created and controlled by the Government. (Widdecombe, cited in Targett, 1994; subsequently cited in Snell, 1996:319)

The then Director of Youth and Education Policy made a similar statement in saying that:

> Some people have characterised the modern apprenticeship as 'just another Government scheme'. It isn't. What we have here is a government

initiative designed to encourage others to do something, with government encouragement and tangible support, by and for themselves. [...] The modern apprenticeship is something for *industry to make work, and employers to make work, if they want to.* It is emphatically not something which the Employment Department will be "running". (Bayliss, cited in Targett, 1994 – emphasis added)

Bayliss' statement that apprenticeship was something for industry and employers 'to make work, if they want to' is an interesting one and is taken up in the final chapter of this thesis. For now, though, the relevant point is that the comments from the Minister and the Director may well have been made as attempts to distance the MA from past training 'programmes' such as the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) of the 1980s and then Youth Training and the government funded 'training credits' scheme in the 1990s (Unwin and Wellington, 2001). However, the evidence presented above suggests that government-supported apprenticeships are now widely recognised to constitute a 'programme', while this thesis presents and focuses on the broader apprenticeship system.

I believe that conflating programme with system risks missing important nuances that arise when considered separately as this thesis will show.

Legal referencing

When referencing legislation, the format used is the form used in legal referencing, rather than the commonly used forms often found in social science texts. For example, the Statute of Artificers 1563 is used, rather than the 1563 Statute of Artificers or the Statute of Artificers *of* 1563.

Epistemological foundation

At the start of the research, I knew very little about 'apprenticeship'; I was then an 'outsider' looking into this historical entity called 'apprenticeship' that was operating in the present. This outsider status has required a great deal of learning and yet afforded me with the ability to consider the topic with some level of dispassion. While I feel I remain an 'outsider' in terms of understanding the learning and qualifications that apprenticeships entail, the levels of dispassion have reduced as my knowledge of the actors, the programme and the system have inevitably grown.

Further ontological assumptions

Two ontological bases for the research were introduced above, involving the separation of the apprenticeship programme from the system and the separation of the research

question into two parts. There are two further ontological assumptions that stem from the first two. The third assumption is that both the apprenticeship programme and the apprenticeship system reflect complex amalgams of *historical activities* (apprenticeship as a known institutional and social practice dating back several centuries)*, present needs* (reflecting twenty-first century England)*, government policy-making (*a process that includes selected non-governmental actors), *occupational skill formation*, and *vested interests* (e.g. of industry; sectors; government; educationalists; individuals and the ability of some actors to access networks of powerful actors). The final assumption is related to this final point of vested interests, but is much wider in its effect and scope: that of 'power'.

Power and apprenticeships

'Power' is used in this thesis as a way of revealing the ways in which the government's apprenticeship programme *and* the apprenticeship system are – as, I argue, institutional apprenticeships have always been – a site for both acquiescence and contestation as actors are encouraged to participate in the programme and yet may develop (and at times be encouraged to develop through the policies) their own roles within the broader system. Actors' abilities to adopt policies and translate them for their own uses will depend on variables such as their position in the system, their links to individuals, offices and networks of power and their own and other actors' roles. In order to develop this aspect of the research, two theories which demonstrate the various ways in which power in societies operates through actors – *governmentality* (Foucault, 1978) and Actor Network Theory (Latour, 1986, 1987; Law, 1986) – are critiqued and applied to England's apprenticeship programme and system. Foucault's theory of *governmentality*, as Chapter 3 shows in more detail, provides a way of thinking about the power of liberal governments to manage populations through various techniques in which the populations actively participate. Actor Network Theory is used similarly to develop the idea that events can be connected through time and space as well as geographical proximities. Each of the two theories share conceptual bases; that of action, governance and distance, yet they bring out separate aspects of both the apprenticeship programme and the broader system, as the interrelationships outlined above are suffused with power dynamics, status and the ability of some groups to be part of government policy-making processes.

Development of a research concept

Two very different documents have each described what were said to be the four key players involved in the provision of the English apprenticeship programme – government, employers, training providers and apprentices. These two documents

were published by the then Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) in 2008 (what is now the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 'BIS') and the Skills Commission, a Parliamentary group which conducted an inquiry into apprenticeships and whose conclusions were published in a report in 2009. For the reasons given above, the 'apprentices' are largely extraneous to this research, except by reference or by way of context. Placing these key 'enabling' players into a visual form was the original intention and the image of the triquetra (from the Latin 'three cornered') appeared ideal for its depiction of the interrelationships between these key contributors (see Figure 1) when used in terms of the apprenticeship system.

Government

Apprentices

Employers   Training providers
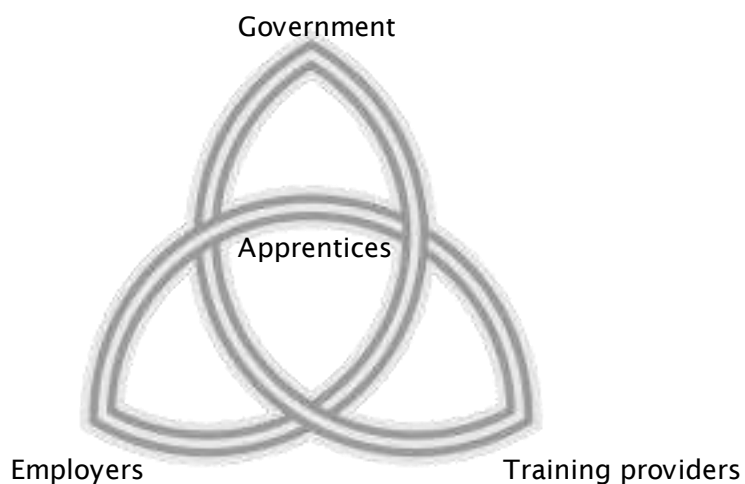
Figure 1: Triquetra of Apprenticeship Actors

The three groups of enabling actors therefore formed the skeletal structure within and upon which the apprentices could start and complete their programmes (although apprenticeship 'programmes' is a modern development and would have been irrelevant to the original concept of apprenticeships as they apparently were to the government when Modern Apprenticeships were first introduced in England).

Once the concept of the Apprenticeship Triquetra was considered in greater detail, limitations in the symbol were revealed that were difficult to address; some actors did not fit neatly into the three categories of government, employers and training providers. There were also ancillary roles being performed by other actors that enabled these 'key actors' to carry out the roles in the provision of apprenticeships. For example, training providers provide training, but qualification awarding organisations (AOs) provide the necessary qualifications as evidence that the apprentices have been assessed and passed to the required standard. So having conceded that government-supported apprenticeship programme involves a raft of different players performing varied roles in the system and was not a matter for these 'key actors' alone, the appropriateness of the Apprenticeship Triquetra was called into question. However, instead of discarding the concept, I reframed the Triquetra as an

'ideal type' (Benton and Craib, 2001:80) or device for questioning the complexity of both the apprenticeship programme and the broader system in the same way that Jaques' lines had encouraged earlier. The original representation of government, industry, training providers and apprentices in the DIUS (2008) and the Skills Commissions' (2009) reports effectively ignored a large and important body of organisations operating behind the scenes. This research is revealing the identity and work of some of these visible and invisible actors in the system and in doing so creating a new perspective from which to understand the modern apprenticeship programme, exposing its strengths and limitations.

The Triquetra symbol denotes both synergy (interaction) and gestalt (the whole being greater than the individual components). In keeping with the synergistic and gestaltic nature of the Apprenticeship Triquetra, the research incorporated some historical development of institutional apprenticeships in order to demonstrate that actors have always played vital roles which go beyond easy categorisation. Therefore some discussion is given in this thesis to explaining the history of apprenticeship as an institution in England over time: first in the Elizabethan era when apprenticeship was first brought under the legislation referred to as the Statute of Artificers 1563, the apprenticeship clauses of which lasted for two and a half centuries (Bindoff, 1961; Snell, 1996; Fuller and Unwin, 2009); and secondly since the 1960s. These histories, given via the literature review (Chapter 2), provide the context and a lens for revealing aspects of the present programme.

From Actors to Factors: Different conceptual lenses

My inability to 'fit' certain actors into the three characters of the Apprenticeship Triquetra led me to reconfigure the same components of Government, Employers and Training Providers into a different form. As figure 2 shows, by maintaining the same triquetra shape as in Figure 1 yet changing the perspective from which these components are viewed allowed me to subtly refocus the Apprenticeship Triquetra in a similar way that the above distinction between the apprenticeship programme and the apprenticeship system discussed above permitted. In reworking the Apprenticeship Triquetra, the intrinsic *functions* replaced the main organisations. The altered perspective became the 'Triquetra of Apprenticeship *Factors'* to reflect this conceptual shift from the social relationships of the actors and onto the institutional functions of apprenticeship itself. So whereas the first triquetra comprises those institutions, organisations and individuals that are responsible for the provision of apprenticeships, the Triquetra of Apprenticeship Factors recognises the main functions which constitute institutional apprenticeships: those of governance, employment and education.

Governance

Apprenticeship

Employment   **Education**
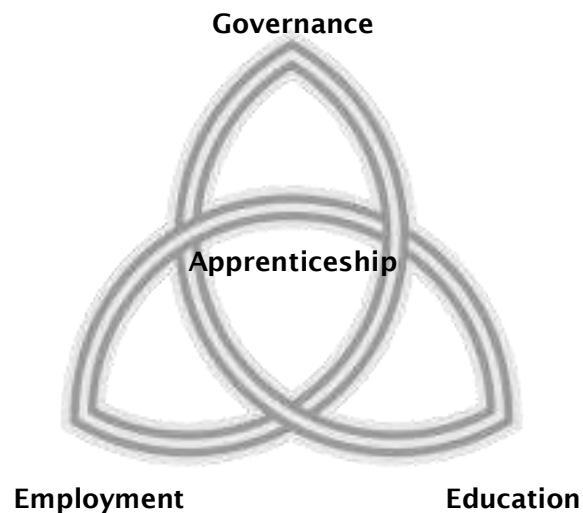
Figure 2: Triquetra of Apprenticeship Factors

The terms 'Actors' and 'Factors' are employed as memorable rhyming literary devices which between them serve to present two different ways of perceiving the related elements involved in apprenticeships. But more than simply being literary devices, they have served to act as mechanisms for questioning not just *who* is involved in *what areas* of apprenticeship provision, but *what roles* different organisations play. For example, Chapter 7 will show that governments are not alone in providing the governance structures of apprenticeships; employers employ but also provide education; both employment and education form part of the governance structures.

The Triquetra of Apprenticeship Factors is useful for the way it distils apprenticeship into these core functions. The ways in which these functions are performed in practice will change with time and space and yet I believe that the functions themselves remain constant, unlike the 'Triquetra of Apprenticeship Actors': as this thesis will show, for long tracts of time, the Government had largely adopted a laissez faire attitude to the apprenticeship system in England and governance was therefore performed by guilds, unions and other actors. The leading role of government in shaping the apprenticeship programme in England is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Sectors and localities

In order to gain the viewpoints of as wide a field as possible, some actors were invited to participate in the interviews because they offered a national perspective on apprenticeships and included organisations from both public (government) and private institutions. Other participants were chosen because they had a 'local' viewpoint. The city of Southampton, located on the south coast of England, provided this local perspective. In adopting this national/local strategy the research presents insights that either a national *or* a local perspective would likely fail to uncover. As referred to

in the research objectives, this thesis incorporates case studies of two very different industrial 'sectors' (hence referred to as 'sectors'): retail, and creative and cultural. These two sectors provide different opportunities from which to present differences in how the apprenticeship programme is perceived and used in practice.

Retail and creative and cultural also have potentially significant meanings for Southampton. The creative and cultural sector in Southampton represents approximately 5.5 per cent of the total workforce (Chapain, 2008:5) and 'culture' is being used as a springboard for economic growth in the city (PUSH, 2010:4.3). Southampton's creative and cultural sector also benefits from the city's Solent University's position as having one of the highest numbers of sector graduates in the UK (David Powell Associates, 2010:13). There are a high number of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and micro-employers in the creative and cultural sector generally (see Table 5 of this thesis); efforts have been made to capitalise on these smaller operations by bringing them together through a regional network of employers whose aim is to increase the amount and quality of training offered in the locality and sector. Moreover, building work commenced in Southampton which is seeing the establishment of a new £175 million site for the arts and culture in the city centre: the 'Cultural Quarter' (Southampton City Council, 2011).

Retail also provides a major financial benefit to Southampton; in 2008/9 according to DTZ, the city was ranked in fourteenth place for retail destinations in the UK (DTZ, 2009:4), while another ranking put the city in 26th place nationally (CACI, 2010), although this position still placed the city as one of the top retail destinations in the south of England in 2010. As with Southampton's creative and cultural sector, retail too has also been cited as crucial to Southampton city's regeneration in recent years, particularly with reference to the building of the West Quay shopping complex in the city centre, described as 'strategically vital to the survival of Southampton as the south coast's leading regional centre' (Lowe, 2007:642).

Recent background to apprenticeships in England

While the historical development of apprenticeship will be presented in greater detail in Chapter 2, this chapter provides a brief background behind recent developments from which to begin thinking about apprenticeship in terms of the actors and their roles. Table 1, presented at the end of this opening chapter, provides a summary of the development of apprenticeships in England over time, including relevant changes in the broader vocational education and training system.

The importance of having a historical view of apprenticeship is to highlight the ways in which industry and the state have each experienced a capricious relationship with

apprenticeship, with interest from both parties having waxed and waned over the centuries (Snell, 1996). Accordingly, control of apprenticeship has shifted over time between private interests and the state through processes and periods of regulation and deregulation. By the end of the twentieth century apprenticeship as an institution was effectively in danger of becoming obsolete in England (or at best used by only a few sectors) and so:

> Ultimately, the survival of apprenticeship in the UK came down solely to the willingness of employers to invest in training and to pay the ever increasing apprenticeship wages, which considerably outstripped those in other European countries. (Fuller and Unwin, 2009:408)

Yet while employer and government *interests* may have waxed and waned over time, the *role* of employers has always been fundamental to apprenticeships, which makes the introduction of so called 'programme-led apprenticeships' (PLAs) in 2004 by the Labour Government (Department for Education and Skills, 2001; Fuller and Unwin, 2008) all the more remarkable for the way in which the employer-apprentice relationship was distanced. In this revised model, 'apprentices' were enrolled on full-time vocational courses with training providers; the expectation being that training providers would then provide the necessary training and the 'apprentices' would be given work placements with an employer to gain relevant employment experience. One problem with this programme-*led* model was the distancing of the employer-apprentice relationship as:

> [The] employer becomes a marginal player waiting for potential employees to appear, employees who they are led to believe are very close to being work-ready. (Fuller and Unwin, 2008:16)

PLAs have since been discontinued, although as later chapters will show, the essence of PLAs continues in a different format. Despite the creation of this government-driven problem of employer-apprentice distancing, the UK Government had played a central role in revitalising apprenticeships with the MA programme discussed above (Unwin and Wellington, 2001; GHK Consulting, 2003), although state interest in apprenticeship in the twentieth century reaches back to the 1960s (Fuller and Unwin, 2009). The new MA was designed in part to 'tap the potential of our young people to reach higher levels of achievement and skills if we are to beat our competitors and stay ahead' (Hunt, then Secretary of State for Employment, cited in Lourie, 1996:10). Hunt's words suggest that the government's reasons for intervening in apprenticeships were to address perceived weaknesses in national competitiveness rather than any particular desire to raise skill levels in young people. Fifteen years after government-supported apprenticeships were first launched in England, legislation was enacted in

the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (ASCL 2009). The Act represents a remarkable event as it was the first time that a single statute has set out the minimum requirements for England's apprenticeship programme since the apprenticeship clauses of the Statute of Artificers 1563 (not the whole Act) were repealed in 1814 (Fuller and Unwin, 2009:406-7). The ASCL 2009 also formally created the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), two agencies which between them oversee and fund apprenticeships in England. Since April 2011 all apprenticeship frameworks must comply with the statutory requirements published in the Specification for Apprenticeship Standards in England (SASE). (The roles of the NAS, the SFA and the SASE are all explained in Chapter 4.) Apprenticeships have been supported by £1.4 billion of public funding in the year 2011-12 increasing to over £1.5 billion for 2012-13 (SFA, 2012a:81; Rhodes, 2012:5). These financial figures include the administrative costs for the NAS. Apprenticeship has now shifted from the margins of vocational education and training in England to one that is now central to government policies (BIS, 2010a).

Organisation of this thesis

Following this introductory chapter, this thesis is divided into three sections. The first section, Chapters Two to Four, begins the tasks of setting the scene through the analysis of the literature, theories and of secondary data.

Chapter Two sets out some of the key texts relevant to this research and in doing so highlights the activities of various actors over time in the provision of apprenticeships. The work of building the case for the focus on the actors within apprenticeship begins by considering the development of institutional apprenticeship over the centuries, asking what apprenticeship was for and showing how it was used by various actors, its development over time, what roles the key actors had and how government interest in apprenticeship and vocational training and education (VET) more broadly has shifted over time. Power, as defined above, is shown to be an underlying yet potent theme throughout apprenticeship's history.

Chapter Three continues the theme of power and governance in apprenticeships by way of two different yet complementary theories of power in societies. The first is Foucault's (1978) '*governmentality*' thesis, in which governments in modern liberal democracies manage their populations by the use of data, bureaucracies and methods which involve the willing participation of populations themselves. The second theory is that of Actor Network Theory (ANT), developed by Latour (1986, 1987), Law (1986) and others to encourage new ways of thinking about science and the spread and effect of

knowledge into and through societies. The purpose of this chapter is to show how the two theories can each shine new light on the activities of the apprenticeship system.

Chapter Four begins the task of narrowing the focus by way of secondary data focusing on the two apprenticeship sectors relevant to this thesis and preparing the way for the second section and the presentation of the primary data.

The second section of this thesis includes Chapters Five, Six and Seven and focuses on the original primary data collected in the fieldwork.

Chapter Five provides the methodology employed in the conduct of this original research. The chapter begins by discussing the methods, the theoretical aspects and the issues and problems that have arisen in the course of conducting the research and the solutions found. One central point to make was how taking time to prepare for each individual interview, including conducting background research on the company or department that I was interviewing, was rewarded with much rich data from which to draw on. The chapter also considers how power constantly shifted during the research process between researcher and participants. Reflecting a continuum derived from the two quotes at the beginning of this chapter, conducting the fieldwork involved a process of actions which shifted on occasions and in different directions between the two ends of the continuum.

Chapter Six gives voice to the actors participating in the research in order to develop a more coherent picture of the English apprenticeship programme from the people and organisations involved in the apprenticeship system. The data reveals the actual workings of organisations through the work of the diverse actors, giving them the opportunity to describe their own work and comment on the roles and existence of other organisations.

Chapter Seven provides further data from the fieldwork and picks up on the themes discussed in Chapter 4, but once more does so from the perspective of the key informants involved in the programme. This chapter reveals some of the benefits of and barriers to participation in the apprenticeship programme for each of the two sectors.

The third and final section provides the concluding chapter and so Chapter Eight discusses the findings and conclusions to be drawn from the research.

Table 1 on the following pages provides a chronological overview of critical policies, legislation and events that have shaped apprenticeships over history to the present. The selection of events for inclusion in the table has been based on their relevance in shaping the actions of actors over time. The aim is to support the argument presented

in the thesis of the centrality of actors in the provision of apprenticeships and also to demonstrate the changes that have occurred.

Chapter 2 then begins the journey into the evidence by way of summarising, discussing and analysing the relevant literature which shows the development of apprenticeship and the involvement of the many and varied actors over time.

Table 1: Chronological legislation and influential events affecting apprenticeship and VET

Year	Event	Government	Effect
13th century to 1563	Guild Apprenticeship	Various	Apprenticeship used first by London Lorimers and then spread to other occupations and locations. Apprenticeships in this time are largely controlled by Guilds, the trade bodies controlling access to trades and also setting minimum standards for its members.
Circa 1563[1]	'An Acte towching dyvers Orders for Artificers Laborers Servantes of Husbandrye and Apprentises' (5 Eliz. 1, CAP. IV. – (herein referred to as the 'Statute of Artificers 1563')	Queen Elizabeth I	First time the state intervened in apprenticeship. The Statute provided a national regulatory framework for apprenticeships, including setting the minimum length of time for apprenticeships (time serving) and the roles expected of individuals in the apprenticeship system. 'Time serving' became a central feature of apprenticeships until the advent of the Modern Apprenticeship programme in 1944-5.
1601	An Act for the Relief of the Poor. (43 Eliz. 1) CAP. II. (Poor Law)	Queen Elizabeth I	Although aimed primarily at the provision of poor relief, this legislation also gave powers to the Justices of the Peace (local government officers who oversaw administrative and judicial arrangements at the local level) to 'indenture' or bind apprentices to employers

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[1] Following the Gregorian calendar which ended in March of each year, some references may use the year 1562 (Statutes at Large, 1763, Vol.II). Mostly, the Julian year of 1563 is cited.

Year	Event	Government	Effect
			the children of families claiming poor relief and relocate the children outside of their parish. This provision moved apprenticeship away from a voluntarily entered into relationship to a form of punishment carried out on the children of adults unable to support their families financially.
1802	Health and Morals of Apprentices Act 1802 (42 GEORGII III), CAP. III.	King George III	Apprentices were to be educated in reading, writing and arithmetic (apprentices today are required to have Functional Skills which fulfil a similar role) and working day limited to 12 hours.
1814	Sections of the 'Statute of Artificers 1563' affecting apprenticeship repealed	Tory	Guilds reclaimed management of apprenticeship as state withdrew the previous legislation.
1884	Royal Commission on Technical Instruction	Liberal	Produced a report (the 'Samuelson Report', 1884) which raised concerns about the quality of the UK's vocational education and training (VET) system in comparison to other countries.
1958	Publication of 'Carr Committee Report': Ministry of Labour and National Service (1958) *Training for Skill*	Conservative	Focused on apprenticeships and suggested that a) industry was responsible for them and b) Group Apprenticeship Schemes (what are now termed Group Training Associations) offer apprentices the opportunity to develop skills that a single employer is unable to provide.

Year	Event	Government	Effect
1961	White Paper: *Better Opportunities in Technical Education*	Conservative	Set out what government saw as the problems of the existing VET system and recommended the creation of Industrial Training Boards to address these problems
1964	Industrial Training Act 1964	Labour	Established Industrial Training Boards (ITBs) which were responsible for raising funds from employers via levies and grants and using these funds to promote skills and training.
1968	'Donovan Commission': Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employment Associations 1968	Labour	Apprenticeship criticised for being too narrowly focused, too gendered and limiting in both scope and content. Also raised the issue of time serving as a poor measure of skill attainment.
1973	Employment and Training Act 1973	Conservative	Enabled the creation of the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), a body responsible for developing employment and training in the UK and which worked in a tripartite relationship with the TUC and the Confederation of British Industry.
1978	Youth Opportunities Programme	Labour	Created guaranteed training places for unemployed young people (16-18).
1980	Central Policy Review (CPR)	Conservative	CPR agreed with the findings of the Donovan Commission (1968) that apprenticeships were irrelevant to modern requirements on the basis that apprenticeships promoted archaic practices and were

Year	Event	Government	Effect
			dominated by a few large industries.
1981	Core Skills Project	Conservative	MSC focus on literacy and numeracy skills of young people in VET.
1983	Youth Training Scheme (YTS)	Conservative	YTS was a government initiative to address the problems of training and employment for jobless young. YTS was later criticised for being a 'cheap version of apprenticeship' (Fuller and Unwin, 2009:409)
1986	National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ)	Conservative	New body charged with developing and managing a new national system of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) to create national occupational standards and the ability, via NVQs, to accredit people's competency against those standards, with the focus being on accrediting the competences of adults already in employment.
1987	NCVQ role extended	Conservative	NCVQ in part replaced the MSC
1988	Employment Training programmes introduced	Conservative	Unemployed (6-12 months) 18-24 year olds guaranteed work experience and training. Weekly wages paid at benefit rates + £10.
1988-1991	Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) introduced	Conservative	Attempt by government to shift responsibility for training to employers at local level to encourage local regeneration and focus on training for the young and unemployed

Year	Event	Government	Effect
1993	Training for Work programme introduced	Conservative	Replaced Employment Training.
	'Modern Apprenticeships' announced		MA announced in Autumn UK Treasury Budget statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Details were then announced by Secretary of state for Employment providing state-funded apprenticeship training at Level 3. Comprised two mandatory elements: NVQ level 3 and Key Skills certificate covering numeracy, literacy and communication skills. MAs also removed the longstanding 'time served' requirement which had been a central feature of apprenticeships dating back to the Statute of Artificers 1563.
1994	Modern Apprenticeship pilots began	Conservative	MA prototypes began in 14 sectors.
1995	Modern Apprenticeship rolled out across England	Conservative	MA expanded nationally to include wider range of sectors.
1997	Education Act 1997	Labour	Created the Qualification Curriculum Authority with a remit of overseeing the VET awards system.
2000	Learning and Skills Act 2000	Labour	Announced the creation of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), a single organisation responsible for the VET of 16 to 19 year olds.
2001	Publication of Cassels Report - 'Modern Apprenticeships – The Way to Work: The report of the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee'	Labour	The Cassels Report contained a number of recommendations that were later adopted by government (see Table 2).

Year	Event	Government	Effect
	(Department for Education and Skills)		
	MA split into different levels	Labour	Youth Training brought into the apprenticeship 'brand' as a level 2 programme and titled 'Foundation Modern Apprenticeships' (FMA). Level 3 programmes were then called 'Advanced Modern Apprenticeships' (AMA). Technical Certificates became mandatory.
2002	Learning and Skills Council established	Labour	Learning and Skills Council (LSC) began work, replacing the former TECs. Based in Coventry and with 47 local offices, the LSC was a single agency responsible for all post-16 vocational education and training, including responsibility for the MA programme. The LSC also conducted research into VET.
2004	MA (FMA and AMA) rebranded to 'Apprenticeship'	Labour	'Apprenticeships' became the name for a wider range of government-supported youth training programmes. Also introduced Young Apprenticeships for 14 and 15 year olds and Higher Apprenticeships (HAs) as a Level 4 programme
	Introduction of 'Programme-led Apprenticeships'	Labour	This programme allowed 'apprentices' to be placed on full-time vocational courses with some on the job training provided.
2005	'Blueprint for Apprenticeship' published	Labour	The 'Blueprint for Apprenticeship' was the first government document aimed at providing national

Year	Event	Government	Effect
			guidance for the design of apprenticeship frameworks in England. While in reality this document contained little 'guidance', it led to what was to become a statutory document for all government-supported apprenticeships – the 'Specification for Apprenticeship Standards in England' (SASE).
2006	Mandatory requirement for apprenticeship frameworks to include 'Technical Certificates' were removed	Labour	'Technical Certificates' were evidence of underpinning knowledge, but became optional with the effect that some sectors omitted them from their frameworks.
2009	Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning (ASCL) Act 2009	Labour	First modern legislation (since Statute of Artificers 1563) to have a direct impact on apprenticeships. The ASCL also created the National Apprenticeship Service, Skills Funding Agency, the Young People's Learning Agency and the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and set in statute the roles of the Chief Executives of each organisation.
	Learning and Skills Council closed by UK Government and replaced with three separate government agencies	Labour	The National Apprenticeship Service, Skills Funding Agency and Young People's Learning Agency began work.
	Established the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)	Labour	Ofqual is the regulating body for general and vocational and qualifications in England.
2010	Draft version of the Specification for Apprenticeship	Labour	The draft SASE replaced the 'Blueprint for

Year	Event	Government	Effect
	Standards in England (SASE) published		Apprenticeship' (2005) and outlined the statutory elements and those components that were flexible. The draft SASE prepared industry for the statutory requirements of SASE so that apprenticeship frameworks could be written accordingly.
	'Train to Gain' (T2G) abolished.	Conservative-led Coalition	T2G was the former government-funded programme designed to address the problems of low skills among employees, particularly in employees aged 25 and over. The £150 million government budget for the 'Train to Gain' programme was redirected to facilitate an additional 50,000 apprenticeship places.
2011	Specification for Apprenticeship Standards in England (SASE) became statutory	Conservative-led Coalition	All apprenticeship frameworks to be SASE compliant.
	Education Act 2011	Conservative-led Coalition	Removed the duty included in the ASCL 2009 for all people aged between 16 and 24 having sufficient qualifications to be guaranteed an apprenticeship place if they wished to have one.
2012	Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE)	Conservative-led Coalition	AGE is a £1500 grant available for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to assist smaller employers to employ apprentices. The grant is payable in full for apprentices aged between 16 and 18 and then reducing by 50% for apprentices aged 19 to 24 and then further

Year	Event	Government	Effect
			still for apprentices aged 25+.
	Statutory Instrument 1199: 'The Apprenticeships (Alternative Completion Conditions) Regulations 2012'	Conservative-led Coalition	Allowed self-employed apprentices to undertake an apprenticeship in specified occupations. Apprentices already registered on an apprenticeship programme but subsequently made redundant could continue their apprenticeship.

Sources: Dunlop, 1912; Keep and Mayhew, 1988; Lourie, 1996; Raggatt and Williams, 1999; Unwin and Wellington, 2001; EIROnline, Oct. 2001; 'Department for Education and Skills, 2005; Mizen, 2004; Vickerstaff, 2005;37; DIUS, 2008; Fuller and Unwin, 2008, 2009;Brockmann et al, 2010; Edexcel, 'Our History', online; Rhodes, 2012; SI1199, 'The Apprenticeships (Alternative Completion Conditions) Regulations 2012')

Chapter 2

The Development of Institutional Apprenticeships in England

Introduction

Apprenticeship as an institutional model of learning reaches through time and space. As such, it offers multiple opportunities to study the subject from a variety of different perspectives, whether they are historical or contemporary, national or international, policy, practice or qualifications. This chapter sets out and analyses a selection of extant literature focusing on the development over the centuries of apprenticeship as an institution and as social practice. The principle aim is to demonstrate how apprenticeship as an institution has always consisted of complex social activities outside the confines of the binary employer-apprentice relationships. Apprenticeship is also shown to be a site of contestation and acquiescence as different actors vie for control, moving through countless changes in accordance with the political, industrial and social zeitgeists. Spanning several centuries, there have been many social backgrounds through which apprenticeship has been used and adapted in its journey through to the present.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the history of apprenticeship has often been written by non-specialist academics and scholars rather than educationalists. For example, Dunlop, Snell, Levene, Nardinelli and Lane were historians. Similarly, Liepmann researched journeys undertaken by workers going to and leaving their places of employment; she also published work on 'housing, building, land-use and transport' (inside cover of dust jacket to Liepmann, 1960). Only more latterly do educationalists seem to have taken up the responsibility for critiquing apprenticeship in the present, questioning the academic content and rigour of apprenticeship as much as its social aspects (see Fuller and Unwin's work). So, too, have others examined the roles of specific organisations (*inter alia*, Vickerstaff, 1988; Maguire, 1998; Keep, 2007; Braun et al, 2010). The role of power in the education system was shown to be highly relevant by Ball (1990a); therefore, there is good reason to assume that it is relevant also to apprenticeship.

In order to fully understand the complexities of apprenticeship, a selection of published works are presented and analysed from a range of sources, including historical documents focusing on the development of apprenticeship at various points

over time, conceptual publications, and also policy review publications. The literature is presented chronologically, according to the point in time to which they relate.

Following this introduction, the chapter is divided into five sections, beginning with apprenticeships from the thirteenth to the late-twentieth centuries. The chapter then considers apprenticeship as both a concept and as an institution. The third section looks further afield to the effects of politics and markets on general education policy, before discussing the role of government reviews on shaping the current programme and system. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the findings of the chapter.

Apprenticeships in history

Early apprenticeships up to 1814

In a book published shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, Dunlop (1912) stated that apprenticeship in England has a history that can be traced back at least to the early thirteenth century, beginning with a bye-law of the London Lorimers (producers of metal goods for equine use, such as bridle bits) in 1261 and that by the fifteenth century apprenticeship was being used and regulated by the London Guilds (Dunlop, 1912:31-2). Thomas (1929) pushed back the date of these origins slightly further to 1230, although that author noted 'it is not unreasonable to suppose that apprenticeship was common long before it is first recorded as a normal custom' and that by the end of the thirteenth century apprentices were registered in 'Loriners [sic], Cordwainers and Fishmongers'. Guilds in medieval England, as elsewhere in continental Europe (see Deissinger and Hellwig, 2005; Graf et al, 2011) played multiple roles, including market regulation, provision of craft standards, overseers of craft skills, the provision of collective bargaining for craft 'artisans', credit supply and policing of trade in local areas (Epstein, 1998). Dunlop's book covered the rise of apprenticeship from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, a period in which apprenticeship had undergone:

> [A] gradual evolution from an insignificant private custom into a public institution. Apprenticeship was originally a private arrangement; the engagement of apprentices was left to the discretion of the individual, while the conditions of service were a matter of agreement between father and master. Gradually, however, it became a public or quasi-public affair, falling under the control of the municipal authority or of the gild [sic]. (Dunlop, 1912:31)

While generally highly informative, Dunlop's work focused on the negative aspects of apprenticeships, in particular from the perspective of child labour and the use of

apprenticeship to compel children into work and under poor conditions. Nardinelli (1980), too, in a paper about the nineteenth century Factory Acts, highlighted the undesirable implications for apprenticeship that were emerging from the rapidly changing industrial landscape:

> The first textile factories were forced to locate in isolated country areas in order to take advantage of water power. Their rural locations made it difficult to recruit a labor [sic] force, a difficulty which was partially resolved by resorting to child labor, much of it by pauper apprentices. (Nardinelli, 1980:754-5)

'Pauper apprentices' were, according to this view, used as cheap, child labour, although legislation permitting the movement of pauper children out of the local parish had been in place since 43 Eliz. 1, CAP. II 1601 (the 'Poor Laws'). However, this rather dark image is countered by Levene (2010), who argued instead that:

> We should be wary of tying apprenticeship in different sectors of the economy into a binary view of training and deskilling. Similarly, we should not assume that one sector brought a greater investment in human capital than the other, especially when we bear in mind the ongoing emphasis on settlement acquisition and future work prospects. Children bound to the industrializing sector were arguably as likely to succeed in these respects as those apprenticed to traditional trades, while Humphries [2003] stresses that apprenticeship was vital in saving poor children from social exclusion. (Levene, 2010:939)

Levene's point is one that perhaps should be borne in mind when considering today's apprenticeships and the expansion of sectors and types of employment it covers. Likewise, Lane (1996) challenged the negative accounts of apprenticeship in English history. Rather than portray apprenticeship as rife with 'notorious abuses as the sweated and brutal occupations' (p1), Lane pointed out that:

> [The] advantages of apprenticeship when it worked well were considerable. Traditional apprenticeship provided stability for a child, a secure future, with guaranteed employment and limited competition. There were also social benefits for the adult in belonging to a trade or craft organization, including welfare provisions for members and their dependents. (Lane, 1996:2)

Lane also stated that individuals who became 'freemen' [sic], that is, had trained as apprentices and earned their right to work free of the employer, were able 'to rise

economically and socially' and so provided them with '[access] to charity funds and franchise rights' in certain towns and cities (Lane, 1996:2). Lane provided a useful overview of the key legislation affecting apprenticeship in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, although errors in the way she referenced the statutes renders some of her legal referencing as dubious[2]. What Lane did very well, however, was to locate apprenticeship in the broader social and industrial changes over the centuries:

> Apprenticeship mirrored the change from handicraft, domestic skills to mass-produced, factory goods, [indicating] new consumption patterns. (Lane, 1996:1)

Another engaging publication was that offered by Snell (1996) in which he discussed the long history of apprenticeship and used Liepmann's (1960:9)[3] distinction between different 'phases' of apprenticeship, those being: 'guild apprenticeship' (pre-1563), when guilds provided the management and structure of apprenticeship; 'statutory apprenticeship' (1563 to 1814), a time in which the power of the guilds diminished due to the rise of the power of the state; and 'voluntary apprenticeship' (1814 onwards), a time in which apprenticeships were often governed by arrangements between employers and unions. One of the core components of apprenticeship from the period of statutory apprenticeships that remained in place until the introduction of the Modern Apprenticeship in 1994-5 was the 'time serving' element, which for many years stood at seven years. Epstein (2010:689), though, has suggested that local 'Justices of the Peace' (JPs), authorised by the 'Statute of Artificers 1563[4]' to ensure apprenticeship law was carried out at the local level, did not always enforce this requirement and so '[even] the apparently uncompromising norms of the Statute of Artificers of 1563 [sic] gave English [Justices of the Peace] discretion in applying apprenticeship rules' (Epstein, 1998:689). This 'soft' approach to implementing the law as described here by Epstein suggests that even in the time of the Statute of Artificers there was a difference similar to that explained in the separation of programme and system in this thesis. Snell's (1996) work, though, also provides another example of the central pillars of this thesis when he described a form of governance within apprenticeships, pointing out that the indentures often required

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[2] For example, Lane referenced one statute as being '8 Anne c. 9' (257) and called it 'the 1709 Stamp Act'. It is, according to Justis (the online database for legislation), the Stamps Act 1709 and is referenced 8 Anne c. 5 (Section XXXVIII). Similarly, Lane cited the Parish Apprentices Act 1792 (32 Geo. III c.57) as c. 47, which is a completely different Act.

[3] Snell is generally cited as the originator of these 'eras', but Liepmann (1960) had made the same observation nearly four decades earlier, referring to them as 'phases'. Leipmann is not cited by Snell for this observation, although Liepmann's (1960) work is referenced elsewhere in the publication

[4] The 'Statute of Artificers' is the name commonly attributed to the wordier and official title: '*An Acte towching dyvers Orders for Artificers Laborers Servantes of Husbandrye and Apprentises*, (5 Eliz. 1) C A P. IV'. The title of 'Statute of Artificers' appears to have been added subsequently as a shorthand term of reference.

moral and religious education to be included in the education of the apprentice. Additionally, 'Apprenticeship was used to enforce an extensive conception of social order, control and loyalty' (Snell, 1996:305). But Snell also made an interesting point when he pointed to the lack of economic consideration that went into apprenticeship at the time as apprenticeship was more about the social factors than 'the literal, 'rational', calculative nature of training and comprehension today' (Snell, 1996:305) in which qualifications and levels of learning punctuate contemporary apprenticeships. However, this is not to say that there were no economic or 'calculative' (Snell, 1996:305) matters in this time. According to Epstein, guilds were implicated in overseeing social practices in apprenticeship and employment as they 'enforced compliance through statutory penalties backed up with a combination of compulsory membership, blackballing and boycott' (Epstein, 1998:691). Guilds, unions, JPs and employers all seemed to play important roles in the management and control of apprenticeships over time, particularly in the period since the *statutory* apprenticeships, although the influence they had went through various peaks and troughs.

One important aspect of apprenticeship touched on by both Snell (1998) and Lane (1996) is that of the state's regulation of apprenticeship. Woodward (1980), Bindoff (1961) and Derry (1931) each provided modern scholars with a view of various elements of the main statute that governed apprenticeship for two and a half centuries: the aforementioned Statute of Artificers 1563. Woodward (1980) focused on the various laws and by-laws introduced by towns, cities and counties attempting to regulate apprenticeships at the local levels. Woodward's point was that the statutes embodied attempts by the local councils to regulate industry and often ignored state attempts to intervene in matters of employment regulation. The Statute of Artificers 1563 was thereby an attempt by the state to put in place a framework that controlled labour. So, while Woodward noted that at times this brought the state into conflict with towns and cities, the two forms of government 'were united in the firm belief that all aspects of the labour market should be controlled closely and that the rewards to labour should be subject to a wages ceiling' (Woodward, 1980:42).

Nearly twenty years prior to Woodward, Bindoff (1961) had traced the journey of the *Bill* of Artificers as it made its way through Parliament and onto the statute book. When it became law, Bindoff believed the end result was that the Statute of Artificers 1563 was not a single piece of law-making but instead reflected a diversity of interests (Bindoff, 1961:59). Furthermore, Bindoff showed that 'Apprentices' were added to the Bill in the second reading, but was not part of the initial aim of the Bill (actually, Bindoff noted that this was the *second* 'second reading').

While the aforementioned researchers focused on the Statute's creation and operation, Derry (1931) provided a view on the reasons concerning the *repeal* of the apprenticeship clauses of the Statute of Artificers. So while Bindoff believed the *Bill* reflected a diversity of interests, so Derry showed that the repeal demonstrated a split between those who believed apprenticeship regulation was beneficial to industry and those who believed such regulation stood in the way of industrial change and employment practices. Indeed, Adam Smith in his famous series of books published as *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776 (Smith, 1976) had already argued against apprenticeship and particularly against the Statute of Artificers 1563 on the basis that apprenticeship was responsible for creating many financial and social inequalities through its outdated customs. Derry (1931), though, believed that many employers at the time leading up to the repeal, and hence the removal of regulations, were actually increasing their rules and regulations regarding apprenticeship and there was, he noted, even increased acceptance of the 'seven year' apprenticeships (Derry, 1931:68). Indeed, Derry noted that 'on April 28, 1813, a petition was sent up to the House of Commons bearing more than 32,000 signatures' in support of the benefits of regulation and requesting the Government 'to introduce an amending Bill to render the [1563] Act *more effective*'. (Derry, 1931:73, 74 – emphasis added)

However, the repeal's success was essentially down to the work of 'a certain Serjeant[5] [sic] Arthur Onslow, M.P.' who appeared to side with the anti-apprenticeship lobby and sponsored the Bill that would lead to the repeal of the apprenticeship clauses (Derry, 1931:76-7). Despite multiple petitions against the Bill in its various stages, it seems a series of political manoeuvrings and powerful alliances combined with 'the apathy and indifference of educated opinion' to see the Bill passed (Derry, 1931:86). Derry's closing sentence noted that 'the Act of 1814 did not owe its inception to the adoption by Parliament of a coherent new economic policy, but was the child of an age of political chaos and governmental ineptitude' (Derry, 1931:87). Comments expressed in the interviews and set out in Chapters 6 and 7 suggest that Derry's observations on the incoherency of government policy merit the proverb '*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*'[6]. So what did the Triquetra Apprenticeship of Actors look like following in the periods from the thirteenth century through to the repeal of the apprenticeship clauses of the Statute of Artificers? Figure 3 shows how the Triquetra might have looked pre-Statute of Artificers 1563, with the guilds holding considerable sway over the governance and administration of apprentices and apprenticeships, while employers and communities would also have featured strongly. Figure 4 then replaces

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[5] The title of 'Serjeant at Arms' was bestowed upon a select few lawyers from the fourteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, providing these particular lawyers with certain privileges. It was also from this select group that judges were chosen (Source: Inner Temple Admissions Database, 'Legal Profession to 1920').]

[6] 'The more things change, the more they stay the same'

'Guilds' with 'Government' and replaces 'Local communities' with 'Local areas/JPs' following the Statute receiving Royal Assent (becoming law). The relationships then changed with the Statute of Artificers 1563, as Figure 4 demonstrates. Although the legislation suggests that Government essentially 'took control' of the governance of apprenticeships, it seems the guilds also maintained control for some time after the Statute of Artificers had been passed (Epstein, 1998:696). Local JPs oversaw the national laws at the local level, although even here Epstein reports there was flexibility in how severely JPs enforced the rules.
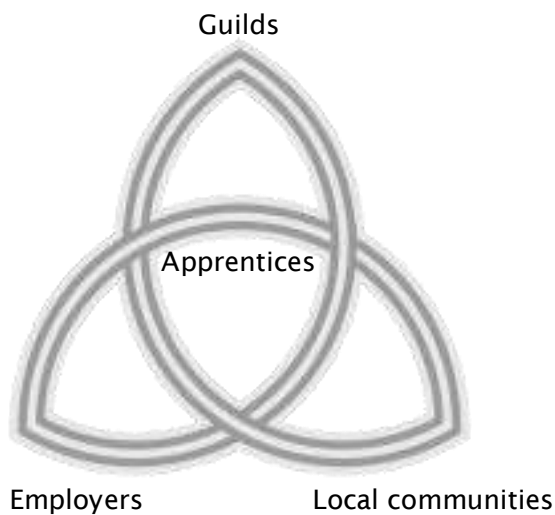
Figure 3: The Triquetra of Apprenticeship Actors (pre-Statute of Artificers)
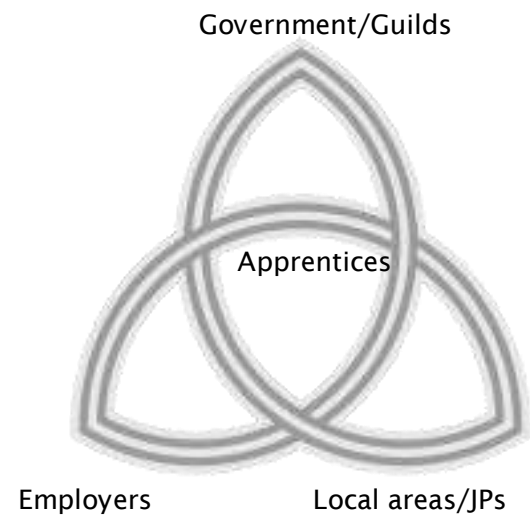
Figure 4: The Triquetra of Apprenticeship Actors (1563 to 1814)

Apprenticeship from 1814 to the mid-twentieth century

Bray (1909:414) commented that with the repeal of the apprenticeship clauses of the Statute of Artificers in 1814, the state had 'washed its hands of all responsibility in the matter of training and supervision' and that only with the advent of compulsory education 'did it again recognise that responsibility'. The effect was to create a bifurcation between the state education system and the apprenticeship system (Fuller and Unwin, 2009:407-8), although Howell (1877) believed the introduction of compulsory education and the growth of technical education would be to the benefit rather than detriment to apprenticeships. Bray's recommendation to address the problem of youth unemployment was – and remains – interesting and highly relevant to recent government policy aims, for he suggested that young people should remain 'under supervision until at least the age of 18 is reached' (remembering that the school leaving age at the time was fourteen) and that 'half of the day should be spent in education and the other half given to employment' in order to oversee 'their physical, mental, and moral development' (Bray, 1909:414-5). Apprenticeship then, as it is now, was much more than simply a model of learning; it involved power interests amongst competing perspectives, public and private institutions, and concerns about the

formative years of young people as they made their way into adulthood, society and productive workers. Yet, even if it was true that the state had 'washed its hands of [...] training and supervision' (Bray, 1909:414), social and industrial practices that had their roots in the longstanding legislation repealed in 1814 continued (Howell, 1877). The Fabians Sidney and Beatrice Webb (1897) had argued that trade unions had continued to operate many restrictive practices that had their roots in the 1563 Act (and can also be traced back to the work of the guilds almost from apprenticeships' inception; see Thomas, 1929; Liepmann, 1960; Streeck, 2011) and that apprentices could expect to be paid lower wages than non-apprenticed workers, but would likely gain entry into trades that non-apprentices workers were prevented from accessing (Webb and Webb, 1897:457). However, the Webbs ended the section on apprenticeship saying that there were, at the time of their research, few individuals apprenticed in trades and that apprenticeship itself was on the wane, noting, as Bray would echo over a decade later, that 'The abandonment of apprenticeship as a form of technical training is not due to the discovery of any satisfactory alternative' (Webb and Webb, 1897:476). Instead, apprenticeship was, they believed, declining as a result of the many arbitrary and varied restrictive practices that had emerged over time, a point agreed on by Howell (1877) who explained that these practices grew from employers who sought to use apprenticeship as a means of cheap labour and that the unions' reactions to these changing circumstances were 'sometimes not over wise' (Howell, 1877:851). Outside of the unions, though, apprenticeship was being faced with criticisms that attacked its very nature, leading the Webbs to remark pessimistically:

> It was, in fact, the cost to the community, and, as he thought, the excessive cost, that led Adam Smith so fervently to denounce the whole apprenticeship system, with its inevitable consequences of monopoly wages and profits. [...] Undemocratic in its scope, unscientific in its educational methods, and fundamentally unsound in its financial aspects, the apprenticeship system, in spite of all the practical arguments in its favour, is not likely to be deliberately revived by a modern democracy. (Webb and Webb, 1897:481)

The 'cost to the community' Webb and Webb referred to was not any single 'community' and neither was it merely an economic cost that was at issue; it was instead, as noted above, one that was restrictive to a person's earnings, ability to work in some trades and their capacity to move between geographical locations and also across sectors (Smith, 1976:117). Yet despite the Webbs' dire prognosis and the at best misguided efforts of trades unions to deal with the changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution (Howell, 1877), apprenticeship remained in place in some industries well into the mid-twentieth century and post-Second World War England was

showing concerns about the expected 'bulge' of young people about to leave school and enter employment (Venables, 1961; Williams, 1963). This wave of young people looking for work was a scenario which some believed necessitated bringing the state back in to govern apprenticeships and vocational education and training (VET) generally in England. What is interesting for the purposes of this thesis is that unions in the mid-twentieth century reflected union attitudes and practices in the late nineteenth century and the guilds several centuries before them. Apprenticeship has thus long been a tool of social and occupational regulation, a status that has been overshadowed by claims that apprenticeship is The following section considers the post-war period up to the early 1990s and begins with a timeline from 1964 to the present showing the various statutes, policies and institutional organisations that have been introduced and closed by government.

Apprenticeship from the 1960s

The early 1960s saw publications by Liepmann (1960), Venables (1961) and Williams (1963), each of which argued for the state to accept responsibility for Vocational Education and Training (VET) (although it is interesting to note that Howell, writing in 1877 (p857), had called for Government intervention in order to best supplement apprenticeships with the then growing demand for technical education). These authors gave voice to a growing collective awareness of the problems facing VET more generally, raising concerns that young people's employment and training needs were not being met by the institutions then charged with overseeing apprenticeships: the unions, the employers and, to a lesser extent, the local colleges of further education. The Conservative Government at this time attempted to reinstate its control of VET with the Industrial Training Act 1964 (ITA 1964), including making provision for a 'Central Training Council' (CTC) to oversee VET in England, although the CTC did not come to fruition. (There was a change of government from Conservative to Labour later that year and so it may be that the incoming government decided against implementing the CTC). So while attempts at introducing new models of training were made in the 1970s and 1980s that would later impact on the design of apprenticeships in England and the UK (Fuller and Unwin, 2009), it was not until the introduction of the Modern Apprenticeship programme in 1994-5 that the government really engaged with institutional apprenticeships once more in any overt way. Apprenticeship, which had largely been ignored by the laissez-faire attitudes of governments for so long, became a site of interest and contestation in the post-war, pre-1990s era. The timeline (Figure 5) of the various legislation, policies and government supported bodies that emerged and disappeared since 1964 provides evidence of unease in the area of apprenticeships and VET.

Liepmann (1960) had called for greater state control of apprenticeships, noting that 'In recent years, Apprenticeship [sic] has become a matter of general concern' (ix) but acknowledged that 'the problems involved [in apprenticeship and VET] are so many-sided and complex'. Indeed, the role of trade unions in the 1950s apprenticeships was to regulate entry into the skilled occupations, which, for the author remarked:

> Regulation of entry into occupations has been a prominent feature of the apprenticeship system since medieval times. It was therefore an old policy which trade unions took over after apprenticeship had ceased to be compulsory in 1814. Skilled workers were the first to be organised; and, in the era of free competition, the craftsmen's struggle for better conditions for themselves alone was in tune with the *zeitgeist*. Apprenticeship was the distinguishing characteristic of craftsmen and lent itself to being used for limiting entry into their trades. (Liepmann, 1960:16)

Liepmann reflected a view of apprenticeship in the post-war era in a way similar to that expressed by Sidney and Beatrice Webb sixty-three years previously in that apprenticeship was a reflection of various and often competing power interests which ensured that apprenticeship remained an often exclusionary device for training young workers and, at its worst, was becoming increasingly irrelevant in the modern world. Yet unlike the Webbs, Liepmann saw the state as a modifying force in the '*modus vivendi*[7]' that existed at the time between the unions and industry and was, she believed, failing many young people (Liepmann, 1960:196 – original emphasis).

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[7] Modus vivendi: an agreement reached between parties

Figure 5: Timeline of legislation and training bodies 1964 to 2011

	1964	1973	1981	1982	1987	1988	1990	1994	1998	2000	2001	2002	2005	2008	2009	2011
Key legislation and policies	Industrial Training Act 1964	Employment and Training Act 1973		Industrial Training Act 1982				Modern Apprenticeship begins		Learning and Skills Act 2000	Modern Apprenticeships' renamed and split into different levels		'Blueprint for Apprenticeship' published		ASCL 2009 & draft SASE published	SASE becomes statutory
Oversight, funding and administrative bodies		Manpower Services Commission (MSC)	Non-Statutory Training Organisations			Training Commission/Training Agency (replaced MSC)	Training and Enterprise Councils (replaced Training Agency)				Learning and Skills Council (LSC)	Sector Skills Councils Delivery Agency (SSDA)		Alliance of Sector Skills Councils (replaced SSDA) / UK Commission for Education and Skills (UKCES)	LSC abolished: replaced with SFA, NAS and YPLA	SSCs to ensure all apprenticeship frameworks comply with the SASE
Delivery bodies	Industrial Training Boards ITBs)			Abolished ITBs	Industrial Training Organisations				National Training Organisations			Sector Skills Councils			ATA pilots begins	

Sources: Keep and Mayhew, 1988; Unwin and Wellington, 2001; Keep, 2006; Payne, 2007, 2008b; ASCL 2009; SASE, 2011

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Venables (1961) also voiced the opinion that the education of young adults was (as surely remains so today) a social issue extending beyond the confines of compulsory education and that the VET and apprenticeship programmes in England were inadequate for the country's needs, asking:

> Are we content to go on as we are, altering and amending a little here and there, leaving the onus on the intelligent individuals to make the effort to educate themselves away from their own social environment? Or do we believe that in an industrialised and civilised democracy further education to the limit of their potentialities is essential for everyone; because in an industrial society further education is also vocationally necessary; and thirdly because no democratic society can remain healthy without some form of universal 'liberal' or 'cultural' education? The three reasons are not conflicting but complementary. (Venables, 1961:211)

Williams (1963), too, like Venables and Liepmann before her, expressed concern about 'the bulge' of young people leaving compulsory school and entering the labour market and 'for whom jobs and opportunities for training must be provided' (Williams, 1963:2). Williams used comparative analysis to consider apprenticeships in other European countries, comparing them to Britain's own apprenticeship system and finishing with a list of recommendations which essentially called for state intervention in regulating apprenticeships. Competing interests appears to have been a theme running throughout apprenticeship's long history, the reach of which has significance for apprenticeships today with the UK Government using financial incentives to encourage smaller firms, while larger firms can opt to receive funds directly from the government to provide in-house training and so by-passing external training providers (Chapter 4 will discuss the incentives and the funding available to large firms in more detail). The ITA 1964 signified an attempt to form a partnership model of VET in the form of Industrial Training Boards (ITBs) and the instigation of a policy of levies upon larger businesses which then provided grants available to firms offering training (Brockmann et al, 2010:114-5).

What each of the writers discussed so far brought to the debate are the roles of various institutions and organisations throughout history in the provision of apprenticeship. Institutional apprenticeships have long relied on interactions between various actors operating in each era. While apprenticeship as a formal arrangement was largely sidetracked in the 1970s and 1980s by the government which concentrated on other models of vocational learning (Fuller and Unwin, 2009), the system of organisations which would later underpin apprenticeships was beginning to develop in this time. This development of new interests seems due to a combination of factors

encompassing the increasing recognition that national interests were losing out to international competition (Brown et al, 2001) and the increasing difficulty of young people entering into employment (Raggatt and Williams, 1999). The increased role of the state in the governing of VET also had the effect of increasing the numbers of organisations involved, in no small part due to the introduction of market forces into education generally (Ball, 1990a). Yet untethered marketization presents problems of inequality, a point that led Streeck (1989) to observe of Germany's training system:

> My argument will call upon a fundamental but today often suppressed insight of social theory: *that successful self-interested, utilitarian behaviour in market environments requires the presence of collective resources, common values and shared expectation that rationally acting individuals cannot normally generate, protect or restore even if they fully recognize their vital importance.* This is because such resources are in significant respects 'collective goods' which cannot be privately appropriated and to whose generation rational capitalist actors have therefore no, or no sufficient, incentives to contribute. As a consequence, the unbridled pursuit of self-regarding interests results in suboptimal outcomes not just for the community at large but also for economically rational individuals themselves. (Streeck, 1989:89-90 – original emphasis)

Streeck's observation is particularly pertinent for the way it reflects many of the concerns offered above that the power of the state was necessary to curb restrictive practices inherent in the way apprenticeships were being regulated (Liepmann, 1960; Venables, 1961; Williams, 1963). (A point I will return to in the final chapter and the discussion of commodification.) Coming towards the end of the era of 'voluntary apprenticeships' (Liepmann, 1960; Snell, 1996), the view that state intervention in apprenticeships and VET was essential was in stark contrast to those individuals who, in the lead-up to the removal of the apprenticeship clauses of the Statute of Artificers 1563, claimed that legislation had led to restrictive practices that were economically and socially damaging (e.g. Smith, 1976; Onslow). Once again apprenticeship was in trouble, only this time the state was being asked to take, rather than relinquish, control. In the period from 1964 to 1979 apprentice numbers in Britain fell from 240,000 to 155,000 and by 1986 even this figure had fallen by another 65 per cent to 63,700 (Keep and Mayhew, 1988:x). Fuller and Unwin explained the situation thus:

> Apprenticeship numbers had been declining since the mid-1960s, when they stood at around 3% of manufacturing employment. By 1990, apprenticeship accounted for just two-thirds of 1% of total employment, and this has continued to drop so that in 2001, apprenticeship stocks

stand at between one-sixth and one-ninth of the share of employment. (Fuller and Unwin, 2003:6)

Trades unions from before the end of the nineteenth century through to the 1960s and 1970s seem to have had a hard grip on apprenticeship regulation in England, using it as a means of entry into skilled employment and union membership (Liepmann, 1960; Streeck, 2011). Liepmann, though, observed that many unions in this time had little interest in the quality of the training they received, saying that unions' interest was 'rather limp' and that they were more interested in protecting the interests of the skilled labour than the processes by which apprentices acquired their skills (Liepmann, 1960:154-5). So what would the 'Apprenticeship Triquetra' look like in the mid to late-twentieth century? I suggest that in the 1950s and early 1960s, any 'Apprenticeship Triquetra' that might be found would have been varying depending on the agreement between the union and employers and the sphere of occupation and that many employers by this time did not participate in any apprenticeship programmes (Unwin, 1996:61-2). For this reason, the title of the 'Apprenticeship Triquetra' presented in Figure 6 ends with a question mark and 'Training Providers' is italicised.

Unions

Apprentices

Employers   ***Training providers*** (where present, usually a local college or training institute)
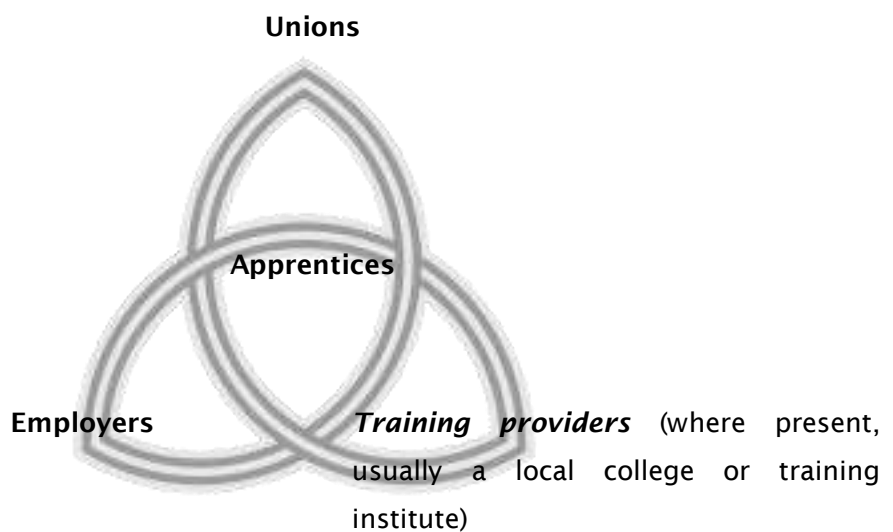
Figure 6: 'Apprenticeship Triquetra' in the mid-twentieth century?

Furthermore, apprenticeship in the 1950 and sixties was found to be wanting, '[perpetuating] outdated restrictions and demarcations' (Gospel, 1997:5; see also Liepmann, 1960, Chapter 9; Raggatt and Williams, 1999, Chapter 2), while in the 1970s through to the 1990s went through a period of decline in numbers and apprenticeship found itself superseded by 'Youth Training Schemes [which were] in effect, a state-funded alternative to the employer-funded apprenticeship' (Unwin, 1996:62).

This was the recent background into which Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) were born. While the period from the 1960s through to the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s saw governments wrestling with the problem of youth employment and skills, it was John Major's Conservative Government which oversaw the first deliberate attempt by the state to revive apprenticeship in England and the point at which the current 'Apprenticeship Triquetra' took form.

Modern Apprenticeships

In establishing MAs, the Conservative Government not only answered the calls of those critics advocating government intervention as a necessity, but it also finally put to rest the Webbs' (1897) dire prognosis from a century earlier. MAs effectively gave new life to apprenticeship, bringing apprenticeship into a new era and a deliberate change in structure. The choice of the term 'Modern Apprenticeship' was a clever move, at once bringing together the positive light in which 'apprenticeship' was generally regarded and yet inserting the word 'Modern' to show it was also new, separate from previous government training programmes and fitting for the end of the twentieth century (Unwin and Wellington, 2001:11-12). In doing so it gave space for a revived body of literature.

The essence of much of the literature which has grown from the MA can be characterised in three ways. First, academic publications considered the introduction of the MA as a break with previous apprenticeships and government-supported training programmes. (See, *inter alia*: Fuller, 1996; Maguire, 1998; Gospel and Fuller, 1998; Unwin and Wellington, 2001; Fuller and Unwin, 2003; Vickerstaff, 2007). A second major line of thought inspired by the MA was to compare the MA with other nations' VET programmes as the 'Samuelson Report' (Samuelson, 1884) and Williams (1961) had once done. (See Penn, 1998; Ryan and Unwin, 2001; Steedman, 2001 & 2010; Ryan et al, 2010; Ryan, 1998; McIntosh, 2005.)

However, it is the third category of publications which is highly significant. Apprenticeship is now being studied as a model of VET in its own right and is sufficiently embedded in the English VET system so as to be worthy of study for what apprenticeship *is*, rather than what it *was*. This is not to say that the contemporary apprenticeships cannot be improved by examining past practices and systems or even that institutional apprenticeship has evolved so far from the original concept that comparisons with the past are rendered meaningless; I argue here that the reverse is true. Rather, the current system has reached a point where critique is possible on its own merits, bringing with it discussions of apprenticeship in conceptual terms (see Lave and Wenger, 1991; Fuller and Unwin, 1998; Guile and Young, 1998). This latter development of the literature signifies that apprenticeship in its modern guise has

'come of age' and can be critiqued independently of its origins, although one can argue equally, as I do, that it can never truly be free of its traditions given its longevity and international spread.

But what *is* apprenticeship as a concept? The 'Triquetra of Apprenticeship Factors' deals with this question to some extent, but the following section critiques publications that have shed some light on this question, for it is essential to understand apprenticeship conceptually as well as practically, for only then can the discussion of actors' roles and their effects on the programme be fully addressed.

Apprenticeship as a concept

In 1991, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger published a book that can be looked upon as a seminal moment in the conceptual understanding of apprenticeship. Through the lenses of 'legitimate peripheral participation' (LPP) and 'situated learning' (Lave and Wenger, 1991), the authors presented a picture of a learning model in which the social aspect was very much integral to the apprenticeship process. Learning was shown as a journey from outsider (newcomer) to key worker (old timer), thus rejecting didactic, classroom-based approaches to learning. The book inspired new discussions about the nature and practice of apprenticeship and provided thinkers on the topic of VET with the platform from which to launch new or furthered ideas (Fuller and Unwin, 2003, 2008) and brought the study of apprenticeship to a new generation, such was the power of the *ideas* contained within the book, if not always agreement on the detail (Fuller and Unwin, 2003). Yet the book also left so much unsaid and in that regard alone, Lave and Wenger's book has had an important effect on current thinking about apprenticeship and its broader meaning as it has been taken up anew in recent decades by governments across the world.

Despite over two decades having passed since 'Situated Learning' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) was published, it retains relevance to the government-supported apprenticeships in use in England today. In the opening chapter, the authors say their 'intention … was to rescue the idea of apprenticeship' (29 – original emphasis), as the *idea*, the *concept*, of apprenticeship had been lost to the point where discussions the authors were having with other academics on the topic highlighted the lack of any robust *understanding* of what apprenticeship actually is and it had become a metaphor for any learning to work situation (Lave and Wenger, 1991:29-30). There is ample evidence to suggest that apprenticeship today still suffers from a lack of identity or broader understanding of what it really entails. A Parliamentary debate on apprenticeships provided a good example of the confused idea of what its use, with some speakers pontificating on the success of local apprenticeship programmes that in

reality were nothing more than short training programmes. (For a full transcript of the debate, see Hansard, the official UK reports of Parliamentary proceedings: 19th Dec 2011, col.1105-1168). Chapter 7 of this thesis also provides interview data on the issue of defining apprenticeship. Situated learning in the sense Lave and Wenger used it (rather than, as they point out, in the sense that all workplace learning is 'situated' to some degree):

> [I]mplied emphasis on comprehensive understanding involving the whole person rather than 'receiving' a body of factual knowledge about the world, on activity in and with the world; and on the *view that agent, activity, and the world mutually constitute each other*' (Lave and Wenger, 1991:33 – emphasis added).

The last italicised explanation provides a useful way of thinking about apprenticeships and lies at the heart of this thesis and, indeed, the Apprenticeship Triquetra, although in the thesis the focus is on actors other than apprentices. But the authors also believed that LPP was both:

> [A] source of power or powerlessness, in affording or preventing articulation and interchange among communities of practice. *The ambiguous potentialities of legitimate peripherality reflect the concept's pivotal role in providing access to a nexus of relationships otherwise not perceived or connected.* (36 – emphasis added).

It is this nexus of relationships that is so central to this research and is picked up in Chapter 3 and the discussion on Actor Network Theory. Indeed, the strength of Lave and Wenger's book was not that they provided any *definitive* concept of apprenticeship, but that they provided the fertile ground from which ideas could grow. The network of relationships involved in LPP is similar in some ways to those of the apprenticeship system. Learning, the authors pointed out, was a transformative process, but is also actively engaged in maintaining 'the status quo' (Lave and Wenger, 1991:57-8). The question then becomes: how do the institutions and stakeholders in the apprenticeship system engage in this generative process? How do they learn to become full participants in the apprenticeship system? Or as I explained in the opening chapter, how do they learn their lines and their roles?

As mentioned, Lave and Wenger's book provided the space from which new ideas emerged. Fuller and Unwin sought similarly to create a new debate on apprenticeships when in a series of articles (1998, 2003, 2008) they linked the practice of the then MA with the conceptual notions of apprenticeship, using the latter as a critique for the former and the former to inform the latter. In 1998, they wrote that:

From the perspective of the Government-sponsored [MA] programme, the key partners in communities of practice are further education lecturers and trainers, employers and apprentices. These groups are supported by Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) which aim to provide specialist sectoral advice, and Training and Enterprise Councils which manage the public funds made available for the programme. (Fuller and Unwin, 1998:158-9)

Fuller and Unwin appear to suggest that apprenticeship needs to be envisaged as a holistic system in which all social partners involved are brought into the formulation and creation of apprenticeship frameworks (Fuller and Unwin, 1998:168). The authors recognised the role of 'key partners', as the Department of Industry, Universities and Skills (DIUS) White Paper *World-class Apprenticeships* (2008) ('White Papers' set out government policy intentions), and the Skills Commission's paper *Progression Through Apprenticeship* (2009) would later do. A further article by Fuller and Unwin (2009), proved to have been inspirational for me in formulating this thesis in a similar way to Lave and Wenger's book in at least two ways; the first I agree with, while the second I take issue with. In this 2009 paper, the authors stated that:

[It] can be seen that the development of apprenticeship *throughout history has involved the interplay of three competing elements*: (1) the evolution of a responsive model of learning; (2) the model's applicability to the needs of employers; and (3) the model's usefulness to the state. (Fuller and Unwin, 2009:410 – emphasis added)

What Fuller and Unwin did here was to locate apprenticeship as a series of interwoven and interdependent elements. Apprenticeship has always involved the passing on from employer to apprentice the craft skills needed of any particular occupation which has evolved through workplace practices. That employers' needs change with time means that apprenticeship has needed elements of both temporal and locational plasticity that has allowed it to be used in different social settings, permitting its use in different industries/sectors/occupations, employers, locations (local, national and international) or over time. Fuller and Unwin's third 'competing element' is particularly interesting, because it would certainly appear that the British Government has recently adopted an 'all or nothing' approach to apprenticeship in moving it to the centre of England's government skills agenda (BIS, 2010a). The point here is that, as Fuller and Unwin alluded to, there have been two occasions when apprenticeship has been shaped by statute, one from 1563 to 1814, the other from 2009, coming into force at the time the paper was published (although, of course, a variety of laws have been enacted over

the centuries that have impacted on apprenticeship (e.g. the so-called 'Poor Laws' and 'Factory Acts'; ITA 1964), without specifically addressing apprenticeships).

The same paper (Fuller and Unwin, 2009) also saw the authors note the way that, historically, apprenticeships have been used as a means of training by which employers pass on not just craft skills to their new recruits, but also teaches wider social morals and norms, in doing so contributing to the social moral order. The abstract outlined the authors' thoughts on how apprenticeships have in recent decades become:

> [An] instrument of state policy, primarily for the control of young people and as part of new legislation to keep them in some form of education or training to the age of 18. (Fuller and Unwin, 2009:405)

It is the argument posited in this thesis that alongside any pedagogical content, it seems that historically apprenticeship has always been more than a matter of workplace education alone, a point the authors acknowledged when they wrote 'apprenticeship as a model of learning that has always included a moral dimension' (Fuller and Unwin, 2009:411). Moreover, as shown above, apprenticeship has always been governed by parties whose interests shape the way that apprenticeship is practiced, including both state and non-state actors. As noted earlier in this chapter, a strong influence has always been exerted by organisations and individuals such as, at various times, JPs, guilds, employers and unions. That the present system of apprenticeship is incorporated into statute (Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 – ASCL 2009) and is being led by government policy and funding mechanisms changes the *balance of power*, but does not change the notion that apprenticeship has always been influenced by wider social forces than simply the direction of any single employer in developing the education, skills and social practices of the apprentice. The problem then becomes one of the state's objectives and mechanisms used to direct the system and here Fuller and Unwin (2009) provide an insight into the way in which the apprenticeship was being transformed into a device for broader social goals. Yet, even the Statute of Artificers 1563 and the Poor Law 1601 (and Factory Acts) had the same impact; that of taking on an apprentice for a period of seven years and permitting children of families in receipt of poor relief to be relocated outside of their parish to be apprenticed in unfamiliar surroundings, respectively (Harris, 2004:41; Nardinelli, 1980).

What Fuller and Unwin achieved with their 2009 paper was to demonstrate the processes by which the current system now operates, including the way in which the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), which they described as 'essentially a cheaper version of apprenticeship' (Fuller and Unwin, 2009:409) was brought into 'apprenticeship'. But

more importantly, they noted that in 1992 the government brought market forces into the state VET system, an action which led to colleges becoming 'corporate institutions' that needed to concentrate on:

> [Developing] courses which attracted the most favourable funding, even at the expense of maintaining and enhancing their vocational profile. This fracturing of the colleges' relationship to local employers and communities marked a distinct change from the heyday of apprenticeship. (Fuller and Unwin, 2009:413)

It is debateable whether any such 'heyday' has ever existed since apprenticeship seems always to have had its positive and negative aspects (Lane, 1996; Levene, 2010). However, the move toward market processes in the 1980s signalled 'a major transformation […] in the organising principles of social provision right across the public sector' (Ball, 1990a:258) and formed part of the broader Conservative Government's New Public Management (NPM) policy agenda and the 'minimal state' ideologies of the neo-liberal politics (Drewry, 2007; Ball, 1990a). It could be argued that with the development of markets in the delivery of vocational education and training, apprenticeship began a process of 'commodification'[8]; something to be *produced* and eventually *traded* (see below). The lead-up to the period in which MAs were conceived marked a period in which market forces had recently been introduced into the education system more generally (Ball, 1990a) and in which parents and compulsory school-aged pupils became consumers of education. It is therefore reasonable to assume in hindsight that apprenticeship, which had always had a foot each in industry and education (Liepmann, 1960), would follow the path into greater roles for private actors and lead to the introduction of internal markets. The problem that follows from this is not simply the issue of the marketisation of apprenticeship, but rather the *commodification* of apprenticeship, with apprenticeship becoming a commodity from which organisations can profit via government funding, partially in exchange for government funding, but also through the creation of markets. For example, ATAs charge employers for their services; training providers adapt their training programmes to attract apprenticeship funding; conference organisers trade on the topic through organising seminars and conferences; large employers contract directly with the SFA (the ten highest recipients between them received over £30 million of funding in 2010-11 – see Table 8). The potential effect of this commodification process is to risk distancing apprenticeship from the best practices of learning embedded within companies, the 'expansive apprenticeships' (Fuller and Unwin, 2003, 2008), as apprenticeship is seen as a way to tap into additional financial resources.

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[8] With thanks for Dr Martin Dyke for this observation

The following section considers this shift of apprenticeships by way of widening the discussion to factor in changes in education and politics.

Education policy and political ideology

Ball (1990a) explained how changes in the dominant discourses of political ideology provided the impetus for changes that would be felt across the education system. During the 1980s, educational policy control was removed from the teachers and teaching unions and so 'parents and industrialists' became 'consumers of education' (Ball, 1990a:8). What followed was greater scrutiny of teachers and tighter regulation of schools, introduced to curb the perception that schools were responsible for the wider mores of society. As Snell (1996:305) observed, education in society had shifted from social to the 'rational and calculative'. Education and, I argue, apprenticeship, was once as much about learning to be a valuable member of society as it was about gaining knowledge and skills; today, education (and apprenticeship) can at times appear to be based on the personal and institutional decisions to avoid risk, and the ability of, for example, individuals, schools, colleges, universities, employers, to make decisions on the basis of qualifications rather than abilities (Beck, 1992; Snell, 1996). Qualifications then become a proxy for skills and abilities (Stasz, 2011; Grindrod and Murray, 2011) whereas once it was the case that apprentices, on leaving their employers, might be required to demonstrate practically their skills in front of either a potential employer or a guild (Epstein 1998).

There are three themes in Ball's work that merit specific focus here. The first is that in his 1990 book *Politics and Policy Making in Education*, Ball made a reference to the inability of politicians to implement policies in full due to the broader economic and ideological constraints, a point also made by Barret and Fudge (1981:3); policy-making always involves varying levels of compromise.

The second theme is that Ball used Foucauldian theories revolving around power and knowledge to demonstrate the roles of politics and education, although Ball concentrated on 'discourse' (rather than, as I use in this thesis, *governmentality*), arguing that:

> Power and knowledge are two sides of a single process [...] Discourses are [...] about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. [...] Meanings thus arise not from language but from institutional practices, from power relations, from social position. (Ball, 1990a:17-18)

Power (governance) and knowledge (education), along with employment, are important elements of apprenticeship as the Triquetra of Apprenticeship Factors shows (Figure 2). In both forms of the apprenticeship triquetra, 'government' and 'governance' form critical components of the tripartite of external forces which interact with the apprentice and apprenticeship. However, this thesis focuses on a related Foucauldian topic of '*governmentality*' (Foucault, 1978) specifically rather than the more general topics of power and knowledge in society which underpinned much of Foucault's work (Delanty and Strydom, 2003:324). Governmentality as a theory appears underdeveloped in terms of apprenticeship.

In 2008, Ball wrote of 'policy networks' and 'new policy communities' in education in which new actors are entering the educational market:

> These new policy communities bring new kinds of actors into the policy process, validate new policy discourses and enable new forms of policy influence and enactment, and in some respects disable or disenfranchise or circumvent some of the established policy actors and agencies. (Ball, 2008:748)

Ball's 2008 article, while interesting, was critiqued by Goodwin (2009) for being overly descriptive and failing to consider how actors within these networks have the capacity to shape government policy:

> [B]y virtue of their privileged position within a pattern of structured relations, the power of individual network actors to shape and steer networks or the power of policy makers to affect the conduct of policy implementers. (Goodwin, 2009:680)

Power is, as the following chapter shows, an essential element of networks, for by understanding how power is distributed through and operates within networks is crucial to understanding how networks function and how they may be controlled by powerful actors. Chapter 3 will take this idea further. Ball's 2008 paper appears to have drawn heavily on Actor Network Theory (ANT) and particularly on the work of Latour (1986, 1987), as does a further collaborative piece published two years later (Braun et al, 2010). Terms such as 'policy translation' (Braun et al, 2010:556) and the notion of 'policy networks' (Ball, 2008) are highly reminiscent of Latour's use of 'translation' (Latour, 1986) and 'action at a distance' (Latour, 1987), although in following the 'Policy Network' theory so rigidly, ANT is not referenced in either Ball's (2008) or Braun et al's (2010) publications. Chapter 3 will discuss these concepts and their relevance to understanding how apprenticeship operates and is implemented in greater detail. Braun et al (2010) made a valid point, though, reflecting Fuller and

Unwin's (2009) paper on apprenticeship (and thereby linking the compulsory education system with apprenticeship), that:

> Education policy-making has been appropriated by the central state in its determination to control, manage and transform society and, in particular, reform and 'modernise' education provision and 'raise standards'. (Braun et al, 2010:547)

Braun et al went on to discuss 'diverse policy actors' who interpret and translate policies into practice (Braun et al, 2010:549). What is most important to note, however, is that 'policy actors', while certainly diverse, can also be politically constructed as 'new institutional structures' (Payne, 2008a:4) which can be created, managed and replaced by the government of the day. Yet, responsibility for the creation and the roles of these structures is not a matter for actors inside government alone. The following section considers this idea by way of analysing some of the reviews of apprenticeships and skills in England since 2001, to show how government extends outside of its own institutional boundaries in shaping the social arrangements that support, structure and govern apprenticeships in England.

Reviewing apprenticeships and skills and creating new bodies

A series of reviews of apprenticeships and skills in England have been conducted since 2001. This section considers a selection of these reviews and the effects such reviews have had on both the apprenticeship programme and system and particularly on the creation of new actors; for instance, each of the reviews has been commissioned by a different government department. In part this is because of the tendency for ministers to restructure departments with sometimes bewildering frequency. (For example, the Department for Education and Skills which commissioned one of the reports listed below was divided in 2008 into the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS). In 2010, these two departments morphed into the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Education, respectively). This section concentrates attention on three particular reviews into apprenticeships and vocational education and skills due to their varied originating perspectives and impacts upon apprenticeship:

- Department for Education and Skills (2001), 'Modern Apprenticeships – The Way to Work: The report of the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee', Suffolk: Department for Education and Skills, 'The Cassels Report'

- Leitch Review of Skills (2006), *Prosperity For All In The Global Economy – World class Skills: A Final Report*, London: HMSO
- Department for Education (March 2011), *Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report*, London: Department for Education, DFE-00031-2011

The 'Cassels Report'

In 2001, the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee, consisting mainly of business leaders, was asked by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment to conduct a review of Modern Apprenticeships and to recommend to the Secretary of State proposals for government-supported apprenticeship for the following three years. The Report that was published in September 2001 was called 'Modern Apprenticeships: The way to work' (herein referred to as the 'Cassels Report') and was headed by Sir John Cassels, a former civil servant who had worked in various VET-related posts. This review is well worth reading more than a decade on from its publication as many of its recommendations were taken up by the Labour Governments; other recommendations were introduced but then subsequently dropped, while some recommendations were not realised at the time and yet are still being discussed today. Due to the number of recommendations that became government policy, the recommendations of this first review are listed along with their successor policies. Table 2 (following page) sets out the recommendations that were accepted and remain in place and those recommendations that were accepted but have subsequently been dropped from policy.

Cassels also recommended an entitlement for an apprenticeship place for all suitably qualified young people, a policy that did not become practice, although was intended as being within the powers accorded to the Chief Executive of the Skills Funding Agency in the ASCL 2009 (ASCL 2009, Explanatory Notes: para.232) but has been removed by the present Coalition Government.

Table 2: Cassels' recommendations and policy outcomes

Recommendations that became policy and remain in place:	
Cassels' recommendations	**Policy outcomes**
Make greater use of National Training Organisations (NTOs) to provide frameworks and expand numbers of apprentices.	NTOs were forerunners to SSCs (See Table 1).
Low apprenticeship wages compared with non-apprenticed wage.	These were introduced in 2010 as Apprentice National Minimum Wage (ANMW) for 16-18 year olds –£2.65 an hour from October 2012.
Creation of Foundation MA (FMA) and renaming of MAs to Advanced Modern Apprenticeships.	Brought Level 2 'National Traineeships' under the apprenticeship brand to form the 'Foundation' level, a move Fuller and Unwin (2008) criticised for artificially increasing apprentice numbers whilst lowering academic standards.
Use of Apprenticeship Agreements (AAs)	AAs became a statutory requirement of the Apprenticeship, Children, Skills and Learning Act 2009 (ASCL 2009) (Statutory Instrument 2012 No.844) and are a form of employment contract setting out the rights and responsibilities between the employer and apprentice.
Introduction of Apprenticeship Agencies to cater for SMEs.	Apprenticeship Agencies now operate as Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs). Group Training Associations (GTAs) may also come under this category, although GTAs have existed since the 1960s. See Chapter 4 for more information on ATAs and GTAs.
A national standard for apprenticeships.	Formally introduced in 2011 as the Specification for Apprenticeship Standards in England (SASE).
The standardisation of apprenticeship frameworks.	Through the SASE and also via the processes by which apprenticeship frameworks are constructed and published.
Flexibility in apprenticeships to reach a range of learners and abilities.	The use of modular assessments and the necessity for apprentices to pass one of eleven qualifications in literacy and numeracy listed in the SASE.

Development of pathways into Advanced and Higher Apprenticeships and into Higher Education.	The Coalition Government have made this a policy (NAS, 2011:4), although Higher Apprenticeship frameworks are still limited in numbers.
Using awards ceremonies for apprentices and recognition for employers.	Now operating as 'Apprenticeship Awards'.
Recommendations that became policy and have subsequently been dropped:	
'The explicit inclusion of relevant technical education […] through the new technical certificates' (10 – 3.6).	Technical Certificates were mandatory but became optional in 2005 with the publication of the 'Blueprint for Apprenticeships' in 2005 and remained so in the 2011 SASE.
Introduction of 'Programme-led Apprenticeships' (PLAs).	A form of 'apprenticeship' in which 'apprentices' were enrolled in fulltime Further Education and subsequently placed with an employer (Fuller and Unwin, 2008). See also Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs).

The 'Leitch Review of Skills'

The Leitch Review of Skills (2006) was also highly influential since its publication in 2006, resulting in the publication of a government White Paper (DIUS, 2007) and the establishment of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), the body which, among other duties, continues to licence Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) (see below) and works with government on implementing government skills policy (DIUS, 2007). Wolf (2007), who would go on to conduct the next major review of vocational education in England for the Department for Education (DfE, 2011), wrote in polemical tones that there was nothing new to come out of the Leitch Review. Rather than tackling the issue of centrally planned training, Wolf believed Leitch's Review served to obfuscate the reality that government was increasing its control over vocational training whilst claiming the opposite (a point agreed on by Fuller and Unwin, 2011a). Furthermore, Leitch's review was criticised, along with the government policy initiatives that followed from Leitch's review, for focusing on raising the numbers of qualifications attained rather than addressing the underlying problems of skills needs for individuals and employers (Payne, 2008a:4). Along with the creation of the UKCES (Leitch, 2006:23), Leitch recommended that government should 'Reform, relicense and empower Sector Skills Councils' (Leitch, 2006:4). SSCs are national (UK) sector-based organisations charged with compiling skills information and needs of their sectors and also compile the majority of apprenticeship frameworks in England. Chapter 4 discusses the role of SSCs in more detail.

Leitch also joined those individuals noted above who looked across the seas to compare other nations to England's production and skill capacities. Moreover, it was Leitch's recommendation that SSCs should be charged with providing sector-specific Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) (he called it 'Labour Market Information' and some SSCs call it as such) and that they produce and publish reports and data for their employers (Leitch, 2006:91). Leitch also expressed concern that the 'esteem of Apprenticeships are [sic] maintained' (p98) and that SSCs should play a central role in this regard.

Like the Cassels Report (DfES, 2001), DIUS (later to become 'BIS'), produced two White Papers (2007 and 2008) from Leitch's Review. The first (2007) was a direct response to Leitch; the second (2008) set out the then Labour Government's intentions for apprenticeships and paved the way for the creation of the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) (DIUS, 2008:32). The 2008 DIUS report made clear Labour's intention that 'Apprenticeships will play a central role in our plans for growing skills in the economy' (DIUS, 2008:3), an intention that has come to fruition through the Conservative-led Coalition Government who now describe apprenticeships as 'the pivot

around which the rest of the skills system turns' (Hansard – John Hayes, speaking as the then Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, Hansard 19th Dec 2011, col.1106). The same can be said of the 'National Completion Certificates' (NCC), issued to individuals on completing their apprenticeships to 'provide future employers with clearly recognisable statements of the apprentice's competency and training' (DIUS, 2008:5, 'Executive Summary'). NCCs would later be introduced by the Coalition Government as 'Apprenticeship Certificates' and Apprenticeship Certificates England (ACE) is being administered by the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils since 19th January 2012.

The 'Wolf Report'

In 2010, the DfE commissioned Professor Alison Wolf to conduct a review of vocational skills in England. The review's sponsorship by the DfE means that, unlike the other reviews featured in this chapter, attention was focused on the 14-18 age group. Wolf's report, titled 'Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report, London: Department for Education' (DfE, 2011) (herein referred to as the 'Wolf Report') also differs from those reports mentioned thus far in that there is a high amount of direct criticism included in the Report on current practices, as well as recommendations for the future. While the Wolf Report focused on VET generally and was commissioned by the DfE (rather than being a joint DfE/BIS initiative), there were recommendations that impacted on apprenticeship, such as employers being offered subsidies to encourage the take-up of apprentices amongst smaller employers. This last recommendation has since taken form through the National Apprenticeship Service's grant scheme for Small and Medium-sized Employers (SMEs), the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE), in which SMEs can claim a grant of £1500 for up to three apprentices. More interestingly, Wolf, following on from her critique of Leitch (Wolf, 2007), questioned the role of SSCs, stating that they should not have sole responsibility for drawing up apprenticeship frameworks (DfE, 2011:14). This seems a strange recommendation for the ASCL 2009 already permits bodies other than SSCs to become 'Issuing Authorities': 'Sector Skills Councils and other sector bodies to issue frameworks over more than one sector' (ASCL 2009 Explanatory Notes, Section 13:54). Wolf noted that SSCs' role in designing frameworks is out of step with international practices and that the current system of frameworks fails to promote progression into 'higher studies' (DfE, 2011:89. See also the above comments on Cassels and progression into higher level studies). Furthermore, Wolf questioned the lack of local flexibility contained within the frameworks, so that local conditions are not taken into account. This is another interesting aspect because it brings locality back into the apprenticeship picture, whereas in recent years there has been a move towards sector-based, rather than local, skills.

The Richard Review

Entrepreneur and participant on a popular television programme, Doug Richard was invited by the Coalition Government to review the current apprenticeship system. Richard's report was published in November 2012, as this thesis was being presented for examination and therefore too late to consider Richard's recommendations or to government's response. I can, however, say that his recommendations if accepted would require major changes to the apprenticeship programme and system. The government have welcomed his recommendations and their response to his proposals are currently out for public consultation.

This penultimate section has highlighted how actors in the public and private spheres have been central to the operationalisation of apprenticeship throughout history, thereby providing a social system that extends beyond the boundaries of occupational training and into the realms of governance and control. The final section discusses the implications of the evidence presented in this chapter.

Chapter discussion

In a critique of MAs, Ryan and Unwin (2001:99) wrote that 'Modern Apprenticeship is enigmatic, welcomed in principle but criticised in practice'. The same can be said of institutional apprenticeship generally, for it seems that apprenticeship has also always had its positive and negative elements, as evidenced by the above literature. As Lave and Wenger (1991:64) stated: 'There is no point [...] either in damning apprenticeship absolutely [...] or [...] glorifying it unreflectively'.

Having been in a period of at best stasis and at worst decline in the latter decades of the twentieth century, both in apprentice numbers, but also in its relevance to industry, apprenticeship in England in the twenty-first century has become increasingly central to successive governments' vocational skills policies and its use and public awareness is in the ascendance once more. Yet, as this thesis shows, the reality of increasing the numbers of apprentices and employers also requires greater supporting structures to ensure that employers of all sizes and individuals from different social settings can create and have access to apprenticeship opportunities. The types of businesses and the actors involved may have changed over the centuries, but what has not changed is the need for there to be social systems in place which provide supporting networks, structures and governance to apprenticeships. In this sense, institutional apprenticeship is little different to the *conceptual* practice of apprenticeship. Taking Lave and Wenger's (1991) examples of the 'apprenticeship of Yucatec midwives' (p67) or the highly skilled areas of 'medicine, law, the academy, professional sports, and the arts' as practiced in the United States of America (Lave

and Wenger, 1991:63) and comparing them with England's current apprenticeship programme, the common thread woven through each of them is that in order to pass on the particular skills and behaviours required of the work requires social structures to be in place. These social structures may be simple, taking the form of an agreement between the employer and the apprentice, or the signing of the indentures as with days past or the more complex programmes in place in England today. Apprenticeship is perhaps one of the most social and interactive forms of learning; whether it is used for the benefit or to the detriment of all of those involved or simply a few depends on the particulars of the relationship. What I have tried to show with this chapter and wide ranging literature is how apprenticeship in England (as in other nations) has been adapted over the centuries and that apprenticeship has always been about more than simply the relationship between employer and apprentice. In this respect, apprenticeship has always been a social and interactive model of learning.

Since 1994, apprenticeship has increasingly been drawn into the responsibilities of the government, something that some critics had called for across the twentieth century (and an event the Webbs believed highly improbable). The above literature show that the present apprenticeship programme operating in England did not arise from any 'quantum leap', springing to life from the latest idea of policy-makers within government; instead, while the MA, proffered as a break with the past apprenticeships, retained many traditional practices (Fuller and Unwin, 2009). Both the current programme and system of apprenticeship are instead the outcomes of a series of transitional changes encompassing government activities, changes within industry and society, national and international politics, and developments in educational practices, school to work transitions and access to employment.

Yet, the present system of government-supported apprenticeship in England is also one that incorporates old and new organisations and old and new ways of promoting apprenticeship in an attempt to address the nation's perennial problems of skills and VET. On this basis it would be easy to assume that it is government alone that is driving the system; indeed, it may be that government is the main force behind the apprenticeship system. Without state intervention in the 1990s, it seems possible that apprenticeship would have withered even further as an institution to becoming obsolete; or at least, becoming so anachronistic as to lose any relevance. The 1990s' Conservative Government's decision to revive and recast apprenticeship set off a chain of policy events that have brought apprenticeship into the twenty-first century and, alongside the international scene, apprenticeship has taken centre stage once more in terms of policy-making and vocational learning, even if there are still comparatively few employers and apprentices when judged internationally (Steedman, 2010). But, as

Chapter 3 shows by applying ANT, the British government took an already existing institution and provided it with new impetus.

An underlying theme of this chapter has been that of 'power' as various bodies have taken the helm of apprenticeship and used it as a tool to further different ambitions. Power and the relationships between the various organisations are key aspects of the apprenticeship system and so I believe, and will set out in this thesis, that relationships and power are as important as the pedagogical content. What this chapter has shown is that all of these issues – power, actors, networks, and policies – are and always have been important constituents of apprenticeship as an institution.

Finally, this chapter has shown how the literature I have selected, published over many decades and the span of which covers a number of centuries, helps to inform current policy debates. Rather than simply reporting what has been written and by whom, this chapter has engaged critically with the literature. Apprenticeship in England is thereby presented as an institution that has moved at various times between management by industry and by government, at times seeming as much a political football as a long established and international model of learning. Just as importantly, the literature provides definition and direction to the research. The following chapter takes up the theme of networks and power expressed here and considers these issues in light of social theory.

Chapter 3

Apprenticeship as an expression of governance, networks and time

Introduction

This chapter considers and develops an understanding of the apprenticeship system as a series of interrelated social activities and interrelationships through which the apprenticeship programme progresses and also through which power is expressed. This chapter is concerned with how power operates within the apprenticeship system and consequently flows through networks of 'actors' and its effect upon the 'factors' (see the Triquetra images, below).

To assist in developing a theoretical framework suitable for explaining power and social relationships in the apprenticeship system, two slightly varying yet complementary theories each addressing structures of power in societies are used to investigate and make sense of the apprenticeship system. The first is '*governmentality*', a theory initially introduced by Michel Foucault (1978) which attempted to explain the increasingly subtle techniques of power employed by governments in modern liberal countries. The second theory is Actor Network Theory (ANT), an ontology developed in the 1980s by Bruno Latour (1986, 1987), John Law (1986) and others. Latour's work is particularly useful as he attempted first to demonstrate power between actors in society (Latour, 1986) and secondly as he sought to connect science with society, in part through 'action at a distance' (Latour, 1987:219; see also Law, 1986). Furthermore, ANT also drew on the work of Foucault (Law, 1986; Fox, 2000). Both Foucault and Latour employed techniques of analysing history to explain the present and both *governmentality* and ANT have been developed since their inceptions. What also unites the two theories is that the authors have both viewed power in societies in terms of a series of social actions rather than existing *per se* and for the ways in which seemingly unrelated events come together to explain particular issues. Governmentality and ANT thereby both provide insights into how the government-supported apprenticeship programme and the broader apprenticeship system are managed and constructed in England through a series of interrelationships.

Following a discussion on alternative theories, the chapter reiterates the two forms of the Apprenticeship Triquetra before discussing the relevance of *governmentality* and ANT to apprenticeships and their suitability in furthering an understanding of the apprenticeship system. The following section then illustrates how power and networks

are apparent within the apprenticeship system and how the organisations within the apprenticeship system work to carry out – operationalize – government policy and yet also provide sites of resistance to government policy. The chapter closes with a discussion based on the findings.

Theorising the apprenticeship system

Governmentality and ANT offer a particular perspective through which to analyse and critique the apprenticeship system and the relationship between the programme and system narrows the scope of possibilities. Yet these two theories are not alone in their capacity to provide such insights. Other suitable theories include 'Regulation (or 'Regulatory') Theory' (Adler, 2009; Morgan and Yeung, 2007) and 'Policy Networks' (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992), both of which have their uses in exposing particular aspects linking social policies with social activities and systems and the relationships between state and citizens and both of which will be discussed next. I begin with Regulation Theory.

Regulation Theory

This thesis' focus on the relationship between the actors in the apprenticeship system, including state and non-state actors, means that Regulation Theory (RT) would sit very well within the research topic. RT looks to the state/non-state actor relationships and their capacity for creating frameworks for social control which moves beyond the state as the primary architect of public law and policy-making (Adler, 2009) to a more ''decentred' approach to regulation' which can be used to emphasise 'the law's instrumental role in shaping behaviour' (Morgan and Yeung, 2007:5). A thorough analysis and explanation of RT was provided by Jones (1999), who traced its conceptual beginnings to the early 1970s in Paris as a way to explain 'the way in which the determinant structure of society is reproduced' (Aglietta, 1979:13, in Jones, 1999:39) and explained how later the theory was developed to reconceive capitalism's place in the transition into a post-Fordist world. Various adaptations saw RT transforming different versions, addressing in the first instance national structures and regulations on social institutions and practices. Later, with '*second-generation* regulation theory', international factors were considered (Jones, 1999:40-1 – original emphasis). However, Jones explained through the literature that these approaches were problematic when it came to analysing local governance structures, leading him to develop '*third-generation* regulation theory' (Jones, 1999:46 – original emphasis) in order to address the interrelationships occurring between national and local actors.

As with theories such as *governmentality* and ANT, RT seems to have a broad appeal with strands developing as different theorists applied RT to their field to explain and

reveal particular aspects of their work, whether in politics and social sciences or policy and law-making (Jones, 1999; Morgan and Yeung, 2007; Adler, 2009). In many respects there appears to be little difference between RT, on the one hand, and *governmentality*, on the other, for they both consider the ways in which governments operate through local actors, sometimes involving the 'political and constitutional context[s]' (Morgan and Yeung, 2007:4) in which regulations are formed and applied and how such regulations reveal and even create new relationships between state and non-state actors where it is unclear which side holds the greater balance of power. (For example, Morgan and Yeung (2007:109-112) discuss the privatisation of former state utilities in the 1980s and the subsequent shift towards governance through negotiation; a similar point was raised by one of the interviewees in this research, who pointed out that their organisation had been created by government as private companies but were considering expanding their territory beyond their initial remit.) Foucault (1982) referred to such regulations and relationships as the 'art of government' (Foucault, 1978:92). Yet, whereas Foucault focused on the relationship between power and liberty; that is, that governments in liberal societies work through the actions of the actors, the people and the populations over whom they govern, but they do not have the power to control their every movement, RT implicitly *assumes* such liberty exists by recognising the ways in which regulations are created through state and non-state institutions alike (Jones, 1999:61; Morgan and Yeung, 2007:53). However, whereas RT starts from a largely instrumentalist position in which regulation, as the title implies, is understood as a necessary constituent in shaping people's behaviours and how the various interested parties then react and interact, *governmentality* is more conceptual in nature, requiring the theorist to adapt it accordingly to the situation.

In addition, ANT, as will be discussed below, conceptualises the role of 'actants' which in this thesis can be understood as the combined elements of the apprenticeship system, incorporating both the human actors within the system and the non-human features of the programme. ANT encourages an understanding of the role of 'apprenticeship' as an entity beyond learning craft skills and beyond even its current use as a government programme. The ANT approach has therefore provided the basis for analysing apprenticeship through the 'Actors' and 'Factors' and thereby move beyond regulation to consider the relationships between people and non-human actors. Furthermore, RT has a critical realist foundation; a similar basis has been observed of this thesis by Dr Martin Dyke as a co-supervisor of this thesis. However, as noted above with *governmentality*, the differences are subtle and I am sure there will be theorists who would argue that RT provides all the ingredients for studying the apprenticeship system as do *governmentality* and ANT. So, how do *governmentality* and ANT compare with 'Policy Networks'?

Policy Networks

Policy Networks theory (PNT) (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992, Peterson, 2003; Ball and Exley, 2010) offers an alternative device for analysing how social networks of actors provide the conduits through which policies and behaviours interact in a similar way to that of Regulation Theory (and *governmentality*). PNT, like RT, also differs slightly according to different authors, although Rhodes has been a major exponent of a version in 'which networks vary: interests, membership, interdependence (vertical and hierarchical), and resources' (Rhodes and Marsh, 1997:23). As with the above observation on the starting points for RT and *governmentality*, PNT offers a lens through which to consider how governmental, social and business networks function as conduits through which policies are both enacted and translated in different environments, once more reflecting the role of government and liberty noted above. Ball (2008) has also utilised PNT and stated of such networks that they:

> [...] contain flows of influence as well as flows of people, and influence is carried back and forth across the boundaries between the public and private sectors; resources are exchanged, interests are served and rewards achieved. Through social relationships trust is established and views and discourses are legitimated. They structure and constrain, enable the circulation of ideas and give 'institutional force' to policy utterances, ensuring what can count as policy and limiting the possibilities of policy. (Ball, 753)

Like RT and *governmentality* , PNT has its roots in the early to mid-1970s (ANT would only really take form in the mid-1980s), but, as with all three other theories discussed here, has also been through different iterations as new research is conducted and the theory adapted accordingly, being applied at various times to micro-, meso- (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992:8-9) and macro-level (Stones, 1992:200-225; Peterson, 1992:226-248) structures and networks. Echoing the *governing through liberty* idea embodied within Foucault's (1978) *governmentality* thesis, 'Actors in the network shape and construct their 'world', choosing whether or not and how to respond' (Rhodes and Marsh; 1992:259).

All the theories discussed here have either suffered or benefited from being expanded beyond their original intention and all of them have been problematic when it comes to defining them (Latour, 1997; Peterson, 2003; Jones, 2009). Yet they each present valid devices through which to explore the relationship between the apprenticeship programme and system. Indeed, RT and PNT offer valid alternative theoretical explorations of this research into the apprenticeship system in England, presenting slightly differing ways to consider policy-making, relationships between state and non-

state actors, power imbalances, vested interests and social behaviours. Other possibilities also exist beyond those discussed here: Humanist theory (e.g. Freire, 1983, 1985), 'Activity Theory' (Engeström, 2001) or 'Legitimate Peripheral Participation' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) would each provide different narratives through which to understand the role of the actors in the apprenticeship system. In the end, it is my familiarity with *governmentality* and ANT, developed over the course of the research, which has tipped the balance in favour of these two combined theories, whereas my awareness of Regulation Theory and of Policy Networks came much later. Moreover, in choosing to use and develop my findings using *governmentality* and ANT, I feel I am able to offer a perspective in which regulations, policies and networks are important but not alone in developing a picture of the apprenticeship system. Finally, I feel that *governmentality* and ANT are most suitable to consider and develop my ideas when used in tandem with the Apprenticeship Triquetra concept. The remainder of this chapter considers the two theories and the concept.

Governmentality, Actor Network Theory and the Apprenticeship Triquetra

Before explaining the two theories of *governmentality* and ANT, it is worth providing a reminder of the two forms of the Apprenticeship Triquetra set out in Chapter 1, for the two forms offer a way of seeing the apprenticeship system from two different but complementary ways. The images of the triquetrae, as Chapter 1 explained, provide a visual interpretation of the apprenticeship system operating as a set of interrelated activities between different parties at various points of the system; activities which are linked in many ways, a point that will become clearer from Chapters 6 and 7. But as part of the networks of actors, power is expressed at different points. The following sections provide some ways of understanding these expressions, first with a discussion of *governmentality* and then of ANT.

Government

Apprentice

Employers   Training Providers
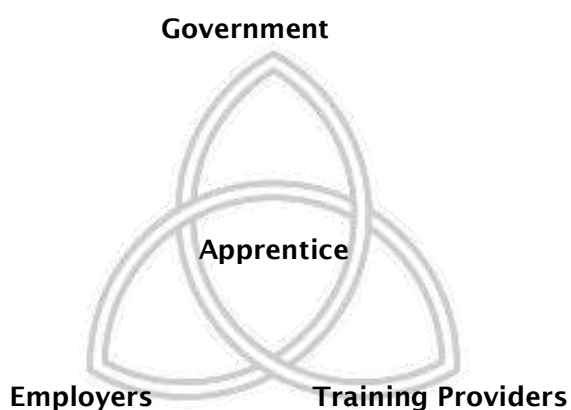
Figure 7: Triquetra of Apprenticeship Actors

Governance

Apprenticeship

Education   Employment
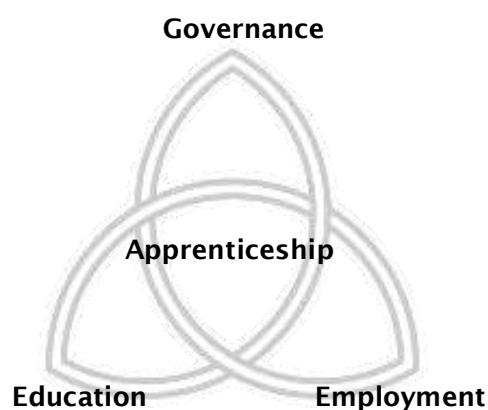
Figure 8: Triquetra of Apprenticeship Factors

Governmentality/'govern-mentalities'

This subsection title adopts two meanings attributed to the term '*governmentality*'. The first, 'government rationality', was used by Foucault himself to refer to the techniques of political governing through the agencies of government or as Foucault himself explained: the 'art of government' (Foucault, 1978:92); the second, 'govern-mentalities', was used by Tomas Lemke (2001) to describe the '*mentalité* of governing' (Collier, 2009:97 – original emphasis). Governmentality might also be understood as a process of governing that has developed over time, for it was Foucault's belief that it was around the eighteenth century, when the period of the Enlightenment was taking hold, that governments began collecting and analysing data on their nation's populations. The conduct of empirical research pertaining to populations was by no means confined to the state; social researchers such as Booth (1887) and Seebohm Rowntree (1902/1980) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provide well-known examples of surveys being conducted centring on inequalities in societies in England. It was not simply that data was being collected that changed the behaviour of governments, but that such data was being used to manage populations and highlight social problems. Foucault likened the change in government rule to the family unit, so whereas governments had previously emulated patriarchal rule similar to that of the (male) head of the family, the family became instead the focus of *data* and *for governing populations* (Foucault, 1978:99-100). In Foucault's own (translated) words:

> The art of government […] is essentially concerned with answering the question of how to introduce economy – that is to say, the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family […] and of making the family fortunes prosper – how to introduce this meticulous attention of the father towards his family into the management of the state. (Foucault, 1978:92)

Indeed, government's focus *on* the family continues today with the National Census for England and Wales and other forms of national data (Office for National Statistics, 'Census 2011' and 'Families, Children and Young People'). In calling this new focus on data collection and population management the 'techniques of government' (Foucault, 1978:101) Foucault referred to the various institutions, agencies, data, policy statements and legislation and also the actions of free people. These techniques would also include the creation of social policies on the basis of the analysis of the data:

> [S]ince the eighteenth century *population* had appeared as the terrain *par excellence* of government. […] Thus, [Foucault] implies, societies like our

own are characterized by a particular way of *thinking* about the kinds of problem that can and should be addressed by various authorities. (Miller and Rose, 1990:147 – original emphases)

The effects of analysing population data were to reveal idiosyncrasies *within* populations, such as: '[Rates] of deaths and diseases, […] cycles of scarcity, […] epidemics, endemic levels of mortality, […] customs, activities, etc.' (Foucault, 1978:99), each of which is taken for granted now, but would have required a change in thinking for the evolving eighteenth century national governments. However, this new focus on the management/government of populations brought with it a development in the populace that remains an essential part of modern democracies, namely that 'the exercise of power requires a degree of freedom on the part of its subjects' and the 'free decisions of individuals' (Hindess, 1996:124-5). Therefore:

> In itself the exercise of power is not violence; nor is it consent which, implicitly, is renewable. […] *The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome.* (Foucault, 1982:789 – emphasis added)

From Foucault's explanation of power it becomes possible to understand how modern governments work, in the main, *through* populations. Foucault explained that:

> Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments, may be realized. Where the determining factors saturate the whole, there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains. (In this case it is a question of a physical relationship of constraint.) Consequently, there is no face-to-face confrontation of power and freedom, which are mutually exclusive (freedom disappears everywhere power is exercised), but a much more complicated interplay. (Foucault, 1982:790)

Returning to the two quotations which introduced this thesis, it helps to think of Foucault's work in a way that encapsulates both the notion of following 'the script' (Jaques) and yet allows for improvisation (Colbert) – hence the 'complicated interplay'. The second section of this chapter will consider what this means for the government-supported apprenticeship system. That power is exercised only *through* liberty ('free subjects') enables power to be understood as a non-authoritarian aspect of everyday life; it exists in multiple instances and activities in which people live. For Foucault, it was through an analysis of *freedom* that the expression of power and government can be understood (Foucault, 1982).

People will have different capacities in which to act, although any such 'freedom' might depend on, *inter alia*, their family background, social environment, education, location, form of employment, the current ruling political ideology. Foucault's writings on '*governmentality*' included an element which has been cited many times by subsequent writers applying his theory in their own research: the 'conduct of conduct' (Hindess, 1996; Gillies, 2008; Darmon and Perez, 2011). Foucault's work on governmentality developed a complex understanding of modern liberal government, one which 'regards […] subjects, and the forces and capacities of living individuals […] as resources to be fostered, to be used and to be optimized' (Dean, 2010:29). Power and regulation is understood more in terms of liberty shaped and guided by 'the conduct of conduct' (Gordon, 1991:2). To explain, conduct as used here has at least two meanings: that of leading or directing others and that concerning one's own, self-regulated behaviour (Gillies, 2008:416). Accordingly, the government of others requires also the government of oneself; the governed cannot simply *be governed* for that implies domination and determinism. Instead, individuals are simultaneously governed and self-governing, as the knowledge which is produced from being governed feeds into and is embedded in society (Dean, 2010:28). The idea of self-governing individuals originated from Foucault's earlier ideas stemming from Jeremy Bentham's 'panopticon' design for a prison in which prisoners would be made to feel they were always on view and so alter their behaviours accordingly (Allen, 1998:169).

Foucault made an interesting point in the following statement which includes a passing reference to apprenticeship:

> The application of objective capacities in their most elementary forms implies relationships of communication (whether in the form of previously acquired information or of shared work); it is tied also to power relations (whether they consist of obligatory tasks, of gestures imposed by tradition or apprenticeship, of subdivisions and the more or less obligatory distribution of labor [sic]). (Foucault, 1982:787)

Power and government require 'relationships of communications'; networks through which various activities are carried out and through which power of varying degrees flows. Power flows through the state as much as it does through the social body, a point which will be explored further in the following focus on Actor Network Theory. Apprentices, employers, training providers, government and all the bodies that sit in the interstices between them are brought into the apprenticeship system – and in doing so bring the apprenticeship programme to life – through networks.

Foucault, using the 'educational institution' as an example, used apprenticeship once more as an example of social practices and power exerted on and through the people and social structures in place:

> The activity which ensures apprenticeship and the acquisition of aptitudes or types of behavior [sic] is developed there by means of a whole ensemble of regulated communications (lessons, questions and answers, orders, exhortations, coded signs of obedience, differentiation marks of the 'value' of each person and of the levels of knowledge) and by the means of a whole series of power processes (enclosure, surveillance, reward and punishment, the pyramidal hierarchy). (Foucault, 1982:787)

Dean (2010) offered this explanation of *governmentality* which helps in the analysis of apprenticeship:

> The analysis of government is concerned with thought as it becomes linked to and is embedded in technical means for the shaping and reshaping of conduct and in practices and institutions. Thus to analyse mentalities of government is to analyse thought made practical and technical [...] (Dean, 2010:27)

The apprenticeship programme can therefore be understood as 'the technical means for shaping conduct' and populations; in this light, the apprenticeship system is the outcome of those means. But apprenticeship can also be at once liberating and constraining. One might even be a prerequisite of the other in that it may be necessary that 'coercion is required to eliminate dependency and enforce the autonomy of the will that is the necessary counterpart of freedom' (Rose, 1999:10). Putting this in terms of the apprenticeship system, the current Coalition Government's position of placing apprenticeship at the centre of their vocational education and skills policies (BIS, Nov 2010a) means that freedom of many individuals and social groups requires the coercion of populations (the apprentices, employers, industry, and others). 'Coercion' takes place via a combination of methods. The most obvious is that of financial incentives, which can be used to induce action and is currently being employed in the AGE financing available to SMEs, in addition to funds channelled through the SFA to training providers and through the UKCES for SSCs, NSAs and similar organisations. But financial incentives have been shown to be just one element of the ways in which the UK Government has sought to increase the numbers of apprenticeships. Advertising campaigns through and in various social media (e.g. newspapers and radio); a website presence (apprenticeships.org.uk); an annual 'apprenticeship week' in the early months of the year with a growing number of activities taking place across the nation; the rise of 'apprenticeship ambassadors'; and

the way that government statement focus on the numbers of apprenticeship 'Starts', using the figures as evidence of success, irrespective of the quality of the programmes; these are all ways in raising the profile of apprenticeships. Indeed, as the final chapter discusses, apprenticeship is in danger of morphing into something other than a social model of learning; it risks becoming a commodity, a good or service accorded its own 'exchange value' (Marx, 1887:26) as the UK Government seeks to bring in greater numbers of people into its fold. Yet, many instances of good, high quality apprenticeship programmes exist and continue to grow. Power is therefore spread unequally; those actors involved in the best apprenticeship frameworks stand to gain greatly, whereas in the worst cases, the benefits of apprenticeship may be more limited, available to just a few and even then limited to financial rewards.

There is one last point to make on the theme of Foucauldian notions of power. That is, p*ower* was not the focus of Foucault's thoughts, although power can be seen as a constant theme throughout much of his writing. As he explained: 'it is not power but the subject which is the general theme of my research' (Foucault, 1982:778). In the same way, it is not *power* that is the focus of this thesis, but the development of the apprenticeship programme and the actors within the apprenticeship system; in other words, the expressions of power by and through the actors' positions and activities within the system. The chapter will now turn to consider the second part of the theoretical framework; that of ANT.

Actor Network Theory (ANT)

In attempting to describe ANT, it is useful to begin by saying what it is not. Latour himself did just this when he set out to clarify ANT at a conference in 1997, saying that ANT 'has very little to do with the study of social networks' (Latour, 1997:2), explaining that:

> I can be one metre away from someone in the next telephone booth, and be nevertheless more closely connected to my mother 6000 miles away; an Alaskan reindeer might be ten metres away from another one and they might be nevertheless cut off by a pipeline of 800 miles that make their mating for ever [sic] impossible. [...] The difficulty we have in defining all associations in terms of networks is due to the prevalence of geography.

The same might be said of the actors within the apprenticeship system; in some respects, proximity is irrelevant if local actors are participating in a government-supported apprenticeship programme. At one level, a local employer may not even be aware of the activities of central government if another actor, e.g., a training provider, is intervening on their behalf to simplify the process of signing up an apprentice

(Figures 11 and 12 in Chapter 7 show how this point operates in the two sectors). But prior to the subsequent development of ANT, Latour had proposed two related ideas of 'action at a distance' (1987:219) and 'translation' (1986:267). Both of these latter theories have as their basis the effects upon society from a distant entity; in the case of the apprenticeship system, there are two entities: government and history. Yet, there were participants in the fieldwork conducted for this thesis whose offices in London were geographically close to other powerful actors and also in easy reach of Parliament; the ability to operationalise power for these actors meant having physical and easy access to other sites of power, in addition to access provided by modern technologies such as telephones, video conferencing and the internet. These actors can therefore operate independently despite their close proximity to each other and to sites of power and yet, through the medium of apprenticeship policy, reach into areas of society geographically removed from their immediate locations. Consequently, while ANT reveals networks removed from the geographical constraints, these actors are networked through both geographical and non-geographical proximities.

'Action at a distance' (Latour, 1987:219) provides a way for considering the non-geographical networks. By this approach, it becomes possible to show that through a series of interrelated events, an occurrence or practice in one place can have an impact on societies far removed either spatially or temporally, whether they be in 'a small provincial town, or an obscure laboratory, or a puny little company in a garage' (Latour, 1987:223). While Latour used science to connect the specific with the mundane, England's apprenticeship system provides a good lens through which to understand 'action at a distance' in operation. Consider the following.

When, in 1993, the Secretary of state for Employment, David Hunt (Lourie, 1996:12), announced the introduction of the government's Modern Apprenticeship programme, it is unlikely he would have thought of a group of employers in the creative and cultural sector in the Southampton area being brought together to discuss and implement apprenticeships in the sector. It is unlikely, too, that most of the people within that employer network are even aware that Hunt had made such an announcement. Yet the two examples – the advent of the MA programme and the creative and cultural employers' network – are connected by almost twenty years of activity (and approximately seventy miles geographically) which has seen apprenticeship moving from the periphery to the centre of the government's skills policy agenda in England through multiple policy initiatives, legislation and changes of government. It is perhaps even more unlikely that the first apprentices in the mid-thirteenth century would have envisaged that the apprenticeship model they were being introduced to (Dunlop, 1912) would still be relevant nearly a millennium later or that their counterparts in fifteenth century Florence were being apprenticed in

commerce (Braudel, 1982:408). The forms these institutional apprenticeships would take have changed with time and space, but institutional apprenticeships have survived and spread as a social activity through networks of people and organisations.

Indeed, the title of one of Latour's (1986) early papers was 'The powers of association' in which power is always associated with something or someone through the social actions of others. Although unable to look back and predict what would have happened to the institution of apprenticeships without the government's renewed focus, it was certainly given new impetus through the government-funded and government-orchestrated MA programme.

A further point of relevance to this thesis is ANT's extension of linkages in networks provided by 'non-human, non-individual entities' (Latour, 1997: no page), for which the term 'actant' was employed to signify the *effect* that 'non-human actors' such as documents, policies, machines, statues, buildings, and the internet, for example, have upon individuals and societies. Latour noted that '…society is not made up of social elements, but of a list that mixes up social and non-social elements' (Latour, 1986:275) and so 'An actant can literally be anything provided it is granted to be the source of an action' (Latour, 1997, no page). The government reports discussed in Chapter 2 can be understood as non-social elements, capable of creating action through *reaction* as people read and behave in different ways according to the words contained on the paper/computer file. (However, in this thesis, the term actant is only occasionally used; it is referenced here due to the way it portrays the power to act as involving more than just human actors.) Power is therefore an effect situated between 'power 'in potentia'' – a document/person/agency holds a theoretical power – and 'power 'in actu'' – the document/person/agency stimulates a reaction. By contrast, if there is no reaction to a person's orders, for example, then that person will be deemed *power-less* (Latour 1986). Fenwick (2010) explained how ANT can be used to make sense of particular aspects of societies:

> ANT focuses on the minute negotiations that go on at the points of connection. Things – not just humans, but the parts that make up humans and nonhumans – persuade, coerce, seduce, resist, and compromise each other as they come together. They may connect with other things in ways that lock them into a particular collective, or they may pretend to connect, partially connect, or feel disconnected and excluded even when they are connected. (Fenwick, 2010:111)

Returning to the twin issues of 'government' and 'governance' outlined in the apprenticeship triquetrae at the beginning of this chapter, government-supported apprenticeships can be understood as embodiments of power relations, but they are

also *effects* of power relations. In adopting institutional apprenticeships as it did, the Conservative Government of the 1990s wrested control of apprenticeship from industry and so it was the government that entered an already existing entity and then changed that entity to suit its own purposes. Government supported apprenticeship is therefore an *effect* of pre-existing historical relations between industry and other actors (e.g. unions, government, employers), but in its present state it can now be understood as an *embodiment of power relations* as existing actors either change their behaviours in line with the government's apprenticeship programme or new actors entering the system.

Power in society can be understood as a form of social 'energy', giving animation and meaning to otherwise inanimate and meaningless objects and providing a conduit for networks to develop; it is therefore present in all aspects of social life, as was noted in the previous section on *governmentality*. Power is also an entity that is continually subject to changes of direction and strength with space and time; the employee starting on day one of their apprenticeship should be subject to greater direction and management than that same apprentice one, two, three years down the line, when they have gained experienced and, hopefully, the trust of the employer and thereby bringing their own ideas into play (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The same apprentice may in this time even begin teaching other new and inexperienced workers or be prevented from doing so by the constraints of the workplace (Fuller and Unwin, 2004a), thus showing power as an entity which can be used at or traced to a variety of levels. Social power is also multidirectional and open to a series of 'translations' by people and organisations reacting, for example, to a particular law or policy as they adopt the law/policy into their everyday, localised behaviours (Latour, 1986, 1987; Braun et al, 2010). In terms of apprenticeship, employers retain the power of veto; that is, the ability to walk away from the programme. If enough employers choose this action, say, for a sector such as retail, then the government stands to lose a large number of its figures. To combat the risk of doing so, the government bodies (JAU, NAS, SFA, UKCES) devise new ways to alleviate the problem rather than letting that sector reduce in size.

It was noted above that two elements of ANT are particularly relevant to this thesis: 'action at a distance' and 'Translation'. The first takes place through the actants/actors within networks; but the second, that of *translation*, is the process by which power is enacted through the social body. In essence, this is always a *reaction* to some initial stimulus, but a stimulus, Latour argued:

> […] does not count for more than any other; force is never transmitted in
> its entirety and no matter what happened earlier, it can stop at any time

depending on the action of the person next along the chain; again, instead of a passive medium through which the force is exerted, there are active members shaping and changing the token as it is moved. (Latour, 1986:268)

The act of continuation also becomes an act of '*transformation*' (Latour, 1986:268 – original emphasis) as each person's application or perception of the token differs according to their social position, perspective, needs and/or desires 'Translation' has been used in a similar way by Braun et al (2010), although the authors did not relate it to Latour's work. Braun et al's use, however, provides a useful working example of how networks, formed through the people and organisations that operate collectively and/or independently of each other, are part of the processes of the ways in which state policies are carried out in the wider education system. These networks accordingly provide spaces for contestation as 'schools produce their own 'take' on policy' (Braun et al, 2010:548). Accusations of how the state has assumed control of policy-making for VET (Fuller and Unwin, 2009) and education more broadly (Braun et al, 2010) have become easier to see in recent years. A fuller discussion of how this has occurred is included in the final chapter. For now, though, the question is how does this focus on power help to clarify the apprenticeship system? The following discussions provide some answers.

Chapter discussion

Adorno once said that 'Theory seeks to give a name to what secretly holds the machinery [of society] together' (Adorno, 1969:229). Through theory it becomes possible to understand the minutiae of societies; contextualising the details of data into something more manageable and understandable. Put in context, the theories expounded in this chapter make way for developing insights into the UK Government's apprenticeship programme and the ensuing system as something more than workplace learning, but one in which the power of actors is an intricate and inherent aspect. Fuller and Unwin gave voice to the way in which institutional apprenticeship in the UK has 'been resurrected as an instrument of government policy' (2009), with 'power' in this respect in the hands of the UK Government through policy and law-making capacities. Such is the importance of power in government-supported apprenticeship system that, through 'governance', it is shown in the 'Apprenticeship Triquetra of Apprenticeship Factors' (Figure 2 and throughout this thesis) to be one of the three interlinked essential elements of apprenticeship, alongside 'employment' and 'education'. Theories of power alone offer little credence in aiding the understanding of the apprenticeship system without some way of understanding the relationships of the actors within the system; power is both an outcome and a condition of the actors'

relationships. That is why *governmentality* and ANT are used in tandem: used in isolation, each theory provides only partial views of apprenticeship; together they show that apprenticeship is being used as a device, an 'actant', through which power runs.

But it is not power in the sense of unmitigated control as might be thought of in the Marxist/Freirian terms in which 'power' was equated to government control and liberty was an outcome of resistance against the idea of accepting the employment and educational status quo (Freire, 1983:10); Foucault's idea of power very much opposed such a view. Instead, acting on the liberty of the populations (which, to some extent, Freire's (1983) Brazilian peasants did), power is expressed through the actors' actions. Even in attempting to trace the origins of the power within the apprenticeship system, it is not possible to say that power begins with government policy. Rather, apprenticeship policy is one *expression* of power; improvising and thereby expressing agency is another. Thinking back to Latour's explanation of power requiring continuity and reaction, the UK Government in the 1990s sought to use and modify an already existing programme of passing on craft skills, one that had a history and an easily identifiable culture and identity. Networks have therefore acted through time, as well as across the present social spaces and networks. The 'actants' inherent in ANT thus become useful devices for revealing how symbols – and the notion of apprenticeship in all its forms provides a very strong symbol of a type of social action through its popular connection with formative, transitional and occupational learning – act to create meaning and social action. It is through ANT that this symbolism that has been included in the discussion of networks

Likewise, a focus on *governmentality* encourages thinking beyond that which is already apparent; in Human Capital Theory terms, government-supported apprenticeships should provide a platform from which individual apprentices, employers and society more generally can each develop. Yet the minimal and sometimes contradictory (Fuller and Unwin, 2011b:32) stipulations that come with the current expansion in numbers and reach of apprenticeships into newer and wider sectors mean that 'governance', as posited in the 'Triquetra of Apprenticeship Factors', was once a matter between industry and apprentices at its widest and employer and apprentice at its most specific. When the London Lorimers introduced apprenticeships in the thirteenth century, they may have done so as a body of employers, but it would be easy to trace the power relationships, given that there were likely only the three actors – the Lorimers as a body; the individual employers and the apprentices. Over time, but prior to the introduction of the Statute of Artificers 1563, the governance of apprenticeships may have spread to other employer bodies. Chapter 2 showed that local bye-laws were introduced between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, leading to the creation of the Statute of Artificers 1563 and the first time that the state officially became involved

in apprenticeships on a national basis. When the state withdrew statutory control of apprenticeships in 1814, industry took control and so power shifted, becoming in essence a nebula of multiple sites of power as unions and industry – and more latterly colleges – organised apprenticeship to their perceived needs and, as noted in the preceding chapter, resulted in unions using apprenticeship as a device for entry into the skilled craft occupations (Liepmann, 1960; Streeck, 2011). Governance continued outside of *government* in the way it is presented in the second triquetra and so power flowed through the industrial actors to shape the types of experiences available to young apprentices. The effect of government entering the apprenticeship system once more was to relocate the ways that power flowed through the system. To use the metaphor of the theatre, it gave some direction to the apprenticeship system, even if some of the 'actors' have not wanted to follow the director's orders.

So in 1993 when the Conservative Government announced plans to introduce a new form of apprenticeship under the MA programme, six notable events took place:

- First, the UK Government intervened in apprenticeship and began the process that would see it eventually establish itself as the major partner in managing and shaping apprenticeships in England.
- Secondly, this point marked the time when it is possible to locate the precise beginning of the current apprenticeship programme in England (and hence leading to the creation of the apprenticeship system).
- Thirdly, the MA dropped the centuries old established practice of 'time serving' in favour of qualifications based around NVQs as evidence of skill attainment (Unwin and Wellington, 2001).
- Fourthly, it forced a change in the previous organisational relationships that had managed and overseen apprenticeships, namely, *inter alia*, individual employers and apprentices, industrial representative organisations, unions, colleges and training providers.
- The fifth event saw new sectors and occupations become apprenticed forms of employment, sectors and occupations that had no previous record of employing apprentices.
- Finally and closely related to the preceding points, there was a major shift in the power structure of the apprenticeship system as the bureaucratic and financial resources of government were brought into what had been a diminishing and outdated mode of teaching and learning trade skills.

Governments since then have sought to increase apprenticeship numbers through providing public funding and introducing markets. But funding and markets alone have not shaped the current system. Accordingly, other, secondary, effects have stemmed from this time, too: for example, the rise in the numbers of older

'apprentices'; legislation enacted to shape state-supported apprenticeships; the implementation of a statutory document providing – arguably – details of what is to be included in state-supported apprenticeships (the SASE); the provision of state funding; the development of new non-governmental bodies; and the creation of state agencies charged with managing the day-to-day functions of the apprenticeship system. All of these points have impacted on today's apprenticeship system.

The works of Foucault and Latour have provided the basis for understanding how government-supported apprenticeship works as a system beyond the government's programme and in doing so shows the way that apprenticeship can be used as one expression of the role of government in modern societies that works through the liberty of the subjects. The *governmentality*/ANT perspective provides a new way of understanding apprenticeship as it exists in contemporary England, yet has also shown its link to apprenticeship in centuries past.

In the following chapter, I add to this historical emphasis and in doing so begin the transition from the general level towards a focus on the detail through considering some of the modern developments in institutional apprenticeships and with a particular focus on the two sectors of retail and creative and cultural.

Chapter 4

The Background to the Apprenticeship Story: Actors, sectors and plots

Introduction

The term 'actors' is used throughout this thesis to describe the people and organisations participating in England's contemporary apprenticeship system; as such, it is important to understand who the actors are and how and what roles they are performing. Using secondary data, this chapter begins to address these questions, a narrative that continues in Chapters 6 and 7 where the primary data from the interviews is used to show the work of the actors in their own words. So while the thesis thus far has focused on 'setting the scene', outlining the research 'problem' and developing the theoretical framework for making sense of the apprenticeship programme and system, this chapter begins the task of narrowing the scope of the research, focusing on the actors and the available numerical data. With a particular focus on the two apprenticeship sectors relevant to this thesis – retail and creative and cultural – the chapter shows how the government-supported apprenticeship programme morphs to fit the requirements of each sector.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The chapter opens with a lexicon of the language common to the modern industrial, skills and apprenticeship discourse; explaining what is meant by 'sectors' and then defining organisations such as Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), National Skills Academies (NSAs) and also the meanings behind 'apprenticeship frameworks' and 'pathways' available in the sectors.   Section Two provides numerical data and analysis for the apprenticeship numbers in the two sectors, looking at the numbers of 'Starts' and 'Achievements'. The final section closes the chapter with a discussion on the findings.

To begin the chapter, it is first necessary to ascertain what many of the terms and phrases mean.

An apprenticeship lexicon

What is a 'sector' and by implication, and specifically the sectors of 'retail' and 'creative and cultural'? What are 'Sector Skills Councils' or 'National Skills Academies'? And what is an 'apprenticeship framework'? This section offers some clarity to these

questions and why understanding what they mean and the function they perform in the apprenticeship system is important.

'Sectors'

'Sectors' is a short-hand term used to describe the ways in which industrial societies are divided and subdivided into manageable categories which reflect their particular occupations, products, politics, funding arrangements and skills requirements. Discussions around 'sectors', though, is problematic as the term implies some degree of homogeneity of the subsectors which operate within each sector. For instance, I would argue that the compartmentalising of work and skills has always been an intrinsic factor of human societies, long before the introduction of Taylorist management principles in the twentieth century. The work of an artist and therefore the specific skills required to be an artist differs greatly from that of the retailer or the banker, sailor, hospital porter, insurer, carpenter or teacher. Differences in employment types bring out different cultural identities, practices and employment-specific skills, the corollary of which is that employers will see education training in different ways (Brown et al, 1997:29; Felstead et al, 2009:6). Consequently, within each sector, there reside specialist skills and cultural practices which sit alongside general skills.

Some 'sectors' (e.g. creative and cultural) may be best understood as umbrella terms encapsulating a variety of subsectors, while others appear simpler and the degrees of difference between the subsectors much smaller (e.g. retail); at least, in terms of the skills required. For example, the retail sector may be perceived as relatively homogenous in terms of the general skills base required across the different types of retail outlets, as evidenced by there being fewer apprenticeship frameworks and pathways to have emerged (see below for definition a list of frameworks according to the two sectors), although Tilly and Carré (2011) state that retail is a far more complex sector than first appears. The evidence presented in Chapter 7, though, suggests that skills amongst larger retailers risk becoming too employer specific, with the potential outcome that apprenticeship schemes can be labelled according to the needs of individual employers rather than those required by the sector. By contrast, the creative and cultural 'sector' consists of multiple subsectors that challenge the whole notion of it being a single sector, ranging from arts and antiques to photo imaging and computer software. (See Tables 5 and 6 for a fuller range of subsectors and how responsibility for the creative and cultural sector's skills and industry data are divided between two organisations.)

Table 3 shows the demographics for the two sectors in England and the South East of England.

Table 3: Sector demographics by SSC & England/region totals – figures for 2009-10.

	Retail	Creative and Cultural	England Totals (all sectors)
Employed (in numbers)	2,316,779	694,700	23,602,300
Businesses (in numbers)	239,450	61,062	2,040,200
Microbusinesses[9] (%)	82%	93%	96%
Employed – South East England	369,522	129,530	4,153,000
Employees: Male/Female (%)	42/58%	59/41%	55/45%
Age bands: 16-24 (%)	31%	10.5%	39.5%
Age bands: 25+ (%)	69%	89.5%	60.5%

Sources: Office for National Statistics (ONS), 'Neighbourhood Statistics: Southampton, July2009-June2010'; ONS, 'Key Figures for People and Society: Population and Migration', June 2010; Skillsmart Retail, 2011a; CC Skills Data Generator, 'Industry Total, Nation/region, Total employed' and 'Industry Total, Sector, Gender', 2010/11

In 2009-10 retail accounted for fewer than ten per cent of the total English workforce and twelve per cent for the south east of England, whereas creative and cultural accounted for less than four per cent of the total English workforce and five per cent of the south east. Retail has a mainly female workforce (58%), although this figure differs according to age group (Roberts, 2011:131). Overall, the creative and cultural sector has a greater male workforce, but the gender split is less pronounced in the following subsectors:

- Visual Arts (53% female)
- Cultural heritage (57% female)
- Literature (52% female)

(**Source**: CC Skills Data Generator, 'Industry Total, Nation/region, Total employed' and 'Industry Total, Sector, Gender', 2010/11)

The creative and cultural sector as a whole is also poorly represented by the under twenty-five age group with only a tenth of the workforce in this category, compared to the all-sector average for England of 39.5 per cent. Retail has a larger representation

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[9] Defined by BIS as businesses with fewer than ten staff (BIS, Nov. 2010).

of this age group at 31 per cent. The creative and cultural sector has a high number of micro-businesses (93%), reflecting the national average of 96 per cent. In retail this figure is slightly smaller at 82 per cent, although this figure hides the fact that 'the UK's top 10 retailers [employ] a third of the retail workforce and the top 75 retailers [employ] around 2 million people' (Skillsmart Retail, Jan 2010c:5).

Data for apprenticeships in the two sectors is partial due to the limited information published by BIS through the SFA. The lack of data made available by government via the SFA also means that it is not possible to track accurately the numbers of apprentices moving from Intermediate to advance Apprenticeships (and those moving onto Higher Apprenticeships, although these are few in number).

'Retail'

Retail is a sector with a longstanding tradition and presence. A useful definition of retail is: 'The action or business of selling goods in relatively small quantities for use or consumption rather than for resale.' (Oxford English Dictionary online). Yet employment in retail is said to have taken on many of the characteristics once considered to be the province of factories: i.e. mass employment and lack of employee discretion (Bozkurt and Grugulis, 2011). Retail is both a fast-moving and highly competitive industry (Huddleston, 2004:5). Retailers come in a variety of formats and in order to ensure that skills within retail remain relevant to the sector, Skillsmart Retail (the Sector Skills Council for retail up to September 2012 – see below for explanations) produced a document 'clarifying' retail by the following subsectors:

Table 4: Summary definition of 'retail' by type.

Retailer type	% of retail business	Examples
New goods in specialised stores	52%	Clothes; DIY; electrical
Non-specialised stores	19%	Supermarkets; department stores
Food, beverages & tobacco in specialised stores	3%	Butchers; bakers; grocers; newsagents, convenience stores
Not in stores	9%	Independent and chain chemists; opticians
Second-hand goods sold in stores	2%	Online retailers; market stalls

Source: Skillsmart Retail (January 2010a), 'Definition of Retail'

Added to the list in Table 4 is that of 'Funeral Services', an apprenticeship framework (see below) issued by Skillsmart Retail on 25 July 2012 (Source: Apprenticeship Frameworks Online). Occupations not counted as 'retail' and hence which come under the auspices of different Sector Skills Councils (SSC) are:

- Florists (SSC = Lantra)
- Car sales (SSC = Institute of Motor Industry)
- Hairdressers (SSC = Habia)
- Butchery, bakery, pubs, inns and food outlets (SSC = People 1st)

(Source: Skillsmart Retail, 2010a:2-3; SSC websites)

Furthermore, there are some workers operating in retail outlets whose skills do not come under Skillsmart Retail's operations, e.g. those working in catering or optical outlets (Skillsmart Retail, 2010a). Apprenticeship training and qualifications for such employees can be included in 'specialist frameworks' which essentially 'boundary-cross' any one sector; e.g. 'optical retailing' is a specialist apprenticeship framework which links general retail skills with the specific skills and knowledge of the optical industry.

Thirty-one per cent of the retail workforce is aged under twenty-five years (Skillsmart Retail, 2011b:2), yet the sector suffers from a long-standing image problem relating to its low skill/low-pay/low opportunities (Bozkurt and Grugulis, 2011) and hence has problems attracting young people choosing to enter the sector as a career choice (GHK Consulting, 2003:19; Spielhofer and Sims, 2004; see also Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis). Nationally, half of all retail employees work in sales and customer service roles, for whom there is an average annual wage of between £11,00-15,000 for non-supervisory staff (Skillsmart Retail, 2011b:2), resulting in high levels of 'job hopping', cited as one of the biggest causes of retail framework non-completion by young people (Spielhofer and Sims, 2004:544).

'Creative and Cultural'

The 'Creative and Cultural' sector is a recent addition to the apprenticeship programme and is best understood as an amalgam of subsectors which can appear as incompatible occupations, as Table 5 shows:

Table 5: Subsectors within the Creative and Cultural Sector.

Creative and Cultural Subsectors		
Advertising	Design	Radio
Animation	Fashion and textiles	Toys
Architecture	Film	Technical facilities
Arts and antiques	Music	TV
Computer software	Performing Arts & theatre	Video games & interactive software
Crafts	Photo imaging	
Cultural heritage	Publishing & literature	

Sources: Guile, 2009:7624; DCMS, 2008:6; Creative Choices website [Accessed Nov 2011]; Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), 2010

Some subsectors, those commonly understood under the more colloquial but equally 'loose' designations of 'art' and 'culture' are centuries old – e.g. arts, crafts, performing arts and theatre. Others owe their existence to technological advances of the twentieth century; for example, film, radio and television. Others still have an even more recent foundation as electronic communication technology has brought into being jobs in areas such as animation, computer software and games programming. The 'creative and cultural' sector is therefore a catch all categorisation which one author described as resulting from 'a sixty year trip' and the political aspirations and machinations of the 1997 New Labour Government (O'Connor, 2010:9, 49).   The difficulties of defining the sector are not helped by the term itself – is it 'creative and cultural' (Guile, 2006, 2009), 'cultural and creative' (O'Connor, 2010) or even just plain 'creative' (Chapain, 2010)?

While it has been argued elsewhere that a process of 'industrial convergence' (Guile, 2006) has taken place between these seemingly disparate subsectors over a number of years due an international shift towards creative economies, there remains uncertainty, or at least, any degree of certainty, as to what the creative and cultural sector is, which itself has had implications for placing a monetary value on the sector and accordingly its ability to attract both public and private funding (Chapain, 2010; O'Connor, 2010), a factor which in part shapes many of the sector's activities, as Chapters 6 and 7 show.

The South East of England has the largest creative and cultural workforce outside of London with a total of 129,530 employed in the sector; 18.7 per cent of the national figure. Nationally, the most popular subsectors are:

- Design (33.2% of the sector total);
- Performing Arts (18.6%);
- Music (15.7%);

- Literature (10.2%).

Agencies and organisations, craft, visual arts, and cultural heritage are each below ten per cent of the total workforce.

In contrast with retail, only 10.5 per cent of the creative and cultural (excluding creative media) workforce is aged between sixteen and twenty-four (CC Skills, Data Generator, 'Industry Total, Nation/region, Age group, 2010-11). However, like retail, there is a sizeable body of employers – 94 per cent – with fewer than ten employees (Baker Tilly, Foreword by CC Skills, October 2011). The creative and cultural sector has a spread of an older workforce, although the majority of workers (14.5%) are aged between thirty-five and thirty-nine.

Both sectors, creative and cultural and retail, contain subsectors which have the effect of disaggregating the skillsets required by the sectors generally. So, while retail provides at first glance a relatively easy sector to categorise, there exist differences according to the type of retailing. The result is that while there are few apprenticeship frameworks and pathways, retail skills will sometimes necessitate the use of the specialist (dual occupation) frameworks mentioned above. By contrast, the creative and cultural sector provides a good case in point of how vague a term 'sector' can be, for the sector hides heterogeneity within its subsectors. Enveloping these seemingly far removed subsectors, the work of the sector is split between two different SSCs: Creative and Cultural Skills for the arts and culture; Creative Skillset for the creative media. This thesis concentrates on those subsectors covered by Creative and Cultural Skills, but for demonstration purposes, Table 6 shows the division of subsectors between the two SSCs:

Table 6: Sector Skills Council responsibilities for the creative and cultural sector.

CC Skills	Creative Skillset
Craft	Advertising
Cultural	Animation
Design	Computer games
Literature	Fashion and textiles
Music	Film
Performing	Interactive media
Visual arts	Photo imaging
	Publishing
	Radio

Sources: CC Skills website, 'About us' and Creative Skillset website 'About Us: Defining the Creative Industries'

So what, then, are 'Sector Skills Councils'?

'Sector Skills Councils'

'Sector Skills Councils' (SSCs) were introduced under the Labour Government in 2002 as a way to address the lack of employer engagement with the apprenticeship programme (GHK, 2003). At their height under the Labour Government, there were twenty-five such Councils, although the numbers of SSCs have declined since 2009, as will be discussed below. According to the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils (ASSC), the umbrella organisation representing the interests of SSCs in the UK:

> Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are the only UK-wide organisations licensed by Government to gather robust and reliable sectoral intelligence, which is a vital part of the skills and workforce planning and development process. (ASSC website, 'Research')

The licensing of SSCs is carried out by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES). As will be seen below, SSCs were created by government, have received millions of pounds of public funding (£40.6m in Core Funding for 2011/12, plus further funding awarded on a case-by-case 'project' basis – UKCES, 2011a) and yet they operate within the private sector, apparently independent from government (Keep, 2007). According to the UKCES, SSCs currently have the following objectives:

1. Make and win the economic argument for greater investment in skills

2. Enhance the value and accessibility of vocational training, especially apprenticeships

3. Galvanise industries and sectors to improve the skills and productivity of their workforces

4. Work with sectors to ensure the creation of more and better jobs, maximising opportunities for unemployed people (UKCES, 2011a:3)

SSCs have also been the 'Issuing Authorities' for apprenticeship frameworks (see below) creating the majority, but not all, of the frameworks. There are nineteen licensed SSCs (November 2012 – ASSC website), down from the twenty-five SSCs operating in April 2009. Skillsmart Retail, the SSC for the retail sector, has recently transferred many of their former SSC activities to People 1st, the SSC for hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism (see below). The existence – and rapid disappearance – of SSCs provides a good demonstration of the link between government and industry in terms of the nation's skills; the licensing of and the threat of losing that licence demonstrates the continued power and influence of governments through policy-making and funding mechanisms, as was noted in the Wolf Report:

The number of SSCs is determined centrally, rather than evolving from and with the labour market; and SSCs can be, and are, closed down, or forcibly merged, if they are judged to be performing inadequately. (DfE, 2011:63)

Although SSCs have existed for a decade, they have not remained unchanged. The influential Leitch Review (2006 – see Chapter 2 of this thesis) envisaged a greater role for SSCs in developing the skills of the nation's workforce and particularly in terms of apprenticeship:

The Government must work with employers to deliver a major improvement in the UK's intermediate skills base. The Review recommends that, as with vocational qualifications, employers should drive the content of Apprenticeships through their SSC. This will ensure that Apprenticeships are relevant to employers and high quality. [Sector Skills Agreements] should include clear commitments and targets, including for the number of Apprenticeships, for increased employer achievement of intermediate and higher skills. The Government should work with the [UK Commission for Employment and Skills], SSCs and [Learning and Skills Council[10]] to dramatically increase the number of Apprenticeships in the UK to 500,000[11] by 2020, with skills brokers engaging with individual employers to demonstrate business benefits. (Leitch, 2006:21)

Wolf, as noted in Chapter 2, was critical of SSCs, saying that due to their UK-wide responsibilities they 'have been given an impossible task' in what is a complex and 'fast-changing economy' (DfE, 2011:101). SSCs, in keeping with the seemingly ever changing nature of organisations involved in England's skills and qualifications, have undergone many changes since their inception in 2002. Even in the three years since 2009 in which this research has been conducted, further changes have taken place as the present Coalition Government has sought to make SSCs more independent from government (UKCES, 2011a:2). Historically, SSCs have been in receipt of government funds (see Table 7, below), leading to criticisms for their ambiguous role for claiming to represent industry whilst yet being in receipt of state funds (Keep, 2007). State funding for SSCs was withdrawn from April 2012 and SSCs are now required to bid for project specific funding from government, something they had previously been able to do in addition to receiving Core (public) Funding (UKCES, 2011a:2). Superficially, it would appear that, perhaps for the first time, this move will mean that SSCs can claim

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[10] The LSC was replaced in 2009 by the a triumvirate of the Skills Funding Agency, the National Apprenticeship Service and the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), although the YPLA has since been replaced by the Education Funding Agency
[11] Figures published for 2010/11 show that Leitch's vision was far more conservative than he realised as the current total stands at 457,000 (Data Service, Statistical First Release, October 2012)

to be 'independent, employer-led, UK-wide organisations which are designed to build a skills system driven by employer demand' (Alliance of Sector Skills Councils website, 'About SSCs'). Yet those SSCs that are still operating remain subject to government licensing (via the UKCES) and able to enter bids for funding projects from the government as they have been able to do previously. It will be interesting, therefore, to review the grants awarded to each SSC in the coming years and compare them with the previous funding totals. Table 7 shows the Core (day-to-day activities) and Total (financing sector specific projects) funding provided through UKCES to the two SSCs for 2009-10 and 2010-11:

Table 7: UKCES funding of Skillsmart Retail and CC Skills.

SSC	UKCES Core Funding received (£000)		UKCES Total Funding received, inc. project funding (£000)	
Year	2009/10	2010/11 (% change from previous year)	2009/10	2010/11 (% change from previous year)
Skillsmart Retail	£1,965	£1,788 (-9%)	£2,971	£2,055 (-31%)
CC Skills	£1,918	£1,757 (-8.5%)	£2,834	£2,032 (-28%)

Source: UKCES (2010, 2011)

Although the funding in relative terms is small in comparison to some of the training providers and employers contracting directly with the Skills Funding Agency (see Table 8 below), the figures are noteworthy for what they say about the changing relationship between central government and the SSCs.

The result of the recent history is that the organisation and representation of vocational skills in England has been a story of constant flux driven by government. As one commentator observed:

> Rather than attempt to improve an existing institution inherited from its predecessor to meet contemporary challenges, a new government (or new minister) with a parliamentary majority behind them, has few (if any) obstacles in the way of abolishing it. (Bynner, 2011:27)

Despite this rather authoritarian presentation and history, SSCs have remained in place for a decade and, as has been noted in this chapter, changes have occurred in their remits and responsibilities in that time, although the previous Minister for Skills and Lifelong Learning, John Hayes, voiced his belief that 'SSCs must dare to rise to the challenge of going beyond the strictly utilitarian to become guilds for the 21st century'

(Hayes, 2011:43-4). For now, though, and perhaps with a shortened expiry date, SSCs remain in place. Perhaps, given the changing patterns in industry, employment, education, skills, and social demographics over the decades and centuries, it is to be expected that representative organisations should move with the times. The question is; whose responsibility is it that organisations should change: industry or government?

What follows is a brief description of the two SSCs relevant to this thesis.

Skillsmart Retail

Until September 2012, Skillsmart Retail was the SSC for retail and operated as a 'not-for-profit organisation', wholly-owned by the British Retail Consortium (Skillsmart Retail – 'About Skillsmart Retail' (no date); GHK Consulting, 2003). Skillsmart Retail was formed in 2002, replacing the previous National Training Organisation (NTO) which lacked the support of the retail industry (GHK Consulting, 2003:15) and was one of five pilot 'trailblazer' SSCs, along with Creative Skillset (then called 'Skillset') and Skillfast UK, the latter of which has since been subsumed into the operations of Creative Skillset. Skillsmart Retail became a licensed SSC in 2004 (National Audit Office (NAO), 2009a) and the first retail apprenticeships of the MA appeared in 1994 (Lourie, 1996:10). However, since September 2012, many of Skillsmart's operations have been taken over by the aforementioned SSC, People 1st. A phone call to the offices of People 1st revealed that Skillsmart is now part of the People 1st company group and as such continues to issue apprenticeship frameworks and certificates and also deals with qualifications and NOS for retail, but that all its other functions as an SSC have now stopped. Most of the evidence presented in this thesis applies to Skillsmart's activities up to September 2012, so all references to Skillsmart in this thesis apply up to that date.

The latest figures show that retail framework 'Starts' (individuals registered at the beginning of their apprenticeship frameworks) for 2010/11 were 41,410 (see Chart 3 and Tables 10 to 15 below). Since 2008/09 (the year when Creative and Cultural Skills first introduced apprenticeship frameworks), a total of 69,260 Starts have been recorded for retail, with an estimated figure for the period August 2011 to April 2012 of 23,430 (Data Service, SFR June 2012: Apprenticeship Programme Starts by Sector Framework (2002/03 to 2011/12 in-year estimates)). The figures for 2010/11 show that, at nine per cent of the total apprenticeship Starts for sectors in 2010/11, retail frameworks are the third most popular frameworks numerically across all sectors, behind 'Customer Service' and 'Health and 'Social Care' (see Tables 10-14 below).

Creative and Cultural Skills (CC Skills)

CC Skills first gained its licence to operate as an SSC in 2005 and is described as having 'a large and diverse footprint' in terms of its subsectors (NAO, 2009b). CC Skills represents, as a general description, the arts and culture side of the broader creative and cultural sector, as shown in Table 6, above. The first creative and cultural apprenticeship frameworks of the current programme began in 2008 and to date there have been approximately 1,080 apprenticeship 'Starts' for England: 720 of these are confirmed figures from 2008/09 to 2010/11, with an additional estimated 360 Starts between August 2010 to April 2011 (Data Service, SFR June 2012: Apprenticeship Programme Starts by Sector Framework (2002/03 to 2011/12 in-year estimates)). The number of Starts for the creative and cultural sector in Chart 4 shows the stark differences between the two sectors.

'National Skills Academies'

SSCs have been joined recently by another set of actors: National Skills Academies (NSAs). NSAs are often connected with or owned by SSCs and form an extension of the work of SSCs (and thereby arguably acting as an extension of government skills policy through to employer and employee). A government report published in July 2011 had the following to say of NSAs:

> NSAs are designed to facilitate the delivery of training to existing employees and new entrants, depending on the priorities of employers in their sector. While they will continue to promote established awards, such as Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships, they may also be involved in the development of new awards to meet the needs identified by employers, if gaps in provision exist. Their delivery arrangements are meant to be designed to fit the needs of employers within their sector and therefore vary significantly across the different NSAs. (BIS, 2011b:13)

NSAs have also been referred to by one interviewee as 'the delivery arm' of SSCs (NNH04). As the above BIS report (2011b) noted, NSAs do not follow any one model and will vary according to the sector; this is particularly true of the two NSAs featured in this thesis. The NSA for Retail operates a network of local retail 'shops', often in shopping centres and towns and in which local retail workers can visit. Again, though, the Southampton NSA for Retail differs from the national retail model due to the 'shop' having no official location, but a series of offices allocated by its local partners. The NSA for Creative and Cultural, by contrast, works through twenty 'core colleges', thereby removing local colleges from the picture.

Training Providers

The term 'Training Provider' (TP) might at first appear relatively easy to define and yet it is worth further consideration. A TP, however, can constitute external organisations (including FE, and Sixth Form and special colleges, and schools, or Private Training Providers (PTP)), but might also encompass an employer holding a direct contract with the SFA to provide training. All of these bodies receive public funds from the SFA provided they are contracted to do so. The public funding can be considerable in some cases; for instance, Elmfield Training (which provides apprenticeship training services to Morrisons supermarket) received over £40 million of public money in 2010-11, equal to the total amount of SSC Core Funding received by all SSCs in the same year (UKCES, 2011a). Elmfield Training is owned by the same individual who set up and owns Skillsfirst Awards Limited, the latter company providing awards to the former. Elmfield is not alone in this respect. The AO 'City and Guilds' owns the training provider 'City and Guilds for Business' whose customers include the Asda retail store and until recently the multinational education business Pearson owned the PTP 'Pearson in Practice', although ownership of owned by West Nottinghamshire College and operating as 'Vision Workforce Skills' (Thornhill, 25 February 2012).

Charts 1 and 2 (below) show that the proportion of apprentices starting and completing their apprenticeship programmes have increased at faster rates amongst PTPs than in the non-private sector, suggesting that a) the private sector is attracting a greater share of apprenticeship training than providers in the non-private sector and b) apprenticeship, in addition to being a model for skill development and social governance, is also becoming an attraction for large businesses seeking to benefit from the public funding mechanisms and internal markets; in effect, a commodity.

Chart 1: 'Apprenticeship by Provider Type' – Starts
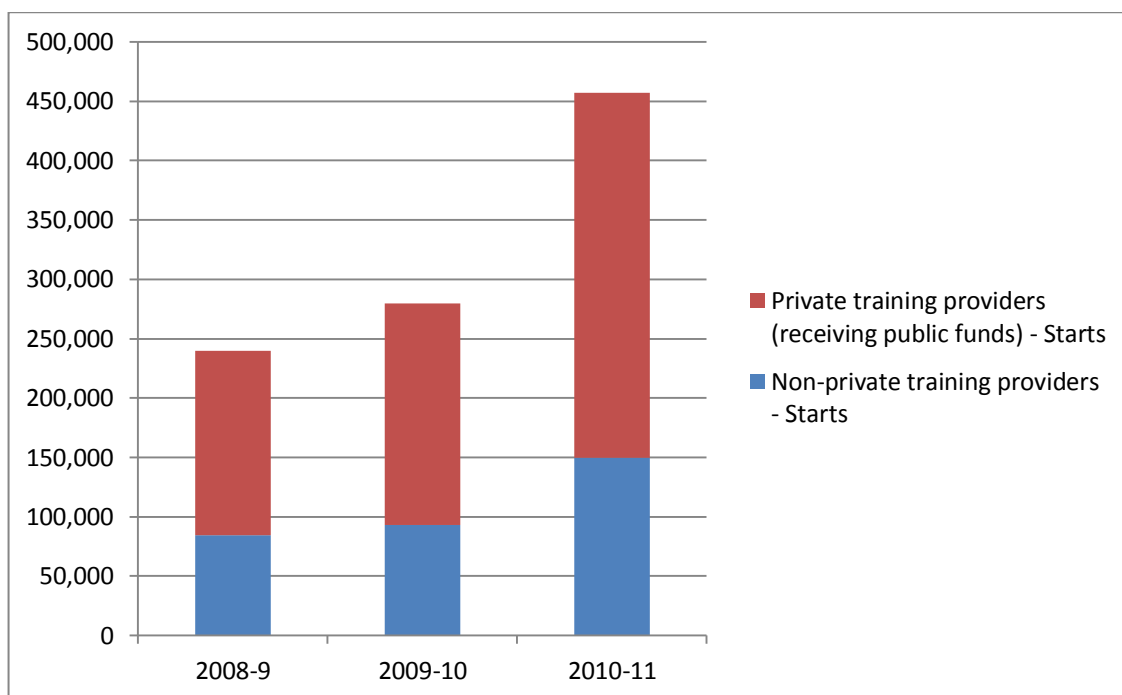
Legend:
- Private training providers (receiving public funds) - Starts
- Non-private training providers - Starts

(**Source**: Data Service, http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/Statistics/fe_data_library/Apprenticeships/) Accessed 25/02/2013]

Chart 2: 'Apprenticeship by Provider Type' – Achievements
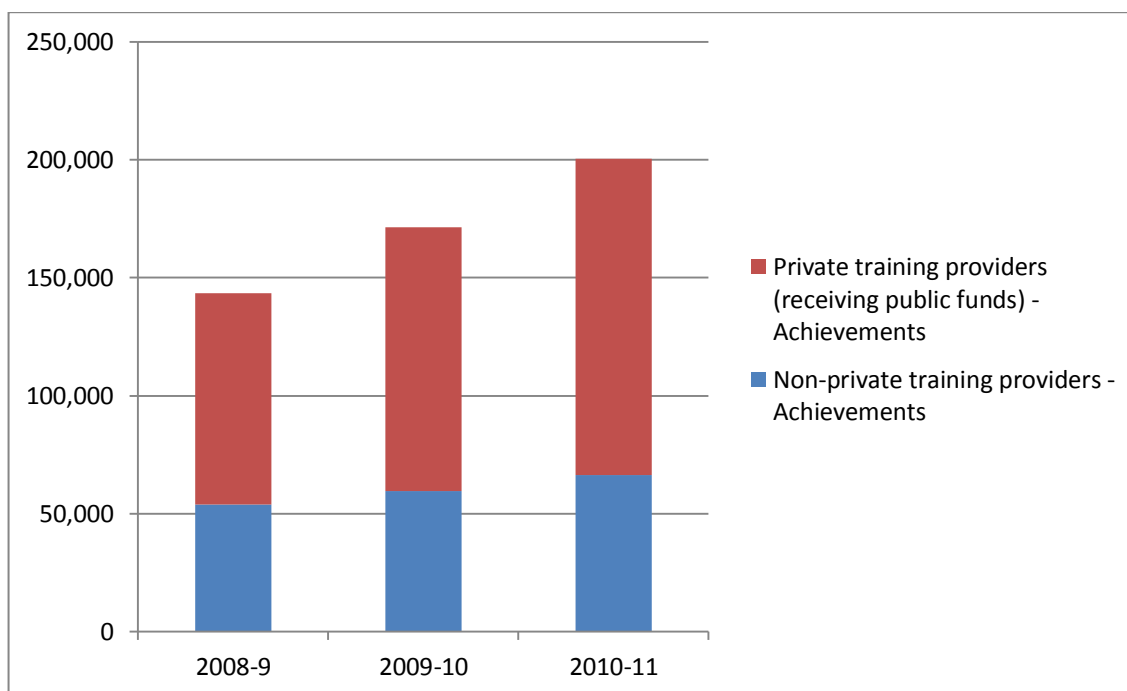
Legend:
- Private training providers (receiving public funds) - Achievements
- Non-private training providers - Achievements

(**Source**: Data Service, http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/Statistics/fe_data_library/Apprenticeships/) Accessed 25/02/2013]

Just as interesting is the data provided in Table 8 which shows the SFA payments made to employers holding direct funding contracts, showing that two of the ten, in first and tenth place, are retailers. McDonald's, the global fast food chain, is the highest receiver of funding for apprenticeships, receiving almost three times the second highest amount (awarded to British Gas). Tesco, the UK supermarket, is the tenth highest recipient, receiving over £1.3 million, twenty-seven per cent of which was for apprentices aged under nineteen, meaning that in both cases the majority of the funding is therefore going to the 19+ age groups. Although I have not included tables on the numbers of apprentices by age group, it is indicative of the changing nature of apprenticeships in the twenty-first century.

Table 8: Top ten Skills Funding Agency apprenticeship payments 2010/11.

Rank	Company name	Total actual payments (apprenticeships)	Payments for 16-18 apprenticeships (and SFA list ranking for this category)
1	McDonald's Restaurants Ltd	£10,176,008	£5,928,249 (27)
2	British Gas Services Ltd	£3,703,674	£3,105,045 (48)
3	BT plc	£3,176,989	£958,653 (240)
4	Phones 4u Ltd	£2,915,752	£586,633 (375)
5	BAE Systems plc	£2,797,403	£2,621,836 (63)
6	Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd	£1,934,954	£134,763 (161)
7	TUI UK Ltd	£1,893,501	£1,177118 (188)
8	Toni and Guy UK Training Ltd	£1,549,046	£1,419,795 (147)
9	Jarvis Training Management Ltd	£1,432,434	£2,071,980 (84)
10	Tesco Stores Ltd	£1,354,279	£368,553 (477)
Totals		£30,934,040	£18,282,625

Source: Hayes, 21 February 2012: Column 751W; Skills Funding Agency, 2012b

National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA)

The NAS is the dedicated government agency for apprenticeships in England. Formed in 2009 and housed within the SFA, the body that funds government-supported VET in England, with whom responsibility for funding of apprenticeship training is shared (see Chapter 6 for a further discussion of this issue), the NAS and the SFA were both formed from the larger Learning and Skills Council. Both agencies have regional offices in addition to their national base in Coventry. The NAS also participates in policy discussions along with the Joint Apprenticeship Unit and meets with other actors

in the apprenticeship system (see Chapter 6 for a fuller discussion of the role of the NAS).

'Specifications for Apprenticeship Standards in England' (SASE)

The SASE is an 18 page document setting out the minimum requirements for all government-funded apprenticeship frameworks in England. Adherence to the SASE has been a statutory requirement for all frameworks since April 2011. Although the SASE became statutory following the ASCL 2009, its origins date back to the decidedly vague 'Blueprint for Apprenticeships' in 2005, a document resembling more a glossy sales brochure than a set of standards governing apprenticeships. A draft version of the SASE was published in 2009, designed to provide Issuing Authorities (which create and publish the frameworks; in the majority of cases these will be SSCs) with a transitional period prior to the publication of the final statutory version (SASE Guidance, 2009). The statutory version of the SASE was published three months later than stated in the provisional, non-statutory SASE (2009), a delay caused by concerns raised about the transition from Key Skills to Functional Skills (see below), the latter being regarded by many organisations as overly complex and difficult to develop across the broad sectoral landscape (Hayes, 2010a). A compromise was reached by which Key Skills remained in place until September 2012 and apprenticeship frameworks could incorporate either Key or Functional Skills until this date, after which Functional Skills have become the standard requirement. The SASE sets out a number of statutory requirements to which apprenticeship frameworks must comply, including:

- A list of eleven qualifications in English and maths from which Issuing Authorities can select qualifications for inclusion in the frameworks to comply with the 'Functional Skills' requirement. Equivalent qualifications covering Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) are also required 'unless [ICT] is not relevant to effective performance in the occupation or sector to which the framework relates' (SASE, 2011:6).
- The minimum number of Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) credits required of each level ('Intermediate', 'Advanced' and 'Higher'): 37 QCF credits for each level. QCF credits foster a unitised approach to learning and qualifications. For apprenticeship frameworks this segmented approach allows 'individuals the opportunity to learn in a more flexible way', according to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills website. However, the QCF has been criticised for failing to allow comparisons to be made with academic qualifications, where the QCF is not used (Fuller and Unwin, 2011a). Furthermore, the QCF approach appears to distance England's apprenticeships further from the idea of apprenticeship as a journey.

- The minimum number of Guided Learning Hours (GLH), set at 280 GLH for all levels. GLH refers to the hours spent with the training provider undertaking the specific training required of the programme and includes 'lectures, tutorials, and supervised study' and assessments (Information Authority, 2012:101). When claiming for funding, the SFA now requires training providers to enter the number of GLH's on the Individualised Learner Record as a 'key driver of costs incurred when determining the level of funding claimed' (SFA, 2012c:7) and as evidence of having undertaken at least the minimum GLH required of the SASE. In practice, there is great variation in GLH according to the sector frameworks. For example, the GLH requirement for retail frameworks is between 285 and 357; for creative and cultural frameworks the GLH is between 437 and 874; all GLH figures vary according to the pathway Level and occupation (Sources: Apprenticeship Frameworks Online - retail and creative and cultural frameworks).

'Apprenticeship Frameworks' and 'Pathways'

In terms of apprenticeship qualifications, the phrase 'apprenticeship framework' has in recent years formed a major part of the apprenticeship vocabulary. Since the passing of the ASCL 2009 and the publication of the statutory SASE in 2011, apprenticeship frameworks provide the statutory minimum requirements in terms of training and employment for government-funded apprenticeships. According to the Data Service, government-supported apprenticeship frameworks must comprise:

- A knowledge-based element (the theoretical knowledge underpinning a job in a certain occupation and industry, typically certified via a Technical Certificate).
- A competence-based element (the ability to discharge the functions of a certain occupation12, typically certified via work-based assessed national vocational qualifications – NVQs).
- Transferable skills (literacy and numeracy) - key skills / functional skills.
- A module on employment rights and responsibilities.
  (Verbatim from Data Service, DS/SFR15 (June 2012))

Within each framework may be different 'pathways', which disaggregate the framework into individual components and levels of study, i.e., what skills and qualifications are required at Intermediate Level Apprenticeships (Level 2), Advanced Level Apprenticeships (Level 3) or Higher Apprenticeships (Level 4). Table 9 provides a snapshot of the frameworks and pathways offered by CC Skills and Skillsmart Retail:

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[12] Using the relevant National Occupational Standards

Table 9: Apprenticeship frameworks by sector and level.

CC Skills			Skillsmart Retail		
Framework Title	Framework Code	Pathway Levels	Framework Title	Framework Code	Pathway Levels
Cultural & Heritage Venue Operations	FR00802	L2 & 3	Retail	FR01370	L2 & 3
Design	FR00538	L2 & 3	Funeral Operations and Services	FR01657	L2 & 3
Jewellery, Silversmithing & Allied Trades	FR01149	L2 & 3			
Music Business	FR00631	L2 & 3			
Community Arts	FR00627	L2 & 3			
Costume & Wardrobe	FR00632	L2 & 3			
Technical Theatre	FR00994	L2 & 3			
Live Events & Promotions	FR00990	L2 & 3			

Source: Alliance of Sector Skills Councils website: 'Apprenticeship Frameworks Online'

No Higher Apprenticeship frameworks currently operate under these SSCs, although Creative and Cultural Skills is in the process of developing a Higher Apprenticeship pathway for inclusion in the 'Design' framework (Alliance of Sector Skills Councils, Apprenticeship Frameworks Online, July 2012).

'Apprenticeship Training Agencies' and 'Group Training Associations'

Like NSAs, another new set of actors in England's apprenticeship system are Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs). The NAS defines ATAs in the following way:

> An ATA is a business whose core function is the employment and development of apprentices. Under the model the apprentice will be hired out to host employers who provide employment key to the Apprenticeship. Training will be delivered by a Skills Funding Agency (the Agency) contracted training provider. (NAS, 2012a)

Coming out of a pilot project of ten initial ATAs established in the first round of government funding (there have been four subsequent rounds of funding under a competitive tendering scheme: NAS, 2011b:2), January 2012 saw the establishment of an umbrella organisation, the Confederation of Apprenticeship Training Agencies (COATA), which currently has eleven members. ATAs have had a mixed reception;

some see the benefits of the model, while others (i.e. unions) have been critical about the effect of what are essentially apprenticeship-focused employment agencies (TUC, 2010; Grindrod and Murray, 2011). Whereas ATAs were created specifically by the NAS, GTAs have been operating since the Industrial Training Act 1964 (ALP/Beyond Standards, 2009) and, along with ATAs, were seen by government as a way of increasing employer engagement in sectors with low take-up of apprenticeships, (NAS, 2009b). Like ATAs, GTAs have a member association, GTA England (see Unwin, 2012). GTAs have tended to focus on 'engineering, construction and manufacturing' (TUC, 2010:3). Unlike ATAs, they can be training providers.

Lastly, what *is* apprenticeship?

'Apprenticeship'

Definitions of apprenticeship in England are varying. Ryan (1998:289) observed that ''Apprenticeship' is notoriously difficult to define consistently across time and place.' Given the changes over time noted in this thesis, this definitional difficulty is understandable. A report from 1925-6 described apprenticeship in dualistic terms:

> [The] contractual relationship between an employer and a worker under which the employer is obliged to teach the worker ... and ... the worker is to serve the employer ... on stated terms (Hilton, 1928:9, cited in Liepmann, 1960:14 – Liepmann's edits).

Presumably, the 'stated terms' referred to here would have involved the unions, many of which were strongly involved in apprenticeships at the time Liepmann published her book. Similarly, apprenticeship has been described more recently as 'a set of reciprocal rights and obligations between employer and trainee which are set out in an agreement or contract' (Fuller and Unwin, 2009:405; Gospel and Fuller, 1998:5). In 2008, DIUS began expanding the apprenticeship relationship, saying that:

> Each Apprenticeship represents a compact between an employer, an Apprentice, sometimes a training provider and the state to deliver the right mix of work and training that will be productive for the employer, for the individual and for society. (DIUS, 2008:26)

The NAS varies the definition of apprenticeship according to the audience. For employers, apprenticeships are defined as:

> They are work-based training programmes designed around the needs of employers, which lead to national recognised qualifications. You can use Apprenticeships to train both new and existing employees. Funding is available to train apprentices. (NAS website, 'Employers: The basics)

For potential apprentices, however, the emphasis changes from 'training programmes designed around' employer needs, to:

> An Apprenticeship is a real job with training so you can earn while you learn and pick up recognised qualifications as you go. If you live in England, are over 16 and not in full time education you can apply. (NAS website: 'Apprentices/Q&A, 'What is an Apprenticeship?')

While variations occur, the important denominator in these definitions is the ability of apprenticeship to bridge employment and education, primarily involving the employer and apprentice, but changing over time. Yet I also assert that apprenticeship has a much larger role to play than the transference of occupational skills; it is simultaneously a device through which social and occupational regulation are enacted and it is also a conduit through which actors with varying interests interact.

I will return to this discussion on the role of apprenticeship later in this thesis in order to consider the national and sectoral apprenticeship numbers.

Data trends: Sectors and apprenticeships by numbers

Numbers of 'Starts' and 'Achievements' by sectors

When the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programme, the forerunner to the existing apprenticeship programme, was introduced in 1994-5, retail was one of the prototype MA sectors, while a framework for an 'Arts and Entertainment' MA, what might be located now under the sectoral umbrella of 'creative and cultural', began operating during the national expansion of 1995 (Lourie, 1996:11; Unwin and Wellington, 2001:11-2). Yet, both sectors have trodden different pathways in their years since the MA was introduced. The numbers of retail apprentices have increased significantly in recent years, although the majority of retail apprenticeships are for Intermediate Level frameworks. Despite the early frameworks, creative and cultural apprenticeship frameworks designed and published by CC Skills did not begin until 2008 and are gradually increasing in numbers, but, as Charts 1 and 2 show, they remain low numerically in comparison with retail. However, caution must be taken when reading the numerical data for apprenticeship 'Starts' as evidence shows there to have been many existing staff who have been registered as 'apprentices' and thereby 'converted' to apprenticeship status in order to comply with government targets and thereby attract government funding (Fuller and Unwin, 2004b; Learning and Skills Council, 2008:Ev77) although gaining data on the numbers of staff conversions is prevented as the SFA do not monitor such practices or collect the necessary data (Fuller and Unwin, 2012). Conversions were defined by the Learning and Skills Council as:

…an Apprentice who was employed on the last working day before starting, and a new recruit as an Apprentice who was not recorded as being employed on the last working day before starting. (Learning and Skills Council, 2008:Ev77)

The following two charts show the numbers of 'Starts' and 'Achievements' over time for apprenticeship frameworks and levels in the two sectors. Please note, however, that the timeline for Chart 3 (retail) begins from 2002/03 as this is when the earliest year for comparable published data, although as explained above, retail frameworks began operating at the inception of Modern Apprenticeships. Chart 4 (creative and cultural) presents frameworks for creative and cultural beginning from 2008 as this marks the year in which CC Skills' frameworks were first introduced.

Chart 3: Retail Sector Apprenticeship 'Starts' and 'Achievements' by Framework Level and Year - 2002/03-2011/12.
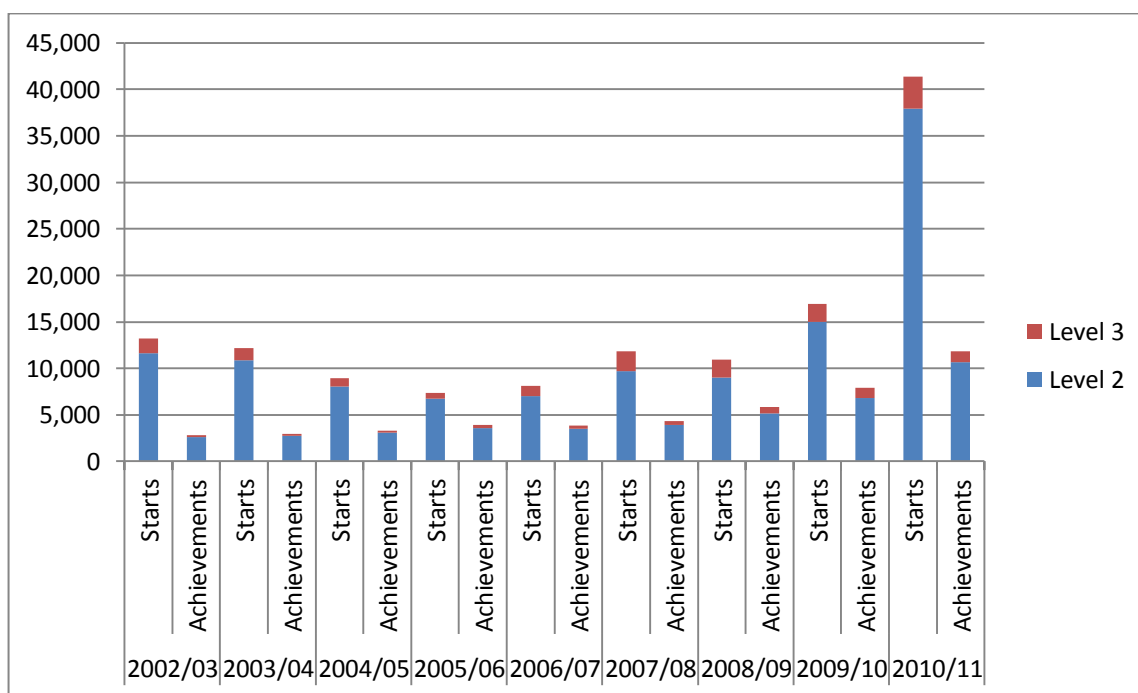
Source: Data Service, SFR October 2012: Apprenticeship Programme Starts by Sector Framework (2002/03 to 2010/11)

Chart 4: Creative and Cultural Sector Apprenticeship 'Starts' and 'Achievements' by Framework Level and Year - 2008/09-2011/12.
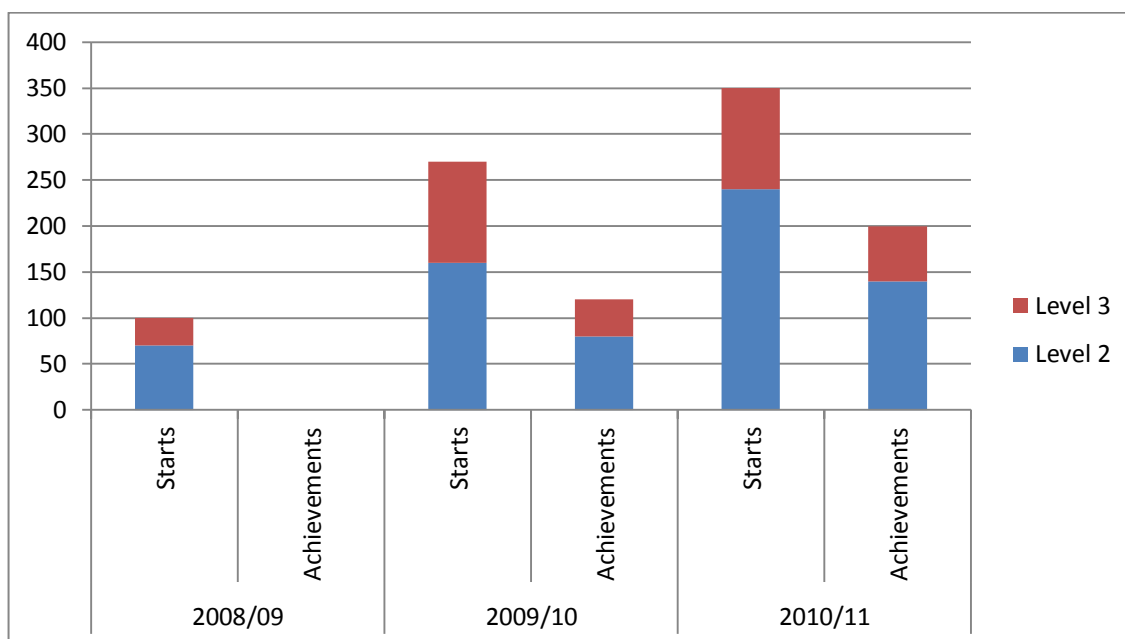
Source: Data Service, SFR October 2012: Apprenticeship Programme Starts by Sector Framework (2002/03 to 2010/11)

For retail, the number of Starts at Level 2 is shown to be hugely disproportionate to the Starts at Level 3. Also, while for logistical reasons Achievements cannot be directly compared to the Starts, it is interesting to note how Achievements have remained relatively low, although even here a steady rise can be traced in recent years. By contrast, Level 3 (Advanced) framework Starts for retail have remained relatively constant unlike Level 2 frameworks and once more another gradual increase can be seen since 2006/07. Chart 4, showing the creative and cultural sector frameworks, is on a different scale and timeline and yet the proportion of Level 2 to Level 3 Starts is much closer than was noted in retail, reflecting the higher numbers of Advanced Level frameworks in the sector.

Data Tables

The following tables (10 to 15) present figures for England and for the two sectors of retail and creative and cultural and contrast these numbers with those for other sectors.

Tables 10 to 15 display figures for apprenticeship 'Starts' and 'Achievements' for England in the year 2010/11, using data taken and calculated from the Government's quarterly Data Service Statistical First Release (SFR).

Tables 10 and 11 show the top ten sector frameworks by the number of 'Starts' and 'Achievements' for Level 2 (Intermediate) frameworks, while Tables 12 and 13 present

the same data for Level 3+ (Advanced and Higher) frameworks. Figures are also included for 'Creative Apprenticeships' (the collective term for all Creative and Cultural Skills' frameworks) and for retail when the sector is not within the top ten sectors. It is important to note that direct comparisons between 'Starts' and 'Achievements' are not possible due to the differing lengths of the apprenticeship frameworks; for the same reason, neither is it easy to calculate with any accuracy the numbers of apprentices progressing from one level to the next. The data is important, though, in order to understand how the sectors compare with other sectors.

Table 14 shows the same data for the two sectors and for all apprenticeships and also shows the figures for Higher Apprenticeship frameworks (Level 5 qualifications), of which there exists currently very few across all sectors and none at all in either retail or creative and cultural.

Table 15 presents the numbers of Starts and Achievements for Southampton. All data is for the year 2010/11.

The figures contained within the Data Service's statistics are rounded to the nearest ten and so small datasets, such as those given for Creative Apprenticeships, may differ between datasets for the same year.

Table 10: Top ten sectors in England by Apprenticeship Starts at Intermediate Level 2010-11.

Rank	Sector framework	L2 Starts	% of all L2 Starts
1	Customer Service	42,150	14.0
2	**Retail**	37,930	10.3
3	Health and Social Care	31,060	12.6
4	Business Administration	24,820	8.2
5	Hospitality and Catering	24,280	8.1
6	Management	15,430	5.1
7	Active Leisure and Learning	13,630	4.5
8	Construction	11,740	3.9
9	Hairdressing	11,610	3.9
10	Children's Care Learning and Development	10,990	3.6
	Creative Apprenticeships	240	0.08
	All sectors	**301,100**	**100**

Source: Data Service: MI Library – 'Apprenticeship Programme Starts by Sector Framework Code, Level and Gender (2002/03 to 20010/11)'

Table 11: Top ten sectors in England by apprenticeship Achievements at Intermediate Level 2010-11.

Rank	Sector	L2 Achievements	% of All L2 Achievements
1	Customer Service	17,140	13.0
2	Business Administration	13,920	10.6
3	Hospitality and Catering	11,890	9.0
4	**Retail**	10,640	8.1
5	Hairdressing	7,560	5.7
6	Health and Social Care	7,430	5.6
7	Children's Care Learning and Development	6,860	5.2
8	Active Leisure and Learning	6,410	4.9
9	Construction	6,360	4.8
10	Engineering	5,530	4.2
	Creative Apprenticeships	240	0.18
	All sectors	**131,700**	**100**

Source: Data Service: MI Library – 'Apprenticeship Programme Achievements by Sector Framework Code, Level and Gender (2002/03 to 20010/11)'

Table 12: Top ten Apprenticeships Starts at Advanced and Higher Levels 2010/2011.

Rank	Sector	L3+ Starts	% of All L3+ Starts
1	Health and Social Care	22,650	14.5
2	Children's Care Learning and Development	16,420	10.5
3	Management	14,350	9.2
4	Business Administration	14,080	9.0
5	Customer Service	11,820	7.6
6	IT and Telecoms Professionals (including ICT)	9,580	6.1
7	Engineering	8,650	5.5
8	Electrotechnical	5,540	3.5
9	Hospitality and Catering	5,530	3.5
10	Hairdressing	4,840	3.1
15	**Retail**	**3,470**	**2.2**
	Creative Apprenticeships	**110**	**0.07**
	All sectors	**156,100**	**100**

Source: Data Service MI Library: Apprenticeship Programme Starts by Sector Framework Code, Level and Gender (2002/03 to 2010/11); Apprenticeship Programme Starts by Sector Framework Code, Level and Gender (2002/3 to 2010/11)

Table 13: Top ten Apprenticeship Achievements at Advanced Level and above.

Rank	Sector	L3+ Achievements	% of All L3+ Achievements
1	Business Administration	6,660	9.7
2	Children's Care Learning and Development	6,050	8.8
3	IT and Telecoms Professionals (including ICT)	5,980	8.7
4	Engineering	5,740	8.4
5	Customer Service	4,840	7.1
6	Electrotechnical	4,160	6.1
7	Management	3,400	5.0
8	Health and Social Care	3,340	4.9
9	Vehicle Maintenance and Repair	3,040	4.4
10	Hairdressing	2,950	4.3
17	**Retail**	1,230	1.8
	Creative Apprenticeships	60	0.09
	All sectors	**68,500**	**100**

Source: Data Service: MI Library – 'Apprenticeship Programme Achievements by Sector Framework Code, Level and Gender (2002/ 03 to 20010/11)'

Table 14: Apprenticeship framework Starts and Achievements for Retail and Creative and Cultural 2010/2011.

Apprenticeship Starts				Apprenticeship Achievements			
Sector	Level	In figures	As % of sector total	Sector	Level	In figures	As % of sector total
All apprenticeships	L2	301,100	65.9	All apprenticeships	L2	131,700	65.8
	L3	153,800	33.6		L3	67,500	33.7
	L4	2,200	0.5		L4	1,000	0.5
Total		457,100		Total		200,200	
Retail apprenticeships	L2	37,900	91.6	Retail apprenticeships	L2	10,640	89.6
	L3	3,470	8.4		L3	1,230	10.4
	L4	N/A	N/A		L4	N/A	N/A
Total		41,410		Total		11,870	
Creative apprenticeships	L2	240	68.6	Creative apprenticeships	L2	140	70
	L3	110	31.4		L3	60	30
	L4	N/A	N/A		L4	N/A	N/A
Total		350	<0.1	Total		200	<0.1

Source: Data Service MI Library: Apprenticeship Programme Starts by Sector Framework Code, Level and Gender (2002/03 to 2010/11); Apprenticeship Programme Achievements by Sector Framework Code, Level and Gender (2002/3 to 2010/11)

Table 15: Data for Southampton (Unitary Authority).

Level		All Sectors	% of England	Retail	% of So'ton Retail	Creative	% of So'ton Creative
Intermediate	Starts	1170	0.4	60	5.1	-	N/A
	Achievements	500	0.4	30	6.0	-	N/A
Advanced	Starts	690	0.4	20	2.9	20	2.9
	Achievements	270	0.4	-	N/A	-	N/A

Source: Data Service, MI Library: 'Enrolments, Starts and Achievements by Home Postcode and Sector Lead Bodies 2010/11: Southampton'

Apprenticeships figures data analysis

Nine of the top ten sector frameworks for Intermediate Level Starts are in service or 'tertiary' sectors; only Construction appears from the 'secondary' sector. ('Primary'; 'secondary'; and 'tertiary' sectors are broadly defined as extraction of raw products from the earth;, manufacturing; and service sectors, respectively. Source: Oxford English Dictionary Online). A similar picture is presented in the Intermediate Level Achievements with the exception of the appearance of Engineering, which replaces Management. Retail ranks in second place for Intermediate Starts with 10.3 per cent of all Starts, yet slips to fourth in the Achievements at 8.1 per cent. The figures for Creative Apprenticeships are too low to attribute comment in this respect.

When the data for Advanced/Higher frameworks are considered, retail disappears from the top ten, ranking in fifteenth place for Starts (2.2 per cent of all Starts at Level 3+) and seventeenth place for Achievements (1.8 of all Starts for Level 3+). Although there remains a preponderance of tertiary sector frameworks for Advanced/Higher frameworks, representation by secondary sectors increase with engineering, IT, electro-technical and vehicle maintenance in the top ten for Advanced/Higher framework Achievements.

Of the two sectors, retail currently has by far the largest numbers of apprentices; given the disparity in the lengths of time the two sectors have been operating the apprenticeship programme, this disproportion is to be expected. Another reason that may explain this disparity has to do with the culture of the creative and cultural sector to recruit from graduate level workers, a point that was raised in the interviews (see Chapter 7). Retail, though, presents a 'bulge' of apprentices undertaking Intermediate Level frameworks, but very few, less than ten per cent, at Advanced Level. However, it is interesting that despite the low numbers, CC Skills has a much greater proportion of Advanced Apprenticeships and is in the process of developing a Higher Apprenticeship. What the data presented in the tables does is to show the differences in sectors and the ways in which sectors and occupations are organised, with some occupations, retail among them, designed around relatively low skills and low pay. It is too early to say how the creative apprenticeships will fare in this respect, but it would appear that there is an intention to go beyond the 'low skills' necessary for the subsectors and occupations, particularly in light of the developing pathway for Design.

Retail Apprenticeships

Skills levels for young people entering retail tend to be low for general retail work, a problem which has ramifications for training decisions made by employers, as this comment from Skillsmart Retail explains:

We would expect that Apprenticeships at level 2 and above would form part of this framework and therein lies one of the key problems with the Apprenticeship framework design for employers. It includes literacy and numeracy remedial learning for the 50% of [school] leavers who do not have good maths and English skills when they leave education and who quite often end up in entry level job roles such as those in retailing. We, and our employers, would propose that these functional literacy and numeracy skills must be in place by the time learners are 11 or 12 years old along with the softer employability skills. (Skillsmart Retail, 2010b:2)

The concern expressed by Skillsmart Retail was that the compulsory education system was failing to equip young people entering employment for the first time (as full-time workers), leaving the responsibility of training in basic qualifications for employers. The NAS sees retail as a particular growth sector apprenticeship in England (BIS Select Committee Report (2012), Vol. II, Ev203). As will be noted in Chapter 6, the retail industry considers Intermediate Apprenticeships to be 'the norm'; in which case, it is perhaps unsurprising that retail ranks as high as it does in Table 12. However, it was noted above and is again taken up in Chapter 7 that retail is a sector with a long-standing image problem resulting in many young people not seeing retailing as a career choice or a long-term profession. Indeed, in a report on the take-up of Advanced Apprenticeships in retail, Fuller et al (2010a:3) observed that retail is 'a sector where high staff turnover rates are linked to a lack of continuity in education and training provision'. On this basis, it would appear that there are challenges ahead for the retail sector given the current government's desire to see Advanced Level Apprenticeship becoming the norm and even more so for retail having a clear progression path into Higher Apprenticeships. Yet data to the end of 1997 for MA in England, when apprenticeships were all Level 3 programmes, showed the numbers of Retail MA 'Starts' placed the sector in third place at 14,763, with only 'Business Administration' (20,932) and 'Engineering Manufacturing' (18,545) above it[13]. This oddity shows that retail workers are capable of learning at level 3 and above, yet why the shift? Spielhofer and Sims (2004:545) proposed that the culture of modern retail, shared by both retailer employers and retail staff, results in short-term thinking and goals in terms of skill development, a point which was verified by some interviewees for this research (see Chapters 6 and 7). Such a culture does not sit well with the apprenticeship model and would certainly create barriers for employers to invest time and resources in Advanced Apprenticeships.

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[13] Figures obtained from the then Department for Education and Employment (January 1998) and kindly supplied by Professor Alison Fuller

Creative Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships in the sector are relatively new and as a result overall numbers remain low, although increases are observable. In comparison with the retail sector, there is a greater percentage of Creative Advanced Apprenticeships: 43 per cent of frameworks are positioned as Level 3 qualifications compared with 8.4 per cent in retail. The Advanced Frameworks may be a reflection of the sector's historical reliance on recruiting graduates for non-graduate jobs (Guile, 2006). Graduate-level workers are said to work for free to gain entry into the sector and then progress into paid employment after a short time, leading to problems of staff retention and recurrent recruitment drives for employers (Tamblin, no date).

In the Southampton and south coast region, a pilot programme of apprenticeships in the cultural sector using two CC Skills frameworks through the NSA for CC Skills began operating in July 2012 through a network of employers in the Solent area. Called the 'Creative Apprenticeship Programme', the pilot is using two frameworks: 'Technical Theatre' and 'Community Arts Administration/Management'. The programme is being piloted through collaboration between regional councils and a national youth arts development agency.

The chapter will now discuss some of the broader issues to have come out of the chapter.

Chapter discussion

This chapter has provided contextual data to show how the current organisations have grown and changed in recent years to the point where there can clearly be seen a market in the provision of government-supported apprenticeships, resulting in large amounts of public funds being channelled through some organisations. Indeed, it is startling to consider that a) McDonald's, a multinational fast food chain, was in receipt of greater funding in 2011/12 through its direct contract with the SFA than the combined core funding the UKCES awarded to the two SSCs for the two year period from 2009/10 to 2010/11 and b) that Elmfield Training received more in one year (1010/11) than the combined core funding provided to the total number of SSCs for that year. Power, it was suggested in Chapter 3, is multidirectional. These large organisations are able to use considerable power to contract directly – and legally – with the SFA. The government is able to use its power and financial resources to bring this large organisation within the apprenticeship programme and hence the broader apprenticeship system. The examples of McDonald's and Elmfield Training are given only for the reasons set out in this paragraph; I have not analysed either company's training programmes and no interviews have been conducted with either company

(however, see James, 2010 for a discussion of McDonald's and apprenticeship funding). It does, though, show the importance of funding in the expansion of the apprenticeship programme. Adopting a *governmentality* approach to this example provides additional insights into the activities of government as working through the population to achieve its objectives. In this case, McDonald's and other large retailers and businesses, SSCs, NSAs, ATAs, the NAS, the SFA and many others besides can be understood as agents of government apprenticeship policy due to their being in receipt of public funding (although it is unlikely they see themselves in this way). With the exception of the two government agencies (the NAS and the SFA), these actors – including the individuals working in them – are not being overtly forced to enter the apprenticeship programme, but are instead incentivised by funding arrangements and marketing techniques/profile raising to do so. The effect is that government's reach extends out of Whitehall and into society not through genuine partnerships but partnerships based, in this instance, on the availability of government funding. How the actors then behave will depend on their particular sector/subsector/occupational/business cultures, circumstances, beliefs and related issues. The commodification of apprenticeship is once more present and risk distancing employment from appropriate levels of education.

Another aspect considered here has been the growth and reach of new organisations in recent years and the ramifications for the apprenticeship system. Indeed, the brief histories given in this chapter and in Chapter 2 show that many organisational actors have come and gone over the years; those that have a longer lifespan, even the ten years in which SSCs have been around, have undergone transformations. Change is of course important to the survival of any organisation; just as societies change, so too do the industries and the organisations within them. Indeed, it has been the plasticity of institutional apprenticeships over the centuries that have enabled this model of learning to reach into the twenty-first century. Yet the recent modifications seem to have been government orchestrated, either through funding streams or through legislation or even reflecting political ideologies rather than occurring organically. So along with increases in the numbers of apprentices has been increased interest from different types of organisations, new and existing, as new ways are sought to reach employers and apprentices. Yet, organisations as actors in the apprenticeship and vocational skills system in England have often tended to be transitory; existing for periods of time before being replaced by other actors, depending on the political and economic zeitgeist, political ideology and strategy and/or national and international employment profiles and training needs. What this means for vocational skills is there seems little time to embed processes into workplace cultures before they are revised or removed altogether and provides another addition to the UK's 'troubled history of VET' (Fuller and Unwin, 2011:191).

This chapter also provides some insight into the two sectors, showing their different perspectives and cultures and highlighting the peculiarities of both. The corollary of this sectoral focus is that government-support apprenticeships, in order to reach across the sectors, need sufficient flexibility – whilst maintaining sufficient minimum levels of standards – to deal with the needs of two very different sectors. Indeed, for the creative and cultural sector, this includes some very different subsectors and occupations, some of which have tended to reject the notion of apprenticeship as a robust training model, preferring instead to concentrate on the graduate employees, internships and unpaid work.

The figures detailing the numbers of apprenticeship Starts show that, numerically speaking, retail frameworks have become one of the most popular apprenticeship frameworks. Creative and cultural apprenticeships lie at the opposite end of the continuum, being a relatively recent entry into the apprenticeship programme, despite 'apprenticeships' in some subsectors of what is now called 'creative and cultural' having histories dating back centuries (Tamblin, no date). On first glance, the numbers for retail appear to be impressive, yet the clustering of frameworks around Level 2 (Intermediate) frameworks suggests that, as far as apprenticeship is concerned, it is being viewed as an expedient model of learning with few opportunities for progression or staff development into Advanced Frameworks. This aspect of the apprenticeship programme and more are considered further in Chapter 7. Apprenticeship numbers are still relatively small when compared with undergraduates entering universities in England, with a ratio of 1:0.41 undergraduates to apprentices starting full-time courses in England for 2010-11, but estimates show that the figures for apprenticeships continue to rise (sources: Higher Education Statistics Authority, SFR169); Data Service, DS/SFR16).

This current phenomenon of expansion in apprenticeship numbers is unsurprising by itself. Governments of all parties in recent years appear to have set great faith in the expansion of the numbers of any programme they introduce and the statistical data does provide a useful account of the shape and size of the programme, leading to concerns that too little thought has been given to the consistency of quality throughout the programme:

> All too often, apprenticeship completion rates are used as a proxy for quality. While completion is an important indicator, this overlooks other crucial aspects of the training experience, including: the duration of the apprenticeship; the amount of time spent training; and the opportunity to progress to further training or employment. (Grindrod and Murray, 2011:77)

The result is that:

> A combination of factors has resulted in a situation where we have everything from highly innovative, world-beating apprenticeships to programmes we should be ashamed of. Apprenticeship has become all things to all people. (Fuller and Unwin, 2011:35)

Statistical data

Like the quality of the apprenticeship frameworks available, so too is there variability in the quality in the provision of statistical data. What data there are show the levels of expansion of apprenticeship in England in recent years; expansion within sectors and across sectors. Easily accessible data available to researchers has improved in recent years (see following paragraph), yet there remain problem areas. For example, it seems an anomaly that neither the Data Service nor the NAS publish statistics on the numbers of employers with apprentices in England. Two confusing publications report that: a) the 'NAS supported 7,000 employers generating 80,000 Apprenticeships in 2010/11' (NAS, 2012d) and b) a diagram of the 'Key organisations involved in the apprenticeship system' (BIS, 2012c:10) estimated there to be 'Approximately 80,000 employers', although no source is provided for this statistic[14]. Telephone and email discussions with the NAS offices revealed that there are difficulties in the way data are collected which prevent the NAS from making claims about the numbers of employers registered. However, they are now able to estimate the numbers of 'workplaces', rather than employers (due to the 'multi-site nature' of some large employers). The data for 'workplaces' for 2010/11 was 177,300, of which there were 400 in the creative and cultural sector and 14,800 in retail.

What statistical data is published is made available via the Data Service, the independent yet publically funded body (via the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) which publishes the quarterly statistical data on the government-supported apprenticeship programme. Since this research began in 2009, improvements have been made in the availability of numerical data. The Data Service did make available data for cross-tabulation via the 'MI Library', although this has now been replaced by the 'FE Data Library' (http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/Statistics/fe_data_library/ - Accessed 25/03/2013), an online resource permitting some cross-tabulation of datasets. Availability of data remain limited to a few datasets and so provide little opportunity for detailed analysis, a concern expressed more generally of the English data availability in a recent Equality and Human Rights Commission Triennial Review

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[14] The report of the BIS Select Committee has been published as this thesis is reaching completion and consequently there is insufficient time to analyse its findings beyond this estimate

into Education and Lifelong Learning (Fuller and Davey, 2010). One wonders whether governments are wary of such information being in the public domain or that within the data there sits information that they do not want analysed. Again, Chapter 7, in setting out the definitions actors attribute to apprenticeship, provides a further insight into this issue. Either way, the problems of accessing data is an issue of considerable importance. With this discussion of statistical data in mind, it is worth considering the following:

> Statistics – whether crime rates or opinion polls – have an ideological function: they appear to *ground* free floating and controversial impressions in the hard, incontrovertible soil of numbers. Both the media and the public have enormous respect for 'the facts' – *hard facts*. And there is no hard fact so 'hard' as a number – unless it is the percentage difference between two numbers (Hall et al, 1978:9 – original emphasis).

The authors then went on to point out that governments make use of numbers to support their policies (Hall et al, 1978:10-11), an observation as relevant today as it was thirty-give years ago. The problem is that it becomes easy to accept the headline figures and to take from them that apprenticeships are a success. Added to the presentation of statistics as proof of the government's success in driving forward the apprenticeship system is the often parroted (by government) figures that government is supporting apprenticeships with 'up to £250 million' (BIS, 2010b:7). The funding was reallocated from the previous Train to Gain budget, which was shut soon after the Coalition Government took office. The 'up to' was soon omitted and the figure became simply '£250 million' (Hayes, 2010b). More recently, it was announced that:

> To encourage thousands of small firms that don't currently hire apprentices to take on a young apprentice aged 16 to 24, the Government will offer employers with up to 50 employees an incentive payment of up to £1,500. This will support up to 20,000 new apprenticeships in 2012/13. (BIS, 2011c)

It will be interesting to note the effect this direct funding for employers has on apprenticeship rates and SME participation. However, the point to be made here is that the allocation of government budgets and rapid increases in numbers is being equated to success (Stasz, 2011; Grindrod and Murray, 2011). Such limited data and the way it is used can easily be construed as devices in the toolbox of government. Foucault argued that data used in this way has been a tool of governments reaching back to the Enlightenment, the period attributed to the rise of '*governmentality*' (Foucault, 1978). Yet, data, and the withholding and non-collection of data, remain problematic for the apprenticeship programme if readily available data is not shared beyond government.

And what effect do all the matters raised in this chapter have on apprenticeship? Writing in 1960, Liepmann offered this thought:

> Apprenticeship is [...] a matter between two parties and, on the face of it, consists of two elements, the reciprocal obligations between the employer and his [sic] apprentice. The apprenticeship system, however, has a third element, the function of regulating entry into the skilled occupations; and it involves trade unions as a third party. Hence, also, individual apprenticeship contains a third element, namely the promise of admission to a protected trade. (Liepmann, 1960:14)

The first elements continue to be relevant today for, on the face of it the employer-apprentice relationship remains central to the current apprenticeship system. However, the current apprenticeship system does indeed have 'a third element' in its present phase, but today it is not the unions that take this place, although they are present, but central government. Yet even here the picture is not clear, for alongside the growing influence of government has been the emergence of markets, the effects of which will be discussed in the final chapter.

The next chapter will set out the research methods employed in this thesis.

Chapter 5

Lighting the stage

Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the research methods employed in conducting the research on which this thesis is based. In analysing the methods, similarities with the research topic are exposed, most notably the power of actors to conform and/or to dissent with the process of conducting the research. Whilst the former was more evident, there were particular instances in which participants asserted their power to reject, or at least raise considerable barriers to the research. Qualitative methodologies were employed throughout most of the research process and incorporated primary empirical research via semi-structured interviews with participants from a range of organisations involved at different levels of the apprenticeship programme in England; from policy-makers to micro-employers. Additionally, by including two sector-based case studies, secondary research was conducted to provide the basis for the interviews and to set out the background to the research, incorporating historical data.

This chapter explores the methods used and discusses among other things, the decision to use qualitative interviews, the challenges of identifying, contacting and inviting potential organisations to participate in the research, problems that arose during the interviews, the ethical issues involved and how the analysis was conducted. As a point of note, the terms 'qualitative interviews' and 'semi-structured interviews' are used interchangeably in this thesis, following Mason (2002:62) in defining qualitative interviewing to denote 'in-depth, semi-structured or loosely structured forms of interviewing'.

What will be shown in this chapter is that making decisions regarding research design is an inherent part of the research process and is deeply embedded in every stage of the work. Indeed, research methods necessarily involve the active engagement of the researcher with the research process, for research is not static; neither is the research process. Instead, methodological decisions are a constant feature of conducting research, from the initial event that triggers the research through to the research design and the conduct of the fieldwork and then onto the analysis and conclusions.

The following section discusses the reasons behind the decision to use qualitative interviews and explains the processes involved in the sample selection through to the conduct of the interviews.

Qualitative Interviews: Motives, aims and processes

Qualitative interviews have been used to reveal the experiences and thoughts of actors within the system, but who act in different capacities and therefore have different relationships *with* and perspectives *of* apprenticeship. As noted in the opening chapter, the research attention and aims focused initially on the roles of the foreground actors as shown in the Apprenticeship Triquetra of Actors, but via the Apprenticeship Triquetra this view revealed a hidden and large number of 'background' agents in the apprenticeship programme that enable the programme to work. It is the relationship and work of these visible and invisible actors that have become the focus of this thesis; looking at and questioning their institutional and individual place in the programme and in doing so creating a new perspective from which to understand the modern apprenticeship programme, exposing its strengths and weaknesses.

The decision to use semi-structured interviews was taken firstly to reflect the multi-perspective nature of the research matter; i.e. analysing the present apprenticeship programme through different lenses of history, sectors, power and networks; and secondly, in order to gain insights into the particular aims of the different actors, allowing participants to explain their work and involvement in the apprenticeship programme. Whilst many useful documents are published online that offer insights into the organisations' activities, these will invariably present a partial view.

Sample selection

An organisational chart was created in the early months of the research in 2009 (see Figure 9), which set out the 'landscape' as it appeared at that stage of the research, showing the various links between the government departments and the apprentices. The organisational chart also provided an initial sampling frame from which the population sample was drawn (Mason, 2002:124; De Vaus, 2002:70) and from which to approach potential participants. The aim was to draw up a strategic sample of organisations within the apprenticeship system, consisting of key informants rather than seeking to be representative of the apprenticeship system as a whole. However, as already stated, new organisations were being created that were highly relevant to the thesis, resulting in changes to the apprenticeship 'population' during the period in which the research was conducted. Therefore, they were added to the sample as the research developed and I became aware of new actors entering the system (e.g. Apprenticeship Training Agencies) or I simply became aware of actors (e.g. civil servants). Either way, it is important for researchers to be able to respond positively to changes to the sample population in the course of the research, 'redesigning the study as often as necessary to pursue these new directions' (Rubin and Rubin, 2005:70)

while being faithful to the research 'problem'. Figures 10 to 13 at the end of Chapter 7 of this thesis offer more complex accounts of this same landscape, separated by sector.

There are two points worth noting of Figure 9 (below). The first point to draw attention to are the question marks attached to particular actors, such as Parliamentary Select Committees and trade unions. These question marks signified the unknown role of these actors and therefore demonstrate the early nature of the research and, as the rest of the thesis shows, how the research has progressed.

Furthermore, the research participants include national and local organisations, again making representation of the population difficult to achieve through the strategic sampling methods employed in this research (Mason, 2002:123). Of course, in drawing up the list of organisations to approach, I have tried to get the views of a range of participants to include government departments and agencies; quasi-public and private representative bodies; private employers, large and small; representative organisations; local colleges; training providers; and a union. The objectives of including this wide assortment of participants were two-fold. First, it exposed the complex array of actors involved in apprenticeships. Secondly, the sample elicited the views of organisations working at different levels within the programme; some are deeply involved in the 'business' of apprenticeships, providing structural services to enable the apprenticeship programme to operate (e.g. qualification awarding bodies provide the awards; SSCs provide the frameworks), while others were employers considering employing apprentices for the first time.

Figure 9: Pre-interview organisational chart of the apprenticeship system (2009)

<u>**Government Cabinet Office**</u>

Department for Business Innovation and Skills ⟷ Treasury ⟷ **Department for Education**

Secretary of state: Rt Hon Dr Vincent Cable, MP

Minister of state: Rt Hon David Willetts, MP

Secretary of state: Rt Hon Michael Gove, MP

Minister of state for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning (BIS) ⟷ Minister of state at the Department for Education

John Hayes, MP (Dual Role in BIS & DfE)

House of Lords Select Committees?

House of Commons Select Committees?

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of state

BIS/Culture, Communications and Creative Industries

The Hon Ed Vaizey MP

<u>**Executive Agencies and Stakeholders**</u> (continued on next page)

Executive Agencies and Stakeholders

Skills Funding Agency

UK Commission for Employment and Skills

National Apprenticeship Service (from August 2010, incorporating the **National Employer Service**)

Alliance of Sector Skills Councils

Creative and Cultural Skills   **Skillset**   **Skillsmart Retail**[15]

[Unions?]

National Skills Academy[16] **Creative and Cultural**
Retail

National Skills Academy

Employers   **Training Providers** (Public and Private)
(National & Local)   **Association of Learning Providers**[17] (National Association)
        ALP South East (Regional)
        ALPHI (ALP Hants & IoW) (Local)
        Group Training Associations (GTA[18]**)**
        Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATA[19]**)**
Apprentices   **Qualification awarding bodies**

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[15] 3 examples refer to those relevant to the research

[16] NSAs are employer-led sectoral training centres. In 2009 there were 14 such centres, although the intention is to create NSAs in each sector. NSAs appear to be linked to the relevant SSC.

[17] The ALP is Funded by membership subscription

[18] GTAs are not-for-profit organisations focusing on encouraging training amongst employers, especially in the traditional industries

[19] ATAs employ and manage apprentices, but place them with businesses. They may also provide training advice and support

In total, twenty-four key informants participated in twenty-one interviews. The following table provides a summary of the participating organisations:

Table 16: Summary of participating organisations

Description of participant organisation	No. of interviews conducted	Geographical base and scope: Local, Regional or National
Central government unit	1	National
Government agency	2	1 x National/1 x Regional
Qualification awarding body	1	National
College	2	Local
Private training provider	2	National
Sector Skills Council	1	National
National Skills Academy	2	1 x National/1 x Local
Theatre	1	Local
Museum	1	Local
Art gallery	1	Local
Apprenticeship Training Agency	1	Regional
Lobby group	2	National
Arts charity	1	National
Consultant	2	Local
Union	1	National

The richness of the data gained from the interviews provides striking insights from a variety of positions within the English apprenticeship system and hence provides valuable additional material to the arguments and evidence presented in earlier chapters. An important point to make here is that the interviews took place over sixteen months, a period of time in which there were many changes in England's apprenticeship programme including the pilots for Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs) (see Chapter 4). During this time three relevant issues arose which should be explained:

- When the initial interviews took place, the Coalition Government had only recently taken office; the effects of the incoming Conservative-led Coalition Government's budget reductions had only just begun and many of the organisations have since

changed as a result. While this could be problematic for the data, in that what was said by someone in an early interview would not necessarily apply if the same interview was conducted at the end of the fieldwork, it is also evidence of the constantly shifting nature of apprenticeship policies, practices and actors in the system. As will be explained in this thesis, with each new change made by government departments and the government itself to the apprenticeship programme, new markets are being created as businesses move in to take up work previously undertaken by government or which government had been unable to fulfil (see chapters 6 & 7).

- Secondly, with one exception, all of the interviewees had long experiences in their fields and/or sectors/businesses. For fifteen of the twenty-four interviewees, apprenticeship was a 'known' quantity; for the remaining interviewees it had necessitated a period of learning. Eleven organisations were national in their scope, two were regional and the remaining six were local. All of the national bodies represented were in the 'known' category; while only three of the ten local organisations could be classed as such. Seven of the participating organisations had submitted written evidence to the aforementioned 2012 BIS Select Committee Inquiry into apprenticeships. Perhaps more importantly, fourteen organisations did not submit evidence to the Inquiry.

- Nine participating organisations were from the creative and cultural sector; three were from retail; and a further nine were from neither or covered both sectors. The dearth of retail participants was both unintentional and a source of frustration. Indeed, attempts were made to include more retailers into the fieldwork, with eight further retail organisations being approached, but either they decided not to participate or they did not respond. On more than one occasion, several attempts to contact potential participants were made, including one recommendation from another interviewee. At times, it even appeared as if some organisations were willing to contribute to the research, but then withdrew as permissions were sought and refused from people higher up the management structure. While nothing should be surmised from their non-participation, a notable difference between the retail and creative and cultural sectors is that retail operates in a competitive environment in which retailers compete with each other for custom and small retailers compete with large, sometimes multinational enterprises, adding the pressures of globalisation to an already mixed retail environment (Bozkurt and Grugulis, 2011:3). By contrast, many subsectors within the creative and cultural sector, particularly the arts, work largely in a milieu of cooperation and partnerships in order to attract funding for projects. It may be that the competition between retailers means that they are more guarded about their training than those organisations based in the arts. There had also been some

poor publicity on the matter of short-duration apprenticeships and some retailers have been criticised in this regard, necessitating the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) to issue a press release about short-term retail apprenticeships (NAS, November 08, 2011). It may be this matter also affected their decisions. Again, this is only speculation, but worth considering nonetheless.

First contacts

Gaining access to potential participants was approached and negotiated on a case-by-case basis as there was no single 'gatekeeper' through which to access a pool of participants. The closest 'gatekeeper' in this respect, by which I mean people or organisations who 'control access to […] information which the researcher seeks' (May, 1997:54), was a local employers' forum, in principle a Group Training Association (GTA) if not in practice (see Unwin, 2012, for a detailed explanation of the role of GTAs in England. See also below and also Chapters 4, 6 and 7 of this thesis). Even with this forum, I was still required to network and approach people individually.

My experience has been that in most cases access was granted by the very individual I wished to interview, while on three occasions a meeting or request was forwarded to a single individual elsewhere in the organisation. Interviews were therefore the result of a process of relationship building (McDonald et al, 2009:121), requiring gaining the trust of the first individual before being granted access to the second. Accordingly, prior to contacting a potential participant, internet research was conducted to gain valuable 'background knowledge' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995:45) about the person, the company and their organisation's approach to apprenticeship and training. Organisation websites provided a great deal of background information about the company and many sites included some degree of information about their staff and even contact details. In such circumstances, selecting an appropriate member of staff was relatively easy. The process of generating *background knowledge* to shape the questions and respond to answers (sometimes with further questions) in this way helped to engender confidence in the interviewee, as expressed in the richness of the data, a selection of which is presented in Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis. As Holstein and Gubrium (1995:45) noted:

> By drawing on background knowledge, active interviewers can make their research more productive, incorporating indigenous interpretive resources, perspectives, and landmarks into their inquiries.

Furthermore, the authors stated that such knowledge '[bridges] the concrete and abstract' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995:45). Yet there were also two occasions when I had to contact the organisation 'blind' and without the support of the background

information (one of which, interestingly, was a government unit, whilst the second was a private training provider). Of these two 'blind' contacts, the first resulted in an interview; the other did not.

Techniques of introduction

Three techniques of introduction have been employed at various times and with varying degrees of success or failure in negotiating entry to a potential interview: telephone calls; email; and 'in person', while there have also been times when a combination of methods has been used. In these circumstances, an email might have led to a phone conversation or interview; at other times, a phone conversation or in person meeting has been followed up with an email.

Telephone introductions

In the early days of the fieldwork, the opening contact was made largely by phone, a technique which took a lot of personal preparation; the thought of 'cold calling' people and the idea that I might be intruding on their work time was an unattractive one. However, this aspect became easier with time and as more phone calls were made, the less stressful an event it was and my explanation became more concise. However, reaching individuals to request their participation in the research has not always been easy or straightforward; often voice mail was reached and messages were left. When doing so, the most productive approach seemed to be keeping the information to a minimum, giving only my name and telephone number and possibly, although not always, a brief message to the effect that 'I'm a PhD researcher at the School of Education, University of Southampton and I wish to discuss apprenticeships with you'.

When I was able to reach people by telephone, the ensuing conversations provided a way of gaining additional background information and also piloting some initial questions. The difficulties presented by the wide-ranging informants meant that conventional pilot interviews were not a realistic option on the basis that they might be a 'wasted opportunity' to gain access to key informants. The phone conversations thereby presented the opportunity to test a few questions and approaches. Indeed, the first interview I successfully negotiated was with a member of the NAS; a government agency I considered too important to treat in any way other than a serious and fully fledged interview. Some of the phone calls were converted into formal interviews; others ended there. On the occasions when telephone contact seemed as if it might be problematic (for example, if I thought an organisation might be less interested if I phoned or if an individual was difficult to get hold of), email was used.

Email introductions

Email has the benefit of giving both parties – researcher and potential participant – the opportunity to reflect on the issue, but there are problems with using emails as methods of introduction. Non-response to emails, for example, can leave the researcher wondering about the lack of response, although the reason may be that the recipient is away from their office; or they did not receive the email; or they have read and decided they do not wish to participate. Not knowing the reason for the lack of response can be frustrating and for the inexperienced researcher can result in not following up on potential leads.

Email has several advantages though. The first, noted above, is thinking time. Email has also been used to follow-up leads made via telephone calls, while a number of successful contacts began through an initial email. As the research developed, this method has certainly resulted in success in accessing key informants in larger companies, particularly as the research has developed a more definite objective, i.e. to look at the apprenticeship programme from the point of those working in it. An example of a typical email introduction can be found in Appendix B. Each email was then 'tailored' (see below) to the particular organisation: e.g. if the business of the organisation was retail, then retail would feature more prominently and vice versa for creative and cultural. In instances where no sector was prominent, such as the Government's Apprenticeship Unit, then the email emphasised the apprenticeship programme.

The third method for gaining access was 'in person' introductions.

'In person' introductions

'In person' introductions were largely opportunistic in as much as they took place following a chance meeting with a potential participant at an event such as a conference or, as was the case with establishing contact with one group of interviewees, employer networking events (Chapter 6 provides an explanation of this 'group'). These experiences chime with an important issue noted by Townsend and Burgess (2009:3) and one that is not possible to anticipate when drawing up the research strategy, which was 'the role of serendipity in research: being in the right place at the right time, and/or talking to the right person.' However, sometimes it would seem that 'serendipity' is the result of hard work spent researching and developing knowledge and also the work of 'getting out there' by attending conferences and other networking events. At one national conference on the topic of apprenticeships, I was able to approach two senior figures within separate organisations: both seemed initially promising, although, despite the auspicious starts,

only one interview came to fruition; the other individual directed my email requests to the office manager and the trail went silent, even following subsequent attempts to reach them by phone.

This blend of *serendipity* and hard work was also apparent when, by chance, I discovered through an online search the inaugural meeting of a local area creative industries employers' networking forum was to be held in the city of Southampton in which a portion of this research is based. I contacted them, via email, and asked if I could sit in on the meeting. The organisers invited me to join them and I attended five meetings spread over 18 months. Although I hoped that I might be able to develop some contacts through the network, I did not foresee the extent of the contacts I would be introduced to. The organisers were 'gatekeepers' (Bryman, 2004:518) only in the minimal sense, for once I was invited to the meetings, I was free to network and discuss with other members freely and at no time did they attempt to hinder or control access to potential participants. I was therefore able to use the access to arrange and conduct six interviews. The networking events have also given rise to a pilot apprenticeship scheme for creative employers, the first wave of which began in July 2012. Again, this extra, seemingly serendipitous, event came about from a lot of background work and did not just 'happen'. One final point: although this subsection discusses 'in person' introductions, not all of these networking interviews came from in person discussions; four of them were the result of 'in person' requests, while the other two came from emails to people on the attendance list, thereby using the network as a 'way in'.

Ethical research

Prior to the fieldwork, clearance was requested from the University's Research Governance Office (RGO) and was given in August 2010 with only one slight amendment to the Informed Consent Form, which entailed asking participants to initial each section to assist against fabrication, rather than use 'tick boxes'. The forms were amended and the fieldwork began.

When interviews had been arranged by phone, an email detailing the date, time and place of the interview was sent to the participant, together with a copy of the Participant Information Document (Appendix C). Where initial approaches were made by email, the Participant Information Document was attached to the original email.

Prior to beginning each interview, the participants were asked to read and sign the Consent Form (Appendix D). It was stressed before beginning each interview that the participant had a right to withdraw their support for the research at any stage, in addition to this point being made clear on the Consent Form. This right was

encapsulated in one case when, at an interview involving two participants, the lead participant requested that he might have the document reviewed by the 'legal department' before signing it, explaining that the forms would be sent as email attachments. Having no option in this matter, we were, after all, about to discuss potentially commercially sensitive information, I agreed and the interview went ahead. It then took a further six weeks and a few gentle email requests before the signed forms were returned, just at the time when I concluded that I would have to 'write off' this particular interview and so I have been able to use the data gained from the interview. The case highlights just one of any number of problems for researchers and so while it was not 'resistance' in the sense of 'a participant's reluctance to discuss, open up or be forthcoming (such as during an interview) after access has already been granted' (McDonald et al, 2009:121), the interview was essentially held in stasis until the signed forms were received. This aspect of qualitative research represents the shifting sands of power in the research process; so while the researcher is able to direct the interview discussion, the participant is able to exert their own forms of control over the process, with the ultimate power being the complete withdrawal from the research. This example also provides an insight into the agency that actors are able to express within the conduct of the apprenticeship programme.

There is a further issue which comes out of this experience and that is that in all cases, no pressure has been exerted on my part to try and coerce potential participants to participate in the research. Two interviewees, however, did participate by request of a more senior member of staff of that organisation. On both occasions it was different offices of the same organisation: one participant was an agency Director; the other a Manager. However, while both interviews were worthwhile and productive and the same steps were taken to ensure that these participants were aware of the research objectives and their right to withdraw, there was no guarantee that they did not receive internal pressure to participate in the research against their will. I can only go on the fact that the interviews were good natured and provided valuable data. The issue of 'consent' is therefore a problem for the conduct of qualitative interviews which demonstrates the complex nature of what, on the face of it, appears a relatively straightforward process (Mason, 2002:81).

Ethical considerations did not end with gaining access to and carrying out the fieldwork; they extended to how the data are used and presented in the thesis and subsequent publications. Protecting the identity of the participants has been crucial; but so too has been ensuring that their words are not used out of context or misrepresented. This is easy to say, however, but vigilance has been taken to ensure that the information is not misused or the participant inadvertently becomes

identifiable. Every effort has been taken in order that participants' views are not used inappropriately.

Data collection and management – the 'housekeeping'

All participants were provided with a Participant Information Document outlining the research aims and providing details about the research process (e.g. expected length of the interview, interview format, right to withdraw.). In most cases this document was provided in advance of the interview, although there were two occasions when this was not the case and the interviewee read the document prior to signing the Participant Consent Form. With one notable exception (the case mentioned above in which receipt of the Forms was delayed by six weeks), the Consent Forms were signed and returned before proceeding with the interview.

All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. The electronic file was then transferred onto secure server files and the original recording deleted from the recorder. The interview was then transcribed by myself, first with the original names and then as a separate anonymised document to protect the participants' identities and from which quotes could be used.

Interview preparation and creation of the interview schedule

It has been explained that the research explores a wide range of public and private organisations, large and small, national and local, employers, training providers and many other 'invisible' businesses that operate in the background. Yet, having such a wide field of actors presents methodological problems for data collection and analysis, as each interview required fresh preparation and each interview schedule was 'tailored' to the organisation and even the individual being interviewed. Appendix G shows the Interview Schedule which formed the basis of the research questions; the exact order and phrasing of questions differed between interviews.   As mentioned above, 'background knowledge' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995:45) was gained through internet searches and so I was able to tailor questions that had relevance to the interviewee, based on either the interviewee's personal achievements listed on the website or organisational news, such as when organisations had recently won contracts or funding. For example, many of the questions relevant to a national body, i.e. a Sector Skills Council (SSC), will be unlikely to make sense to a local employer. Similarly, the questions posed to an SSC in one sector may not necessarily be relevant to an SSC in another sector due to their different natures and biographies, although, of course, by way of them being SSCs means that some questions remain relevant, such as funding,

networking, relationships. Despite the tailoring, the interview schedules followed a general format which incorporated the following core issues underpinning the research questions and research problem:

- General questions designed to elicit:
    - Interviewee name, position and job role
    - Background information about the organisation and how they work
    - Networking – how they interact with other organisations (and if they know of specific organisations such as government agencies, SSCs or unions, for example).
- Knowledge of government policies and legislation.
- Sector-specific issues.
- Apprenticeships
    - How they define apprenticeships.
    - Why is apprenticeship suitable for their work?
    - How they see apprentices.
    - Problems they experience with the apprenticeship system.
    - Issues around apprenticeship

However, not all questions had the same meaning to each participant, hence the 'tailoring' to ensure that questions remained relevant. 'Tailoring' meant that the preparation for each interview was time-consuming in order to ensure that sufficient knowledge of the organisation was gained so as not to replicate data already easily available. On the other hand, the lengthy preparation also resulted in high levels of trust, whether I was talking to small employers or 'business elites', those people who have privileged access to government ministers and departments, operate through 'social and professional networks' and hold offices of considerable power (Goldman and Swayze, 2012:231-2). As discussed above, the background research enabled more insightful questions to be asked, yet posed the problem that if a question was asked of one participant, but not another, then how can they be compared? In one sense, the interviews were not intended to offer directly comparable data; the idea instead being that they offer different experiences and perspectives which together can form the basis for understanding apprenticeship at different points in the programme. They are not all experiencing the same issues from the same perspectives and so the research rejects the 'action research' aim of finding solutions to known problems (Bryman, 2004:277).

The shifting sands of power in the interview situation

The point made above about the balance of power in the interview process is an interesting one. Where does power lie in the conduct of the interview: with the interviewer or the participant? Certainly, the balance of power leading up to, during and after the interview will shift in different ways, depending on the interviewee and interviewer. Interviewees hold the ultimate power in that they can decide to withdraw from the research, meaning that the data gained from the interview cannot be used. If they are at ease with the interview, then it is incumbent upon the researcher to use their words carefully and without distorting the meaning. For the 'elites' mentioned above, it may be easy for them to dominate the discussion (Goldman and Swayze, 2012), although I did not experience any sense of domination in this respect. One interviewee told me of how a high level discussion had taken place in the room we were in and that one of the major players had sat in the very chair I was in. This comment was interesting, for it was said as an aside and in an otherwise relaxed, friendly and informative interview; yet it could also have been intimidating or as an attempt to impress.

There is also another aspect of qualitative interviews that requires careful management by the interviewer and that is when participants seek to present the 'party line'. Many of the participants interviewed for this thesis could be construed as 'elites' and there have been a number of occasions when the participants have tried to promote the 'party line'. As has been shown, a great deal of preparation for each interview was undertaken, thereby I was able to pick up when discussions took a stance that I already knew to be inherent in the organisation. The effect of presenting such a 'party line' can, in effect, equate to the removal of power and control from the interviewer by only presenting a partial account or 'truth' of the topic. The participant may believe what they are saying to be 'the truth'; they may just as easily be speaking without having previously given the question much thought. Either way, a process of *triangulation*, checking the validity of the statements against external sources after the interview has taken place can be one way of verifying the claim (Denscombe, 2007). In-depth pre-interview preparation is another, thereby allowing the interviewer not only to be confident and to ask relevant questions, but also to recognise when assertions were being presented as 'facts'. On such occasions, I found there were three ways of managing the discussion:

- Bringing the conversation back to the question if the answer had moved too far from the original question.
- Questioning the individual further, asking them to make clear or justify their position or statement.

- Saying nothing and continuing the interview.

I should point out that this third aspect does not equate to *doing nothing* as I was later able to listen again to the interview during the transcription process and then read and analyse the interviews later. For example, when interviewing the three members from government (in three separate interviews), all three gave similar responses when requested to 'define apprenticeships' (see Chapter 7). Each in turn gave a similar response, but when compared with the responses of other actors, it became possible to consider their definitions in a different light. Thus, such strong views can say as much about the stance the organisation adopts, or at least tries to adopt, on the given topic.

On occasions, while replying to one question, the interviewees would provide additional information outside of the original schedule, as happened in an interview with a qualification awarding body; or they may move onto a question scheduled for later in the interview. I have had to be cognisant of the naturally shifting dialogue which can alter the shape of the interview from that intended when writing the schedule. Loss of 'control' of the interview by the researcher can result in partial data, which represents the actor in a particular light. It was my experience in conducting the interviews that the balance of power shifted constantly between the interviewer and the interviewee. The locations of the interviews can also affect the balance of power between the researcher and participant (Elwood and Martin, 2000). In carrying out the fieldwork for this research, interviews have been conducted in a variety of locations: coffee shops, spare rooms and plush offices (complete with a personal assistant who provided drinks). On one occasion the interview took place in an office that was cold and cramped, while another interview was held in a four star hotel; these have all been venues for the interviews.

There can be also indirect ways of asking questions and one of the strengths of the semi-structured interviews is that it allows the researcher – and the participant – to move away from the specifics of the question to elaborate on a particular issue. Even the apparently simple question alluded to above – 'What is apprenticeship?' – provided a way in for more probing discussions and so not only presented the participant with the opportunity to show their level of understanding of apprenticeships but also provided a way of expanding the discussion to reveal further data. This has more often been the case with larger organisations, as many smaller businesses were dealing with apprenticeships for the first time; one small business was interviewed on the basis that they had little knowledge of apprenticeship and had not considered taking on an apprentice, despite being in one of the newly 'apprenticed' sectors of creative and cultural. As such, it was felt important to at least acknowledge the

reasons why this particular business had not considered employing an apprentice. The data the interview produced fed into the broader problem of employment in the sector, more details of which can be found in Chapter 6.

Interview devices

In addition to the interview schedule, two image-based devices were created to elicit further information from the discussions. One was the 'Apprenticeship Triquetra' (Appendix E) shown in diagrams (see Figures 1-4); the other was a 'relationship map' (Appendix F). The purpose of the diagrams was to demonstrate the thinking behind the research to the participants and also to elicit more detailed information. The 'relationship map' was designed with the intention of providing the participant with a way of showing which organisations they work with and which organisations they had or had not heard of. While both devices were useful to a degree, I took the decision to drop the 'relationship map' as, over time, I felt my experience and ability as an interviewer had progressed to an extent that it no longer seemed necessary and that I could, by careful probing, stimulate discussions that would have the same effect. The 'Apprenticeship Triquetra' diagram was more useful and certainly generated some thought-provoking discussions.

Policy and legislation review

In preparation for the qualitative interviews and for general supporting data, government and private company policy documents and legislation were read (see Bibliography). Given the 'live' and ongoing nature of policy-making and the seemingly endless changes that have occurred in recent years for government-supported apprenticeships, this has meant that many documents have been published and continue to be published. Furthermore, policy documents are also published from non-governmental sources, e.g. the Institute for Public Policy Research (Dolphin and Lanning, 2011); the Trades Union Congress (2010); or the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (2011). Each of these organisations offers a particular perspective on apprenticeships and keeping abreast of the publications offers a great deal of data to the research which can then be compared with the interview data. Some policy documents were included in the literature review in the preceding chapter, but a full list of documents is included in the Bibliography.

Since the research began in October 2009, the Apprenticeship, Children, Learning and Skills Bill has been given Royal Assent (ASCL 2009) and so there now exists a legislative framework for government-funded apprenticeships in England. The importance of such regulation cannot be overlooked when it is considered that this is

only one of a few statutes regulating apprenticeship in England throughout its lengthy service; therefore time was set aside from the interviews in order to conduct comparative research between the two main Acts: the Statute of Artificers 1563 and the ASCL 2009. Analysis of the 1563 Act took place at the Parliamentary Archives office in London in May 2011 and so allowed me to examine the original handwritten document dating from 1563, complete with handwritten amendments between lines and in the margins; I have therefore read for myself the source document for the 1563 statute and have thereby conducted original research on the matter. In the process, I was able to compare the original scroll with the typed version contained within the Statutes of the Realm (1899), a faithful typed and bound replica of the scroll and a copy of which is housed at the University of Southampton's Hartley Library. Another version is contained within the 'Statutes at Large' (1763), although the wording differs from the original scroll.

The historical research provided a rich source of knowledge on the use of apprenticeship over the years and how it has been adapted to suit its contemporary use. The same knowledge continues to provide a basis from which to understand apprenticeship's modern usage in England. In the process of editing the thesis, I decided against including an analysis chapter of the two Acts, although the experience of doing so has provided me with further and invaluable insights into the development of the current government-supported apprenticeship programme in England and a more rounded knowledge of institutional apprenticeships under the governance of both government and the private sector.

Statistical data

This research uses primarily qualitative data methods. However, supporting evidence is provided using quantitative data, used here to show the 'shape' of the sector populations registered on the government-supported apprenticeships. Access to data, though, is a problematic topic for researchers and this is certainly the case for apprenticeships in England, as the chapter discussion in the previous chapter explained.

In addition, only recently have the government agencies responsible for apprenticeships (the NAS and the SFA) provided data for the funding costs of apprenticeships (these can now be found in the SFA's Annual Report (SFA, 2012a:81; Rhodes, 2012:5). Again, such data are not easy to find; some funding data for the NAS for the year 2012-13 was contained in a footnote to Annexe 1 of the BIS 'Grant in Aid funding letter' (BIS, 2012a), although the figures given are partial and so it is unclear as to what they refer to and the figures do not tally with those published in the SFA

Annual Report. A request submitted to BIS for further information elicited a response saying the Department does not keep data for previous years and that I should make a request to the NAS directly. The NAS website contains no readily available contact details for such requests. The problem of access to data is one that has been raised to me from one of the SSCs. In a personal email correspondence at the beginning of 2012, I was provided with a copy of an internal email discussion showing the frustration felt by one SSC and NSA on the lack of available data for sector-based information detailing numbers of Starts and Achievements by geographical area, gender and ethnicity, despite SSCs being authorised by the government to receive such data from the government agencies.

Data analysis

Data analysis has been conducted in different ways:

Policy documents

Policy documents have been reviewed and relevant themes drawn out (see Bibliography). These documents not only provide good bases in preparation for and analysis of the interviews, they also provide essential detail about how apprenticeship policy is being understood, created and used by governments. Themes identified in the policy documents were in keeping with the following points 1 and 3 made by Baldock et al (2003) in their explanation of the types of social policy analysis:

1. The intentions and objectives that lie behind the individual policies or whole groups of them;

2. The administrative and financial arrangements that are used to deliver policies;

3. The outcome of policies, particularly in terms of who gains and who loses (Baldock, Manning and Vickerstaff, 2003:7-8)

With these objectives in mind, policies were reviewed for the following points:

- The contextual and historical milieux from which the policies have grown
- The policy objectives
- The target populations (actors)
- Changes from previous policy papers
- Use of power and/or coercion

Interview transcripts

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Interview transcripts were then coded manually through a two-level method. The first method involved a deductive approach based on the creation of codes which reflected the research theories used in this thesis: those of *governmentality* and Actor Network Theory (ANT).   The second approach was more in keeping with inductive approaches; in the case of this thesis, the transcripts were read initially for content, emergent themes were noted and new codes created. The transcripts were then reread and coded according to full coding list set out in Table 17. Therefore, in analysing the data, I was looking for broader references to, and discussions around, government, power and relationships, as well as some of the original themes to emerge from the interviews.

Table 17: Codes used in fieldwork analysis

Theory-derived codes	Data-derived codes
Participant background and work	Local networks
Defining apprenticeships	National networks
Roles of organisations	Markets
Retail	Partnerships
Creative and Cultural	Apprenticeship length
Barriers	Complexity of apprenticeship programme
Benefits	Quality
Employers	Data
Apprenticeship Training Agencies	Age
SASE	Apprenticeship National Minimum Wage
Government	Progression into Higher Frameworks
Policies	Ownership
	Conflation of apprenticeships with other forms vocational training or qualifications
	Other points raised
	Information
	Skills
	Higher Education

Chapter discussion

The above chapter has provided the methodological basis underpinning the research project. In doing so, research methods become both integral and interactive aspects of the research process, presenting researchers with both challenges and opportunities (Devine and Heath, 1999). Deciding which method or mixture of methods to employ has implications for the whole research process, bringing to the fore issues that extend beyond the conduct of the fieldwork. Research methods are, as Devine and Heath stated, part of the 'mundane *messiness* of empirical research' (Devine and Heath, 1999:3 – original emphasis); yet the authors also pointed out that research methods provide clarity to such *messiness*. There is also some element of chance involved in conducting fieldwork and it was on this point that Townsend and Burgess (2009) identified 'serendipity' as an important feature in conducting research. However, it seems while chance encounters might be 'serendipitous' it is also possible to argue that in the main 'serendipity' only exists as a result of the hard work that is required of the researcher in the conduct of qualitative research (Mason, 2002:67).

What this chapter has also shown is the shifting balances of power in the research process. Power expressed in and through the apprenticeship programme is an essential focus of this thesis: by government; through documents; in history; and of networks of organisations and individuals. Power is also an essential constituent of the methodologies employed in the undertaking of research, from taking decisions as to how to go about researching the subject, through to gaining permissions from the participants. The balance of power constantly shifts. Sometimes that balance lies with the researcher in deciding whom to approach; how best to approach and engage with potential participants; what preparation is required; and what questions (and in what order) to ask of the interviewee. There are other times when the balance of power lies with the participant (as an individual and/or as an organisation), who has it in their power accept or decline; withhold or withdraw consent; and decide how best to answer questions and what information they choose to reveal in doing so.

This ends the second section of this thesis. The following two chapters present primary data from the interviews to consider the roles of a selection of these actors and the effect they are having upon the apprenticeship programme in more detail and through the thoughts of the actors themselves.

Chapter 6

Organisations and networks in the apprenticeship system

Introduction

The opening chapter provided an original way of thinking about apprenticeships, with Jaques likening life to the stage showing the managed, structured elements, while Colbert suggested agency, reacting to the here and now. This chapter, the first of two chapters based on data from the fieldwork, shows that the English apprenticeship system contains elements of both structure and agency. New actors have been brought into the apprenticeship system and, as will be shown, once established they do not necessarily follow the script that has been set. Or was the script so vague that it allowed for some improvisation?

The aim of the interviews was to develop a more coherent picture of the English apprenticeship system from the inside and to reveal the actual workings of organisations through the work of the diverse actors, giving them the opportunity to state their own work and comment on the roles and existence of others. What the data show is that despite the appearance – and the reality – of government control of apprenticeships there is also room for 'improvisation' to take place.

The data from the interviews are separated into two chapters: this chapter focuses on the participant organisations; the following chapter considers the two sectors and some of the issues that have been raised that feed into the apprenticeship system and how they are changing the nature of what is understood by 'apprenticeship'. This chapter is divided in the following way. The following section sets out the presentation of the data. The data is then presented according to the five categories listed below with supporting evidence provided from secondary sources where necessary. The chapter ends with a discussion on the implications arising from the interviews.

Data presentation

In order to ensure anonymity, the participants are coded and referenced into the following five categories:

- **EDU:** Education providers (colleges, private training providers, qualification awarding bodies)

- **EMP:** Employers (all local employers)

- **NNH:** National Network Hub[20] (SSCs, NSAs, unions, lobby groups)

- **LNH:** Local Network Hub (local organisations)

- **GOV:** Government (government agencies and units)

Each interview is numbered: for example, 01; 02 and generally refers to a single interviewee. Suffixes a and b are added to indicate interviews involving more than one interviewee. Hence, NNH01a and NNH01b were two participants in the same interview with a National Network Hub. While these categories provide useful ways of capturing the data and the organisations, they are not precise groupings, as there is some cross-over of roles ('And one man [sic] in his time plays many parts' – Shakespeare, circa 1600); one interviewee might be employed by a particular business or organisation but that same participant may have responsibilities that sees them overseeing the work of, for example, an ATA, a training provider or a National Skills Academy. Some participants were on the Boards of more than one organisation; others had worked for different businesses and so these individuals could speak with some knowledge on different organisations with the apprenticeship system. Table 16 (p118) provides a full list of participating organisations.

National actors

The following section focuses on those actors operating at the national level. Given that the apprenticeship programme is a government entity (separate from apprenticeship as a model of learning), it is with this group of actors that the next section will begin.

Government: Joint Apprenticeship Unit (sometimes referred to as the 'Apprenticeship Unit')

As noted in Chapter 4, 2007 and 2008 saw changes in the 'machinery of government' (GOV01) in which government departments and the allocation of responsibilities underwent further alterations. As a result, responsibility for apprenticeships was divided between two 'new' government departments: the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the aforementioned Department for Innovation,

[20] The term 'Network Hub' is used in this thesis to denote member organisations, whether these members are employers, training providers and colleges or others

Universities and Skills (DIUS). In 2009-2010, these departments morphed once more into the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), respectively; the former responsible for 16-18 year olds and the latter for 19+ age groups. What ensued from this division of responsibility between DCSF and DIUS was described as a 'turf war' (GOV01) for which department should take the lead responsibility for apprenticeships. The departments' response was the creation in 2008 of the 'Joint Apprenticeship Unit' (JAU), described by one government official as being 'at the heart of the [apprenticeship] system' (GOV01) and whose job it was to network with other agencies, quasi-public and private organisations and actively engage with policy-making (GOV01). The JAU is funded and staffed from both DfE and BIS, although most of the JAU staff at the time of the interview were employed by BIS (GOV01); seventeen staff were employed, including one apprentice, plus they were expecting to employ a further member of staff in due course. The JAU staff are civil servants and, while they do participate at conferences and meetings and will often be present in National Network Hubs, the JAU tends to operate in the background, which caused one interviewee to jokingly comment that they were 'Mysterious civil servants!' (GOV03). The joke has a serious side, though, for the presence of the JAU is not popularly known or understood beyond a select few people and organisations, a point expressed here through two different interviewees:

> Well, this says it all, doesn't it, really? That a person like me … I'm Head of Apprenticeship and I've never even heard of them. (NNH04)

> We do deal with [the JAU] intermittently, but uh, you know, we often ask them things, but I think they're sort of one removed; they're in the background the whole time. But when we're having a meeting with the Minister we usually let them know what we're doing; you know, 'We'll show you ours if you show…' That sort of thing. (NNH01)

On a more philosophical note, he added that the JAU:

> Have a very big input in the relationship with NAS, of course. I mean, NAS and the Joint Unit spend a lot of time and I shouldn't say it, should I[21], but you do wonder why you've got this duplication. [...] But that's it, 'twas ever thus. (NNH01)

Another interviewee explained that:

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[21] The interviewee also informed me that nothing he said was 'off the record'

> I wouldn't spin them off from BIS. You see, I would meet with the Apprenticeship Unit people; I wouldn't meet with BIS separately. To me, BIS are the Apprenticeship Unit. (NNH05)

The JAU was not known by any of the local organisations interviewed, operating largely in the background except to a privileged few – national – actors who were invited to work with the Unit. The discussion at the end of Chapter 7 provides an explanation for this 'invisibility'.

National Apprenticeship Service

By contrast with the largely unknown work of the JAU, the NAS is 'employer-focused' (GOV01) and has a relatively high profile and was known by all participants. Indeed, through its regional offices, the NAS takes government into local environments, as will become clear in this chapter and the following chapter, despite the recent revision of its work that has seen the scope and activities of NAS reduced. Formed in 2009 prior to the enactment of the ASCL 2009, its duties and those of the SFA were set out in the legislation. The NAS was to 'be a discrete service within the SFA, and the Chief Executive of the NAS and his [sic] staff will undertake the apprenticeship functions' (ASCL 2009 Explanatory Notes, para.242). There was some haziness in the roles performed by the SFA and the NAS, particularly in terms of positioning and accountability. According to one government source, the NAS are:

> Part of, or a service within, the [SFA]. So it's very complicated and complex. [...] [P]eople wanted it to be employer-led, employer-focused, so therefore it needed to be at arm's length. Didn't want to create a new entity; hence being put into the [SFA]. (GOV01)

Being housed within the SFA has caused some tensions between the two agencies of government as the NAS oversees England's demand for apprenticeships and then works with SFA to manage the funds. According to one source, the NAS is involved, although by no means its sole remit, in 'the process of buying apprenticeship' according to the specific needs of the geographical area (GOV03). Indeed, the transcript for this particular individual (GOV03) was littered with the language of sales. When I pointed this out to the interviewee, I was informed that it helped to think of apprenticeships as a product bought and sold between the agencies, but she admitted that it might seem unusual in the public sector to be thinking in such ways. It was indeed strange to hear and still is; yet with internal markets brought into the public sector under the New Public Management (NPM) strategies of the 1980s (Drewry, 2007), which continued under the discourse of modernisation by way of introducing markets and 'stakeholders' into areas formerly undertaken by the public sector (Steer

et al, 2007) perhaps it is wrong to be so surprised to hear of apprenticeships talked about in this way. Another interviewee explained: 'If you talk to John Hayes [the Minister for Skills until September 2012] about their role, he sees them as a sales and marketing force' (GOV01).

The importance of the 'sales talk' will be returned to in the Discussion at the end of this chapter. Leaving the issue of the sales talk aside for the moment, these interviewees were keen to point out their independence of the NAS from the SFA:

> We have an Executive Chair of the [NAS] who, seniority-wise, is the same as the Chief Executive of the [SFA]. It's not a hierarchy. The two are on a par and we also have a Chief Operating Officer that does most of the operations, obviously. (GOV03)

> Although [...] housed within the [SFA, the] Chief Exec reports direct into ministers and not to the Chief Exec of the SFA. (GOV02)

And while the JAU operates more at a ministerial and departmental level, the NAS is essentially 'employer focused' (GOV01), set up to invigorate sufficient levels of interest amongst employers to deal with the expected 'bulge' of young people leaving school in a particular geographical area, requiring a balancing act between funding and expected demand (GOV01). They obtain this information via local authorities. The NAS also works closely with SSCs and NSAs as 'They're the experts in that field' (GOV03). If there is a problem with the take-up of apprenticeship frameworks in a sector, then they will work with the SSC to resolve the issue:

> We do obviously work closely with [SSCs], because what we will do is say 'Well, this framework is not being taken up. You know, this sector's very hard to penetrate. [...] What is the issue here? Why? Is it the product that's wrong? Or is it a difficult sector for other reasons and if so, what's the market? How can we work with you to crack the market or are we flogging a dead horse?' [...] So we work closely in terms of feeding in intelligence about their products and their sector. (GOV03)

There seems some ambiguity about the extent of the role the NAS plays. For example, in an early document, the NAS claimed to have 'end to end responsibility for apprenticeships' (NAS, 2009a:06), a stance reiterated by the current interim NAS Chief Executive, David Way, in his oral submission to the BIS Select Committee Inquiry into apprenticeships (BIS Select Committee Report, Vol. II, 2012). However, while the reach of the NAS is vast in terms of apprenticeships, such a claim is highly subjective, particularly in light of the recent scaling down of the NAS's activities and the

transference of many of the responsibilities originally envisaged for the NAS to private providers. Indeed, more than one interviewee stated how they had taken over roles formerly performed by the NAS. NNH04 thought that the organisation he worked for was more likely than NAS to have that 'end to end responsibility', although this responsibility was confined to a single sector. Another participant informed me that their business had filled a gap that the NAS has either 'missed or is no longer available through the National Apprenticeship Service' (EMP01) following the NAS's recent restructuring. That organisation, an ATA, also provided 'business to business' services which involved discussing employers' requirements in terms of employing an apprentice (EMP01).

At the time of one interview (GOV02), the ASCL Bill was still going through its final stages in Parliament and it seemed that the NAS was going to be issuing Apprenticeship Completion Certificates, over and above any that may be awarded by individual qualification awarding organisations. However, in accordance with the ASCL 2009 (s.6) the work of issuing certificates can be delegated and sub-delegated to sub-contractors (ASCL 2009 Explanatory Notes, para.50). As from April 2012, the function of issuing apprenticeship certificates transferred to the Association of Sector Skills Councils (ASSC), the organisation originally set up to represent SSCs but now includes broader functions such as issuing certificates and publishing the online Apprenticeship Framework Library. The introduction of publically funded non-governmental players into the work originally part of or planned for the NAS is interesting, but in one sense logical. GOV02 gave the following example:

> There are a lot of apprenticeship Starts happening in companies where there are less than 10 staff. They're not in a position to [provide the administrative and management support] so they need the support of a college or training provider. So you bring in [...] another set of actors there. (GOV02)

That 'other set of actors' is being taken up by the private sector, particularly with the advent of NSAs and ATAs and, as mentioned, the increasing role of the ASSC. GOV02 also said that the NAS was set up 'to address market failure', what elsewhere has been referred to as:

> [I]ncomplete markets (because a complete market would provide all goods and services for which the cost of provision is less than what individuals are willing to pay). (Stiglitz, 2000:81),

and that their life expectancy as an agency was limited as new players came in and took over as the market was corrected. The result is that as the system develops and

demands more resources, so more actors are required to fulfil the needs, to the extent that there is now a greater reliance on market forces than existed at the time of that interview. Perhaps it is questionable whether 'the market' has been corrected or whether the market has simply been reshaped as the numbers of apprentices have grown. But then, the way that apprenticeship has been managed in England, whether it is government or private actors, has always been fluid, adapting to changing social and industrial circumstances.

According to one interview (GOV02), the NAS is (and mostly always has) concentrated on larger employers because it is easier to drive up the numbers in this way and different models have been tested to reach Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), including ATAs, NSAs and even a small unit housed within a regional office of the NAS (GOV02). A report into ATAs (NAS, 2011b) suggested that the NAS should provide ATAs with links to interested employers, although EMP01 commented that the NAS does not refer work to them as the report recommended, which results in 'friction' between the two organisations (EMP01). A similar point was also made on the relationship between SSCs/NSAs and the NAS (NNH04) and even between the twin agencies of the NAS and the SFA. In theory, the NAS is an agency ideally placed to manage the apprenticeship system and yet there are holes in its functions and its ability to network effectively with other organisations.

National Network Hubs (NNH): NNH No. 1 (Representative organisation and lobby group)

This network was first formed out of a request from government. Its success led to its continuation and a change of name and remit; its members represent many large and well-known businesses. They meet quarterly and invite government ministers and officials, who often attend; they also lobby on behalf of their members. They are in receipt of a small grant from government which pays for their small administrative team, which the interviewee admitted 'does slightly undermine our independence' but added that:

> The Chief Executives and Chairmen of large public companies are completely independent and we say what we want about whatever we want and from time to time we do in fact criticise government or make suggestions on policy issues. [...] I think our independence is without doubt. (NNH01)

It is debateable as to whether the organisation's independence was 'without doubt', particularly given their small bursary and the organisation's link to the NAS website; however, his point that the organisation's members were mostly experienced, high

level officers within large corporations is a valid one. One further point is that this organisation has operated largely 'in the shadows'; the interviewee then went on to say that although their now closer relationship with the NAS can be seen as an issue threatening their independence (the link on the NAS website), most people – he used the phrase 'The man [sic] on the Clapham omnibus' – would not even be aware of them; neither would they care if this Network ceased to exist. Is it an appropriate defence to say that some people can access government ministers and agencies so relatively easily yet be so unknown? After all, apprenticeship is not a matter of high security, despite its raised status in recent years; yet issues of access also merge into the ability to influence policy – or at least be involved in policy discussions at an early stage – and such power is closed to most people. Their anonymity cannot be equated to the power they have in engaging with debates at the highest level. Perhaps the link with the NAS is a small step, maybe no more than a shuffle, towards bringing the organisation out of the shadows. Also, NNH01 claims the network members are acting in the interests of apprenticeship and that their members 'represent all parties and no parties and they know they can say what they like about [apprenticeship policy]' (NNH01). Indeed:

> With my contacts, I've now got a network, all these people that are players; ministers, civil servants, NAS, Sector Skills Councils, AELP, all these people I deal with and you develop a network and you become part of that network and you live or die by the quality of what you have to say and your views. (NNH01)

NNH No. 2 (Representative organisation and lobby group)

This second organisation has, like the previous lobby group, also morphed out of its original form, but unlike the previous group, receives no state funding. Its members include training providers, colleges, GTAs, SSCs and qualification awarding organisations (AOs). These latter two organisations joined in order to:

> '[M]ake sure that their voice is heard. First of all they join I think because they get an awful lot of data and information […], but also they are free then to get involved with any of our, what we call special interest groups. We've got a large number, and […] they've grown quite dramatically, I mean, a dozen plus special interest groups from our membership of over 600' (NNH02a)

However, like the previous example, NNH02 has access to government ministers and officials. The network holds an annual conference which draws a number of high profile speakers, including government ministers and staff from NAS and SFA. It was

at one such event that the Minister for Skills announced a major policy change. NNH02 also writes policy papers, agreed with its members and which it sends to relevant parties, including, once again, government ministers: 'It's not just about the meetings. [The Network] is a member organisation and sends reports, papers' (EDU01).

This NNH has a network of regional offices; in at least one case, the regional office management is subcontracted to a private training organisation that then coordinates the local meetings (EDU03). The regional meetings provide local actors – businesses, colleges and private training providers – to participate and share information:

> In effect we have little master classes, we have little sub-groups and one of those sub-groups will look at voice of the learner, another one will look at the voice of the employer, and another will look at funding and contracting and, so a contracts management group. And they will say, 'Look, this is what's going to hit the streets soon [...] so how are we gonna line up our ducks?' [...] and I think that's what's been the strength of [the Network].... Once you're there, it's a bit like the RAF, you sort of take your cap off outside, put it on the coat hook and you're all there together, because you're looking at how you actually make this work for the providers as a whole. (EDU03)

Sector Skills Councils

SSCs represent an important link between government and industry, but as Chapter 4 pointed out, there have been questions raised over their level of independence but also their value in the present system. This interviewee shared these concerns when he said:

> The last government's attempt to get employers very involved was to create Sector Skills Councils, which [...] still design the frameworks or put them forward and there's nothing right or wrong about any particular model, but to me they weren't necessarily representing the employers. (EDU01)

NNH02a believed that SSCs had lost the government's support, hence the introduction of the Employer Ownership programme (UKCES, 2011b), designed to engage employers in the VET programmes, but which essentially ignores SSCs but also provides funding directly to employers rather than training providers. (Interestingly, GOV01 reported that the government had previously been against directly funding employers due to the lack of accountability that employers have, unlike training providers.) However, another participant stipulated that the job of SSCs was to guide

employers as much as it was to represent them (NNH03a) and many SSCs assist in the construction of apprenticeship frameworks through holding sectoral meetings and then feed information gained back into the development of the frameworks. On this matter, EDU04 considered that SSCs had done a good job overall, but suggested there is the possibility that EDU04's organisation could one day develop their own Apprenticeship Frameworks, saying '[I]f [the SSC] don't come up with any appropriate frameworks, we may have to become a developer ourselves' and that the decision to do so would be based on a 'commercial need' (EDU04). EDU04's comments raise important points in that SSCs can be vulnerable in their dealings with the sectors they claim to represent and also in the development of new markets within the apprenticeship system.

SSCs do, however, work closely with a number of other organisations, engaging and participating in the ongoing discussions and latest developments in the system and so many SSCs are members of organisations such as the Association of Colleges (AoC) and the Association of Employers and Learning Providers (AELP), along with qualification awarding organisations (AOs), providing them each with opportunities to share practices and knowledge and to contribute to ongoing debates (EDU06; NNH02a). Many SSCs also operate NSAs (although not all NSAs are attached to SSCs), thereby extending their reach into geographical locations:

> There's only so much we can do with the number of staff we've got available and I think the [NSA] is key to us engaging with the small to medium-sized enterprises, because the [NSA] network is actually a lot bigger than [the SSC] is and so that is providing us an access in to talk to SMEs, whereas before the NSA was about, really we only had the manpower to go out and talk to the big employers. (NNH03a)

As well as representing employers within their sectors, SSCs also work to 'guide' employers:

> With retail you don't have [licences to practise] and I think there is a key thing to professionalise around that Level 3. You know, sort of say, 'This is the kite mark standard' and I think that's where we're moving towards, but it is… lifting the employers out of their training materials and saying 'Let's raise the game here. Let's raise the bar'. (NNH03a)

In addition to operating as a conduit between the government and employers, SSCs also 'hide the wiring' for employers; in other words, simplifying the complex funding arrangements and qualification requirements:

All [employers] need to know is *these* are the apprenticeship frameworks; *these* are the qualifications. You must go to *this* awarding organisation for certification and for *this* service and then once you've got all these component qualifications, *we'll* issue the apprenticeship certificate at the back end of that. Funding? Yeah, that does get a bit grey there, but again it's about hiding the wiring and it's about sort of saying 'Well, all you need to do is this', because the problem is, particularly in retail, if you make it complicated and more than a side of A4 paper, they'll walk away, you know. So there is a role there in terms of us hiding the wiring. (NNH03a)

National Skills Academies (NSAs)

NSAs offer a further attempt at creating and developing further employer-led structures for skill development in a way that was originally envisaged for the SSCs (Leitch, 2006:23). They also reach out to SMEs in a way that, as NNH03a explained, SSCs could not due to the limited reach, something that had been envisaged for SSCs by Leitch (2006). NSAs do not follow a single model, but vary from sector to sector, as a recent BIS report explained:

There is no 'one size fits all' business model for NSAs as they all have been developed initially to meet the specific needs of their sector and have subsequently adapted their business model to meet emerging needs and changing circumstances. (BIS, 2011b:4)

Certainly the two sectors in this thesis proffer substantially different models of NSA. The NSA for Retail operates through a network of locally based 'skills shops', while the NSA for Creative and Cultural Skills consists of a group of twenty core colleges which then provide the training, assessment and qualifications of apprenticeships to interested employers within a region. This varied format can be confusing, though, even for people long familiar with the skills and education system. One interviewee observed that although familiar with idea of NSAs, he did not understand them beyond seeing their role as the delivery arms of SSCs (EDU06), while another said simply that they are 'just another training provider' (EDU04), although NSAs may or may not provide training. One NSA member agreed with the idea of the NSA being the delivery arm of the SSC, saying SSCs were more policy and data focused: 'So, in a sense, [NSAs] take whatever is gathered by the [SSCs] and […] help make it happen'. The NNH then feeds back information to the SSC in a 'feedback loop' (NNH04).

EDU05 heads a retail skills shop (RSS). Established in 2011, this local NSA was formed through a collaboration of local and national partners, including a nearby college (Purple College) with which it maintains a strong relationship, the city council, local

businesses and the SFA. Indeed, such was the strength of the link between the RSS and the college that the interviewee switched repeatedly in the conversation between talking about the work of the RSS and the work of the college, which was confusing at times. Although the retail NSA operates through a network of local 'shops', the RSS participating in this research did not have a physical presence at the time of the interview, although it was the intention to have a shop in the future. Instead, its network of local partners offered office space in which to hold meetings and training courses. The interviewee found that the SSC, Skillsmart Retail, were supportive of the NSAs, providing data as well as regular courses in which to meet with people working in other NSAs. EDU05 felt there was little competition between the retail NSAs and they would refer work to other RSSs on occasions, unlike, I was told, colleges which tended to be 'very precious about their business and, you know, want to keep it all safe' (EDU05). Like the NNHs, networking is a vital aspect of EDU05's work and the relationship with Purple College is a reciprocal arrangement with EDU05 bringing in training and the college supplying possible contacts (EDU05).

Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs)

Chapter 4 gave a brief summary of ATAs, although their roles are still developing. This interviewee was an advocate:

> The ATA model is a good model in terms of from an employer's point of view and it needs to be targeted at the smaller employers. If you're a small employer who is fairly convinced that apprenticeship is a good option for you, but is not in a position to take on a full commitment, so all the head count, the costs and all of that, it's a way of in effect trying it before you step into it in a big way. From the candidate's point of view, it's quite a safe model, because if you're made redundant, if suddenly the company that you're placed with has to shut its doors, you're not unemployed because you're still employed by the agency. It then becomes the agency's responsibility to find you an alternative placement. So there's quite a nice safety net from the candidate point of view and [...] there's a number of young people that wouldn't have started their apprenticeship if they hadn't gone into the agency (GOV02)[22]

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[22] This interview took place in October 2010. Since May 2012, apprentices who lose their jobs through redundancy can also complete their apprenticeship under the 'The Apprenticeships (Alternative English Completion Conditions) Regulations 2012' (S.I. No.1199), which also permits self-employed workers to be apprenticed within certain specified occupations.

The above quote raises three important issues. First, ATAs were conceived by the NAS to deal with the problem of engaging SMEs. Secondly, ATAs transfer the risk involved in employing an apprentice from the employer and in doing are able to engage with both the employer and the apprentice in sectors or subsectors where small and micro-employers (employing fewer than ten staff) are commonplace and apprenticeships are fewer in number; both retail and the creative and cultural are such sectors. Thirdly, ATAs make apprenticeship available to young people who might otherwise have been excluded from taking up an apprenticeship, thereby benefiting the individual and also reaching out to young people who might otherwise be excluded from 'traditional' forms of apprenticeship and thereby minimising the waste of potential talent. However, while designed to work with principally with SMEs, the ATA interviewed reported that they were also providing services to larger employers on the basis of reducing those businesses' operation costs (EMP01), a point also made by the NSA interviewee.

While the potential benefits support the use of ATAs, there are a number of concerns that go with them. NNH05 and EMP03b both likened ATAs to employment agencies for apprenticeships, a point that is hard to refute with the minor exception that the 'core function [of ATAs] is the employment and development of apprentices' (NAS, 2011a:2). The fact that ATAs are governed as much by regulations for employment agencies as they as by the ASCL 2009, if not more so, implies a hybrid status for the organisations. NNH04, who is closely involved in the work of a sector-based ATA, and EMP01 who works for an ATA both commented that much of the work was based on running the payroll system and that accordingly anyone can set up as an ATA. NNH04 expressed concern for the future of ATAs:

> I know in the future for big colleges looking to do it as an option, they can afford to not pass on that cost. They could do it for nothing, because they could draw down so much money from the funding. Whilst it's not supposed to go towards those kind of things, you know, if it's a big corporation, they can move the money around. So you can see in the future where [...] we won't be competitive, because we can't offer it for nothing, whereas the colleges that drawn down all the money can offer that service. (NNH04)

Initial funding for a limited period was provided by government, through the NAS, to create and develop the ATAs. Similar to the employment agency model on which they are based and share so many characteristics, they then charge employers for the apprentice placement. NNH04's fear of being 'undercut' by colleges was being realised by the following comment made by a local college:

It's a clever model and we've looked at models and again it's within my
development plan, really, is to say 'Well, should we be the employer? And
should we be charging the employers?' So, if you like, we do become the
broker of apprenticeships in the area and I think a number of employers
might well see that as being attractive. (EDU03)

Both the NAS and Confederation of Apprenticeship Training Agencies (COATA), the
body established in February 2012 to represent ATAs, have drawn up the 'ATA
Recognition Process and a National Register of Approved ATAs which will maintain a
high quality of service' (COATA website, 'About Us: ATA Recognition Process'), which
requires ATAs to be registered with the NAS and to operate in accordance with the ATA
Framework which came into effect in April 2012.

NNH04 stated that they added value to the apprenticeship system because 'we know
the sector', while EMP01 stated that they provide a service to employers by acting as a
buffer between the apprentice, the employer and the NAS/SFA. Both ATAs are founder
members of COATA which EMP01 saw as a way of providing 'best practice' amongst
ATAs and will also act in a lobbying capacity. But what NNH04 also found was that
ATAs were:

[Helping to] generate a whole kind of change of culture […] So we always
saw it as a, to test the system, but also to increase the uptake of generally,
through the awareness raising. (NNH04)

This particular ATA had ties with an NSA and SSC. NNH05 had concerns about ATAs
because of the ambiguity surrounding the apprentice's employment status; or at least,
that ATAs distort the meaning of 'employment'. NNH02a expressed similar concerns:

I mean, it's a great model, but the tension line is the definition. It is the
definition of employment, uh, but more it is the definition or the
acceptance of who is the employer […] But ATAs are pushing at this
employment upfront level […] and it's a debate worth having. (NNH02a)

NNH02a also contested the accepted definition of 'employment' as someone who is
necessarily in full-time employment with an employer. Indeed, evidence suggests that
many young people are willing to undertake a variety of work and engage with
employment conditions that might otherwise seem unstable and insecure, thereby
earning the label 'the *adaptable generation*' (Bradley and Devadason, 2008:133 –
original emphasis). Should apprenticeship, which has been shown in this thesis as an
adaptable model throughout its history, adapt to fit in with such fluid profiles? What is
the difference between learning taking place in different departments within one

employer and different employers within one occupation? EMP01 provided a further example of how young apprentices might manage their uncertain working profiles and thereby presenting an indication of the plasticity of the present apprenticeship programme in England:

> I've got a number of apprentices who might work Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday doing their apprenticeship with their one employer, then go to college on the Thursday and party Friday, Saturday and Sunday, or Friday and Saturday they work down at the pub, or B&Q or in Costa or something like that and actually, that's fine because what they're striving to do is they recognise that by doing 2 or 3 days a week with this person in their apprenticeship, they're actually moving towards where they want to go. (EMP01)

Further consternation has been expressed by unions (TUC, 2010; Grindrod and Murray, 2011) because ATAs prevent union recognition by acting as non-unionised employers, thereby limiting unions' capacities to safeguard apprentices' employment conditions and act as intermediaries between employer and apprentice; on this basis, one interviewee was more in in favour of GTAs (NNH05). However, the ATA participant also saw part of *his organisation's* work was to perform a similar role as an impartial actor when necessary, 'whether it's an issue with their training or an issue with their employer or with their host act as a mediator between the employer and apprentice' (EMP01). Of course, unions can only safeguard jobs and apprenticeship where they have union membership and not all sectors or workplaces have such representation; of the twenty non-union interviews, only two participants reported working with unions on the matter of apprenticeship. ATAs can then provide services where unions are wholly absent in the workplace or where union presence is weak in a particular sector or location. ATAs also provide information and routes into companies that might otherwise not employ an apprentice:

> I think, although we have a unique sort of selling point in the fact that we can actually employ the apprentice, be the legal employer, I don't think that's just what we're about at all. [...] I think a lot of companies are really keen to get involved in apprenticeships. You know, they've heard all the rhetoric from government and they recognise that there's opportunities for [accessing] government funding, etc., but actually, largely, they don't really know where to start, particularly if they're new to apprenticeships. (EMP01)

ATAs, like the NAS, SSCs and NSAs, provide employers who have not previously employed an apprentice with information and potential entry routes into employing apprentices. Indeed, they were created in order to a) 'to engage more small firms' (GOV01); b) as a way of generating interest in sectors that have previously not employed apprentices; and so c) minimise risk for SMEs (GOV03). Yet, ATAs are also taking on work previously undertaken by the NAS by offering Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) to small and micro-employers:

> I think there is a spectrum to what we offer […]. I think we fill a gap, perhaps, that the [NAS] used to. I think with the restructuring of the [NAS], their emphasis now really on two-fifty plus employed businesses, they physically cannot, you know, if Joe Bloggs the carpenter rings up […], they [the NAS] physically cannot send someone round there to have a business to business meeting with him about their requirements. (EMP01)

One further aspect of the work of ATAs and their role in the apprenticeship system and in terms of quality came from a comment made in the interview with the ATA participant and also by one of the NSA interviewees, which was to use the Apprenticeship National Minimum Wage (ANMW) as a starting point for negotiating pay and conditions for the apprentice:

> When I begin a conversation with an employer, because inevitably, you know, that beast is lurking in the corner, 'Well, have you thought about what you've going to pay them?' My advice to every employer host I speak to is to think about what you're asking that person to do and then think about what you ordinarily pay someone to do that and that should be your starting point. If your motive for taking an apprentice is that you can pay someone £2.60[23] an hour who you would otherwise have to pay £6 an hour through national minimum wage, I'm not sure we want to work with you. (EMP01)

While ATAs as a new set of organisations have attracted concerns about their activities (Grindrod and Murray, 2011, plus two of the interviewees participating in this research), EMP01 explained that the ATA was considering other ways outside of the apprenticeship system to support themselves financially. If that happens, then apprenticeship could be just one function of ATAs as new opportunities emerge.

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[23] Since October 2012, the Apprentice National Minimum Wage for apprentices aged 16-18 is £2.65 per hour. Non-apprenticed workers of the aged 16-17 receive £3.68. The full rate referred to here (£6.19) is for non-apprenticed workers aged 21 and over. Source: GOV.UK website, 'The National Minimum Wage rates'

Qualification Awarding Organisations (AOs)

On the face of it, the work of AOs in the apprenticeship system might seem one of the most obvious of roles, yet AOs play a far wider role beyond that of creating and providing the qualifications attached to apprenticeships. Unlike some of the actors discussed above, AOs have long established roles in the broader education system. The AO consulted in this research has a relatively high profile and a long history. It has also been proactive recently in promoting apprenticeships. Different AOs will have their own ways of working, but as this section will show, evidence provided by conversations with the AO and other actors show how AOs extend their reach into other networks in order to be engaged with the major discussions and participate in shaping government policy-making through their links with lobby groups. In doing so, AOs become another key player in the apprenticeship system.

The creation of apprenticeship frameworks is the responsibility in the majority of cases of SSCs. But to create a framework requires the SCCs to work with AOs and others to ensure:

> [Apprenticeship] frameworks are fit for purpose, to make sure that they meet the sector's needs [and] that they can be delivered by the awarding organisations. (NNH03a)

There is a close working relationship between AOs and SSCs, particularly in terms of developing and/or amending apprenticeship frameworks, for which the NAS will also be involved (NNH03a):

> There's constant communication with [a named SSC], either through email or through telephone, you know, there's things that either we need clarifying or [the SSC] want clarifying from the awarding organisation. (NNH03b)

AOs contribute to this discussion by adding their knowledge and experience of delivering qualifications. They can do this in various ways, either through frequent dialogue between AOs and SSCs and/or training providers, most of which takes place via email and telephone, but also through regular and ad hoc meetings. AOs can be invited to work with the NAS and other government agencies and government departments in Parliamentary steering groups. 'Round table' discussions, convened by organisations such as SSCs, the Association of Colleges (AoC) or the Association of Employers and Learning Providers (AELP), also provide essential opportunities for information exchanges for AOs to provide feedback to the SSCs and for SSCs and

employers to keep AOs updated with the latest policies, skills needs and business opportunities. So, for example, they might discuss:

> National Occupational Standards that might need reviewing or, you know, we might have identified a new unit that could be developed. (NNH03b).

They also consult with employers and training providers through forums and online consultations. This SSC participant saw the chain of information that flowed through AOs:

> There's a big reliance on our working with awarding organisations, because they will obviously have their centres [within colleges and training providers] who are up on the qualifications, so we have to allow them to talk to their centres and give them updates as well. So it's not just us, it is all in this tent. We've all got to play our part. (NNH03a)

AOs need to ensure that their qualifications are SASE-compliant and have worked with SSCs and the NAS over the move to Functional Skills, plus AOs

> [W]ork closely with the SFA to make sure [...] qualifications appear on the learning aims database, what is now called LARA[24], whatever that stands for' (EDU04).

However, one interviewee expressed concern that apprenticeships should not be seen in terms of their qualifications:

> Something that we've tried to do through case studies and the like as an awarding organisation is to illustrate where we think apprenticeships really work [for potential employers]. (EDU06).

As such, AOs are engaged in the governance structures that ultimately shape learning within apprenticeships by interaction with the SSCs:

> [W]e do sometimes try and influence the shape and size and design of qualifications as they are being, if you like, determined through work with the SSC from the point of view of 'Is this actually deliverable? Is this going to work on the ground from our experience or is this so complex or so difficult or the assessment so difficult to either, monitor, quality assure or whatever, that it isn't gonna make sense?' So, it's in those areas of the debate where if there's a problem [...] hopefully we can resolve that through discussion really and a kind of joint understanding. (EDU06)

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[24] LARA: Learning Aim Reference Application

EDU04 also believed AOs performed an essential role in the governance structures alongside the NAS (carrying out government policy), SSCs (framework development) and the SFA (providing funding). AOs have a number of systems in place to carry out the governance work through the ways in which they quality assure their qualifications; this includes working with training providers:

> [W]e are constantly in touch with our centres, our deliverers, in terms of making sure the qualifications are working and working well for them and we soon learn if there are difficulties! (EDU06)

Like many organisations in the government-supported vocational education system, AOs have experienced changes over the years as policies come and go. With the advent of the qualification-based National Occupational Standards (NOS) such as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the 1980s, tighter restrictions were placed on AOs as qualifications became more centrally defined by government:

> 'I suppose at that point, awarding organisations began to experience less leeway in terms of what they could develop as qualifications. [...] So if you like, the wiggle room for AOs became much more confined in terms of the course. An AO needs to invest. It needs to derive its funds from somewhere, those come through primarily [Further Education], [Private Training Providers]. Each of those bodies relies very heavily on public funding, rather than direct funders from learners or employers, so if you like things begin to follow that kind of chain through. So, if we're investing as an AO [...] we've got to follow that to a certain extent and that's the way of the world, really. (EDU06)

AOs, this informant commented, may also be invited to contribute to Parliamentary steering groups along with other organisations:

> We had an invitation to and still continue to participate in [...] a steering group which is about access for people with disabilities into apprenticeships, so we were invited as an awarding organisation to take part in that. (EDU06)

The evidence provided here suggests that while AOs have been part of the vocational education sector for many decades, they are currently reassessing their position in light of the growing government-instigated focus on apprenticeships. Along with other actors, such as government and employers (and non-human 'actants' such as legislation and documents), AOs are part of the governance structures in the apprenticeship system.

This chapter has so far concentrated on national actors. The following section will turn this focus on local actors in order to gain insights from quite different perspectives than those offered above.

Local Actors

Local Network Hubs (LNH)

Some remarkably different Network Hubs were identified at the local level, two of which have been included in this research. The first is a Local Network Hub (LNH) brought together with the specific aim of raising skills amongst the creative and cultural employers in the Solent region. This Hub is therefore referred to in this thesis as the Creative Industries Employer Network Hub (CENH). The second LNH is a Retail Skills Shop; evidence from the Retail NSA was discussed above. Other LNHs have emerged during the course of the research, two of which are included in this research but listed under different sections. For example, one is part of the CENH that brings with it a network of local authorities and town councils; the other is a local college that has a business development team whose job it is to liaise with local employers and other organisations to develop their business links and local education provision.

Creative [Industries] Employers Network Hub (CENH)

In contrast with the NNHs, the CENH is a cooperative project incorporating two locally-based Network Hubs with the joint objective of promoting apprenticeships in the creative and cultural sector within the Southampton and south coast of England regions. As such, the two Network Hubs are working in collaboration to bring local employers and training providers together with relevant organisations such as the NAS, the SFA, relevant SSCs and others in order to engage a range of actors in establishing a regional apprenticeship programme for the area's flourishing creative and cultural sector. The Southampton-based Network Hub is a charity and a Youth Arts Development Agency aimed at opening the arts to young people and promoting career and skill development in the arts and itself taps into other national networks such as the Arts Council England (ACE) and the English National Youth Arts Network. The experiences the NNH have gained are being brought into the CENH:

> Our role has sort of been as an employment agency, I suppose, working with 50 or 60 organisations in the East Midlands and the South East and acting as employer to 105 young people and there have been quite a lot of issues. But we can bring that sort of experience to this kind of work. (LNH01)

Its partner Hub is formed of local authorities and town councils in the county area and one of its aims is to raise the profile of the creative sector in the region. The CENH first met in October 2010 and has met as a network on four subsequent occasions, with additional subgroup meetings. The CENH has been working as 'matchmakers' to the different employers and businesses, especially in terms of 'sharing' the apprenticeship employment (LNH02), by which is meant that employers, particularly micro-employers, can share the administrative, employment and training costs of employing an apprentice.

Running the CENH was a management team consisting of two individuals from each of the separate Network Hubs, plus a consultant brought in three days a week to project manage and develop the Network's creative apprenticeship programme. As the Network has developed, so, too, has the responsibility been shared more broadly amongst its members. The CENH began operating by 'targeting employers who fitted within both the [Creative] Skillset and the Creative and Cultural Skills Councils' footprints' (LNH02), but has gradually shifted to a focus on 'the arts' as they realised that the creative media subsector was adequately catered for in terms of training and opportunities, at least in this geographical area (LNH02) (although EDU02 believed this was not the case). The direction of the LNH has developed organically over the two years since it first met, focusing mainly on smaller employers (LNH02):

> They're mainly small organisations [the CENH members], and mainly in, a lot in receipt of some public sector funding. So [...] we haven't been out to sell the programme to large employers because again it's a very step-by-step approach to get the programme [...] You know, chicken and egg, do you go out and find lots of people and then develop? I think we've done it in a considered and a sensible way and based on all our experience [...] So there is potential; you know, it would be fantastic to get some large employers on board, but perhaps we're not at that stage of development yet. (NNH02)

I first met with the CENH on its inaugural meeting and have been invited to all subsequent meetings, allowing me to observe first-hand the development of the CENH, in addition to providing me with entry routes to local employers and the opportunity to see the network developing. In this time, the CENH has progressed from possessing numerous general ideas to having formed a clearer idea of the issues such as what they are trying to achieve, who their members are and what their members' interests are and have begun piloting the first apprenticeship programme:

> I suppose in the early days of the network [...] we [...]developed [an] action plan that had probably with hindsight far too many actions and far too many people doing things in a short period of time, but we [...] wanted to have something for those network members to be able to see where they could play their part in that and I suppose, you know, we've always been concerned that [...] having the network and the network meetings, that each individual thinks it's a good use of their time and they get something from it. But we've kept that support and across all those different types of organisations and sectors. (LNH02)

Indeed, the CENH has allowed a range of relationships and contacts to come together and so there are different experiences and knowledge being brought into the programme, including work with a local ATA as well as the National Skills Academy provided through the SSC, Creative and Cultural Skills (CCS NSA) (LNH02). The overarching criterion in the earlier stages of the CENH was to provide a route for young people into the arts and to develop an action plan for accessing government funds to realise this objective:

> [T]his may be one of the strengths of this network in that there is a purpose to it which is about young people and is about a practical outcome from the network [...] It's not enough to get these people together to talk; it is about doing something and that's where the money is. (LNH01)

Although 'commodification' of apprenticeships has been discussed in this thesis, this instance appears to represent a genuine need amongst smaller employers to have the financial resources to provide training they would otherwise be unable to afford and so there is a balance between 'commodification' and providing funds to counter genuine needs of smaller businesses.

The CENH has also grown in numbers as attendees have contacted the organisers to ask if they can bring interested colleagues and acquaintances along to the meetings. The particular apprenticeship programme that has grown from the network has resulted in the adoption of two apprenticeship frameworks offered by Creative and Cultural Skills:

- 'Technical Theatre'

- 'Community Arts Administration/Management'

The programme includes for employers free PTLLS training (Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector)[25]. The employer training and the apprentices' academic work is subcontracted to Yellow College via the CCS NSA due to their SFA funding contract allowing them to draw down government funding. Concern was expressed to me in and out of the interviews that using Yellow College in this way effectively side-lined those local colleges and training providers who have also been part of the network (LNH02; EMP03b). There are, though, a number of advantages offered by Yellow College as they already have experience of running a similar project with another LNH operating in another county which is approximately six months ahead in providing a similar apprenticeship programme, allowing them to learn from the other organisation's experiences (LNH02). Also, Yellow College is acting as a recruitment coordinator, thereby providing similar operations to the ATAs, but having the added advantage of providing training services (LNH02).

LNH03 has a network of connections and experiences in the creative sector and is bringing that knowledge and network into the CENH (LNH02). The other LNH includes most of the region's local authorities and many town councils, as well as local universities, ACE, English Heritage, Sport England and Tourism South East, as well as a Local Enterprise Partnership and 'Creatives' [pseudonym]. The work of LNH03 focuses on capitalising on the region's thriving creative and cultural industry (LNH03). What is of particular interest to this thesis is the way in which the two LNHs are working cooperatively to promote apprenticeships in the sector, using their joint experiences and networks to foster an environment in which employers, training providers and other relevant businesses and organisations can work together to address skills shortages in the area.

Training Providers

Training Providers play an essential role in the apprenticeship system through the provision of training, assessment and qualifications. Two local colleges ('Red College' and 'Blue College') and two national private training providers (PTPs) participated in the fieldwork.

'Blue College' participates in a network of colleges, TPs and employers and holds regular employer fora. The former CEO was very well-connected and had contacts at high levels of government. In contrast with Red College, they have developed a good relationship with the regional NAS. 'Blue College' is a member of the regional AoC office and also the local AELP office and has also worked with a local HE provider to

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[25] PTLLS is an entry level training and qualification required for teaching in post-16 education.

link up with a project aimed at increasing transitions into higher level learning. Markets are, according to EDU03 at Blue College, something to be created and so working with employers – 'critical friends' as he called them – allowed them to try out ideas first before they develop them further (EDU03). By contrast, EDU02 was concerned that 'Red College' senior managers had recognised the potential to attract government funding for apprenticeships but responsibility for attracting apprentices onto its courses had fallen to her and she was at a loss to know how to go about growing its apprenticeship base. At the time of the interview, it seemed as if they might have one local employer interested (the employer later contracted the training provision to another provider outside of the local area); the interviewee admitted that this side of the business was not part of her normal work and she was essentially having to 'cold call' people. The difference between the two colleges was such that Blue College had established networks with whom to work, while Red College struggled to start the process and had no contract, unlike 'Blue College', with the SFA. Joining the CENH did not help 'Red College' in this regard due to the subcontracting of the CENH apprenticeship programme to Yellow College (Blue College has not joined the CENH). This problem of getting started for 'Red College' was particularly strange to comprehend as it had an already thriving creative and cultural department and generally good relationships with local employers with whom it is able to get students essential work experience. Once more, it seems that the market is being distorted by the funding arrangements.

EDU04 is employed by a national PTP which is an off-shoot of another major player in the apprenticeship system and so can draw upon a large base of existing contacts, although the company focuses on large national employers. EDU04 gave assurances that the two companies were separate, while being housed in the same group, yet also stated that they were able to benefit from the experience the parent company had in the matter of apprenticeships and education. When asked if there might be a conflict of interest, I was informed

> Well, there could be. There isn't, because we've set up the training provider as a separate company. It's still part of the [parent company] Group, but it's not [parent company] (EDU04).

Yet the list of contacts and the connection between the two businesses and their different but highly related roles could be problematic. Also, like the interviewee from the Retail Skills Shop, EDU04's dialogue moved between the parent and off-shoot company and it was sometimes difficult to know to which business he was referring and hence weakening the idea of the separation between the two.

EDU01 also worked for a PTP and described his company as a training provider for whom:

> The larger part of our business is currently in the Department of Work and Pensions, finding sustainable jobs for unemployed people and a smaller but fast growing part is our apprenticeship business, which was also a Train to Gain-type business. We're also involved in foundation learning for unemployed young people.

EDU01 has a long history of working with employment and training and particularly apprenticeships. He also sits on the Board of another organisation and is a member of one of the NNH's discussed above and, like EDU04, has a wealth of experience and contacts to draw upon. EDU01 described the work of his own organisations as engaging in partnerships with other players:

> You see, you can't have apprenticeship without an employer [...] A lot of our work on employability involves other partners in the training world and so on because although we're trainers ourselves we can't be everywhere at once. We like to build good solid supply chains where we work with other organisations who deliver on our behalf either the full service end-to-end or specialist stuff. (EDU01)

Training providers, then, come in many varieties and perform different functions depending on their target employers and yet networking and partnerships, along with supply chains, subcontracting and funding, seem key components of successful organisations in the apprenticeship system.

Employers

Employers are key to apprenticeships and yet the apprenticeship system is a complex area, especially for small employers, a point raised often during the interviews and will be discussed more fully in the following chapter. Both of the college interviewees mentioned above believed that employers are key to apprenticeships and to the FE sector, although EDU03 wondered whether employers in general need FE in quite the same way as FE needs employers. GOV02 believed that 'the best apprenticeship programmes without a doubt are the ones where the employers take control of them' (GOV02). As this interviewee noted:

> The reality is [...] you need the employers to take on apprentices. You know, if no employers want to take on any apprentices then there are no apprentices. If a hundred want to take on apprentices, a hundred

apprentices. Doesn't matter how much money there is sitting ready to be trained up. (NNH04)

All of the employers that participated in this research were local: three were within the creative and cultural sector, while a fourth was from a locally-based ATA. Of the three local employers, one was a theatre employing at the time of the interview approximately 27 staff; another was an art gallery with a staff of around nine:

Half of whom are part-time and that's largely because a lot of those members of staff are also practitioners, so they're artists themselves, and the rest are full-time [...] and within that we also sometimes have internships or people on work experience that work here as well. (EMP02)

The third employer, a museum, relied substantially on part-time staff and volunteers, the latter group outnumbering employed staff by around two to one. All of these employers rely on public and private funding, the latter including donations, sponsorship and funding from organisations such as the Arts Council England (ACE), which often sees them working in collaboration with other employers in the field. Both the theatre and the gallery receive National Portfolio Funding (NPF) from the ACE, requiring funded organisations to inspire and mentor a new generation of entrants into the arts. The funding therefore shapes their activities, but the ACE NPF for these businesses has been reduced for the period 2012-2015: the gallery by five per cent and 15.2 per cent for the theatre (ACE, 2011). Both the theatre and the gallery have been involved in the CENH apprenticeship programme and have attended the networking events with the aim of taking on an apprentice, but both reported in the interviews that there was uncertainty because of the reduced funding. Only one of the two employers has since gone on to employ an apprentice. Indeed, funding was so tight for the museum that I was told they could not afford to take on an apprentice, even paying them the minimum wage for apprentices, because of the combined financial and time commitments it would require (EMP04).

EDU05 acknowledged that the biggest barrier to apprenticeships in retail is employer 'buy-in', a point also made by NNH04 in terms of the creative and cultural sector. For both sectors, training has to be flexible to meet with the demands of employers. Employers, though, span a wide range of attitudes, sizes, profitability, sectors and others, yet there was some agreement noted in the interviews that crossed the two sectors and the organisations; employers do not think it is their responsibility to be paying for what they see as additional qualifications such as Functional Skills and many employers still see training as a cost rather than as an investment (GOV01; NNH03a; EDU05; NNH02a & b).

There remains cultural resistance to apprenticeships amongst employers in both sectors; thereby the sectors unwittingly provide spaces for growth of new models of apprentice employment, such as those offered by ATAs as the government seeks to expand apprentice numbers. This resistance has, according to NNH02b, been historically rewarded: 'the more [employers] resist, the more the government throws at it, the less they have to invest themselves' (NNH02b). Linked to this observation, yet taking a slightly different perspective, was a point made by another interviewee who thought that employers do not invest in apprenticeships because of some higher altruistic reason, but rather because 'they are good for business' (NNH01). Accordingly, the two groups of people that employers were most likely to listen to were other employers who successfully employ apprentices and the apprentices themselves.

One interviewee challenged the meaning of contemporary 'employment'. NNH02a cited the business management thinker and philosopher Charles Handy and questioned the popular image associated with employment and employers, which he believed related to full-time work for an employer, when the nature of 'employment' is so varied in reality (14.2 per cent of the UK's employed population are self-employed; 23 per cent of the employed workforce are classified as 'part-time'. Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Market Statistics, May 2012). On this basis, apprenticeships need to reflect this change and NNH02a believed that is where there is a role for alternative forms of employment and training such as those offered by ATAs and GTAs. The interviewee went on to say that although ATAs minimise the risk inherent in employing and managing people, they are also problematic for apprenticeship because of the meaning of the term 'employed', which is a core aspect of apprenticeship (NNH02a).

Employers can also require a range of skills in their operations, as this interviewee from a theatre testified:

> The thing with being a production house, though, is you end up working with the whole gamut of artists that are needed to make a production, so from script writers to stage managers to designers to chippies to, you know. So […] you're employing a lot people, a lot of skills [and developing] from the idea to the finished product. (EMP03a)

As for apprenticeships, this employer was keen to take on an apprentice and told of how they had benefited from internships and volunteers in the past, who have themselves gone on to other posts in the sector:

For instance, some work experience internships we've had, whereby in the past [...] a [student] has done a piece of research for us that we might not necessarily have been able to do ourselves [...] because it's more time consuming. So, it's normally those projects where you really want to do it, but you either need some additional support with and/or it's time consuming and it's great for someone else to get involved but also take an outsider's perspective on things. Cos that's another issue that you can be masked by your understanding of your work, but it's always useful to have an outsider's perspective. (EMP02)

Both the gallery and the theatre reported the influence being exerted on the arts sector by the lead body in England, ACE, who have been strongly advocating apprenticeships in the sector. Likewise, both employers were members of the CENH reported above and believed they had benefited from past training programmes in the arts which have given them the experiences of working with young people and mentoring them to develop their talents and enthusiasm:

When we were part of the [employment and training] programme, the benefits were two-way and I think that the arts sector has [...] an obligation, in a sense, to give back and offer more opportunities for young people at an apprenticeship level, because don't forget usually [...] people enter working in the arts sector largely at degree level, but [...] I think to be able to kind of broaden that out a bit more, whilst there's still on the job training, is just really, really going to be so much more interesting and beneficial. (EMP02)

Of the four employers, only the participant from the ATA knew of the work of SSCs; none of the other interviewees reported knowing much about the government agencies, although as reported, the theatre and gallery had both been working in the CENH and so had recently been introduced to the work of the NAS and the two creative sector SSCs, although could tell me little about the latter organisations.

Chapter discussion

The continuum between following the script and improvising has been one of two consistent themes in this thesis, the other being power. With this continuum in mind, this statement from a government source provides a good example of the interplay between 'the script' and improvisation:

It's frustrating that no matter how you try and get the message out [...] the messages are heard differently by different parts of the system. (GOV01)

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However, rather than the message being 'heard differently', the interviewees expressed ways in which they engaged actively with the apprenticeship programme. Expressions of agency varied from Blue College's consideration of adopting the ATA model into its business plans or the large organisation moving into the provision of training or even the CENH interviewees who saw the programme as an opportunity for employers and apprentices to benefit from participating in apprenticeships. This raises the question of how much control the government has over the system, beyond the programme itself. Funding provides a strong lever to attract businesses, whilst the efforts of government to raise the profile of apprenticeship amongst employers and apprentices can stimulate interest amongst the target populations, but how the actors then translate these levers remains largely out of the government's control, although the legislation and other forms of regulation further this particular role. Reflecting the *governmentality* theoretical approach adopted in this thesis, the apprenticeship system is shown to be very much an example of how agency is an essential part of the apprenticeship system beyond the more structured government-supported programme, a point raised by Hamilton (2007) in a critique of research which takes an overly policy-focused approach to the VET system.

The two government actors that are particularly useful to focus on – the JAU and the NAS – appear like the two faces of a Janus-faced bureaucratic power of government. The JAU face operates largely at the ministerial and departmental levels, working at the policy level, its public persona and existence limited to a select few people and organisations. By contrast, the NAS is more outward looking, wearing the public face of the government and acting as the link between policy-making and policy implementation. Yet in their own ways, each has a wide reach into the populations, despite the obscurity of the former. All of which makes a recent review of small businesses commissioned by BIS (2012b:8) strange, for the author, Holt, recommended that:

> In particular, it will be vital to ensure DfE and BIS as a whole are closely bound into policy and delivery decisions on apprenticeships, so that decisions made in one part of DfE or BIS do not adversely impact on efforts to expand and enhance apprenticeships by another part of DfE or BIS.

Holt was concerned that changes to the structures of the NAS and the SFA might damage the relationship between the two government departments, yet this is the very job that the JAU was set up to achieve. In effect, the JAU operates as the collective voice of the two departments and it was, and remains, the job of the JAU to work with the NAS and others.

On a different note, the NAS has typically concentrated its attention on larger employers through a unit called the National Employer Service (NES). (The NES had originally been a separate government agency created in the years of the Labour Government to engage larger employers in a range of VET issues, but was incorporated into the NAS in 2010.) The result of the NAS's focus on larger employers (which itself has the effect of increasing apprenticeship numbers) combined with the policy and economic retrenchment that has occurred in recent years has left a vacuum in areas such as Information, Advice and Guidance for small businesses that are being filled by organisations and businesses such as SSCs, NSAs, ATAs and other organisations such as colleges and private training providers. Yet, these organisations can themselves be creations of government; SSCs, NSAs, ATAs each fit into this category and work alongside non-governmental sources. For example, GTAs, colleges and training providers, AOs and the example of the local CENH, may even vie for business against each other. All, though, adapt their businesses in some ways to fit in with government policies and funding mechanisms and yet can each operate outside of the apprenticeship programme. With all these different organisations spread throughout the country, some of whom have claimed in interviews for this thesis (see below and following chapter) to be able to simplify the apprenticeship programme for employers and apprentices, it seems strange to see that in September 2012, concerns were still being expressed that SMEs find the apprenticeship programme too complex (Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network, 2012).

The work of National Network Hubs at once differs considerably from that of government and yet is also deeply embedded in the functions of governance of the apprenticeship programme. This is because they bring together and work with people and organisations from throughout the country; they act as a focal point for discussing members' needs and have the capacity and the connections to lobby government in a variety of ways. All of the NNHs included in the fieldwork have offices in London and reported having frequent contact with government officials and ministers, making them fundamentally different in this respect from Local Network Hubs (LNHs). An NNH can also include among its members other NNHs in addition to its specialist members and in doing so can broaden the scope of its reach and magnify the power of its lobbying capacity; networking and lobbying are therefore central elements of the work of NNHs.

One NNH meets regularly throughout the year and invites ministers and civil servants to those meetings. It and other organisations have members that regularly sit on panels where ministers and civil servants were present. There is nothing intrinsically wrong in doing so; NNHs operate collectively, representing their membership organisations and businesses which are spread throughout the country and work in

many different ways at the local level. Four of the five NNH organisations interviewed had been in receipt of state funds as part of their operations; of these, two have recently had funding withdrawn, while a further NNH received funding in order to staff their secretariat. Again, this is part of the business of modern governments; forming networks and providing funds in order to raise participation in the larger discussions. NNHs, therefore, can be likened to a spider's web; countless strands converging into a central core.

NNHs have arisen that have the power to lobby government on behalf of their members. Only recently has Creative and Cultural Skills succeeded in lobbying government to allow self-employed apprentices to work in certain occupations where there is a large contingent of self-employed workers, resulting in a Statutory Instrument (SI) being created (SI1199, 2012). Six months after the SI came into force, the operation of the self-employed apprenticeships was described to me in a personal communication as remaining unclear and that as of August 2012 the NAS had still to provide adequate guidance on the matter. But more than just lobbying, the NNHs actively engage with other organisations in discussions and work on the practical issues of apprenticeship. They bring in those other groups into the networks, exchanging information, sharing thoughts and providing specialist knowledge.

LNHs provide functions not dissimilar to the NNHs, except they work at the local level and in doing so involve other local players. On occasion, they link into the national system, as SSCs, NSAs, and the regional offices of the NAS and SFA are invited to participate. And therein lies a problem for the apprenticeship programme and system: while there are multiple instances of organisations coming together in this way to share their knowledge and experiences in partnerships, what seems to be lacking is a cohesive structure. Partnerships generally appear to be ad hoc; brought together to deal with specific issues or events, yet not quite reaching the partnership models seen in some continental European countries. This point will be taken up in the concluding chapter.

There is, though, a question about what these activities do for and say about the levels of independence the NNHs have from government. This can change from Network to Network and also over time. For example, as described in Chapter 4, since the initial Trailblazer pilots a decade ago (GHK Consulting, 2003), SSCs have received annual core grant funding from government, via the UKCES. Since April 2012 that funding has ceased; instead, SSCs can bid for grants on a project-by-project basis, as they have previously been able to (UKCES, 2011a). The withdrawal of the core funding for SSCs from April 2012 certainly creates the appearance of greater independence from government, but SSCs remain licensed by the UKCES. The UKCES has itself has

undergone recent changes as the Coalition Government stated its intention in 2010 (BIS, 2010a) to give the organisation a greater remit in working with employers across the four devolved nations. The intention was to move the UKCES from 'a top down advisory body to one that works with employers, trade unions, social and other partners to raise employer ambition' (BIS, 2011e) and:

> ...in maximising UK skills to achieve enterprise, sustainable growth and job creation across the UK [...] and promoting the case for employer investment in skills, engaging employers and sectors in programmes such as apprenticeships. (Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)/BIS Remit Letter, 2011)

The UKCES is currently receiving over £71m of government funding for 2012-13, a £2m reduction from the previous financial year (BIS, 2011e; DWP/BIS, 2011).

Problems

This chapter has raised a number of problems with the present situation with England's government-supported apprenticeship programme and system. It was reported above that the NAS's claim to have 'end to end responsibility for apprenticeships' was only partially true or, at least, limited. Similarly, SSCs claim to 'hide the wiring', yet such simplification is also being achieved by ATAs, GTAs (not featured in this research) and NSAs. The first problem is this: with so many organisations involved in the simplification of policy, where do employers, training providers or even apprentices turn when they need independent information, advice and guidance? Who has overall responsibility when the JAU operates at the supra-structure level, the NAS is focused mostly at medium to large employers and the SFA is charged with the funding arrangements? When asked who was responsible for ensuring quality in the system, the government representative replied that it was:

> [V]ery difficult to legislate for quality in any great depth, so we've set the standards and it's up for other people to apply those. [...] I mean, [apprenticeship has] been working for thousands of years in one way, but ultimately the levers we have, have got to be between contractor and process because we pay for it or we don't and so they have to be compliant with the legislation and the contractual requirements in order to be able to be paid. (GOV01)

Yet Lewis and Ryan (2009) casted doubt on GOV01's comments about following quality through publically-funded training providers, pointing to the way in which government sponsored inspection systems have tended to downgrade programmes run by private

sector employers and thereby over-inflate the attributes of, *inter alia*, training providers, thereby distorting the effectiveness of the training provided by public and private providers.

In August 2011, the NAS published a two page document outlining its position on the issue of quality in the apprenticeship system (NAS, 2011a). In April 2012, following the broadcast of the 'Panorama' television programme on the misuse of apprenticeships by large training providers, apprenticeship 'quality' became a major issue, provoking a public statement from the NAS Chief Executive (NAS, April 2012b), while in the same month saw the publication of the NAS's updated 'Quality Action Plan' (NAS, 2012c). (It should be noted, however, that a conference organised jointly by the Association of Colleges (AoC), Association of Employers and Learning Providers (AELP and the NAS had been held in February 2012 addressing the issue of quality in apprenticeships.)

It seems that traditional roles are being challenged as established parts of the system are being replaced by new organisations. Unions claim to act to safeguard standards in apprenticeships and vocational training (Grindrod and Murray, 2011) yet, while able to lobby government generally, they are perhaps most effective only those areas occupations where they have members; the NAS cannot possibly have 'end to end responsibility' with all that claim entails; SSCs are not the only ones who 'hide the wiring'. These bodies that have come to lay claim to represent the interests of apprenticeships were faced with near impossible tasks; tasks which are now being taken up by the markets. Even qualification awarding organisations are responding to market conditions and using their established networks and experience to move into emerging gaps in the markets. Is this what the interviewee meant who stated that the NAS was brought in 'to address market failure' (GOV02); implying that the markets are now undergoing correction and hence there is less for the NAS to do? Or is *the problem* changing?

Thus the second problem emerges. Government cannot physically be everywhere and cover every element of their population and so, in keeping with the broader activities of government, power and policies are being exercised through 'not only the formal state … but also the private sector, the community and voluntary sectors, and others' (Morison, 2007:141). GOV02 and GOV03 both expected a reduced role for the NAS in terms of its size and capacity. The government agencies can be reduced as the work they formerly carried out is continued by non-governmental actors, yet there seems uncertainty as to who has responsibility for the different areas once government does step back. Foucault's 'Governmentality' theory becomes a political tool rather than simply a general theory of government as the government seeks to minimise its costs

and footprint while still managing the populations through non-governmental sources. The work is undertaken outside of government, but continues nonetheless.

But there is a third problem: the place of the government in the present apprenticeship system. It is the government, via its departments and agencies, that controls the apprenticeship programme, through policies, legislation, funding mechanisms and bureaucratic power, that is creating the environments through which apprenticeship numbers are growing. Yet it has been shown in this chapter that those same policies, legislation, funding mechanisms and bureaucratic power are sometimes preventing markets from operating freely in the broader apprenticeship system, while at other times they are creating new organisations that are taking over roles recently performed by government actors. These new actors, though, are developing their own identities, outside of the original remits. The problem is not just one of government control and or even the amount of control, but rather, perhaps, the *type of control* being administered through the funding arrangements and top down approach. This third finding is a particularly important one and will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter. The following penultimate chapter continues the presentation of data gained from the interviews to look at the specific sectors and consider some of the issues discussed which arise from different parts of the apprenticeship system.

Chapter 7

So many characters speaking so many lines and dancing to so many tunes

Introduction

The following chapter picks up on the topics introduced in Chapter 4 which used secondary data to present the background to the sectors. This chapter, the second of the two chapters using primary data taken from the fieldwork, provides further insights into the sectors from actors within the sectors with a particular focus on the apprenticeship programme. The chapter title comes from an observation made in the conclusion to this thesis, that the apprenticeship system is so complex as to obscure any intention behind the programme, with a complex array of relationships and networks through which policies are transformed and translated into apprenticeships.

Following this brief introduction, this chapter is divided into three sections. The opening section presents observations on first the creative and cultural sector and then the retail sector and considers some of the cultural barriers and the perceived benefits of apprenticeships. The second section discusses other issues raised in the interviews, including participants' definitions of apprenticeship and the factors that obscure the ease with which actors at all levels of the apprenticeship system can access the programme. The chapter finishes with a brief summary and broader discussion of the data.

Section One: The sectors

The creative and cultural sector

It was noted in Chapter 4 that the 'creative and cultural sector' is an umbrella label hiding a wide variety of subsectors; so varied is this sector that it has been artificially divided between the two SSCs discussed in Chapter 4. LNH03 thought the labelling of the various subsectors into this 'superstructure' was 'vastly problematic' in terms of the sector's artificially imposed single identity. Another interviewee phrased it like this:

> There're a lot of odd bedfellows there. So we've got the live, the roadies and the archaeologists, you know and the architects and the designers.

And also what's not part of our sector which is a completely different sector according to how it's been carved up; film and TV are a different sector. (NNH04)

Although NNH04 saw 'film and TV' as belonging to a 'different sector', they do come under the broader definition of creative and cultural, but are the responsibilities of the SSC, Creative Skillset. In accordance with the literature reported in Chapter 4, I was informed that the creation of the super-sector was designed for political reasons.

In London during the 1980s, there was an expansion, particularly in digital film-making media sectors. At the same time, Ken Livingstone at the GLC had a passion for engaging communities through street arts, festivals, carnivals, and those kind of activities and as a political convenience he merged the two into a category called the 'creative sector', so as to get economic development money to fund his festival programmes [laughs!] (LNH03)

Funding for the arts was noted as a longstanding problem as this interviewee remembered the period of the 1980s as being a time in which 'Thatcher [the then Prime Minister] just cut and cut and cut and cut…' funding for the arts (EMP03a). Another interviewee expressed a similar opinion:

I think that the arts is always the sector that gets hit first, the most. The arts […] have to be, kind of, without sounding quite socialist, but quite united about what they do and offer together. (EMP02)

When New Labour took over government in 1997, Chris Smith became Secretary of state for then Department for Trade and Industry and soon after with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport; as such the sector became a political tool (LNH03). The implication here is that the sector is one that was artificially constructed with seemingly little thought given to the skillsets required of the subsectors and occupations within. Occupational roles therefore become of secondary importance to the networking that characterises some subsectors, particularly the arts. A slightly different perspective was offered by the following interviewee, which, although still reflecting the 'collective' benefits of the creative and cultural sector as a political tool, saw the sector as a way to develop generic 'soft skills' and occupationally-specific skills:

[The sector] provides the creative and cultural with a voice. […] It provides the sector with a voice to talk to higher and further education about the sorts of young people that sector needs to fill the jobs […] But on the

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other hand, this sector has very similar needs to other sectors. It needs skilled young people who are articulate, who can work as a team, who have basic admin skills that encompass an ability to be literate in all that that word means. Obviously, we have particular needs in terms of particular aspects of the industries. So, we need stage technicians and lighting technicians and people who are fantastic with sound, for the music industry. But alongside those specialist skills we have the same needs as any other sector in terms of communication, […] social skills, networking skills, team skills; all those soft skills that all employers need. We have those same needs. (LNH01)

Although there was some evidence in my meetings with the CENH to show that such discussions between employers, FE colleges and universities have been happening, such meetings and collaborations appear to be recent events rather than being historically embedded and therefore ongoing. There seemed little evidence to suggest partnerships between these institutions stretched back to the political beginnings mentioned by LNH03.

Some of the subsectors, though, do have a culture of collaboration and networking, although any such partnerships tend to be transitory (see below) and particularly pertinent to the arts, as EMP02 and EMP03a&b mentioned in the previous chapter, although LNH01 also saw subsectors such as architecture benefiting from collaboration. For LNH01, the sector as a whole is:

> … an umbrella term and you can look at the network of architectural firms, the network of music industry is huge in itself, as is the entertainment industry, leisure industry. I mean these are huge subsections within the overall umbrella cultural and creative industries framework and they are used to networking together and I think having a framework around them all will facilitate the sharing of learning and expertise and cross-sector collaborations, rather than necessarily sticking within allotments. (LNH01)

Rather than being a gathering of disparate occupations and subsectors, LNH01 saw the sector as offering an opportunity for sharing information and skills. The same interviewee went on to liken the arts sector to 'an amoeba' and said it was a 'shape-shifter' (LNH01) that was constantly changing its form according to the environment, as businesses came together for project-specific funding applications. Those parts of the creative sector that come under the auspices of the SSC 'Creative and Cultural Skills' are often dependent on state funding and this is especially pertinent to those companies within 'the arts'; for example, theatres, museums and galleries. Interview

participants told of how recent government funding cuts have hit the arts subsectors particularly hard and these cuts have added to and run alongside funding reductions from the private sector, which has also been affected by the recent economic downturn. Two cultural-based organisations (three interviewees) commented that their respective employers had no money for training and so learning tended to be on the job and through networking:

> We do a lot of skill swapping generally, I think, and because everything we do is different, I mean, obviously there's a skeletal structure in things like how to market a season and all the rest of it, but I think the approach to every show has to be different, um, so you're constantly learning anyway. (EMP03a)

The same individual added:

> This industry in particular makes you think laterally, partially because it's the sort of industry that's always had to survive cuts, because it's seen as a luxury. People always see anything to do with the arts as a luxury. (EMP03a)

Such cuts have led to a situation whereby:

> You're kind of brought up in that culture, so […] you're very good at finding a solution, finding funding somewhere else, project funding. You know you will make it happen and you will find a solution. (EMP03b)

While networking and collaboration have been highlighted as culturally embedded in the arts, it did not appear to be the case with the museum participant, who did not seem to think they were part of the creative and cultural sector:

> We're here sort of preserving […] the local history as opposed to art and culture. I suppose it is 'culture' to a certain degree, but we don't really look at it in that way, because again you get stuff coming through from the Council, art and culture and it is literally art, music, dance, you know, this sort of thing. (EMP04)

Rather than offering the museum a collective 'voice' as LNH01 suggested of the sector, there was a sense of alienation in this interviewee's perspective from the local and even the broader creative and cultural community. However, this was one museum interview and the fieldwork does not provide data showing whether this was a common feature amongst small museums. What networking there was appeared to be limited to occasional meetings with other museums in the Hampshire area and through the

Independent Museum Association, membership of which allowed the museum to keep updated with latest developments in matters of funding and government policy.

Further insights into the sector can be gained from how apprenticeships are being introduced, what cultural barriers remain and how apprenticeship is seen in a positive light. Apprenticeships are still relatively new to the sector. Two of the creative and cultural employers stated that they were awaiting a decision from their Executive Boards to find out if there were sufficient funds available to employ an apprentice, because 'you have to commit to fund it and it's not a massive amount [the Apprenticeship National Minimum Wage], but it has to be put in a budget somewhere' (EMP03). Indeed, the costs of employing apprentices were brought up by some employers attending the CENH events, for whom the cost of employing an apprentice is still seen as an expense and the benefits too unknown to be used as a balancing factor. As already mentioned, one local museum exists on a shoestring budget, as I have heard other employers at the CENH meetings say, and the interviewee (EMP04) doubted they could raise sufficient funds to pay the apprentice's wages and pointed out that most of the staff were volunteers, with the few paid members of staff employed on short term contracts (EMP04).

One interviewee (LNH03) noted that employers in the sector often conflate 'apprenticeships' with work placement programmes and described the sector as a 'magpie sector' as:

> [Employers] will pick up a word that has currency in the media and will use it to describe an activity they're doing and use it to attract funding. And so they will say they're running a programme of apprenticeships for young people and write that into a funding bid and there are funders out there who won't ask any more details [laughs] and the organisation will deliver whatever it is and no one will ask any questions about whether it's been evaluated or accredited or, probably the most detail they'll get is seven young people went through our apprenticeship placements. (LNH03)

LNH03's observation, taken from an interview with an individual with much experience in local government and an extensive network of contacts, implies that money flows more easily than does the detail of the funding objectives as long as broader training objectives are seen to be covered in a 'box ticking exercise'. Once again, Stiglitz's (2001) notion of asymmetric information comes to mind; in this instance, it is through the lack of information about what actually constitutes 'apprenticeship' in the context of the government's apprenticeship programme. The effect is that the money is flowing, companies can afford to participate in the activities they wish to participate in

and even make a profit, but the cultural meaning of 'apprenticeship' (or any type of vocational training programme) risks being watered down.

On a number of occasions interviewees raised the subject of the arts as a middle class venture typically, but that apprenticeships were seen as a way of breaking through this historical culture to reach a wider range of people and bring in fresh ideas to the sector. One interviewee reported that apprenticeship was helping to fight the previous culture of nepotism in a London-based theatre, by bringing in young local people to work in the 'front of house' roles, work that had been formerly undertaken by graduates from outside the area who were seeking to enter into careers in theatre. The difference being made was that the young apprentices were bringing local knowledge with them, using it to assist with customer queries and that there was more stable employment as a result (NNH04). This example chimes with how another participant perceived that apprenticeships could provide 'real connectivity with the world of work' (LNH01).

EMP02 also saw that employing a young apprentice could create the environment in which to attract other young people, thereby not only breaking the cycle of recruitment at a higher level, but actively bringing in other young people (EMP02).

Cultural barriers

There are four aspects of the creative and cultural sector that potentially impact on the take-up and use of apprenticeships in the sector. The first is the sector has an inherent attraction for many people, and so generating greater interest in people wishing to enter occupations within the sector than there are vacancies available:

> [O]ur sector's kinda unique in the sense that people would do anything to get into the sector. You know, which is why they would work for nothing. It's […] got a lot, certain areas of our sector's got a lot of […] cachet about working there and people will, whilst there's too many of those X-Factor kind of people who want to get in […]people would work and do anything to get into the sector, so it's always difficult. (NNH04)

EDU02 added to this view by saying of Red College:

> I could staff my department now with volunteers, like ex-graduates; people who are that desperate that they will work for free. So even though you can pay an apprenticeship three pounds an hour[26], you can also get the

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[26] This interviewee was referring to the National Minimum Wage for Apprentices, currently £2.65 an hour

work for free. So, it's a bit of catch 22, you know, the recession. There are drivers that do come into play big time. It's quite sad for young people. (EDU02)

The above comments reflect a culture in the sector in which there appears little incentive for employers to take on apprentices.

The second point, also made in Chapter 4, is that it is a sector comprised of multiple and diverse subsectors which itself impacts on the types of skills and training needed and is reflected in the number of Frameworks and Pathways available in the sector (see Table 9):

Whilst the creative and cultural sector may sound homogenous, it's not and we all do very different things. You know, to some people who don't really know necessarily what the arts do in the broader sense it's actually quite diverse and I think […] that's therefore really important. (EMP02)

As LNH01 said (above), the diversity of occupations impacts upon the balance of generic and occupationally-specific skills in the sector as a whole.

The third point is that for some micro-businesses, the pressures of time and money prevent them from taking on an apprentice, although, as the previous chapter explained, ATAs were devised as a way to mitigate some of these problems. The CENH was also established to overcome some of these problems, suggesting a 'ground upwards' approach to a local problem.   The CENH is operating as an 'intermediary agency' (Guile, 2010) in which opportunities for networking, information and knowledge exchanges and partnerships in the creative and cultural sector can be fostered and which can 'design models of apprenticeship that actually reflect their needs' (Guile, 2010:479).

The final aspect is the sector's reliance on networking, particularly notable in those occupations which might be thought of as 'the arts'. Networks were stated as being important for EMP02's work, providing channels through which people wanting to work and gain experience in the sector could be introduced to the appropriate person or organisation (EMP02). Networks also offer vital avenues for funding applications as they are able to work collaboratively so as to make their bids more appealing through bringing together different experiences and skills (EMP02). The arts sector as a whole remains embedded in a culture of networking and the importance for young people of having gained experience in the sector to open career doors:

> The sector isn't a very NVQ, to use the old parlance, conscious sector. But it is very conscious of networks and it is very conscious of tangible, practical experience. (LNH03)

The point LNH03 made is that the culture of networking and experience in the sector has created an atmosphere in which qualifications have relatively little meaning in and of themselves. Instead, 'who you know' and 'what you know' feature strongly and can be exclusionary to young people seeking to enter the sector but who do not have the social networks and financial resources available to them. The government-supported apprenticeship programme therefore requires the employer and the apprentice to have sufficient knowledge of what undertaking an apprenticeship means in practice, with training provided both on and off the job and the implications of this training for their work schedules.

All of these issues add to an environment in which the introduction of apprenticeship must compete if it is to be accepted by employers. The following section moves on to look at retail.

The Retail Sector

This section follows the previous section in revealing the complexities of a sector's use of apprenticeships, this time with retail as the focus. As Chapter 4 explained, employment in retail has come to represent 'the post-industrial era' in a way that was once the preserve of factories, reflecting the 'increasing losses of discretion and autonomy on the job' (Bozkurt and Grugulis, 2011:2). Yet it is a more complex social, working and learning environment than it at first appears (Tilly and Carré, 2011).

Whereas the previous section closed by expressing four key points acting as cultural barriers to the development of apprenticeships in the creative and cultural sector, This section on retail begins by focusing on these key barriers. It is interesting to note that retail has its own cultural barriers, which do not prevent employers from using apprenticeships, as has been the case for the creative and cultural sector. Instead, these barriers prevent participation in or progression to Advanced Level Apprenticeships. It is with these cultural barriers that this section begins.

The first barrier appears to be that retail is a sector that, unlike the above observation made of the creative and cultural sector, has little 'sex appeal' of its own and no queue of people wanting to work unpaid in order to gain a career foothold. Indeed, research shows that retail is often seen as an 'infill' sector with large numbers of part-time work being taken up by women and students (Huddleston and Hirst, 2004; Huddleston,

2011; Skillsmart Retail, 2011b; Tilly and Carré, 2011:298). Instead, retail is a sector often overlooked as a valid career choice:

> People […] see [retail] as something you do until you decide what you want to do and if they understood the avenues you could go into and the potential earnings that you can earn, you know, some of the managers in [a named shopping complex], crikey! I think some of the people don't realise that and if you, if we can educate them to show them you can travel the world, the things that are available, then it might just encourage kids into it, rather than it being something that 'Oh, what do you do?', 'Oh, I work in a shop…' It's like, 'No it isn't! It's so much more than that. It's a skill.' (EDU05)

Another interviewee considered the low perception of retail extended to the parents of young people who did not see retail as a long term career trajectory. The topic of low perceptions of retail as a career amongst parents of young people is a longstanding problem for the sector (see Huddleston and Hirst, 2004). Apprenticeship, though, according to this interview can provide a way of changing that perception:

> Through the qualifications you can do visual merchandising, you can work in different sections, marketing and it can lead onto so many other things, you know, but it is that blinkered view that it is just stacking shelves. Sometimes it's not about the actual learners who think that, but it's sometimes the parents [who] want the best for their children and they think they want them to be a doctor or lawyer, etc. What they don't realise is that, actually, you can probably be earning very, very good money in retail by the time you're 25, you know, and have a nice Audi car sitting outside as well […] and so it is changing the perception of retail as a career and part of the way of doing that is the retail apprenticeship programmes. (NNH03a)

Secondly, retail can appear to require more generic skills; yet subtler differences emerge at the inter-business level, with some larger employers wanting to shape apprenticeship frameworks according to their own company needs.   This point and its implications will be discussed below.

Thirdly, retail has seasonal pressures which impact upon its training, with assessors, training providers and government agencies each conscious of the problems of training around peak shopping periods such as Christmas and Easter are and therefore assessments and training have to go on hold in these times:

[Retailers] wouldn't have wanted assessors around at Christmas, so the apprenticeship in retail that has Christmas in the middle of it will take longer in my view than one that doesn't. (EDU01)

Moreover, EDU05 believed that part of retail's problem is fed by the British attitude to and variable acceptance of poor service in retail:

If we're ignored [in a shop], we might not want to go back there again, but if it's our local [Retailer #3], and it's convenient to us and the only one we're going to go to, then even if we get rubbish service, we keep going back there, so they don't change it, cos if their bottom line isn't being effected. I know, and that's a massive issue really, isn't it, across the whole country, really? But then you get the likes of [Retailer #1] that have said 'Okay, we're gonna pride ourselves on the fact we are customer service experts and we will be the top of our game'. (EDU05)

Another cultural barrier to the take-up of training generally in retail is the relationship between individual stores and their Head Offices. In one interview I was told of an instance where a store manager was interested in having staff attend a training course organised by the retail centre in which the shop is located, only to be refused by Head Office on the basis of cost, despite, according to the interviewee, an annual store turnover of £30 million. On another occasion the same interviewee experienced the converse situation:

So their Head Office want them to buy in [to apprenticeships], but the stores don't want them to buy in. So that's, and you think once you had the Head Office buy in, the managers would do it because the Head Office are supporting, but, no […] they're not interested. So it is really difficult. (EDU05)

EDU05 then admitted that:

Probably I'd say it's easier to engage the little [stores] than it is the big ones, cos it tends to be, with [a Small and Medium-sized Enterprise] of say, I don't know, 500[27] staff in there, there's a chain of command up to Head Office level, that very often the store manager won't have authority to say 'Yes, my staff can do that training'.

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[27] This statement is incorrect. Technically, SMEs are businesses employing fewer than 250 staff [Source: European Commission website, 'What is an SME?']

Despite retail apprenticeships having been available for a number of years now, apprenticeships were sometimes referred to in 'aspirational' tones, looking at what apprenticeship *can* offer, instead of what they *are* offering. So like the creative and cultural sector, retail is a sector where interviewees thought there existed opportunities to change the culture of employment and '[raising the bar.' (NNH03a). For those individuals employed in the sector, other problems emerged that impacted on the perception of retail, such as low pay and conditions (EDU01) which can result in staff moving from one store to another in order to improve their pay:

> The problem with retail is the speed of which employees move. You know, so we might be working for [named store] today and signed up to the apprenticeship programme and next week the store down the road offers another 30 pence an hour and so I'll jump ship and go and work for them because I'll get a pay increase out of it. (GOV02)

This problem of 'job hopping' was observed in research conducted by Spielhofer and Sims (2004:544) who stated that:

> Training providers and employers interviewed as part of this research said that many of the employees working in retail are motivated by short-term gains and will leave one workplace for another just to earn a bit more.

Of course, as noted in Chapter 4, the average annual salary for sales assistants is between £11,000 and £15,000 (Skillsmart Retail, 2011b); short-term financial gains are understandable in that context. These sectoral issues are having an impact on employers' perceptions of apprenticeships with more than one interviewee stating that retailers would likely withdraw their support if the government became too prescriptive about apprenticeships; this was especially the case with the implementation of the SASE and the minimum number of Guided Learning Hours (EDU01; NNH03a) (see Chapter 4 for an explanation). This interviewee, however, was sanguine about the task ahead, saying:

> Retail's always been a 'slow burner'. It takes so much to get the employers buy-in and even now it is my sole focus, it's all I do most days and it's like, some days, I think 'I don't know why we're doing this'. […] In their heads, they think they've got it sorted and they don't need help, but if they could realise that what you were doing would improve their bottom line or solve their recruitment issues because so much of it, the staff turnover is enormous in retail. (EDU05)

GOV01 believed that retailers could benefit from apprenticeships in order to improve their levels of customer service and also to ensure that staff are learning skills from across the company, rather than concentrating on just the one aspect of it required to 'get the job done'. The following interviewee, speaking about the SASE prior to its implementation, was doubtful about whether the wider aspects of learning were seen as positive or even necessary by the sector:

> In retail they don't like anybody leaving the shop floor, because you've got to backfill the people and that costs money and all the rest of it. So, the [SASE] will have a requirement where there has to be a certain amount of off-the-job learning and retailers will say 'No. All our learning's on-the-job. We don't like that, because it costs us money'. Or, for example, another one I like is, um, there's an element around Personal Learning and Thinking in the [SASE] … but retailers don't like people using their own initiative. People like [Retailer #3 and #4] have very direct instructions about what they should be doing in their role and they don't want people going around using their own initiative. So, how does that fit with that retail environment? Um, Functional Skills, big, it's a hot potato, because it's an academic test, but an apprenticeship programme is vocational, so why are we making people do an academic test when it's not contextualised, when what we really need is to understand how to work out stock numbers and what amount of stock we need to order and all the rest of it. Not how long it takes to get to Edinburgh in the car; do you know what I mean? (GOV03)

GOV03's observation raises an interesting question for suitability of apprenticeships in the retail sector; or at least, for apprenticeships based on Level 2 qualifications. Moreover, GOV03 raised the SASE and elements of the SASE such as Guided Learning Hours (GLH) and Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS); such issues were raised in nine of the twenty-one interviews (irrespective of sector) by the participants and yet did not form part of the interview questions. NNH04 believed that the delayed implementation of the SASE in 2011 resulted in problems beginning new apprenticeship frameworks in the creative and cultural sector. Similar problems were expressed in retail. The following quote was from an interview also conducted prior to April 2011 when the SASE became statutory:

> I think what has been, I suppose, holding us up is more of the confusion over the message. You know, we're going out to employers and saying 'Hey, watch out for this Specification for Apprenticeships coming out', when actually it's not been rubberstamped as approved yet. It's still in

draft format. So people are developing apprenticeship frameworks, but we don't know what the final signed-off specification says. So it's very much a holding game, so we can only go by what's written into the draft and say to our employers, our training providers, our awarding organisations, 'Look, you know, we're going on this at the moment, but it might all change' [laughs] and that doesn't help anybody. (NNH03a)

NNH03a expressed concern about the meaning of 'off the job' GLH because of its implied meaning that the apprentice must be off the shop floor where the face-to-face business takes place and so requires employers to 'backfill the [temporarily vacant] post' (NNH03a) and thought that conformity to the SASE required the development of 'stealth ways' of addressing the statutory SASE elements. Skillsmart Retail, the then SSC for retail, subsequently published a guidance document on GLH and PLTS in April 2011 setting out the minimum requirements for the sector.

For the retail sector, training needs to be flexible to meet with the demands of employers, as many retail stores are now open seven days a week. EDU05 thought that while the retail sector sees 'the apprenticeship programme as a development tool', the biggest barrier to using apprenticeship is what she repeatedly called 'employer buy-in'. Also, deciding on the appropriate retail frameworks can be more problematic than they appear. Four interviews took place in coffee shops and one interviewee used the interview location as an example of how 'retail' is more complex in terms of choosing appropriate frameworks than it might appear:

Here is a retailer, Costa Coffee; well, they could be doing an apprenticeship as a barista or customer service or in retail. Which is best? [...] If you're a car mechanic, you're only really gonna do automotive engineering. (EMP01)

Single frameworks and pathways tend to be simpler to offer and to administer than cross-sectoral frameworks, as these latter frameworks are more complicated to administer because they require bringing in someone with the appropriate knowledge and levels of skills to act as an assessor (EDU05).

I was told by one participant that Intermediate Apprenticeships are retail's 'bread and butter' (NNH03a), a point borne out in the SFR statistical reports which shows Intermediate Apprenticeship Starts at almost 92 per cent of all apprenticeship Starts for retail in the year 2010/11, with Advanced Level accounting for the remaining eight per cent; there are currently no Higher Level Apprenticeship frameworks for retail (Data Service, Oct. 2012: Apprenticeship Programme Starts by Sector Subject Area, Level and Age (2002/03 to 2010/11)). The lack of progression in retail appears to be a barrier

created from within retail's cultural practices, including the organisation of recruitment, pay and diversity of much of the work:

> I think there's been a very strong emphasis on apprenticeships at Level 2 and they don't see necessarily the value of the Advanced or Higher Apprenticeship in many of the retail industry. (GOV01)

The same interviewee was aware of the pressures on retail and pointed out that Intermediate Level Apprenticeships suited the majority of sales assistant roles which dominate the sector (51 per cent of shop workers – see Chapter 4), so while she believed that there should be Advanced retail frameworks, GOV01 explained:

> It's not like progression in an academic sense [...] You might have to do a bit of 'time served' and wait for the opportunity to come up in your organisation before you can [...] go back and say 'Now I've been promoted can I do the level 3?' [...] And one of the issues there is, again, if you push too much centrally, then that might make some employers reluctant to take people on because [...] they've only got that job and they invest in the training and they're expected to help them and they haven't got that next step to go on to, particularly in small firms. That individual will probably apply for a job elsewhere, so wasted investment. So, it is very, very difficult. (GOV01)

The UK Government takes the view that apprenticeship policy requires sensitivity to sectoral needs. Another interview that took place in the early stages of the research showed the acceptance of government agencies to allow retailers to limit the apprenticeship frameworks in retail to Level 2 and the interviewee recognised the problem of trying to make Advanced Frameworks the norm:

> Retail is an interesting one, because it doesn't fit with the shift towards Level 3 because the majority of the jobs in retail are Level 2. You know, you don't really need a Level 3 to be a sales assistant which is where most of the jobs are. So, for that sector, the kind of shift in focus isn't really, I won't say 'helpful' but it doesn't really fit with the skills needs and the employer needs for that sector, but it's still an important sector because of the numbers that are employed within it and therefore we should not neglect it and indeed there will be opportunities for progression up to level 3 for a certain number of people and beyond. But, say compared with the IT sector which has a definite need for people at Advanced Level, Level 3, straight away, and they want people at that level from the start,

because that's where the skills needs are and what employers want and were the jobs are. (GOV03)

The corollary of GOV03's comment 'it's still an important sector because of the numbers that are employed within it' seems to suggest that the sector has a legitimate reason for limiting its apprenticeship frameworks for the majority of its workers to Level 2, with only a few going on to Level 3 qualifications. This limited approach again chimes with the data mentioned in Chapter 4 that Level 3 Frameworks account for only a small proportion of the total number of Starts in retail apprenticeships. Perhaps, then, it is unsurprising that some people in what might be referred to as the 'traditional apprenticeship' sectors such as engineering and manufacturing, apparently hold strong views about expanding apprenticeship into the 'non-traditional' sectors such as retail or creative and cultural and question whether these new 'apprenticeships' are indeed apprenticeships at all:

> A traditional apprenticeship, strong apprenticeship sector [...] do tend to be rather vocal about apprenticeships. I don't think I'm being unfair to them; they have somewhat critical view of some of the newer, uh, the retail, creative and cultural. Are these proper apprenticeships? And you've heard the phrase even used, you know, 'proper apprenticeships'. Are they 'proper apprenticeships?' (NNH01)

The interviewee continued, stating the case for greater standardisation across all sectors:

> What an apprenticeship needs to cover and all I'm concerned about is to make sure that everyone who goes through an apprenticeship has done that, whether it be white van man around the corner and a massive great multinational manufacturing company, engineering and manufacturing company, they've both got the same overall broad content. And I don't want the engineering apprentices to be able to say to the hairdressing apprentices 'Well, you're not doing a proper apprenticeship', cos they *should* be doing a proper apprenticeship. They should be having the same things and I'm sure in all these things and even in retail, [...] there's a load of stuff which in retail they should understand, other than just doing checkout. [...] There's the law; there's the money side of it; there's the quality issues; there's the Sale of Goods Act; there's a whole range of things, if you've done a 'proper apprenticeship', that you should be able to cover. (NNH01)

Whilst recognising that minimum standards must be maintained across the sectors to ensure consistency in the apprenticeship offer, the following interviewees thought that sectoral differences should also be accepted:

> If you're not gonna have an incredibly regimented, predetermined training programme irrespective, then you're going to say 'No, there should be a generic picture in our argument which is applicable in retail and engineering, but then you need to have a bespoke framework where engineering will hang onto something much closer to 3 years, but retail are pushing 12 months and actually trying very, very hard to move it down beneath that. That's being resisted just now and there clearly are limits and that's a big issue under current debate. But it is the sector; you do need sectoral differentiations, behind a common message. (NNH02a)

To which NNH02b added:

> But what you've got to try and stop is everybody trying to compare them and saying they're all apples, when they're apples and oranges. You know, you can't try and say a Level 3 in retail is the same as a Level 3 apprenticeship in engineering, because they shouldn't be and they aren't. So why try and pretend and make them equivalent? Accept the differences and say go with what's right with the particular one you're involved in. (NNH02b)

There is a problem here, for while the sectors may well be 'apples and oranges', the point made by NNH01 above make it clear that as far as apprenticeship was concerned, there should be high minimum standards applicable across the Levels regardless of sector. Advanced Level Apprenticeship frameworks are communicated as being designed as the equivalent of two A Levels – Level 3 qualifications (Fuller et al, 2010b:2) – and therefore potentially offer alternative routes into Higher Education. Minimum standards for apprenticeship must therefore be sufficient to foster transition into Higher Education, or at least provide high levels of vocational skills across all sectors. While allowing for sectoral differences may be necessary, there are some large retailers that are altering their existing training programmes to apprenticeship programmes that, while adding a few extra elements to the training and thereby attract government funding through direct contracting with the SFA, some good training schemes have been turned into poor quality 'apprenticeships':

> [Retailer #3] had this wonderful training in modules, uh, silver, gold, platinum. Fantastic training. All the things you had to do and you could see all they did was put around it the 'Rights and Responsibilities', the

'Health and Safety' stuff and they made it into a framework for an apprenticeship and they got government funding for it. Now is that right? It's an apprenticeship. The funding comes to them. [Retailer #3] gets some money for doing what they were really doing before. (NNH01)

Conversely, a more benign emphasis was given on the same issue by this interviewee:

I think where retail is unique in one aspect is that the employers, a lot of them already have existing training programmes, you know, they're really conscious of the fact they need to train their employees and have rigorous programmes in place and what retail [...] employers are now doing is their mapping those training programmes to the requirements of the apprenticeship framework, particularly the competency-based qualification. That mapping, the majority will be at Level 2, because that's what their in-house training programmes have been geared to. [...] The next step will be to get them to look beyond [...] the core training, to progression, to the Level 3. But the mapping of the training programmes to the accredited qualifications is quite crucial really, cos it's helped to promote apprenticeships in the workplace. (NNH03b)

The above remarks (NNH01 and NNH03b) show two competing perspectives on the same topic: on the one hand, retailers are seen as deliberately upgrading their existing training programmes to attract state funding; on the other hand, retailers are upgrading their existing training programmes as a way of improving the in-house training programmes.

In the section on the creative and cultural sector, LNH01 outlined her vision for young apprentices in the sector, whereby apprenticeship offered the opportunity to learn and to move into work, in or outside the sector. EDU04 believed that in adding elements such as Employment Rights and Responsibilities and Functional Skills to training programmes, it had the effect of providing workers with 'a much more rounded education that is much more, um, fit for purpose in terms of what [Retailer #2] want to use it for'. However, there was an implicit suggestion in EDU04's comment that apprenticeships in retail should focus on the needs of the particular employer rather than those of the broader sector. EDU04 went on to admit that while an apprenticeship undertaken in, for example, Retailer #2, might be 'contextualised around [Retailer #2]', i.e. how that retailer operates its stores and occupational practices in ways that differ from other retailers, many of the skills were easily transferable:

So till operation, as a simple example, um, as a point of sale operation, essentially the skills are the same, but actually the contextualisation around operating a till in [Retailer #2] is quite different to operating a till in [Retailer #3]. It wouldn't take long for a [Retailer #3] trained till operator to be able to work at [Retailer #2] till, but there would need to be a little bit of learning, a little bit of difference and so it's, you know, it's difficult to say. They are similar, but it's the contextualisation. (EDU04)

Such differentiation of apprenticeships between retailers concerned some interviewees, as there was a danger that Frameworks could become too employer focused, rather than engaging with the needs of the broader sector and then lead back to the issue of 'apples and oranges' once more:

Do you let employers do their own things? [...] Do you start to develop a [Retailer #1] Apprenticeship? And then you get things about the debate we just had before about engineering compared to hairdressing. You change that. You then start to say [Retailer #1] compared to [engineering company]. [...] Hopefully, we can try and get this, not homogenous, but at least they're all the same. Now when employers start to own it all and do it themselves, they'll put their own little bits and bobs on, and make it very [Retailer #1] specific and not retail specific. That's the worry. That's the whole tension. So quality's quite a complicated subject. We want to make sure the providers deliver what they're supposed to deliver, but we want to make sure the providers deliver what they're supposed to deliver but we want to make sure they do it in a context of making sure they're delivering it at a cost, what are the agreed frameworks. (NNH01)

Chapter 4 considered the role of SSCS. This interviewee gave insight into the tensions that SSCs experiences in balancing the needs of the specific employers with those of the sector and the maintenance of the qualifications and training:

I think what we've got to be very, very careful of, because with all this flexibility [...] comes complexity in terms of proliferation in apprenticeship products and, you know, we've got to be very careful that we don't have somebody popping up and saying 'We want an apprenticeship in retail floristry' and 'We want an apprenticeship in retail this, that and the other', because what we've also done is, going back to the qualifications, we built the flexibility into the qualifications. So that retail apprenticeship actually remains the same whether you're specialising in bakery, you know, whatever. [...] Because what we don't want is [different retailers] coming to

us and saying 'Well, we want our own apprenticeships' when actually it's the same as this apprenticeship over here. All they want is the [business name] in the title [...] So, you know, we gotta guide them, I suppose, to what they think it is they're asking for! (NNH03a)

This section has shown the sectors from the perspectives of those whose work takes them into the sectors and exposed some similarities and also the differences they face. Apprenticeship provision is shown as highly complex with the different needs the programme has to take account of. The following section exposes the varying understandings of what defines apprenticeship and then looks at some of the complexities inherent in the programme.

Section Two

In search of a common definition

This second section presents further data taken from the interviews. Some points were made in response to a direct question, while other aspects were raised by the participants. I have selected two elements from the data to present in this section: (i) Defining apprenticeships, (2) Complexities in the apprenticeship programme. The aim of this section is to raise issues that go deeper into the meaning of what apprenticeships are, what they are for and therefore how they are being used.

Defining apprenticeships

The evidence presented in this thesis shows the variety of people and organisations operating in the apprenticeship system; one might assume therefore that all actors *know* what it is they are part. This section considers what the actors *think* they are part of. This issue is therefore of significant importance in contributing to the overall thesis about the roles of the actors within the current apprenticeship programme.

What is particularly relevant to this discussion is that all the participants who provided an answer gave definitions that had at their core the issues of working, learning and the attainment of qualifications. What is perhaps more interesting is how they then added to that core definition. Although it is not the intention to go through the definitions by the groupings given in the previous chapter, the first definitions begin with government. Two participants commented, one off the record and the other willing to state for the record, that they have known government officials and even government ministers to conflate apprenticeships with other training programmes (NNH02a), although I was assured this did not pertain to the then Skills Minister, John Hayes, who had been in the post from May 2010 until he became the new Energy

Minister in 2012. A House of Commons debate held in November 2011 certainly confirmed the existence of a surprising level of ill-informed MPs willing to speak on the subject (Hansard 19th Dec 2011, col.1106). Multiple ministerial changes in recent years have done little to help in this regard. The following three definitions were provided by the participants from the government unit and agencies; the similarity in the descriptions are therefore unsurprising, yet at the same time they offer an insight into the role that government sees for apprenticeships:

> An apprenticeship is a job [...], following an agreed nationally recognised framework of qualifications and work experience. (GOV01)

> As a general description [...] it's an individual who has demonstrated their ability for the role, through both practical and underpinning knowledge. (GOV02)

> It's a job, but you're also getting the benefit of a nationally recognised qualification and more in terms of all the bits that go around that, so you're getting a job, work experience, off the job training, a nationally recognised qualification. You're getting your basic literacy and numeracy, so it's a job with a good quality training programme attached to it. (GOV03)

GOV02's comment was intriguing as it emphasised the skilled worker rather than the apprentice, the difference being that the former is trained for the job, while the latter should, according to the evidence presented in Chapter 2, provide broader skills and education for the individual. Also, GOV01 did later then expand on her definition by separating new workers from existing staff, saying that for new workers apprenticeship was a 'sort of induction into a career pathway'. Another interviewee gave a similar response:

> It is where somebody who is new to the industry is able to go through a specified amount of learning to achieve the skills that recognise them as a skilled operator within that industry. So it's an induction programme, if you like, but it's more than just a basic first week induction, it's the first 12 to 18 month induction to get them from a novice up to a skilled worker. (EDU04)

The notion of apprenticeship as an 'induction' seems to have strayed far from its original intention of developing craft and social skills and even the intentions behind the Modern Apprenticeship programme, whereby young people would receive 'work-based training leading to technician, supervisor and similar level qualifications' (Lourie,

1996:10). To consider apprenticeships as an extended 'induction' as these two participants described seems to limit its potential to offer little more than on the job training, rejecting both its historical heritage and its international standing. The following two examples continued this theme, both expressing definitions focusing on the skills and qualifications, although the latter, while shorter, adds the component of workplace discipline:

> Apprenticeship is a means to gain a nationally recognised qualification that would show future employers that you are competent within the sector to the level that you have studied. [...] And also that it upskills in maths and English, so it's not just sector based, it also it's the core life skills that you need. So you're proving that you're a complete package to a certain extent to the level you've studied. (EDU05)

> [Apprenticeship is] on the job training [...] backed up with the soft skills and the maths and English, with the discipline of work as opposed to a classroom. (EDU02)

Some interviewees went beyond the qualifications and skills and, whether in practice or as an aspiration, came closer to what Fuller and Unwin (2003, 2008) call 'expansive apprenticeships' and the notion of apprenticeship 'comprising a journey through a series of stages of complexity' (Fuller and Unwin, 2009:410).

> For me an apprenticeship is not an apprenticeship unless it's about that thorough, total experience of working in that industry, getting as many facets as it's possible to get at your particular level, I mean, in terms of hierarchical level really, but getting the broadest possible experience of what that industry's about and then refining that further into, and in this particular part of that industry, this is the role that you undertake and these are the very, very specific skills that you need in order to do that and I'm talking real hands-on skills. [Apprenticeship is] the ability to enable learners to go off, learn, trade, do stuff, make mistakes in the workshop or whatever it is. (EDU06)

Similar themes were brought out in the following comment:

> I think [apprenticeship] gives an opportunity to those people who have the talent and probably have the passion as well, to get access where they wouldn't normally get it. It's also very valuable training ground and in some ways it's more valuable than a piece of paper that says you've done however many years under a college 'pretending to rig lights'. (EMP03a)

EMP03a did then correct her use of 'pretending', but the point being made was that the skills were immediately being used in the workplace with all the time pressures that entails, rather than under more remote environments of classrooms. Perhaps unsurprisingly, considering both interviewees participated in the same interview, but the following comment also picked up on the idea of developing people's pre-existing skills and 'passion' for the sector by saying that apprenticeships offered:

> A chance to develop their skills [...] if they show the inclination or passion [...]. So it's giving the opportunity to them and I think bringing up another generation through. (EMP03b)

The following interviewees also spoke of the benefit of working and learning and gaining valuable experiences beyond the scope of the qualification:

> The real value is not that piece of paper [the completion certificates] they get at the end of it; that's a nice touch and the young people want it and the young people's parents want that piece of paper, that qualification, but, the reality is, certainly in our sector, is that, if it's a year, that year's experience, working in the environment where thirty per cent of our staff in our sector are self-employed is the valuable piece. So they make those contacts, they learn their trade, which gives them the opportunity to more freelancing work [...] or gives them the opportunity to create relationships that will enable them to go on and work somewhere else. (NNH04)

NNH04's comment is particularly interesting when compared with the words of LNH03 (reported on page 170) who had observed that the creative and cultural sector was 'very conscious of tangible, practical experience', for NNH04 recognised the same culture of networks within the sector but then saw apprenticeship as a way to work through, rather than against, that culture to create new pathways into the networks that would not have otherwise been available to many young people. To NNH04, apprenticeship offers more than just the training and the end result – the qualification. EMP04 expressed similar ideas:

> They're doing this apprenticeship with the training, then they should gain that sort of extra knowledge at the end of it, cos they've sort of concentrated on it [...], so at the end of the day the apprentice, to me, would come out far better qualified than just taking on a normal trainee. (EMP04)

According to these participants apprenticeship offers the opportunity for apprentices to work, learn and gain qualifications, but also to gain experience within the world of

work, with all the pressures that entails. Some saw potential in apprenticeships beyond the gaining of qualifications; others appeared to think the value lay in the qualifications and certificates the apprenticeships achieve on completion. With such a different range of visions of what constitutes 'apprenticeship', it seems unlikely that apprenticeship can adhere to a single set of standards that maintains its quality. Yet despite many positive attributes seen in the apprenticeship model, there were reservations expressed in the interviews regarding the complexity of the programme. The final subsection continues this theme by considering the perceived complex nature of the apprenticeship system.

Complexity of the apprenticeship programme leading to uncertainty in the system

This final part of this section considers how easy or complex the apprenticeship programme is for the different actors to access. Indeed, with such a high number of actors involved, some apparently carrying out similar work, the programme can sometimes appear overly complex; a complexity generated on multiple levels. Some of the problems can be summarised thus:

- Apprenticeships are often conflated with qualifications.

- Funding is generally channelled through training providers (with the exception being the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE) and employers directly contracting with the SFA) and yet apprenticeship is based on employment. Funding streams can therefore add to the overall confusion as to what apprenticeship is.

- As a result, apprenticeships then become confused and/or conflated with government training programmes for tackling worklessness and/or adult reskilling.

- There is a lack of specificity and general misunderstanding of what apprenticeships are for and what they entail amongst actors at different points in the apprenticeship system.

LNH01 considered the apprenticeship programme as 'unnecessarily complex, but there you go' (LNH01). This statement was made following a discussion of the various actors involved in the system. EMP03a and EMP03b too complained that the seemingly multitude of organisations involved did little to help in this regard. Likewise, EDU02 thought that the system was complex and believed that small colleges were being held back from accessing funds. However, it should be noted that each of these interviews (with LNH01, EMP03a&b and EDU02) were conducted in the early stages of the CENH

and at least one interviewee has subsequently gained considerably more familiarity over the period since this email, while another has gone on to employ an apprentice. The matter of funding and the supporting information was also raised by EDU05, who warned of the importance of staying on top of changes to the policies and in particular the funding mechanisms:

> It is just literally a case of going on the website and you just check and we register for all the updates and stuff like that as well so, it's not just a case of 'Gosh, I haven't looked this week. Has anything changed?' Or a glitch will come in the system so like, a course code number will change when you go to process the paperwork and you'll go back to see what the new one is and you'll see a funding requirement attached to it or the learning hours have changed and they've changed the number of the course, that kind of thing and that's how it works, really. Which is quite scary because you could miss something really easily. (EDU05)

The same interviewee thought the funding linked to the GLHs had made things worse in this respect:

> Since the funding's changed again with the Guided Learning Hours [GLH], it's so much more complicated than it's ever been before. (EDU05)

(See Chapter 4 for an explanation of GLH in apprenticeship frameworks and the requirements for funding)

The previous chapter explained how organisations such as the NAS, SSCs, NSAs and ATAs can, as part of their work, offer assistance to employers in clarifying what is often a complex landscape; EDU04 added a further layer to this 'simplification' process by saying that qualification awarding organisations and training providers can each assist in explaining to employers how certain aspects of the programme work and what the best course of action might be (EDU04). The following training provider ran through a list of actors and elements affecting apprenticeships, concluding that:

> 'Apprenticeships' is a catch-all word used in this country and elsewhere. They've got a long history and people have their own view about them. So even a very senior business leader running a very large company, who may have been an apprentice himself or herself will have a view and sometimes it's useful for them to know what's happening at the coalface, because employers very often and usually work with a training provider and it's useful for them to get the training provider's view of what is going on and some of the issues and problems with it. (EDU01)

Even for people involved in employment and training – and even for those who might have once was as an apprentice at the start of their career – the current programme can be difficult to understand; collaborative working has been shown to overcome some of these problems.

This section has highlighted only a few points of note that provides a complex picture of the apprenticeship programme. Others could easily have been included, such as: the expansion across ages; the length of apprenticeship frameworks; and the poor availability of data. However, given the data presented, what conclusions can be drawn? This final section considers this point.

Chapter discussion

This chapter has provided examples of how actors in the apprenticeship system are simultaneously acting according to 'the script' and yet they might concomitantly be 'improvising', taking the apprenticeship programme and adapting it to their own needs and according to their sectoral and occupational cultures. Through the application of ANT and particularly the notions of 'long distance action' (Latour, 1987) and Rose's (1999:49) related 'government at a distance', the picture that emerges of the apprenticeship system is a programme mediated at different stages in the apprenticeship system by different 'actants' (see Figure 10 below). The inclusion of 'Histories' in Figure 10 provides a way of showing how the history of apprenticeship and the development of sectors and occupational practices over time create the ideas and structures shaping behaviours in the present. It also helps to show the interconnectedness of the different aspects of apprenticeship policy-making. The use of the double-headed arrows shows the two-way nature of each of the levels and the depiction of government at the top is deployed only due to the nature of government-supported apprenticeships in England. And while it is not necessarily the case that each stage will be present to any obvious degree in all instances at all times, I believe the levels are factors that are implicit in many of the actions within the apprenticeship programme.

All of these mediating factors form part of the long distance control through which government policies become practices, thereby shifting from 'action at a distance' (Latour, 1987) to 'government at a distance' (Rose, 1999). Yet, it is through these same mediating forces that improvisation takes place as the programme is filtered by the various mediating forces. 'Action at a distance', as Latour (1987) envisaged, encourages one to think in terms of how people and objects, separated by time and space, can be linked through a mixture of temporal and spatial networks. However,

might it not also be the case that 'the distance' also provides too many opportunities for difference? This question is taken up again in Figures 11 and 12.

Figure 10: Levels of Mediating Factors

Mapping relationships

Using data from the interviews, Figures 11 and 12 present sector-specific maps which update the pre-interview organisational chart shown in Figure 9 (pp.106-7) and show the various bodies through which apprenticeship policy is reaching into local communities in retail and creative and cultural respectively, through multiple actors, including many intermediary agencies, until it reaches the employers and then the apprentices. Both maps focus on the social relationships rather than tracing funding per se, although the connections may also mirror some funding activities (for example, colleges and their relationships with the SFA). Both maps show specific unions linked to the SSCs. For retail, the union is USDAW (Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers), while for creative and cultural the union is BECTU (Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union). Unlike the situation with creative and cultural, Skillsmart Retail operated the NSA for Retail separately from the SSC; hence the SSC and the NSA are connected but presented distinctly.

Retail

Figure 11 shows the linkages between and organisations involved in retail apprenticeships. The purpose of these maps to demonstrate the strength of the relationships as well as the linkages, although it is recognised that each of these relationship 'strengths' may change in different situations; for example retailers with branches in Southampton holding direct contracts with the SFA will have a 'Strong' relationship with the SFA, although based on the absence of retailers in the interviews makes such work conjecture, therefore the relationship is marked as 'Medium'. What is most striking is how the strongest relationships tend to be clustered into short distances. There are few red lines reaching between the departments and government agencies on the one hand and the local actors on the other; although there is, of course, a strong relationship between the SFA and 'Purple College' as funding is channelled to the training provider, while a weak relationship is presented between the SFA and employers with the advent of the AGE funding for SMEs. But it is the shortness of the majority of linkages and relationships that is particularly interesting, for they indicate how policy is taken up through a series of actors, each of which will have their own way of relating to apprenticeship policy.
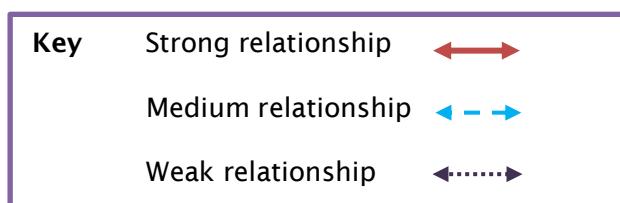
Figure 11: Actor relationship in retail apprenticeships: government to local
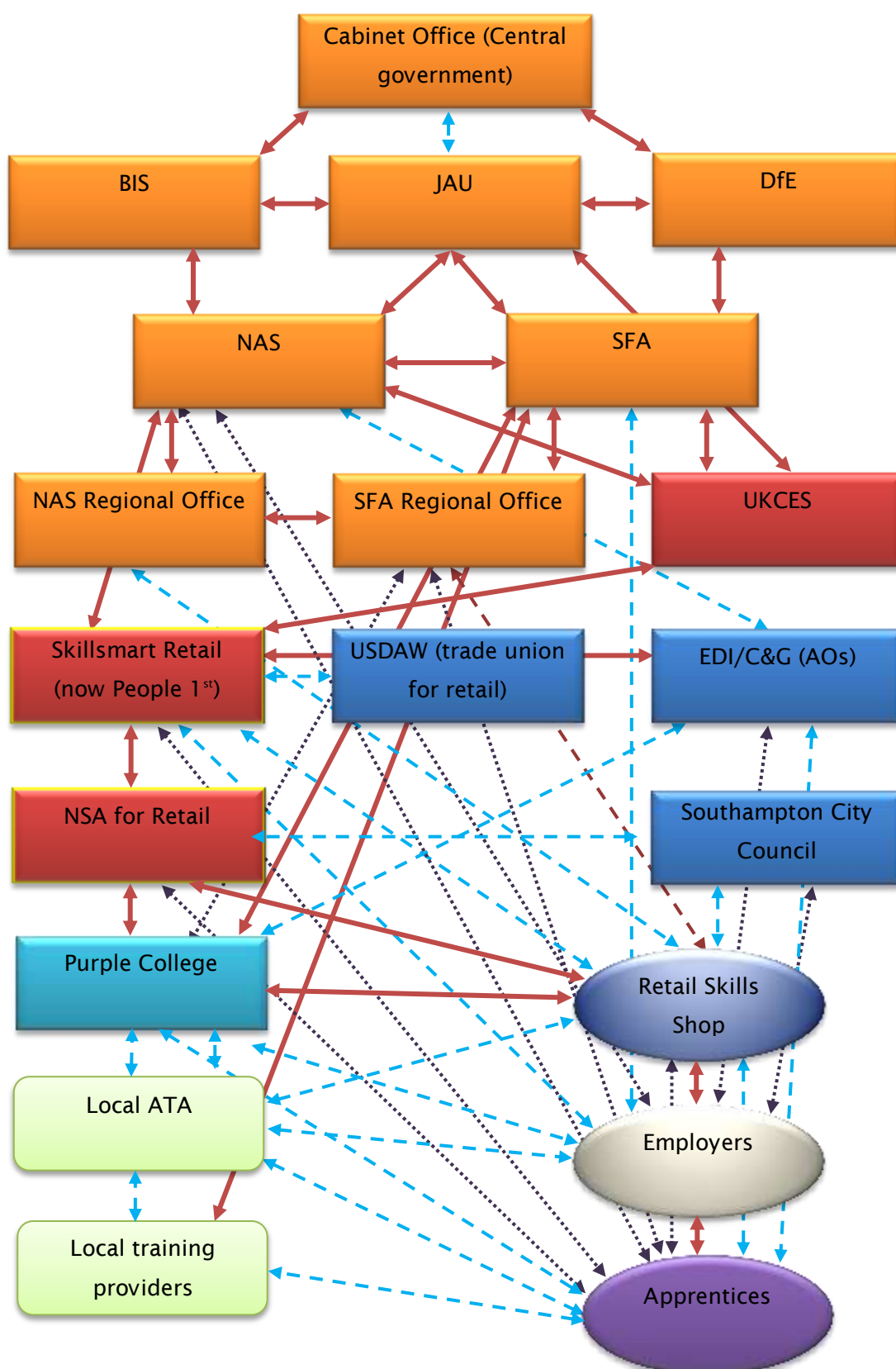
Creative and cultural

Figure 12 provides a similar map for the creative and cultural sector and shares many commonalities with the map retail. However, unlike retail, the SSC and NSA merged into one body and operate their own ATA under the name of the Apprenticeship Training Service, which has a contract with 'Yellow College' (as one of the Core Colleges linked to CC Skills). In place of the Retail Skills Shop, Figure 12 shows the CENH. Here there is a notable difference: the Retail Skills Shop was set up as a business that works with employers by approaching them on a one-to-one basis and also by offering training courses and seminars; the CENH began operating as a collective in which employers and businesses were invited to attend meetings which then resulted in an organic growth of the network and the subsequent apprenticeship programme. Both organisations, though, were created in recognition of the strengths and opportunities offered by the sectors in Southampton and surrounding areas. In line with the reliance on funding streams for the arts businesses in the sector, the Arts Council England has provided support for the CENH and members of the CENH are now working with the ACE and also the UKCES, providing additional networks and knowledge resources.

What both sectors share in common is the general shortness of the stronger linkages, suggesting that the role of filtering organisations is non-sector specific, although the form they take varies according to the sector (e.g. the way the NSA is structured or the presence of the union within each sector).

Figure 12: Actor relationship in creative and cultural apprenticeships: government to local
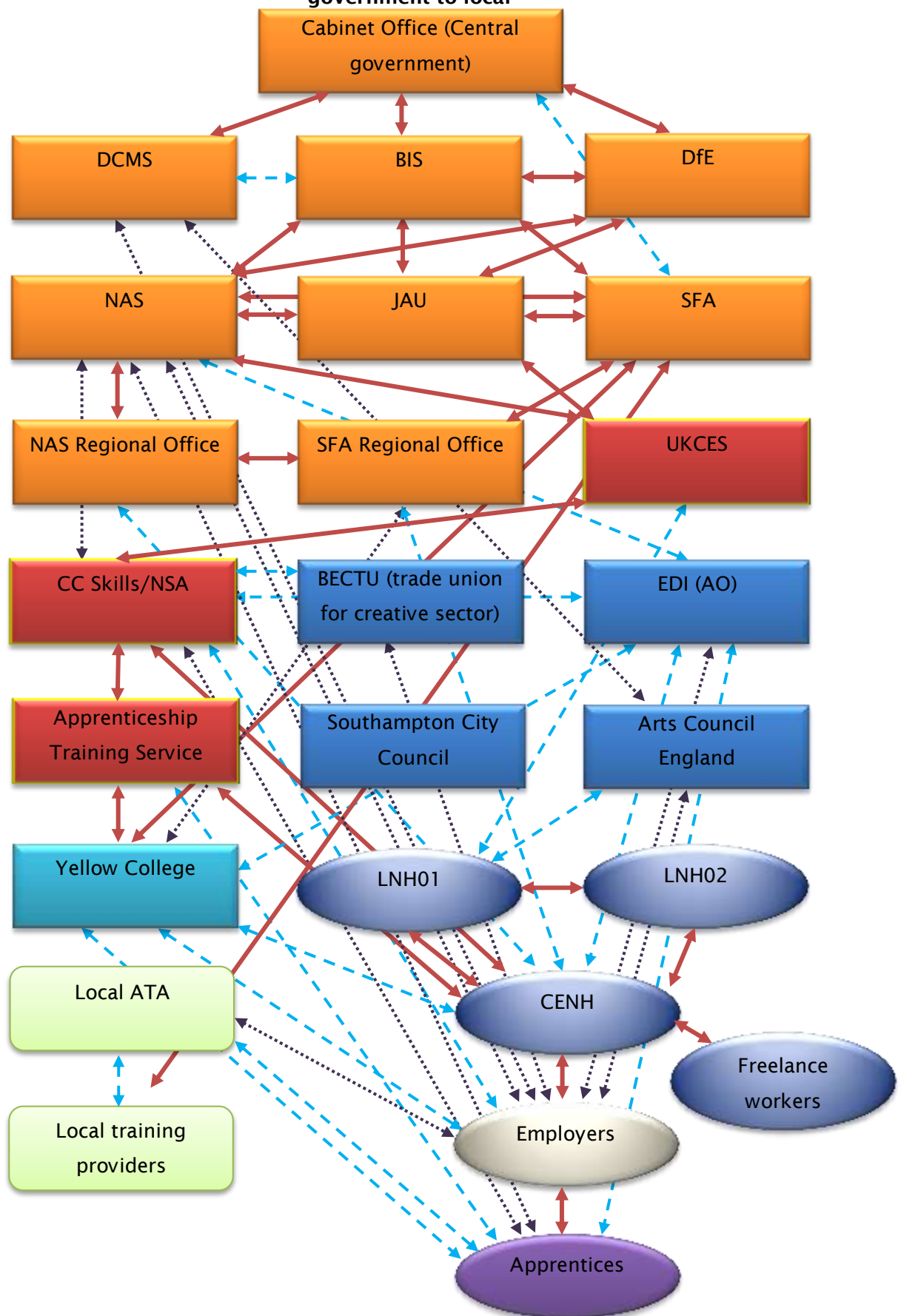
Learning from the mapping

The two networks maps show the realities of government departments and agencies in engaging actively with all actors and levels of the apprenticeship system. For government alone to take on this task would require vast numbers of staff and resources, something which runs against recent political ideologies and recent government departmental budget cuts. Instead, there are a number of intermediary or filtering organisations through which apprenticeship policies are translated into apprenticeships. These filtering organisations provide vital roles not only in the operationalisation of apprenticeship policy, but also in providing services and IAG. In the majority of cases, the filtering organisations will be non-governmental actors, although it is recognised that both local councils and central government departments and agencies can employ apprentices. However, one possibly inadvertent outcome of the work of the filtering organisations is the distancing of any relationship between government and society, except by way of funding. The result is that government departments and agencies effectively 'disappear' into the background, contributing to a sense of invisible actors operating at levels which are accessible only to a select few players.

These relationship maps provide only snapshots and lack nuanced detail. They may also vary according to whether the data informing them are analysed according to funding, governance or the provision of skills or when trying to add the mediating factors as suggested in Figure 10. Yet what the maps provide is further space for understanding the work and place of the actors in the two sectors, particularly in terms of linking national and local actors. The maps also demonstrate the potential for distancing of government from the activities involved in apprenticeship provision as they filter through to local organisations and businesses.

In the same way the two maps in Figures 11 and 12 were created from the interview data, so too can the Apprenticeship Triquetrae be redrawn on the basis of the evidence from the evidence in this thesis. Figures 13 and 14 below show the revised forms of the two Apprenticeship Triquetrae.

Figure 13: Triquetra of Apprenticeship Actors in Revised Form

Cabinet   Treasury

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills   Department for Education

Joint Apprenticeship Unit

National Apprenticeship Service   Skills Funding Agency

Education Funding Agency   UKCES

Apprentices

Employers

Public-sector employers

Multinational companies

National companies

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

Micro-employers

Self-employed workers[28]

Charities/not for profit businesses

Apprenticeship Training Agencies

Training providers

Private training providers

Colleges of further education

NSAs

Employers-SFA direct contract holders

GTAs

ATAs[29]

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[28] As mentioned earlier in this thesis, self-employed workers in specific occupations can now be apprenticed to other skilled self-employed workers (SI1199, 2012), although the details of how self-employed apprentices will operate in practice are still to be determined (October 2012).

[29] ATAs do not necessarily provide training, but act as a buffer between employer, apprentice and training provider. However, the strength of the ATA-training provider relationship increases considerably if the ATA is already a training provider seeking to branch out into the ATA model.

Figure 14: Triquetra of Apprenticeship Factors in Revised Form

<u>Governance</u>

Government (departments, agencies, etc.)

Legislation (employment laws; ASCL 2009; Statutory Instruments)

Funding mechanisms (public and private sources)

Specification for Apprenticeship Standards in England (SASE)

SSCs   **N**SAs   **E**mployers   **S**upervisors/co-workers   **G**TAs   **A**TAs

Trade unions   **T**raining providers & representative bodies   **A**Os

Qualifications   **C**odes of practice   **I**nstruction manuals/workbooks/online resources

<u>Apprenticeship</u>

<u>**Employment**</u>   <u>**Education and Training**</u>

Direct employment with employer   **E**mployers

(traditional employment – full/part-time)   **T**raining providers

Apprenticeship Training Agency (contracted out employment)

Trade unions   **S**upervisors/co-workers

Group Training Associations[30]   **A**Os

Government (departments & agencies)   **I**nstruction manuals

Employer-training provider networks   **S**SCs

                                                               NSAs

                                                               Experiential learning/making mistakes

                                                               GTAs

                                                               Trade unions

                                                               Government (departments & agencies as policy-makers)

                                                               Employer-training provider networks

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[30] Although GTAs do not 'employ' apprentices, some GTAs manage recruitment processes on behalf of their members (Unwin, 2012) and are included under this heading for their role in the processes of employment

Revising the Apprenticeship Triquetrae

The most obvious difference between the two revised Apprenticeship Triquetrae and their original counterparts, which is also apparent when comparing the 'Actors' and the 'Factors' with each other, is the complexity of the picture that emerges, particularly in terms of 'Governance', but also in the provision of 'Employment' and 'Education and training'. What seemed initially simplistic and straightforward in terms of the presenting the 'Actors' in Figure 1 becomes much less apparent in Figure 13; similarly with Figures 2 and 14. Yet the complexity increases when comparing Figures 13 and 14 with each other. This is partly because the 'Factors' are wider than simply the work of the Actors alone. Here the ANT term 'actants' provides a way of understanding the effects of the 'social and non-social elements' (Latour, 1986:275) involved in the provision of apprenticeship and how the two elements (human and non-human) combine through the 'Factors'. However, the two revised forms of the Apprenticeship Triquetrae also show how some human actors perform multiple roles. Government as policy-maker has a direct and active input into, for example, what constitutes 'employment' as far as apprentices, employers and ATAs are concerned. Government is also highly influential in setting out the qualifications and even what constitutes 'learning and education' in apprenticeship frameworks. The details are then taken up by other actors such as SSCs (in writing frameworks) and AOs (in creating qualifications) and in the discussions between SSCs, AOs and training providers (ensuring that qualifications and training are complementary and 'fit for purpose'). Over the course of this thesis, the picture that has steadily emerged is one that shows the complexity of apprenticeship and the ways in which the initial simplicity offered by the first form of the Apprenticeship Triquetra (Figure 1) have developed to expose the complexities of the apprenticeship as a social practice which extend beyond apprenticeship as simply 'learning and earning' (Liepmann, 1960).

So what conclusions can be drawn from the evidence presented in this thesis? The final chapter offers some thoughts and discussion and so draws the thesis to its conclusion.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

Introduction

The preceding chapters in this thesis have demonstrated how England's current apprenticeship system operates as a single site for compound social interactions between multiple actors; as a site for policy-making and policy-acting; and as an entity in which governance/regulation/control sits closely alongside apprenticeship's seemingly core activities of learning and working. This thesis has also shown how apprenticeships have been controlled over the centuries by different parties, whether they were guilds, unions or governments and how the current system of actors has expanded as the government have attempted to use apprenticeship as a means of reaching evermore people engaged in vocational employment. On this basis and coming to the end of this research, if I were to choose just one word to describe the current state of apprenticeship, I would say it is 'complex'. Yet I do so knowing much of the history in which apprenticeship has been used in England and am able to apply that history to the present and realise the continuing relevance of Marx's observation:

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.' (Marx, 1852, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,* cited in Bottero, 2005:57)

It is interesting to note that Jones (1999) replaced 'Men' with 'The individual'; following in his footsteps I would suggest another variation, to say that '*Actors* make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please...'. 'Actors' of all types, from government policy-makers through to large corporations and small businesses are engaged in the apprenticeship system. It is this system of actors and their relationships with the programme that has been at the heart of this thesis. This following chapter brings this thesis to its conclusion, answering the research question set out in Chapter 1 and considering the implications arising from the evidence presented in this thesis. This research question asked:

> What roles do the actors in the English apprenticeship *system* play in the government's apprenticeship programme and what effect does the system have on the government-supported apprenticeships?

The chapters that followed the introduction showed how various systems of apprenticeship have developed over the centuries and how, more recently, the government-supported apprenticeship programme has become not just the central pillar of England's VET system (BIS, 2010a), but reaching out to encompass areas such as the criminal justice system (BIS, 2011d:15). This last use for apprenticeship appears to substantiate claims that apprenticeship and VET in England have increasingly been used for political, social and economic (Keep, 2007; Fuller and Unwin, 2009; Keep, 2013), yet more than that it resonates with the way apprenticeship was used in the early seventeenth century to put young children of parents claiming poor relief to work outside of their local parish. In this sense, apprenticeship has *always* been 'an instrument of [...] policy' Fuller and Unwin's (2009:405). What has changed over time is whether it is the state or non-state actors (and therefore which non-state actors) creating those policies and it is only with the wax and wane of interest in apprenticeship shown by the various parties that the 'other' party – government or non-state actors – have stepped in to keep apprenticeship alive. The problem has then been that of each of the particular actors using apprenticeship for their own means.

From the preceding chapters, three findings are discussed here in greater detail. The first is the level of commodification that has taken place in the apprenticeship system in recent years. The commodification of apprenticeship has been a wholly unexpected finding, but one which has serious implications for government-supported apprenticeships in England. The second finding relates to *the way in which the power of the government has been used* to direct the apprenticeship programme and system. The third finding constitutes that of an observation born out of this thesis' historical narrative: apprenticeship acts as a social barometer reflecting a nation's approach to apprenticeship and skills more generally. This Chapter is divided into two sections, with Section One discussing these findings, before moving on to consider the implications of the research. Section Two provides a summary of the theoretical and conceptual approaches underpinning this thesis.

Section One: Findings and Implications

Finding 1: The Commodification of Apprenticeship

Commodification as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary is:

> The action of turning something into, or treating something as, a (mere) commodity; commercialization of an activity, etc., that is not by nature commercial. (Oxford English Dictionary (OED) online http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/37198 [Accessed 21/02/2013])

Marx (1887), using the term 'The Fetishism of Commodities' (Marx, 1887:46) wrote of how a 'thing' could be transformed into a commodity in two ways. The first was by the conversion from what he called the 'use value' of a product or a service, referring to the social utility of that product/service, to its 'exchange value' or the value the product/service has in the 'free market' (Marx, 1887:26). Secondly, a product or service may also have an exchange value without first having a use value; labour is such an example of this second form (Marx, 1887; Standing, 2009) and is captured in the above OED definition. In terms of labour, commodification entails the removal of ownership and therefore the wresting control of the worker's labour and thereby alienating the worker from the product. So, how then has apprenticeship, usually associated with organised workplace learning and as a social practice in which knowledge transfer takes place through 'situated learning' (Lave and Wenger, 1991), been transformed into a commodity?

Using Esping-Andersen's lead when he said 'It is [...] unlikely that the pure commodity status of the worker ever really existed' (1990:37), I wish to make it clear that I do not believe England's government-supported apprenticeship programme – or the system within which it is so deeply entwined – has *become* fully commodified, but where it is apparent represents major flaws that require further attention. Likewise, the OED's above definition refers to 'treating something as, a (mere) commodity'; the inclusion of 'mere', even if bracketed, tells only part of the story as the process of commodification is a complex one, involving more than simple economic factors.

For example, Halliday (1996) has stated that VET generally in England had already undergone a process of commodification prior to the end of the last century; a decade later, markets were commonplace in the fields of education and training as they were elsewhere (Steer et al, 2007). However, for Halliday, the commodification of VET came about not through strictly economic terms, but by the introduction 'of occupational competence' which served effectively 'as an adjunct to liberal ideals of knowledge and education' (Halliday, 1996:40), essentially ensuring that VET morphed into something *other*, existing outside of vocational-based education and skills. Yet, the form of commodification that has become visible through this thesis is one in which much of the *provision* of apprenticeship has become commodified, involving both a multiplicity and interactivity of actors and factors engaged in the business and the provision of apprenticeships. Through a combination of government policy and the introduction of markets, responsibility for apprenticeship has fragmented between many actors, in effect compartmentalising responsibility for apprenticeships between the actors, many of whom are engaged in the *business of apprenticeships*. If the introduction of international markets into higher education has been expressed as a cause for concern under the World Trade Organisation's 'General Agreement on Trade in Services' (GATS)

(Knight, 2003), then the same concern should be expressed of the provision of apprenticeship through national markets. Apprenticeship, like labour and in keeping with education generally VET, is not intrinsically a commercial venture, but a social activity (even allowing for the different power plays that have been discussed). Yet, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests that apprenticeship in England is being increasingly distanced from its social roles through the confluence of processes which have been introduced, by various governments, over time. These many and varied processes include: i) the introduction of NPM into the public sector and general education which began in the 1980s; ii) the refocusing of apprenticeships under the government-orchestrated MA in the 1990s; iii) the overriding desires of governments of different political parties to expand apprenticeships into 'new' (for apprenticeship) sectors, irrespective of whether apprenticeship is suitable for each sector; iv) the rebranding of the MA into 'Apprenticeships' in the first decade of the twenty-first century (in which 'apprenticeships' were redefined to include Level 2 qualifications); v) the availability of public funds for training providers, the majority of whom are private providers rather than colleges (see Charts 1 and 2 of this thesis); vi) the ability of some larger businesses to contract directly with government by delivering their own training and receiving public funds for doing so (Table 8); vii) the UK Government's tracing of training provider funds as a measure of 'quality'; viii) the introduction and gradual (ongoing) demise of Sector Skills Councils and ix) the failed attempt to introduce PLAs and, more recently and linked to this last process, the introduction of ATAs. As if these aspects were insufficient, to this list can be added: a lack of a single workable definition and goal for apprenticeship, which has allowed the development of workplace training programmes to be called 'apprenticeships'; splitting responsibility for apprenticeship between two government departments ('education' – DfE – and 'business' – BIS) depending on the age of the apprentice; the focus by the NAS/SFA (and thereby by central government) on expanding the numbers of new apprentices and the former Minister for Skills' vision of the NAS role in sales and marketing; plus the view in academia that education, and apprenticeship in particular, was being used to achieve broader state policy goals (Fuller and Unwin, 2009; Braun et al, 2010; Brockmann et al, 2010). All of these examples together have created an increasing number of organisations involved in the provision of apprenticeships, a selection of which have been made visible in this thesis, and the creation of markets within apprenticeships. The network maps shown in Figures 10 and 11 in the previous chapter provided examples of what the networks of apprenticeship actors looked like for each of the two sectors. The point of these maps was to draw attention to the distance between government and apprentices; essentially hiding government from view while it is still very much involved in shaping the activities of the apprentices and the many actors in between. Yet the maps also illustrate the point that by placing

greater numbers of actors into the network without providing suitable partnership fora through which the actors can interact and work together, there is a potential to distance apprenticeship from its main aim of educating workers. So *why* is commodification happening?

The modernisation of public services has been portrayed as a necessity since the introduction of NPM in the 1980s and the development of markets in public services in both the Labour Government (Steer et al, 2007) and the present Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government. Arguably, apprenticeship has been part of the public service since at least 2009, when the NAS was created, although its public sector roots reach back to the MA of the 1990s and further still to the VET policies of 'the late 1970s' (Fuller and Unwin, 2009:406). Moreover, as apprenticeships have increasingly become central to the government's VET policies (and beyond), it stands to reason that apprenticeship should reflect actions observed within VET more broadly: the opening of markets in apprenticeship and the focus on narrower occupational competencies rather than developing more holistic levels of knowledge in and through employment (Halliday, 1997).

The matter of *why* commodification is happening requires looking at all of the evidence provided in this thesis and summarised above. Certainly, the availability of public funding and the introduction of market forces into apprenticeship have been powerful determinants in the current state, but economic factors alone cannot be entirely to blame. What I suggest instead is that the incremental policy-making that has occurred over the time since the MA was introduced has paid lip service to the greater good that apprenticeship – at its best – can offer, but has focused too much on expansion rather than depth. Apprenticeship has not only developed as 'an instrument of State policy' (Fuller and Unwin, 2011), but has done so without any clear objective.

I do not suggest, either, that the private sector cannot or should not be involved in the provision of services through which apprenticeship programmes are provided. Indeed, there are examples provided in this thesis in which partnerships of different private and private/public organisations appear to collaborate positively, although I only attended meetings of one such partnership – the local CENH. However, the ad-hoc partnerships that have been apparent in England to date lack a robust model and structure to follow that can help to raise the quality of apprenticeship programmes and partnerships in England generally and prevent businesses from using the apprenticeship programme as an income source. If further commodification is to be halted, then I suggest such partnerships need to be considered in more detail, for it seems it is these collaborative, perhaps localised, models that offer the template for which England's apprenticeship programme and system could benefit and thereby

provide all apprentices and employers with well-structured programmes capable of raising skills whilst developing strong networks of actors. It is interesting to recall an observation made twenty-five years ago:

> Government has a key role to play in encouraging and ensuring coordination, as well as in achieving consistency in those areas for which it has direct responsibility. There is an uneasy tension between the need to achieve this and the desire to obtain, wherever possible, the benefits of the market. (Keep and Mayhew, 1988:xiii)

Streeck (1989:89) likewise warned against the problems of 'the unbridled pursuit of self-regarding interests', yet in many cases this is what has happened as businesses altered their behaviours to attract large public funds made available to encourage growth. Placed in terms of the 'Apprenticeship Triquetra' the effect of this commodified status is to break or at least weaken the links between the actors. The same actors remain in place – government, employers, training providers – but instead of interacting as a system in the provision of apprenticeships, there is a risk that each actor acts in accordance with their own interests. The triquetra is then replaced with a triangle, as in Figure 15, in which the apprentice becomes an adjunct to the programme and system, rather than being at the centre of it and the actors have a series of relationships with each other, but which fail to work with any broader meaning. Any gestaltic possibilities are stultified as interactions between actors are fragmented into a series of smaller groups with little reference to a 'bigger picture'.
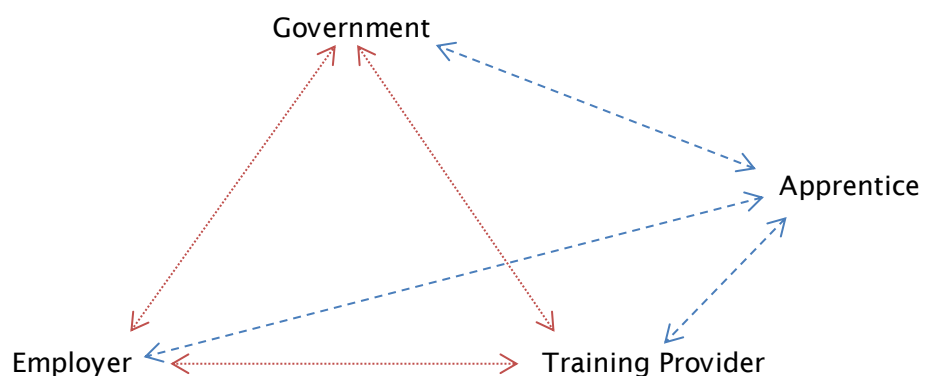
Figure 15: Fragmented Apprenticeships

I stated above my belief that commodification is not absolute and that instances of non- or low-commodified apprenticeships exist, where the focus begins with what apprenticeship can offer employers and individuals alike. Indeed, nearly all of the participants in this research expressed some form of end benefit for the apprentice in providing a good service and a sound apprenticeship programme. Obviously, there have been reports of poorly managed and ill thought-out training programmes

masquerading as apprenticeship (see Hansard, 19 Dec 2011), but so too is there an underlying recognition that apprenticeship can be beneficial.

Thinking about this fragmented form of apprenticeship using the theatre metaphor, it is as if the actors still interact with each of the other actors on stage yet each meeting is performed to a different script. The actors 'have their exits and their entrances', but they do so according too much to the improvisational method of production, risking the play developing in ways that, to paraphrase Colbert, 'is often as much a surprise to *them* as it is to the audience'. So what does this say about 'power' in the apprenticeship system?

Finding 2: The ultimate paradox of governmental power?

This thesis has shown the complexity of England's apprenticeship system; a site for multifaceted social and power relations which have been largely hidden from view until now. This section considers the role of power amongst the actors in the apprenticeship system and considers the thesis' second major finding: the *way governmental power has been used* to develop the apprenticeship programme.

With reference to the title of Keep's (2007) chapter 'The Multiple Paradoxes of State Power in the English Education and Training System', this section questions the wisdom of the way in which government has used its vast power and resources to shape the apprenticeship programme. With change for England's apprenticeship programme once on the agenda as the Coalition Government prepares its response to the Richard Review (2012) and the Prime Minister promises to make apprenticeship *the alternative* to Higher Education ('Apprenticeships to be 'the new norm', says David Cameron', BBC News, 11 March 2013), it is worth considering this point in more detail.

What has become clear in this thesis is how the 'ownership' of apprenticeship in England has passed to different actors at various times (employers, unions, guilds, government). Until the MA in 1994-5, the UK Government had adopted a laissez-faire attitude to apprenticeships in England (leaving aside their involvement in the provision of training programmes since the 1970-80s; see Keep, 2006; Fuller and Unwin, 2009). Yet since the MA, successive UK Governments have increasingly brought apprenticeship to the centre of the English VET system, whilst simultaneously chasing the elusive 'holy grail' of *Employer Ownership* of apprenticeships and training (see Fuller and Unwin, 1998, 2003; Spielhofer and Sims, 2004, for academic references on this topic. For government references, see: Leitch, 2006; DIUS, 2008; Hansard, 19 Dec 2011: Column 1108; UKCES, 2011b). At present, despite this rhetoric of employer and/or individual 'ownership', the government continues to wield considerable power over both the apprenticeship programme and the system, evidenced by the rapid

changes presented in this thesis that have taken place within the last decade, but which have been particularly evident in the time this research has been conducted.

Yet within the growth of and changes to the apprenticeship programme lays a paradox of governmental power and it is within this paradox that the second major finding becomes apparent. In 2007, the then Labour Government published a Green Paper entitled *The Governance of Britain* in which they said that 'power remains too centralised and too concentrated in government' (2007:10). (A follow-up White Paper was published in 2008.) This statement is interesting and relevant here as in the apprenticeship programme it would seem too little has changed in this respect, resulting in the paradoxical situation that the government *lacks* power because of the way it has used its vast resources to *exert* power, to force growth by offering money and by promoting apprenticeship as *the* vocational education model for sectors, businesses, individuals and the nation. With government success too often measured by increased numbers of apprentices and businesses in the system, attention has been drawn away from the quality of the training on offer. In order to expand the numbers of apprentices too much flexibility has been introduced for the non-governmental actors to act in ways that may not have the apprentices' needs as their overall concerns. I do not suggest that the increased interest in apprenticeship from different actors is wrong, but their reasons for participating can be questioned.

The evidence presented in this thesis shows that the apprenticeship programme, originally intended to be run by industry with the support of government (Targett, 1994), has in recent years been micro-managed by central government, as the government reacts to perceived problems, resulting in the creation of new quasi- and non-governmental actors. At the same time, there have been instances of people and organisations working together organically, as was the case with the CENH reported in this thesis or the creation of the Retail Skills Shops, both of which have arisen to deal with local sector-based needs. Power is not the exclusive possession of government and many instances have been given in this thesis in which non-governmental actors have expressed their own power, whether those are large businesses shaping apprenticeship programmes to suit their business and training needs and/or using their size to attract funding through direct funding arrangements with the SFA or small businesses simply not wanting to take on apprentices or businesses of any size not wanting to be involved unless government funding is made available. In its effect, this last example is business' ultimate power resource as employers essentially say 'pay or we will not play', thus throwing the Coalition Government's (now) flagship VET policy into disarray, or at least weakening the numbers and potentially providing negative political publicity. Power has also been in the hands of those representative organisations that have the capacity not only to interact with policy-makers but to

invite ministers and policy-policy makers to their meetings. It seems that, as outlined above, power has been expressed by all sides, yet I suggest that there has been much mismanagement of the apprenticeship programme by central government; in effect, governments of different political perspectives have used their huge power in ways that have driven the very self-interested activities that Streeck (1989) warned against and continued the 'uneasy tension' between stability and market fluidity (Keep and Mayhew, 1988).

There can be little doubt that what exists now in England and has existed for some years is a *government-led* apprenticeship programme. Yet history has shown that the dominance of one or two dominating lead actors (at varying times either guilds and/or unions) has had dire consequences for apprenticeship as a social learning activity and ultimately for those people who have relied upon apprenticeship as a source of skill transmission and development of social and occupational advancement. Whereas expert opinion in the early 1960s called for government intervention in apprenticeships and VET (Liepmann, 1960; Venables, 1961; Williams, 1963), current academics have recommended the creation of 'apprenticeship hubs' formed of local and regional organisations 'to act as guardians of apprenticeships' (Fuller and Unwin, 2011; see also Dolphin and Lanning, same publication). Such a move would see the return of collective responsibilities for apprenticeships at the local level that were once undertaken by guilds and JPs (although, hopefully without the protectionist stance the guilds once took. See Chapter 2 of this thesis) and also, more recently, attempted through the work of the Manpower Services Commission in the 1970s and 1980s (Keep and Mayhew, 1988).

Collective approaches based on partnerships of varying organisations in England are not uncommon and this thesis has described examples of such partnerships by way of the CENH, or large organisations such as the AoC, the AELP, the TUC or even as meetings held between government and major players to address particular problems in the apprenticeship programme and system. The problem is that such partnerships either appear fleetingly, like those partnerships described in the arts, or they form only for specific purposes and therefore lack any larger organising structure or strategy. The UKCES aspires to address this point through its 'social partnership' approach (UKCES website, 'About Us'), the effects of which remain to be seen.

In summary, there are a large number of actors now involved in apprenticeships, but the main criticism must be that, despite the huge bureaucratic and financial power available to the central government, there has been a lack of coordination on the part of government and a lack of a coordinated strategy as new actors and policies are brought in to deal with specific problems. From the 'hands off' intention (Targett,

1994), governments have increased their grip on apprenticeship to the point where currently the government's presence is at once too strong (they have too much power) and yet often invisible (the length of the networks hide their presence). The result is a piecemeal attempt to direct apprenticeships in England, which have allowed weaknesses to develop and embed in the system.

Finding 3: Apprenticeship as a social barometer

This is another interesting aspect of England's apprenticeship system: whether in the hands of the private sector or the state, apprenticeship has reflected the various political, industrial and social zeitgeists over time. Chapter 2 set out the historical developments that have led to the present situation, but to explain this finding I will summarise the huge changes in this single paragraph potted history.

From at least the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, the guilds sought to use apprenticeship to protect craft workers within the parishes. The growing power of the local parishes, towns and cities of England in Elizabethan times resulted in a mass of local bye-laws, which were then brought under state control with the development of the Statute of Artificers 1563. State legislation (the Poor Law) allowed some employers to relocate the children of families claiming social relief. With industrial and social change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, apprenticeship legislation was seen by some as too restrictive, which led to the apprenticeship clauses of the Statute being challenged and repealed in 1814. The resulting private sector control also reflected a broader era of *laissez faire* government (Harris, 2004:150), but this time also allowed private enterprise to flourish. Unions gradually took the place of the guilds and apprenticeship was at once used by the unions to strengthen their own positions (which lasted into the latter half of the twentieth century) while the fledgling state education system took over much of the education which apprenticeship formerly provided (Howell, 1877; Bray, 1909). Two world wars and significant changes in social and industrial life, plus the continued recalcitrance of trade unions to relinquish grip on apprenticeships (Streeck, 2011) saw the model lose favour once more. This position was then not helped by the increased government policy-making and direct management of VET that has been noted from the mid-1960s onwards and was particularly prevalent in the 1980s (Keep and Mayhew, 1988). The introduction of the MA, despite the best intentions of its architects, continued the state/non-state divisions which have been further promulgated through government policies and employer unwillingness to take control of apprenticeships and VET. In all, England has a history in which there seem always to be 'two sides' competing for control of apprenticeship. Seen in this light, apprenticeship in England has nearly always been an entity of social control and of regulation with different parties sitting in the 'Director's

chair' at different times.   Unlike many international apprenticeship systems (INAP, 2012), both the dual system and the social partnership models have failed to materialise. Given its history, perhaps this is no surprise.

Following 'the script' or improvisation?

In the opening chapter, I postulated that apprenticeship was a site for both acting according to 'the script' (the programme) and also for improvisation (within the system). This thesis has provided some evidence indicating that 'improvisation' takes place various ways and in this final chapter I provided a brief account of how the oversight and management of apprenticeship has moved between different types of organisations and has involved opposing 'factions' (notable in the lead-up to the removal of the apprenticeship clauses of the Statute of Artificers 1563). As already discussed, the current situation is one in which the UK Government creates policies and programmes designed to deal with specific problem areas, e.g. low programme starts in specific sectors or occupations or the low numbers of small employers taking on apprentices; and yet government can be taken by surprise, as appeared the case with the rise of 'quality' as a government priority, bringing forth Colbert's (2006) quotation cited in Chapter 1 in which he said 'What happens in a scene is often as much a surprise to you as it is to the audience'.

Markets have developed within the apprenticeship system, largely, but not entirely, through government intention. Some non-governmental organisations have the power to meet with government representatives to lobby on behalf of their members and to apply pressure to oppose proposed changes. Similarly, some businesses, particularly the larger organisations, are able to adapt existing training models to include the requirements necessary to register their courses as 'apprenticeships', in doing so reducing their training budgets through accepting public funding. Issuing Authorities write apprenticeship frameworks according to the requirements of the SASE as well as sectoral and occupational needs (including NOS) and cultures, the mix of which leads to frameworks of varying degrees of educational attainments and requirements; e.g. GLH; Functional Skills. But the same flexibility which can produce such variations also allows for training programmes to be created which reflect local and sectoral employment conditions; for example, the setting up of the Retail Skills Shop or the CENH. Finally, ATAs are looking to expand their business *outside* of the apprenticeship system, while those businesses *outside* of the ATA model (e.g. training providers and NSAs) may be looking to expand their business operations to *incorporate* the ATA model into their own work.

Government itself is not immune from improvisation, reacting to the activities taking place elsewhere on the stage and creating policies on the basis of such leads. This conclusion indicates that although government remains in the position of 'Director, Producer and Script Writer', there are still areas, including policy making, in which all members of the 'theatre' are reacting to the moment, or due to a particular opportunity. This brings the chapter to a suitable place from which to address the second part of the research question.

What effect does the apprenticeship system have on government-supported apprenticeships?

The expansion of the apprenticeship system has created problem areas for the programme: employers not wanting to take on apprentices; some young people being unable to enter into apprenticeships and the growth of apprentices aged 19 and over; problems of the variable quality of programmes; lack of understanding about apprenticeship amongst actors. The effect of the system has created policies which have tried to address these problem areas with the result that new actors have been introduced into the system. It was in the system that issues of quality arose, requiring changes to the programme such as direct funding to employers through the AGE granting programme and the Statutory Instrument (1199) coming into force in 2012. Yet it was also the system, permitted and encouraged by the programme and the policy-makers, that allowed some large training providers to receive huge sums of public money to provide apprenticeship training and qualifications, in this particular instance providing an unequivocal example of how apprenticeship has been used as an economic commodity with a highly profitable exchange value. I raise this last point to show that a) the government's trust in channelling funding into training providers rather than employers was misguided, essentially providing too much power to training providers (thus unbalancing the Apprenticeship Triquetra), and b) that the system can at once feed back into the programme to change policies, while being used to support government policies (e.g. increased apprenticeship 'Starts'). As I noted in the above discussion on ANT, the activities of the actors in the apprenticeship system provide a feedback loop through which the programme is revised. Yet, as noted with Figure 15, such a reactionary perspective risks creating a system unable to work to its optimum level.

The following two subsections discuss the implications for the two sectors.

Retail

I acknowledged in Chapter 5 that I felt the dearth of retail participants risked weakening my findings where retail is concerned. However, the multi-method approach has allowed me to draw some conclusions on the suitability of apprenticeship for the retail sector. On this basis, I find the following.

Retail is a problematic sector for apprenticeships, for it is a sector which has experienced high growth rates for apprentice numbers and holds the potential to reach out to a large body of low and unskilled workers; in doing so 'rais[ing] the bar', as one interviewee expressed it, for retail workers, for retail businesses and for the sector as a whole. Yet the way in which retail occupations are structured mean that they have been heavily balanced in favour of Level 2 qualifications and perceived as having a lower academic value and being too narrowly designed than similar level apprenticeships in other sectors (e.g. engineering and accountancy, as some participants in this thesis have suggested). (See Fuller and Unwin, 2008 and also the INAP (2012:9) report for more on the dangers of narrowly structured occupations and the modularisation of the 'qualification and certification system'.) These are not insurmountable problems, but they would require huge changes in the thinking of retailers towards training and the acceptance of the need to focus on skills rather than qualifications in the sector. For such a high employment area of industry, this would also require radical rethinking of how apprenticeship can be used for progressive training, rather than in terms of extended 'induction' training. The alternative is that retail and the UK Government find other, more appropriate, forms of skills provision and development that suits the specific needs of the sector, yet I feel that would be a great loss given the benefits of 'expansive' apprenticeships (Fuller and Unwin, 2008) in developing both the knowledge and the skills of their trade.

Creative and Cultural

While retail has risen swiftly up the apprenticeship data performance tables in recent years, the same cannot be said of the creative and cultural sector, which as a single sector has been slow to take apprenticeships on-board, despite apprenticeships having been used in many of its subsectors over the centuries and, as discussed in Chapter 4, the MA programme included some of these subsectors in its original intakes of sectors. The gradual growth in numbers of apprentices and the development of frameworks (see Table 9 of this thesis) suggests that although acceptance of apprenticeships has met with employer resistance, those apprenticeship programmes that are undertaken are being given time to embed in the sector. The numbers of 'Starts' and 'Achievements' continue to rise, although such increases remain slow. Yet

there are many, particularly young, people who want to enter the sector but have found the cultural resistance to normal routes into employment unavailable and for whom apprenticeship can provide a valuable entry route. Indeed, participants in this study recognised the value of apprenticeships in bringing a new cohort of young people in the sector and the CENH was one of a number of localised attempts at redressing the imbalance in this respect. Like retail, the creative and cultural sector has systemic barriers against the widespread uptake of apprenticeships, namely the prevalence of micro-employers, large numbers of self-employed workers and a reliance on graduate entrants to many occupations with the sector.

Implications from the research for policy and practice

The UK Government has over the years increasingly taken direct responsibility for apprenticeships in England, promoting apprenticeships as the answer to many of today's problems with skills and national productivity. Yet there has been a focus on increasing apprentice numbers which have arisen alongside the actors in the support structures. What has been overlooked, it seems, is the strength of relationships between the actors which has been central to apprenticeships of all types – institutional or otherwise (Lave and Wenger, 1991). If apprenticeship is really going to provide something valuable to individuals, employers and the national interest alike, then there needs to be strength within those networks, rather than an adherence to expansion.

The UK Government set an agenda to involve different (although limited) bodies in the production of workplace skills and vocational education (BIS, 2010), yet what this research has shown is that despite instances of networks of actors working together, there is no meaningful broader system in which partnerships operate. The apprenticeship system is, overall, fragmented as many institutional actors work in relatively limited, sometimes select, networks, yet the UK Government has the power to provide the fora through which to bring these disparate actors together. The lessons learned from this thesis show that it is not the government's job to lead apprenticeships, but to provide the *environments* in which others can contribute and develop apprenticeship programmes according to local needs, but which take account of occupational requirements and high minimum standards.

My research shows that the government's funding arrangements are only partially responsible for the current state of affairs; that economic factors alone are insufficient to have created the present state of institutional apprenticeships in England. Successive UK Governments since the MA programme began in 1994-5 have sought to use the identity of 'apprenticeship' as something to be valued, but they have not

always made it clear just what is meant by the term in the twenty-first century nor by the policies that have been created. Apprenticeship has suffered from a lack of definition that begins with Government, for it is they – the policy-makers, the departments, ministers and civil servants – who are at the heart of the drive to increase the numbers of apprentices in England. Success has been too easily measured in numbers with insufficient attention being given to the ways in which good quality apprenticeships can be delivered which will make a difference to all the actors in the system. Indeed, another problem of the current system is that the piecemeal approach to apprenticeship policy-making has lost sight of the situated nature of learning that differentiates apprenticeship from other forms of VET. Yet, apprenticeship, for all the glamour that is currently being used to portray it, has always been a varying entity, with a past that has shown the best and the worst working, regulatory and social practises (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Lane, 1996; Ryan and Unwin, 2001).

At a conference presentation (Journal of Vocational Education and Training 9th International Conference, 2011), I likened apprenticeship to the 'Ford Fiesta' motorcar. Over the 30+ years in which the Ford Fiesta has been around, there have been multiple models, each new version reflecting the previous model yet each model revised for the new age in which it is to be marketed. Yet if one compares the images of the latest model with the first, it is difficult to discern any similarity between the two. Apprenticeship might be considered in the same way. Having undergone many revisions throughout its long and international existence, is it right to say that apprenticeship in England today retains sufficient similarities to the apprenticeships that once existed? This is not to say that apprenticeship has always been a model of excellence in the transmission of craft skills as the evidence provided in this thesis highlights. Given media reports (Merrick, FE Week, June 2011; Murray, *The Guardian*, February 2012), one might say that both of these faces of apprenticeship still exist. But, like the Ford Fiesta, apprenticeship has been often reinvented to operate in accordance with the zeitgeist, the 'spirit of the day' and so there is much to learn about modern-day England from the apprenticeship system.

This chapter will now turn to a discussion on the role of *governmentality* and ANT in this thesis and on the apprenticeship system.

Section Two: The apprenticeship system – theories and concepts

The above discussions have been elucidated through an underlying method of inquiry informed by the theories of *governmentality* and ANT. Together, these two theories have provided different yet related ways of understanding further the means by which

the apprenticeship has been used as a way for the UK Government in recent years and non-governmental actors at other times to manage 'populations'; e.g. young and un/low-skilled workers; employers; training providers and others. The economic tools available to the modern government are powerful factors in shaping the system and increasing the numbers of employers, apprentices and other actors, but they are insufficient on their own. That is why the annual 'National Apprenticeship Week' exists and why the UK Government have now made apprenticeship *the* model of VET in England.

Developing a '*governmentality*' approach has emphasised the role of government as the primary actor operating through 'the population'; the actors who are engaging with the apprenticeship programme. On this basis, apprenticeship, as discussed above, is therefore an instrument of control as much as it is a method of knowledge production (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Fuller and Unwin, 2009). Government has become 'Director, Producer and Script Writer' in England's apprenticeship system, employing economic mechanisms of funding and applying non-economic 'techniques of government' (Foucault, 1978) to raise the idea of apprenticeship as a viable proposition for the multiple actors currently engaging with the programme. It is the combined activities of governmental and non-governmental actors who are providing apprenticeships, creating 'active subjects' (Morison, 2000:119) caught up in the processes, discussions and activities which shape the apprenticeship system. This line of thinking also suggests that 'active subjects' have been bound up in the creation of the aforementioned commodified form of apprenticeship; yet as I previously suggested, I believe the processes of commodification have largely been hidden from government and non-government actors alike. Indeed, the application of ANT highlighted how the UK Government adopted a pre-existing model of learning – apprenticeship – which it has subsequently adapted further to suit the government's – and, arguably, society's – needs. The interrelationship between government and apprenticeship as a model of learning is therefore as important as the interrelationships between the actors. In order fully to understand the relationship between the current apprenticeship programme and the apprenticeship system, it was necessary to reach back into medieval history to the time when institutional apprenticeships were first employed and then regulated through the guilds and local statutes.

The historical element is therefore vital to understanding the present and ANT provided the lens through which it is shown that networks do not simply operate in the present, but link the past with the present through occupational and sectoral cultures and practices. Yet more importantly, power exists also in the *idea* of apprenticeship, that apprenticeship is inherently a positive model of VET. In using the historical *idea* of apprenticeship and in publishing statistical data showing the growth in the numbers

of apprentices each year, the government is able to add its weight behind the drive to develop new ambitions for apprenticeship. Yet, whereas in the opening chapter I suggested that the Triquetra denotes both synergy and gestalt, it appears that the Apprenticeship Triquetra is not reaching this optimum stage and so, while many actors are working within the system, only a few examples in which meaningful partnerships are taking place and where synergy and gestalt are truly being fulfilled, leading to the situation outlined in Figure 14 in this present chapter. Fuller and Unwin's (2011b) suggestion of 'apprenticeship hubs' as a way to mitigate these problems will have limited effect unless government places sufficient trust in these bodies and partnerships.

What *governmentality* and ANT used together in this thesis achieve is to expose aspects of England's apprenticeship programme and system that were invisible through the lenses of the Apprenticeship Triquetrae alone. Together and in conjunction with the Apprenticeship Triquetrae they demonstrate the 'techniques of government' (Foucault, 1978) employed in expanding the apprenticeship programme and the processes of 'translation' (Latour, 1986; Braun et al, 2010) through which the apprenticeship programme is transposed into reality for employers and apprentices. Therefore, the current situation in which apprenticeship finds itself is one in which all actors have contributed; not just those in government but those actors outside of government, too. The problem, or paradox as I stated above, lays in the way in which governments have chosen to develop the programme and use the resources at their disposal. Apprenticeship began outside of government and for most of its history continued to do so without direct government participation, which is a relatively recent activity. Governmentality therefore shows that governments can concomitantly work through the populations and yet still make errors; the error here being the failure to develop a cohesive (and often coherent) apprenticeship programme which fully utilises the non-governmental actors. In Chapter 2 of this thesis I pointed out how Liepmann (1960) believed government could act as a modifying force in apprenticeships, breaking the agreements that existed between the unions and industry in the mid-twentieth century. I suggest here that it is now the UK Government that has divided apprenticeship by failing to act as a unifying force and yet wielding too much power.

The Apprenticeship Triquetra

It was the conceptualisation of the Apprenticeship Triquetra, used initially as a description rather than with any conceptual leanings, which provided the simple yet powerful springboard from which to question further the realities of England's apprenticeship *programme* and particularly the apprenticeship *system*. The initial image made possible the focus on spaces existing between the three dominant actors

of 'Government', 'Employers' and 'Training providers', the result of which, now well-rehearsed in this thesis, was to question and interrogate the data and permit further insights into the apprenticeship system in England from the perspective of those people and organisations involved in the provision of apprenticeships. The questioning of the actors' roles then led to the drawing of an alternative Triquetra and a separation between the 'Actors' and the 'Factors'. This second model was designed to clarify aspects of the actors' work that was not easily explained in the first Triquetra. Both forms provided the starting point to interrogate the hidden realities of the government's apprenticeship programme and system.

Revising the two conceptualised forms in Figures 13 and 14, however, was more complex than simply 'writing in' greater numbers of actors. Instead, attention was drawn to the fact that some organisations play more than one role and so appear under different headings; dual roles are especially apparent in the 'Triquetra of Apprenticeship Factors', a feature that distances it from the 'Triquetra of Apprenticeship Actors'. Figure 13, under the headings of 'Government', 'Employers' and 'Training Providers' presented a more nuanced narrative than the example provided in Figure 1 as to which parts of government are involved and what types of employers and training providers are involved. The same can be said of Figure 14, which not only provided a more complex account than that offered in Figure 2, but showed, using ANT terminology, the importance of 'actants' in creating and constituting the apprenticeship system through the programme. In short, the unassuming conceptual device of the 'Apprenticeship Triquetra' has provided a complex account of an apparently simple model of learning at work; the Triquetra has enabled new insights into the act of apprenticeship and in particular the activities of the actors engaged in the provision of England's apprenticeship programme.

The value and limitations of the research methods

The data on which this thesis has been produced has been largely drawn from qualitative research methods. One criticism of qualitative research is that it is overly subjective, leading to problems of researcher 'bias' (in this instance referring to providing an uncritical or one-sided view) due to the way it can represent a particular perspective (Becker, 1967:1.5; Bryman, 2004:284). To overcome such limitations, I have tried to include different perspectives, posing similar questions (albeit worded to suit the different actors' experiences and levels of understanding) and also providing each participant with the opportunity to present how their organisation benefits the apprenticeship system. Also, the interviews have been underpinned by background research; many of the questions asked of the participants were formed on the basis of this research and so the interviewees were able to offer redress to pre-existing bias.

Furthermore, the knowledge I was able to demonstrate to the participants by discussing with them particular aspects of apprenticeship, whether in policy or as an historical entity, I believe gave them reassurance that I was serious in my work and knowledge of apprenticeships, resulting in a high quality of responses and data from the interviewees.

By developing the historical narrative rather than using the time and resources to include contemporary apprentices in the interviews, not only have I demonstrated detailed background knowledge, but such a perspective also led to the conclusions presented in this final chapter. With that historical knowledge I have been able to contrast the roles of actors in the present apprenticeship system with those people and organisations in past times.

Areas for further research

The speed of change of apprenticeship-based policies appears to have increased in recent years. Therefore there will always be new areas for further research if such rapidity of change continues. With the Richard Review (2011) calling for a root and branch reworking of the apprenticeship programme, it would appear, if the current Coalition Government accept Richard's proposals, that much of the evidence presented in this thesis will become obsolete. I am not against such an outcome, for after more than three years of studying the apprenticeship system, I believe that reform is necessary. Will the evidence I have presented become obsolete and therefore of interest only in the historical sense? I do not think so, although it would herald another major change for apprenticeship if this were to happen. However, as the applications of *governmentality* and ANT have shown, power is an interesting entity and the UK Government is currently engaged in another consultation process following the Richard Review (Gov.uk, 'Future of apprenticeships in England: Richard Review next steps', Accessed 05/05/2013). Therefore, research of a type contained in this thesis should be conducted again, ensuring that small and micro-employers are included alongside the larger bodies and government actors with those in the private sphere. With the provision of apprenticeship spread across the public and private actors, it is essential to maintain a conversation that is inclusive in its scope.

Furthermore, there is the question of how commodified the post-Richard apprenticeship system will be? That again remains to be seen, but is a further area of research to be conducted, combining economic and social factors.

Finally, this thesis has focused on the apprenticeship programme and system in England in a time of great change, but it must be remembered that the implications of

any apprenticeship government-supported (*led*) programme will be felt by the individual apprentices, the businesses that employ them and each of the many other organisations that participate in different ways in the apprenticeship system, thereby shaping the workforce of the future. As such, there is a great need to ensure the system operates with synergy and gestalt, something which I feel the evidence shows has been lacking.

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Appendices

Appendix A: LLAKES Studentship Requests for Application (March 2009)

Position Number	3193-09-L
Closing Date	13/03/2009
Location	Highfield
Description	

ESRC +3 PHD STUDENTSHIP

School of Education

The School of Education is delighted to offer a fully funded ESRC Research PhD Studentship tenable from October 2009. This is an exciting opportunity for anyone interested in undertaking a research project leading to the award of PhD. The studentship will cover tuition fees and provide an ESRC funded annual maintenance allowance (£13,290 for 2009-2010). The award is available for three years (+3) for those with an ESRC-recognised masters degree.

The studentship is attached to the ESRC Research Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies (LLAKES). The studentship will contribute to Strand 2 of the Centre's research programme. For more information about the LLAKES centre and its programme of research please visit: www.ioe.ac.uk/fps/llakes. A range of projects in Strand 2 of the programme are examining the shift towards the 'knowledge economy' in terms of: a) its implications for the creation and distribution of knowledge and skills; b) its impact on social cohesion; and c) how these dimensions interrelate.

Two of the projects in Strand 2 are exploring the strand's themes within the context of the retail and creative and cultural sectors, initially in the Southampton, Birmingham and Manchester city-regions. It is to these projects that the studentship will be most closely aligned. Both the retail and creative and cultural sectors are seen as central to the regeneration strategies of city-regions. The studentship will contribute to the work of Strand 2 by focusing on young people and their education – work transitions in the retail and creative and cultural sectors. Depending on their previous educational attainment, young people might be recruited to these sectors via a range of entry routes including: work placements as part of government supported initiatives to target disadvantaged young people (e.g. Entry to Employment schemes (E2E) and New Deal); Apprenticeships; under-graduate placements; and graduate traineeships.

The broad themes to be explored in the doctorate are the ways in which young people's developing concepts of identity and career are influenced by their induction into and experience of these sectors. There is scope for candidates to express an interest in focusing on one or two of the groups mentioned.

The studentship will be based in the School of Education, at the University of Southampton, under the supervision of Professor Alison Fuller. The associated research will be conducted mainly in the Southampton city-region and there will be opportunities to engage in the research being conducted in the other city-regions and to participate in the life of the LLAKES research centre which resides at the Institute of Education in London. The studentship will start in October 2009 and be completed in September 2012. The deadline for applications is Friday 13th March. Informal enquiries about the studentship should be emailed to Professor Alison Fuller: a.fuller@soton.ac.uk.

For information about how to apply, please visit: http://www.education.soton.ac.uk/prospective_students/

Your application should be accompanied by an outline proposal of up to 1500 words. For more information about doctoral study in the School of Education and for guidance on drafting your proposal, please visit: http://www.education.soton.ac.uk/courses/research_degrees/index.php?link=course_details.php&id=109

The University of Southampton has nearly 20,000 students and 5,000 staff based across several campuses. Its discipline base is broad, encompassing all the major academic subjects, but with a particular commitment to innovation and the advancement, communication and application of knowledge through critical and independent scholarship and research of international significance. It is one of the top research-intensive universities in the United Kingdom. It hosts the National Centre for Research Methods in social sciences, funded by the ESRC. The School of Education is one of the largest and most active centres of educational research in the UK with a wide range of research projects, involving regional and national partners, and students from countries around the world. Research is organised into three research centres: Post-Compulsory Education and Training, Institutional and Professional Development, and Pedagogy and Curriculum. The School also includes national specialist centres on Science and Mathematics learning. Collaboration with practitioners and stakeholders in education is a key element, resulting in educational innovation and a significant impact on practice and policy. The School is a diverse community which is committed to creating an inclusive working and learning environment in which all individuals are equally treated and valued, and can achieve their potential.

Appendix B: Original ESRC Research Proposal

Ian Laurie: ESRC 3+ (School of Education) Studentship Proposal

"The Apprentice and the Triquetra: the core of a three-part form"

Research Question: *"To what extent do the experiences of apprentices in Southampton's creative and cultural and retail sectors reflect the aims of the state, local employers and education providers?"*

A triquetra is a symbol consisting of three linked components which together form a central core, demonstrating how government, employers and teaching institutions are each involved in creating and producing knowledge, with the apprentices at the core.

Using qualitative research methods, the main objectives are to:

- Map the supra-level policies to assess how they are translated by the various institutions involved in delivering apprenticeships
- Consider how well the experiences of apprentices reflect those of the institutions
- Ascertain whether apprentices see their roles as passive recipients of work-based learning or as dynamic actors in the learning process. Do the apprentices' roles change over the period of the apprenticeship (for instance, from passive to active, or vice versa)?
- Reflect on the appropriateness of apprenticeships in the retail and creative and cultural sectors: do they provide realistic employment prospects or merely provide obfuscation and unrealisable ambitions?
- Assess the implications for policy formulation and implementation

By applying a Foucauldian theoretical framework of education of "erudite" and "subjugated knowledges", it is intended to show the interplay between policy-informed or "erudite" forms of knowledge, and the "localised" and "disqualified" forms of the apprentices (Foucault, 1976, in Delanty and Strydom, 2003:347).

At the macro level, this research would explore the relationship between apprenticeship policy and practice. This thesis would compare and consider the policy formation and implementation and its subsequent utilisation by employers, teaching institutions and apprentices. Young people are at the core of a triquetra in which state, employers and educational institutions appear to dominate. By situating the fieldwork in Foucauldian knowledge theories, it is intended to show the interplay between formalised knowledge systems inherent at the policy level and the "local … illegitimate knowledges" (Foucault, 1976, in Delanty and Strydom, 2003:348) of the

apprentices and their experiences. Foucauldian theory ties in with many elements of Fuller and Unwin's (2003) "expansive/restrictive continuum"; many restrictive practices occur in overly controlled workplace environments, while expansive apprenticeships adopt elements of both formalised ("competence-based qualification" (Fuller and Unwin, 2003:411)) and localised (experiential) knowledges. Thus, the continuum is expanded upon, allowing for comparisons and understandings to be made between policy and outcomes.

Research design and methods

Stage 1: Initial documentary investigation of contemporary policies and academic literature incorporating government policy, knowledge theory and a review of information provided by colleges, to prepare interview plans and initiate interview contacts

Stage 2: Interviews with key employers and key staff in colleges (approx. 50% of total interview time) and prepare interview plans for Stage 3

Stage 3: Individual/focus group apprentice interviews (approx. 50% of total interview time), exploring experiences, initial and actual expectations, and their integration into the company. The combined interviews will be used to understand the competing and allied aims of the various actors involved.

Stage 4: Review of findings/write-up

References

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Appendix C: Example of a Typical Email Introduction

Dear [name]

I am writing to you as I am currently undertaking research into apprenticeships as part of my PhD in the Education School at the University of Southampton. My research focuses on the organisations and individuals that operate at different levels of the apprenticeship system, using [retail] and [creative and cultural] as example sectors. Organisations I have spoken with include central government departments and agencies, national and local organisations and businesses, large and small businesses and, of course, public and private institutions. My methodologies include semi-structured interviews designed to elicit a range of different perspectives on the current apprenticeship system.

I have attached an information document [see Appendix X] which provides more information.

[*There would include a section here on the reason why this particular company and/or person is being approached*]

I look forward to hearing from you and hope you may be willing to participate in the research. If you have further questions, please feel free to email me or contact me on the number given below.

Regards

Ian

Ian Laurie

PhD Research Student

Southampton Education School

University of Southampton

SO17 1BJ

Appendix D: Participant Information Document

Participant Information

Study Title: "The Apprenticeship Triquetra: The relationship between government, education and employment in the delivery of apprenticeships"

Researcher: Ian Laurie **Email**: il104@soton.ac.uk **Phone**: 023 8026 7725

School: Education   **Ethics number: 7465**

This document outlines the research project, its background and objectives, and sets out the research process. If you have any questions then please feel free to contact the researcher on the email address given above.

Please read this document carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

Research summary

The research forms a doctoral study into apprenticeships in England; specifically, in the retail and the creative and cultural sectors. Southampton is the main geographical focus of the investigation, although the study also includes representatives from national and regional organisations involved in the apprenticeship system.

The researcher, Ian Laurie, is seeking to understand the relationships that exist between government, employers and education providers, what are referred to in the research as the 'apprenticeship triquetra', in order to consider how such policies are operationalised in the provision of apprenticeships. One of the methods has been to trace the multiple 'actors' – that is, individuals and organisations, such as government departments and agencies, employers, training providers and consultants, covering both the public and private sectors – involved in the provision of apprenticeship training. Key to the research is identifying the roles each of these actors plays in the provision of apprenticeship and understanding how the actors work with each other. A further aspect is to analyse the key drivers that are required to make apprenticeship work as a model of learning in sectors that have no obvious or embedded history of apprenticeship. Qualitative interviews are being conducted with individuals from many of the organisations in order to gain insights into the relevant factors they feel benefit and/or inhibit their use of apprenticeship. Recent policy discourses, including those of the present Coalition Government, have increasingly focused on the benefits of apprenticeship for vocational training. Therefore, from a policy perspective, it is

becoming increasingly relevant to understand the issues involved in apprenticeship provision.

Definitions

'Operationalisation' is defined in this research in terms of the processes by which policies become practice through the actions and decisions of the actors involved in the provision of apprenticeships. A triquetra is a symbol comprised of three interrelated arcs, each of which converge in the centre. The triquetra expresses the interrelated and interdependent nature of the apprenticeship system.

The sectors

The two sectors – retail and creative and cultural – have been chosen because each represents relatively new sectors to use apprenticeship to train their staff. In Southampton, apprenticeship in creative and cultural sectors has a very weak presence, despite a high number of creative and cultural employers in and around the city. Southampton as a city region therefore provides the researcher with insights into the issues involved in initiating interest amongst employers and in creating and managing apprenticeship in a sector that has no history of taking on apprentices. Apprenticeship in retail, by contrast, has a stronger footprint, although retail apprenticeships appear to be dominated by larger employers.

A further advantage offered by studying these two sectors is that they will simultaneously have their own industry-specific perspectives and thereby raise different issues regarding their particular training needs. Retail, for example, has a wide range of employers; from large, national and multinational companies to those employing just a few staff. The creative sector is comprised of a wide range of activities, with many employers operating with just a handful of staff and some preferring to recruit from the graduate market. To create apprenticeship frameworks and pathways which cover such disparate needs therefore provides many challenges.

Research Funding

Ian is studying for his doctorate in the School of Education at the University of Southampton. This doctoral research is being funded by a studentship from the ESRC Research Centre for 'Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies' (LLAKES31). LLAKES adopts "a programme of multi-disciplinary and mixed method research" to investigate issues of learning and "knowledge production and transfer"

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[31] For more information about the LLAKES centre and its programme of research please visit: http://www.llakes.org/

and their relationship with economic competitiveness, social cohesion and individual life-chances in a changing economy, particularly within city regions. The studentship contributes to Strand 2 of the LLAKES' research programme, which examines the shift towards the 'knowledge economy' in terms of: a) its implications for the creation and distribution of knowledge and skills; b) its impact on social cohesion; and c) how these dimensions interrelate.

Your participation

Your participation in this research assists the researcher to understand the issues set out above. You have been invited for interview because you hold a key position in a business or organisation which is involved in the apprenticeship system and your views are important to understanding the issues relevant to your organisation.

Benefits to participation

Your participation will allow insights into apprenticeship policy formation and operationalisation and thus contribute to discussions on policy formation. The aim is to have a range of views on the growing use of apprenticeship and to understand the various benefits and barriers. Your views are therefore critical to present a balanced perspective of the modern apprenticeship landscape.

The interview process

Interviews will take approximately 45-60 minutes and will be recorded and transcribed. On completion of the dissertation (to be submitted in or around September 2012) you will be sent a summary report of the findings and recommendations. You will be asked to sign an Interview Consent Form. This gives the interviewer permission to use the interview transcripts.

Right to withdraw from the research

Even if you have agreed to be interviewed and/or signed the Interview Consent Form, you still have the right to withdraw your interview at any time. If you choose to withdraw after the interview, the recording and transcript will be destroyed and it will not be used in the dissertation. For evidentiary reasons, it may be necessary to mention that the organisation was approached and opted not to participate. No inference will be drawn from such a decision.

Confidentiality and anonymity

All interview transcripts will remain confidential. All interview transcripts will be anonymised. Some direct quotations from the interviews will be used as illustrative evidence in the thesis, publications and presentations arising from the research. Extracts from the transcripts may be placed in the thesis appendix as evidence of the analytical process. However, because of the public nature of some of the organisations invited to participate, it may be the case that the organisation name will be used. Where this is the case, individual participants and their positions within the company will remain anonymous. All data will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Complaints procedure

If you have any concerns over the interview or wish to make a complaint, please contact Ian Laurie in the first instance. If you remain unhappy with the response you receive, then please address your concerns to the research supervisor, Professor Alison Fuller on 023 8059 8864/ A.Fuller@soton.ac.uk.

Appendix E: Participant Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton
School of Education

Participant Informed Consent Form

Study title: "The Apprenticeship Triquetra: The relationship between Government,

education and employment in the delivery of apprenticeships"

Researcher name: Ian Laurie
Research Institution: University of Southampton, School of Education
Study reference: ES/H022317/1 [ESRC Funding Reference]
Ethics reference: RGO 7465

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet dated (Dec 2010: IL/PID/v2)
and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study ☐

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my interview to
be recorded and used for the purpose of this study ☐

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw
at any time without my legal rights being affected ☐

I understand that I may be contacted again during the research for
clarification of points raised in the interview ☐

I understand that the interview will be recorded and transcribed and
that quotes may be used in the research report and subsequent academic
publications ☐

I understand that what I say will not be shared with other colleagues
(under the Data Protection Act 1998 your details will not be shared with
anyone else and the data collected will be held securely) ☐

Name of participant (print name): ....
Name of Business or Organisation: ....
Signature of participant: ....
Date of interview: ....

Appendix F: Interview Device I - Illustration of the Apprenticeship Triquetra

Actor or Factor A

Central Actor/Factor

Actor or Factor C   **Actor or Factor B**

A

D

C   B

Relationships within triquetra (connections)

Government   **Governance**

Apprentice   **Apprenticeship**

Employers   **Training Providers**   **Employment**   **Education**

Apprenticeship: 'Actors'   **Apprenticeship: 'Factors'**
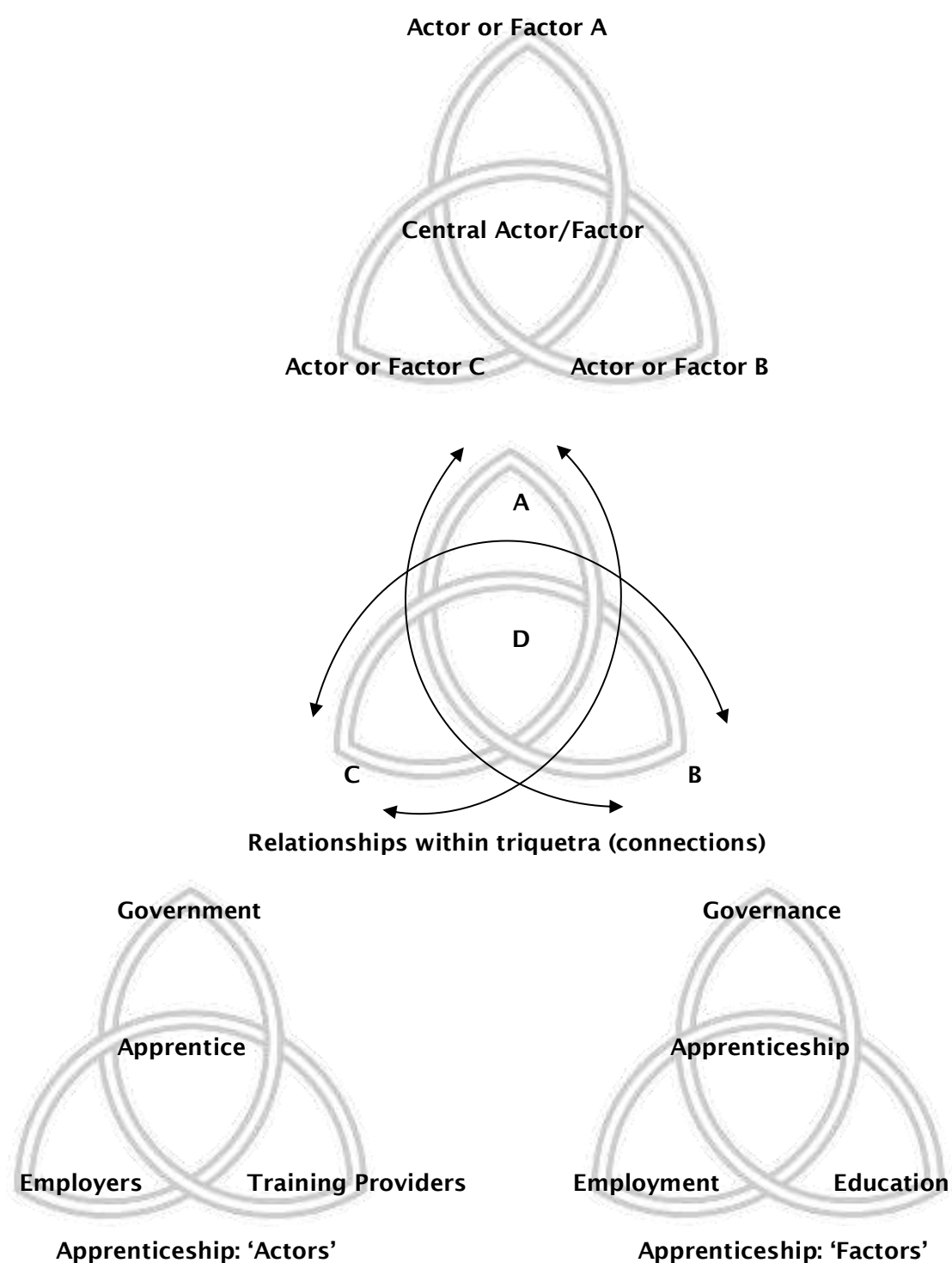
Appendix G: Interview Device II - Example of the Relationship Map

Key:
- —— **Close relationship**
- ······ **Medium relationship**
- – – **Distant relationship**

DfE

BIS

Skills Funding Agency

UKCES

National Apprenticeship Service

Young People's Learning Agency

Alliance of SSCs

World Skills

SSCs (CC Skills, Skillset, Skillsmart Retail)

Name of interviewee's organisation

Employers & Employers' bodies

National Skills Academies

Qualification awarding bodies

Apprenticeship Ambassadors'

Trades Unions

National Councils and representative

?

Local authorities & representative organisations

Local colleges or training providers

Appendix H: Interview Schedule Template

Paper work: Read and sign the Consent Form.

Recap of research:

- Just to recap, I'm seeking to understand how apprenticeship as a model of learning works in its modern guise and in doing so I'm interested in the individuals and organisations who are involved in providing young people with apprenticeship training opportunities. I'm also trying to understand whether the meaning of apprenticeship alters between sectors and occupations.

- In doing so, I'm building up a picture of the main issues involved: where expansion of apprenticeship works; where it doesn't; how do issues differ according to sector; what the relationships are between the organisations [e.g., how does a local college or employer link with central government?]. The ultimate aim is to develop a reconceptualisation of apprenticeship in England.

General

- Can I first ask you to confirm your name, title and give a brief description of your role, please?
- How long have you been in the post?
- Questions leading from responses

Organisation-specific

- Can you describe for me the work of the **[organisation]**?
- Is the **[organisation]** able to provide feedback on **National Occupational Standards**? Examples?
- According to recently released figures, **youth employment** is being **hit hardest** as it so often does in **economic downturns**. **What role**, if any, can **apprenticeship play** to **help curb future unemployment**?
- Other questions related to the specific work of the organisation or company

Apprenticeship

- Apprenticeship is a centuries old method of learning a craft; **so what is it**, do you think, **that makes it suitable for today's world and the range of sectors in which it is now being applied**?
- Can you tell me how you **define** an 'apprenticeship'?
- What do you see as the **pros** and **cons** of **expanding apprenticeship across the sectors**?
- Related to that last point; what would you say is the biggest threat to the expansion of apprenticeships?

- The **expansion of apprenticeship** is taking place not only in terms of the **numbers of apprentice places** and the **types of apprenticeships** available, but also in terms of the **age range of people becoming apprentices**. Does this [organisation] have any concerns regarding the expansion of apprentice ages?
- On a related topic, I understand that there can be 'issues' surrounding the **conversion** of **non-apprenticed workers** to give them **apprenticeship status**. Is this an issue, do you think?
- What do you see as the **pros** and **cons** of these '**conversions**' in terms of **apprenticeship policy**?

Relationships

- [Present the relationship map] Can you tell me about the organisations outlined on this map and perhaps how closely you work with them? [Are they strong/weak; are they collaborative/inspectorial; accountability/monitoring/diagnostic/formative etc?]
- Are the any missing that you work with?
- Does the [organisation] **meet with other agencies**? [BIS; SSCs; NAS; SFA; UKCES, etc]
- [Present **diagram of the triquetra**]. **Can I ask you** to **suggest where** [your organisation] **lies on the actors and factors images**?
- How closely do you feel you are connected with **central Government**?
- **How** is this **relationship enacted**?
- **One criticism of the NAS** has been that **they have been big on marketing**, but were **weak** when it comes to **policy work**; they were **not really interested in policy**. Is this your understanding?
- One of the **complaints against the pre-NAS system** was that it was overly complex and the NAS was created to try and simplify the system. Do you think the apprenticeship landscape is overly complex
- Does the **[organisation] have much contact with the Government's Joint Apprenticeship Unit**?
- In your experience, is there a **difference** in **attitudes** between **public and private sector** employers in this regard? For example, do you still meet employers who remain sceptical about the benefits of apprenticeship or see them still in terms of the traditional industries? Examples?

Policy

- The Government's 'skills strategy' paper (BIS, 2010a), has placed apprenticeships **at the heart of the skills strategy**. Why is it important that apprenticeship is so central to Government policy?
- Does the **[organisation]** have any **concerns in this respect**?

- The **Coalition Government** has been keen on **developing a route** through to **higher level learning**.   What **implications** are there for apprentices in **those sectors that have no history of apprenticeships**?
- And for your work?
- And how would you expect to see apprentices working at level 2, differ to those working at level 3 or level 4?
- Do you have any knowledge of Apprenticeship Training Agencies?
- How do you feel about **ATAs**.
- The **SASE was published** in January of this year. Are you aware of the SASE?
- Does the **SASE concern you at all**?
- What **policy initiatives** would [your organisation] like to see **taken up by Government**?
- Have reasons been given as to why Government **shouldn't introduce these policies**?

Sectors

- **Sector Skills Councils** are charged with raising "**employer engagement, demand and investment in skills**[32]". **Do you work with SSCs in this regard**?
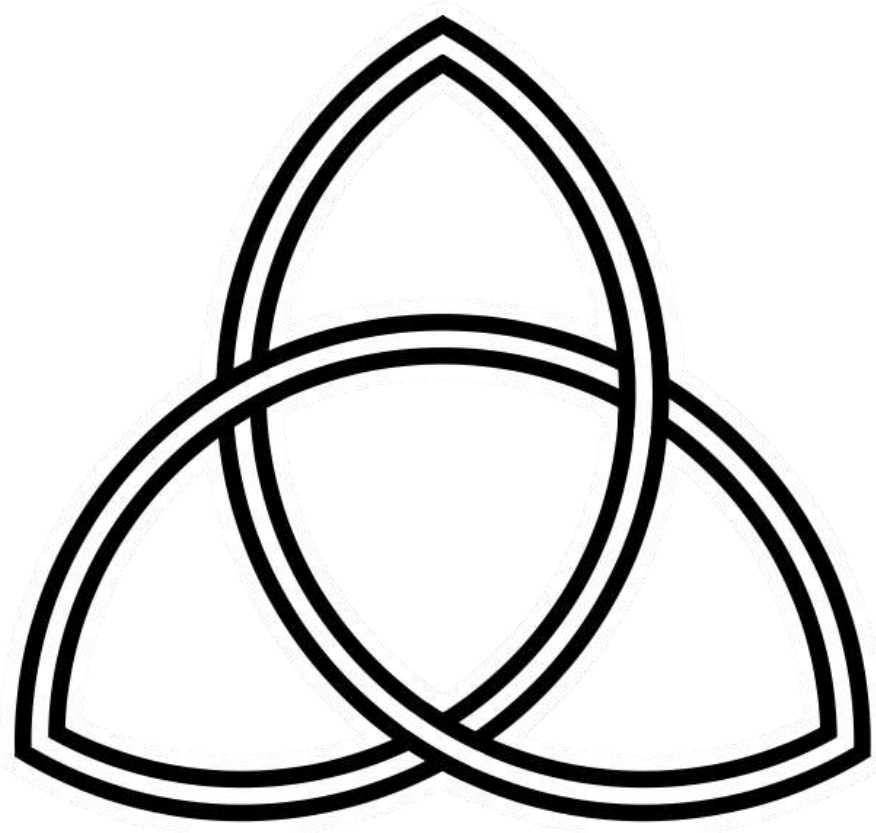- **How closely is that relationship?**

Finish

- Are there any questions you would like to ask me before we finish?

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[32] UKCES (October 2010), *SSC Annual Performance Report, 2009-10*

http://www.ukces.org.uk//upload/pdf/SSC%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%20FINAL%2010110 1.pdf [Accessed 20/12/2012]

Appendix I: Triquetra Image

Appendix J: A note on 'As You Like it'

The quotation used at the start of this thesis comes from Shakespeare's 'As You Like it' (c.1600); written as a comedy, its use in a Doctoral thesis exploring the relationship between the apprenticeship programme and the actors in the system can seem out of place. Furthermore, anyone familiar with the play might be excused also for wondering how a tale of love, revenge, forgiveness and gendered cross-dressing fits into such a topic. Yet by focusing on actors as this thesis does, the metaphor of the theatre serves well. Also, 'As You Like It', aside from its classic lines spoken by Jaques, provides further insights into the present day apprenticeship system, as the Editor of one edition of the play explained:

> *As You Like It* is not a heavily plotted play; indeed, its 'plot barely exists', and most significant action occurs in the first act, with the subsequent four acts constructed primarily of encounters between paired characters. […] Within individual scenes, on stage spectators repeatedly add a layer of commentary to the observed action, mitigating the dominance of any particular perspective. (Marshall, 2004:2, Foreword)

Although England's government-supported apprenticeship programme and the system cannot be said to have each developed in ways that mirror this 'plot [that] barely exists', it is perhaps the case that they have developed in ways in which the plot is sometimes hard to follow. Furthermore, as apprenticeship has been expanded across sectors and with different objectives (Fuller and Unwin, 2009), the 'dominance of any particular perspective' is similarly suppressed. So, too, I suggest, has the apprenticeship programme at times been expanded through a series of 'encounters' between government ministers and civil servants and a select number of non-governmental actors. Moreover, performances of 'As You Like It' have been presented as both 'appearing a dangerously subversive work that exposes the instability of traditional values' and as 'a stalwart demonstration of conventional social mores' (Marshall, 2004:1). As the preceding chapters showed, similar views have been expressed on the topic of apprenticeships, although, perhaps they may not have been quite so 'dangerously subversive'. The transformation of the apprenticeship programme in England into an apprenticeship system has involved a wide range of actors, operating individually and as a series of collectives; yet these actors can easily be overlooked as they engage in apprenticeship as a model of learning. This thesis has brought these actors – or their characters – out of the backstage and into the limelight.