DProf thesis,Doctorate by public works thesis

Navigating the challenges of professionalising sales careers: a case for degree apprenticeships in sales
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Navigating the Challenges

of Professionalising Sales Careers:

A Case for Degree Apprenticeships in Sales.

Submitted for the award of

Doctor of Professional Studies

by Public Works

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The Faculty of Business & Law

Middlesex University

November 2022

Acknowledgements

Firstly, my thanks must go to Associate Professor Kate Maguire and Professor Darryll Bravenboer, for their challenge, supervision, personal support and belief in me to complete the Doctoral programme. And to Kate once more, and the team at Middlesex for delivering the Professional Doctorate programme which enables practitioners, such as myself to critically engage with our work. It is a transformational programme.

To my family, Graeme, Matt and Ellie and the friends who have been incredibly supportive and patient with me over the last five years, through the development of the Public Works and then subsequently this thesis, 'thank you so much'.

I owe much to Peter Critten, a wonderful person and mentor who sadly passed away in the summer of 2021. Without Peter I would still be wondering how to start. And I would also like to thank the apprentices who motivated me (although they won't know this) as they persevered with their own programmes, inspiring me to do the same with mine.

And finally, to Mandy Crawford-Lee. We started and engaged with this scholarship together. Thank you. I couldn't have asked for a more supportive and motivational 'study-buddy'.

Abstract

This thesis presents the narrative of my navigation through factors, both actual and philosophical, which I encountered during the development of my public works (PWs) of two, sales degree apprenticeships. It weaves together themes of stigma, bureaucracy, employer culture and complexity whilst addressing what constitutes 'professionalism' within the new and emerging professions of this VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) period of change in the business environment.

The key methodologies which inform my approach to the critique of my works are autoethnography and reflective practice. These were achieved using a new coaching framework that I developed (C-E-D-A-R) specifically for this enquiry, recognising the complexity of the public works development ecosystem and the need for a framework to address all the dynamic elements and agencies within it. Enquiring into the ecosystem using C-E-D-A-R, I address the microsystem, mesosystem and macrosystem it supports, and identify the insights and outcomes emerging from the critique of the public works which expanded the possibilities for the ecosystem to maintain balance and relevance and to continue to thrive.

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Glossary

APPG	All Party Parliamentary Group
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DfE	Department for Education
HE	Higher Education
HEIS	Higher Education Institutes
IfA/IfATE	Institute for Apprenticeships/Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education
ISP (formally APS)	The Institute of Sales Professionals (formally the Association of Professional Sales)
KSBs	Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours
NAS	National Apprenticeship Service
OfS	Office for Students
RoATP	Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admission Service
UVAC	University Vocational Awards Council
VUCA	Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous
WEF	World Economic Forum

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I am the Academy Director at Consalia[1] responsible for the development and delivery of our accredited progammes which we deliver in partnership with universities and the Institute of Leadership and Management. When I joined Consalia, 6-years ago the Academy had 22 active students on two MSc. programmes: the MSc. Professional Practice in Leading Sales Transformation and the MSc. Professional Practice in Sales Transformation. We now have 236 active students across six programmes, including two-degree apprenticeships that are the products of my Public Works. Prior to joining Consalia I worked in several sectors and roles (Appendix 1 CV) and which are described in more detail in Chapter 2.

This context statement presents a critique of my chosen Public Works (PWs):

    (i)   The Apprenticeship Standard for a B2B Sales Professional

    (ii)   Degree Apprenticeship programme for a B2B Sales Professional

    (iii) Degree Apprenticeship programme for a Senior Sales Leader

The critique has been achieved through an autoethnographic lens which has evoked insights into my motivations, and their contextual influences, on the development of the PWs, from a position of standing back as an observer and standing in as a participant.

New learnings and knowledge have emerged as a consequence of this critique, and a new synthesis has formed through the various interconnections that were revealed through this standing back, reflective and reflexive process. Exploring the works in depth became an opportunity not only to identify connections and evoke new insights but to transform them into emerging theories, evolving habits of practice and new ways of thinking which have influenced my perception of who I am now not only as a professional but as a person.

My chosen Public Works (PWs) are centred around **Sales Degree Apprenticeships and professionalising sales**. These PWs have delivered new opportunities for young

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[1] Consalia is a Sales Business School providing Executive Masters programmes, degree apprenticeships in sales at Level 6 and Level 7 and bespoke sales training and consulting solutions. https://www.consalia.com

people and adults to choose to begin a professional career in sales and to help those already in employment take a professional sales qualification. Whilst the PWs focus on sales degree apprenticeships in the wider context they address skills development for the emerging VUCA[2] and global economy, vocational learning, contemporary apprenticeship reforms and the ecosystem in which contemporary apprenticeships reside. The critique identified four themes which have been and remain at the core of the PWs: **stigma, employer culture, bureaucracy** and **complexity**.

Chapter 1 operates as a positioning statement, informing the reader about the PWs and why I chose to develop them. It shares my motivations at two levels. The personal motivations which were known to me and to others and my deep-rooted intrinsic motivations which have emerged through this critique. My role as both an insider and outsider researcher and how this enables me to use analytic autoethnography as my primary research methodology are highlighted, and ethical consideration of using this approach are explored. Further details are to be found in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 presents the timeliness of the PWs; the need for the PWs at the time they were initiated in terms of the evolving context within the sales sector, the Government's upskilling policy and the increased concerns about student debt for degrees which may not match professional sector demands. I share why it matters to me and the key moments in my career which steadily built up my professional practice. With hindsight my professional approach today took shape through a transdisciplinary attitude that led me to work across different sectors and in multiple roles, internationally and within different working cultures. My personal motivations for developing the PWs are part of this personal and professional knowledge narrative.

Chapter 3 presents my conceptual framework and explains my rationale for developing the framework I have called C-E-D-A-R. The conceptual framework is based on a new coaching framework developed through this programme. C-E-D-A-R focuses in on the **Context, Stakeholders (Everyone involved), the Dynamics** and

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[2] Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous

what's emerged in my <u>A</u>wareness and <u>R</u>eflections. I discuss how coaching is a key component of my professional practice and integral to my way of working. I then go on to introduce the PWs development ecosystem.

Chapters 4 and 5 present my critique using the C-E-D-A-R framework of PWs 1, 2 and 3.

Chapter 6 focuses on the insights and the outcomes emerging from the critique and shares how my professional practice and my identity have shifted as a consequence of the programme. Necessary and/or recommended shifts within the PWs development ecosystem are identified and actions to maintain agility, relevance and balance within the ecosystem are presented.

Chapter 1.

My PWs support a sector quest for sales professionalisation and include the creation and development of two degree apprenticeships: a BSc. Professional Practice in Business to Business (B2B) Sales and an MSc. Professional Practice in Senior Sales Leadership. Apprenticeships are first and foremost a job, supporting learning, about work, whilst in the workplace. Degree apprenticeships, introduced in 2015, were a relatively new Government initiative at the time. The initial development for these two apprenticeship programmes began in 2016 and they continue to be offered and developed. In this document I explore what they have achieved, analyse what we could have done differently or better, critically evaluate my professional knowledge developed as a practitioner, and reflect upon and identify my personal learnings throughout the development of the PWs which will be of benefit to other apprenticeship stakeholders.

Due to the ubiquity of B2B sales my PWs cross a multitude of sectors and industries both in terms of their development and implementation. They have been a part of Government skills policy responding to opportunities created by the Apprenticeship Levy[3], and include training and development initiatives, in this case in sales education supporting sales professionalism. More information about the apprenticeship levy is provided in Appendix 2. Critical to their success has been the development of partnerships with employers and universities. I am suited to such a set of trans-contextual programmes having had an inter-disciplinary career as an employee, a trainer, a consultant and a coach and having adapted to and developed multiple agencies across large corporates and SMEs.

The PWs have created change at the macro level: (i) large-scale effects for the sales profession, organisations, employers, the higher education institutions (HEIs) and Consalia, (ii) at the micro level for line-managers and apprentices and (iii) at the meso level in-between the macro and the micro. I have observed the ripple effects of these changes and the outcomes that have emerged. This is a privileged inside outside

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[3] The Apprenticeship Levy is an amount paid by an employer at a rate of 0.5% of their annual pay bill, if this exceeds £3million, to fund apprenticeship training.

position affording me a multiple perspective: I can look back, I can look in and see what is happening within the PWs now and I can look out and see the impact of the PWs on individuals, organisations and within the sales profession.

The Critical Lens.

This privileged position has enabled me to use autoethnography which reflects my way of being, knowing and doing in the world. It guides a reflexive approach to context, to the cultures of practice, and the membership of those cultures, respectfully seeking how we have shaped each other by the encounters we have had within the macro cultures of the government, business and higher education in which we sit.

There is a polarisation of perspectives on autoethnography which has created a dichotomy of views or as Wall (2006) prefers to present it, a continuum from "evocative to analytic" autoethnographic approaches. Most typically, autoethnographic research is described as the narration of evocative, and emotional personal experiences (Atkinson, 2006), an approach pioneered and championed by Ellis et al. (2011). Others (Anderson, 2006; Atkinson, 2006) support a more analytical and scholarly approach which they say delivers greater rigor and usefulness from the research to promote social change (Wall, 2006, p2). My approach aligns with Chang's (2008) description of autoethnography as a method that draws on personal experience within an analytical-interpretive process and Wall's (2016, p1) suggestion that autoethnography persuades through the power of narrative by "providing a unique vantage point across macro and micro linkages, agency and their intersections, to contribute to social science".

Combining a narrative and analytical approach encouraged me as an experienced coach to create a conceptual frame based on a coaching framework which I have called C-E-D-A-R. C-E-D-A-R has enabled me to recount the development of my PWs as a narrative, whilst also bringing in an ethnographic analysis of the cultural context (Lapadat, 2017). This has supported the evolution of both my practice and scholarly knowledge. This approach comes with challenges particularly ethical considerations especially in the area of relational ethics (Ellis et al., 2011). It will be a transgressive account (Denshire, 2014) and I will be analysing the actions of other agents within my

journey aiming to translate personal experience into sociocultural action (Lapadat, 2017). This may lead towards researcher vulnerability, or veer towards self-indulgence or a restriction of scope (Lapadat, 2017) as a result of limiting, through self- selection, the agents and areas of social experience. According to Easterby-Smith et al, (2018, p219) achieving a critical distance will be a challenge and I have taken this as a sensible cautionary note.

Autoethnography by its nature is reflexive and positions the researcher as both subject and researcher. Indeed, I too "acknowledge my account will be a partial perspective seen through my own point of view from my position and at a particular point in time" (Lapadat, 2017). I will be an insider and an outsider researcher and during this contextual inquiry I will also need to position myself with yesterday's identity whilst being aware that I have already moved on.

> The moment of autoethnography coexists in the present with past and emerging future moments of qualitative inquiry (Lapadat, 2017, p597)

Using C-E-D-A-R, I challenge assumptions and perceptions, both my own and others. I change my perspective from observer to participant and use an autoethnographic lens through which to explore what influenced my thinking during the time and in the context of when my PWs emerged and how I understood the culture of activity then and see it now.

As discussed previously, discourses on autoethnography span a continuum from evocative to analytical (Wall, 2016) the evocative approach championed by Ellis and Bochner (2006) and a more analytical approach which incorporates analytical reflexivity and a commitment to theoretical analysis (Anderson, 2006). C-E-D-A-R explores elements from both dimensions of autoethnography to achieve a deeper understanding of the context and accelerates scholarly practice.

Focus of Interest

My focus of interest is what makes a degree apprenticeship programme successful. Areas of interest are the concept of professionalism and professional practice,

specifically the sales profession "with many deeply entrenched attitudes about sales politically and in the academic world" (Squire, 2021, p15), communities of practice (Wenger,1998) and the learning organisation (Senge, 2006) and what makes the optimum learning environment for degree apprentices. An all-embracing context for my PWs is complexity and change which can be summed up through the VUCA world in which we live and work, the most recent catalysts of confusion being the Covid global pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Complexity and change are constants and whilst the pace, the volume and complexity of change are increasing this 'chaos' brings possibilities and opportunities, but it requires agility to leverage them. Adams and Maguire (2023, p5) explain that a "transdisciplinary perspective on practice is grounded in a relational ontology that sees entities and their relations involved in a causal flux that is constantly changing" and Maguire (2016) writes of an ontological position derived from the workplace of inter-connectedness and complexity, an "ontology of complexity" and this will be omnipresent within my enquiry.

The multiple communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) which formed, performed and evolved during the PWs will also be an area of investigation.

There are questions that I have sought to answer by undertaking this work and new questions have arisen that still need answering. Things have revealed themselves that go some way to clarifying what continues to occupy my thinking which I hope will make the path smoother for those just starting out on their involvement with degree apprenticeships in whatever role. In some senses this thesis has an historical value as well as a contemporary one.

For example:
- Defining apprenticeships in and for a contemporary world
- Apprenticeships having a natural affinity to professionalism in sales
- Perceptions and misperceptions of apprentices and degree apprenticeships
- The success of degree apprenticeship programmes
- The meaning of success

It is not surprising then that I began with the hope that this critique would help to improve the theoretical understanding of this approach to learning and identify indicators underpinning the delivery of successful degree apprenticeships for the individual and the organisation to ensure maximum benefit is achieved for all. Successful apprenticeship programmes should create "learning organisations which continually enhance and expand their capacity to create its future" (Senge, 1990). Critten (2016, p65) aligns the product of a learning organisation to one of corporate capability and warns how traditional views compromise our ability to put "idealised principles" about learning organisations into practice. Potentially then, this contextual statement may contribute to a shift, a metanoia even, that Maguire (2015) interprets as another way of knowing, regarding the concept of a 'learning organisation' for degree apprenticeships.

Chapter 2. My motivations

The context of challenges

Sales is one of the largest employment groups in the UK. In December 2016 LinkedIn had more than 2.9 million individuals registered as working in sales and an ONS survey (2015) recorded 661 thousand B2B Sales Professionals. In addition, the sales industry has transformed over the last 20 years with globalisation, explosion of new technology and the emergence of digital sales markets. This has made both the 'art and the science of selling' more complex, challenging, and competitive. According to Davis (2016) this rapid pace of change will continue in the aftermath of Brexit and further advances in technology. These factors combined require salespeople to have a much broader and deeper knowledge of their customers and a wide range of new sales skills.

There are however ongoing challenges within the sales sector. Many customers still have a general distrust of salespeople (Squire, 2021) and the perception of sales as a profession is impacted by mis-selling scandals such as Enron[4] and more recently the current investigation into Greensill[5] that presents a narrative of privilege and cronyism and potentially unethical behaviour. Whilst not on the same scale, but with devastating consequences, in 2017 we had the cladding scandal from Grenfell[6]. There is also a perception of sales as a lesser 'discipline' than marketing and other corporate functions which typically require a degree for entry level into professional roles. Historically, people have fallen into sales roles rather than choosing a career in sales.

Squire (2021, p13) writes of an "anti-sales bias in academic institutions". Very few academics have embraced sales and its complexity and until the development of PW1 and PW2 there were no degree programmes dedicated to sales at universities in the

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[4] The Enron scandal in 2011 was a series of events involving dubious selling and accounting practices that resulted in their bankruptcy and the dissolution of the accounting firm Arthur Andersen.

[5] Greensill Capital was one of the world's biggest providers of supply-chain finance with what has emerged as dubious financing arrangements triggering a parliamentary investigation into possible cronyism between the UK Government and Greeensill.

[6] The firm which sold the cladding panels used on Grenfell Tower has accepted that its staff misled and lied to customers about its test data.

UK. It is a self-perpetuating cycle. The lack of sales degree programmes develops few academics with an interest in sales and there is only one journal, *The International Journal of Sales Transformation* dedicated to B2B sales. In comparison, there are over 100 marketing journals. To elevate to a recognised profession both in the business world and academically, new approaches to a professional sales practice, embedding ethical behaviours and values, had to be cemented in a professional sales education practice.   This is what my PWs do. They establish an industry and government approved, professional B2B sales and sales leadership education practice.

Why am I bothered about this and who am I to position myself as someone whose comments can be considered reliable? To hopefully answer those two questions, in the remainder of this chapter I present my career path that led to the production of my public works and my personal motivations for developing them.

My Professional Path.

I often describe myself as a 'professional practitioner', but what does that mean? What enables me to describe myself this way?

If I deconstruct the term, I hope to explain myself. I cover more on the discourse of professionalism in Chapter 4, but my interpretation of professional aligns with the results of a semantic questionnaire on the concept of professionalism by Svennson (2006, p579) who summarises his findings with the statement that:

> professionalism was regarded by respondents as contextual competence rather than as a general capability. Practical knowledge, experience and knowledge in use were stressed over theoretical knowledge and formal education.

Gherardi (2009) supports my understanding of a practitioner when he endorses the contention of both Bourdieu and Polanyi that practical knowledge is personal knowledge and that it is ineffable. Citing Polanyi (Gherardi, 2009) claims that "we know more than we can tell". My claim therefore to be a professional practitioner is linked to contextual competence, practical knowledge, experience, and knowledge in use. I know that I know more than I can share. As a result of this enquiry into my own practice

and works, I am finding a better articulation of my practice and me in my practice, for example I now consider myself to be a 'transdisciplinarian', due to the sectors, roles, countries, and cultures I have experienced and the attributes I have inherently developed over the years. For example, "the ability to think in a complex and interlinked manner, engage in new modes of thinking and taking action with a societal awareness", (Augsburg, 2014, p 240). Ingold (2022, p197) describes this evolution as growing into knowledge,

> like that of following trails through a landscape: each story will take you so far until you come across another that will take you further, and in following these paths you grow into knowledge (ibid)

He describes such 'knowledge' wanderings as "wayfaring" (Ingold, 2022, p197).

My wayfaring

I read geology and computing at university. Studying geology enabled me to stay close to nature which goes deep into my soul and is my healer and preferred place for contemplation. Computing was a different matter. It was a skill set to position me for the future and which I was encouraged to study by my parents. I graduated and worked for BP International as a computing geologist, an interdisciplinary role, for six years, working in Calgary, Aberdeen and Glasgow as well as BP's head office in London. Under the banner of a 'computing geologist' I was a programmer, a systems analyst, a designer and team leader. Key learnings as a programmer included an attention to detail and a pre-requisite for diligence. As an analyst and designer, I had to put the user at the heart of my thinking and creatively find a solution for their needs. I use the word heart not just for positionality, but to highlight the need to meet the intrinsic and emotive needs of the user. When I reflect on this period, I can appreciate my users were my customers and delivering with a 'customer' focus was integral, and still is central, to my professional practice. Svennson (2006, p581) reflecting on 'new professionalism' and professionals as providers of services "describes how relationships between clients and professionals have in many areas turned into customer relations". Building on the relationship, as part of my professional practice, I would discuss emerging challenges with my users, identify new developments in our knowledge and techniques (Freidson, 2007) and together we would make connections

to strategise and generate solutions, thus creating a shared learning experience. As Squire (2021, p76) expresses "through collaboration, new ideas can be formed". Adding to this professional positioning I agree with Schwab (2017, p113) who proposes that by building on a shared understanding we can "make explicit the values and ethical principles that our future systems must embody".

I then moved from BP to Price Waterhouse Coopers to take up a role as an IT consultant in the Oil and Gas division. At this point I would describe myself as an 'oil guru' implementing upstream solutions to support exploration activities and downstream solutions taking the oil and gas from the oil field into the petrol station. I worked for BP, Shell and Elf Oil in the UK, Colombia and Guatemala using IT systems as an enabler for change. This was my induction to change management and understanding the impact of change on people.

The 'dot.com' boom arrived in the late 1990s and having worked for 10-years in oil I was ready for a change and moved to AT&T UK. Altogether, I had 15 years working for large, multi-national blue-chip organisations and the experience and skills acquired whilst working in these roles accumulated to form a bank of transferrable skills: consulting skills, project management, change management, people management and relationship management which I continue to draw on to this day. During this period, I was not conscious that I was developing as a professional practitioner; my aim was to keep learning in a professional context. Looking back, I can appreciate I was indeed starting to build a professional practice 'tool-kit'. Edwards (2010) describes a decision-making practitioner as someone who works responsibly with clients and other practitioners and brings their professional resources to complex problems recognising and responding to the perspectives of others.

By this time, I was a mother of two young children juggling work and childcare. I consequently chose to work for smaller consultancies to minimise any overseas travel and support part-time working. I spent six years working for niche consultancies, including two years in a consulting role at Defra. Working in a Government institution after 15 years in the private sector was a culture shock. Government was a completely different landscape brimming with bureaucracy. In

retrospect I appreciate this period 'developed professional resources' in me (Edwards, 2010), resources of value in preparing and implementing my first PW which involved working with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE).   Defra, I realise now, had been instrumental in helping me to adapt to the Government culture, pace and silo approach that I encountered again while undertaking PW1. In parallel with my part-time working, I trained as an Executive and Performance Coach. The coaching programmes delivered my own 'ah-ha' moment when I appreciated my personal purpose as a coach was "to make a difference and to help people achieve their potential" (Sutton, 2012) and I still operate to this principle. This purpose was a key motivator for developing the PWs.

In 2011, I joined Sony Mobile managing special projects within their global sales function, one of which was to create a Commercial Academy to deliver best in class training. I developed a philosophy in the academy which drew on Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning: that people learn from one another through observation and imitation. We shared our best practice across the sales community globally, promoting the behaviours to sustain a high-performance community. At the time, the Sony Mobile sales community was divided into 12 geographic regions working autonomously which produced a culture of competitiveness and a single-minded approach to achieving targets, increasing commission and personal success, rather than seeking synergy across global accounts. As we shared the best practice scenarios it became evident from feedback that salespeople liked to hear success 'stories', and that they learned from the stories. This sharing of best practice in this way became embedded in the core of the commercial academy and the interventions we ran. I liken this to developing Critten's (2016) 'corporate capability' through professional sales education. In the first 18-months the academy achieved over a £10M Return on Investment, a significant part through improved negotiations with partners and adoption of best practice sales techniques.

A flagship programme within the Sony Mobile Commercial Academy was an MSc Professional Practice in Sales Transformation for our high potential and emerging sales leaders which was delivered in partnership by Consalia, a sales performance consultancy, and Middlesex University. Bringing the masters programme into the

Commercial Academy was a significant moment in my career. It introduced me to action research and reflective practice as a mode of enquiry to improve the students' sales practice and the importance of letting your professional and personal values underpin your practice. Negotiated work-based learning, built around real-world problems (Siebert and Costley, 2013) is an integral part of the programme enabling the students to learn through their own experience. Appreciating the ability to contextualise the projects informed by real customer challenges was probably the key component which persuaded us to bring the MSc Professional Practice in Sales Transformation into Sony Mobile's Commercial Academy. These concepts of critical reflection and real world of work projects are those which underpin the degree apprenticeships.

An influential path

With hindsight, the Commercial Academy at Sony Mobile was the launchpad pad for my own entry into professional education, degree apprenticeships and the mission to professionalise sales.

I had no idea that I would be on such a long and challenging journey when I was first asked to develop a Commercial Academy. I had no formal knowledge of sales at this point, and when I mentioned this to the Global Head of Sony HR I was advised to 'treat it like a project because you are an expert at delivering projects and making things happen'. The appeal to me personally was the chance to facilitate learning in others and develop a high performing, global sales team. I was, at the time, ready for a new challenge. However, if that long and very challenging path had been described to me, I may not have taken it. I can recognise now that some of the best learning comes out of not knowing, of discovery, of wayfaring and unfolding. Costley, Elliot & Gibbs (2010 p.2) introduced the term "lifeplace learning", situating self, work and learning in a life setting. I have been living intensely in a 'lifeplace learning' environment for the last six years. I have enjoyed the learning immensely, but I am hoping the engagement with this critique will provide a normalisation point for me as it has enabled me to see in perspective that which I could not see. I go into this more in my Chapters on the PWs themselves.

Usually when you know you are going on a long journey you try and plan for everything you may need along the way. To reach this point, I have been purposive and also open to the serendipity within the process. Through this critique I am generating a path of discovery inquiring what I had within me, in addition to project management expertise to propel and sustain me. Costley et al (2010, p116) suggest that "you will bring your biography, history, experience and personality into the work setting which frame the lens though which you view the world". It has taken time to find the courage to do this as it means digging into my past and researching myself.

Personal drivers behind the PWs

Recounting one's life is an interpretive feat (Bruner, 1987, p14)

Focusing such close attention upon my own actions, my identity and the impact and outcomes I have achieved through the PWs has invoked much internal dialogue and questioning. Why did I commit so much of myself, what did I feel about it at the time and what could I have done differently? Bolton & Delderfield (2018) claim that reflexivity involves thinking from within. I liken it to holding a mirror up to see who and where I was.

I grew up as one of six children just outside Blackpool on the north-west coast of England. It was an atypical family set-up at the time. My parents divorced when I was three, my mother moved to London, and I would see her in the school holidays. I grew up with my father and stepmother, two sisters, two step-brothers and a half-brother. I have an especially fond love for my father, whom I looked-up to as a wise and fair man with a wonderful sense of humour. Now in his nineties and in a care home, with little long or short-term memory, I pull on earlier memories to remember his better days. His current circumstances and the recent clearing of my parents' house have taken me back in time, triggering much reflection and a re-visit to who I am. It has been a challenging and emotional process at times and as Hedberg says "I have more questions than when I started" (2009, p30). My father was a successful solicitor and fairness was at his core, always, and I know it is at mine. Transparency, empathy and understanding are also critical to my belief system. My mother was a much more

complex woman, but I can now appreciate her work ethic and in particular her creativity at work.

My memories of growing up as one of six children are good, but I recognise more consciously that a driver I had in that context was a desire for recognition. My achievements often passed my father and stepmother by, older siblings had got there first. As a scruffy tomboy I also did not fit the mould that my mother, who had moved into different social circles, had set for her daughters. Bauman (2017) writes of how some identities float around, some of our own choice and others which are launched by people around us. He shares how this can develop misunderstanding or one can master the ambiguity, but the price of that is to accept you may never be "truly at home" (2017, p14). I adapted to each home environment as I moved from the north-west to London and back again. Rock & Cox (2006) identify status as our sense of worth and where we fit into the hierarchy at work both socially and organisationally, and relatedness as whether we are 'in' or 'out' of a group. I can see advantages now in these 'adaptive capacities' although there were also collateral sensitivities.

'I wanted to please' is, I now believe, how I lived my life for a long time with a heightened concern for the feelings and needs of others. I tended to defer to the identity that was expected of me. That stance started to change as I became a coach but interestingly even the process of being a coach is about putting the coachee first. What I am appreciating through this reflective process is that I have placed myself in shadows a lot of my life. This is uncomfortable to acknowledge, and I appreciate now that these formative experiences developed core values of mine: that everyone deserves fair opportunities; of the need to be 'non-judgemental'; to recognise people's strengths and what each individual brings with them.

Maguire (2021) shares the need to move from a private to a public identity as we recontextualise our public works. The idea of exposing the private me has not been a comfortable one and I have had to unpack why this is. In one MSc. module we present a model to our Masters students, called 'Korthagen's Onion' (Poutiatine, 2010) which represents an individual's identity from multiple dimensions. The model represents the core or the essence of a person which does not change with six additional layers: (1) mission which equates to the individual's purpose, (2) identity, defined as who the

individual thinks they are, (3-5) beliefs, competencies, behaviours, and (6) is the external environment. Poutiatine (2010) describes how the layers represent permeable membranes so that a change at one level triggers a change at the other levels. Reflecting back, I can appreciate my identity has taken a long time to emerge recognising I have had the traits of a chameleon morphing from one identity to another, adapting to a self that people wanted to see. I can recall one wonderfully empowering sensation in 1988 arriving in Calgary for a 6-month secondment with BP Canada. I arrived there 3-days before I was due to start work, no-one knew me or what I was like and I remember thinking 'who should I be, what could I be'? I can recall the sense of excitement I felt when I thought I could be anyone. Now I appreciate perhaps it meant I just did not have a clear identity at that time. I am aware that a stronger sense of identity has emerged as a result of the PWs, and I am looking forward to seeing who emerges at the end. Bauman (2017) suggests identity is an objective. Strengthening mine was not an aim when I started the PWs. I challenge his suggestion "that identity is invented rather than discovered" (ibid, 2017, p15). I suggest that identity emerges and shifts over time, as knowledge emerges (Ingold, 2022) and beliefs embed.

I chose to work part-time (3-days a week) when my children were at school, and I describe this period as one of 'treading water' in my career. It was a compromise I was prepared to make but it had an impact on the value I felt I was providing and the way I was perceived in the workplace. With reduced responsibilities and fewer opportunities my self-perceptions of my contributions and status took a step-back. However, I was grateful to have part-time work and I appreciate it kept me up to date with technology trends and the world of corporate work. When I joined Sony Mobile, I was still working part-time, and this made me appreciate I had previously been working in compromising cultures and that high value work can be achieved in a part-time scenario. I aim to keep the company culture and the factors that make it 'thrive or dive' integral to my way of leading and creating at work.

Costley, Elliot & Gibbs (2010) observe that the starting point of a reflective practitioner is concerned with a critical consciousness to a level where individuals achieve a sufficient degree of social and political awareness to understand contradictions in society and work to transform it. We lived in a grammar school catchment area. When we viewed the two options of grammar schools and secondary modern schools for our

children the differences were stark and shocking: well-funded grammar schools with rich resources and expansive plans compared to a significantly reduced curriculum, tired buildings, inferior facilities and the reduced curriculum opportunities of the secondary moderns. The educational experience for the pupils at each school would be vastly different. This experience created a fundamental shift in my understanding of the (un)fairness in education. I volunteered at our local secondary modern school on a campaign titled: 'Inspire, Motivate and Achieve' linked to the 2012 Olympics to mentor children close to their GCSEs which provided more insight into the huge disparities within our educational system. This experience transformed my politics which had been relatively non-committal up to this point, and seeded my desire to help individuals, young and mature, to achieve their potential. Linking back to Korthagen's Onion (Poutiatine, 2010) my career, personal and parenting experiences shifted my values over time. When merged with the external environment and opportunities presented by the apprenticeship levy, my involvement with the PWs made sense because it was an opportunity not only for learning a new sector but for me to continue helping more people to achieve their potential and to challenge the hierarchies of what is professional.

Selecting a lens

As an insider-researcher I was drawn to an autoethnographic lens through which to more closely examine my PWs. My role within the process would be as a full participant, a part of the object of study, and as an observer recognising the layers of complexity.

> Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)
>
> (Ellis et al, 2011, p273)

Autoethnography capitalizes on the power of story as a way of knowing and teaching and on writing as a means of inquiry and I will recount the development of my PWs as a narrative whilst bringing in an ethnographic analysis of the cultural context and implications of my experience (Lapadat, 2017). As a coach, I maintain a constructivist

ontological position which espouses that there are many truths and that "facts depend on the viewpoint of the observer" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018, p67).

In this thesis I underpin my narration of the development of my PWs with the creation of a framework to structure my observations at the time and my reflections since which I have called the C-E-D-A-R framework. Geertz, in Bolton and Delderfield (2018, p20) observes that ethnographers create a "thick description, a web of sort of piled up structures of inference and implication through which the ethnographer is continually trying to pick his way". My aim then was to create a transitional space, "a place between my thoughts and feelings and the world of actions, events and other people" (Bolton and Delderfield, 2018, p190) and which Palmer (2007, p4) describes as "an interplay of our inner and outer worlds". Petranker (2005, p244) observes that it is through "acts of sensemaking that knowledge takes place" and that was my intention.

Traversing Boundaries

I appreciate, from a professional perspective as well as through my coaching, the ontological perspective of the 19th century British philosopher, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), captured in his well-known words "There are many truths of which the full meaning cannot be realised until personal experience has brought it home". As an IT consultant, I was trained to ask open questions and to seek out the various and often differing viewpoints of stakeholders in any one project or organisation. This would be a data gathering exercise as part of a larger activity to enable and facilitate transformation in the workplace. Feedback from customers/users during my performance reviews often identified the strong professional relationships I developed with our user communities; sometimes they observed it was too strong and I was 'going native'. In fact, I was often based on a 'client-site' for many months, two years in the case of Defra with my own desk and company e-mail. I began to say 'we' as the client as well as 'we' as my consultancy organisation. I was able to adopt a duality of identity and to see different perspectives both the client's (the insider) and the consultants' (the outsider).

I can now recognise that my role as a consultant can be linked to one of a qualitative researcher, assessing status, asking questions, creating a way forward, with a shifting

identity (Townsend and Cushion, 2020, p3) of insider and outsider. The client / user environment is the field or 'social space' of research. Adopting their term, I was 'crossing fields' (ibid, p4) between my user community and my role as a consultant, a concept they consider potentially disruptive based on the agent's split subjectivity. They propose rigorous self-awareness and criticality as a solution enabling "a level of ethnographic authenticity to representations of social reality" (ibid). I would like to believe I was authentic in my representations of the user communities I was working with, but I know at the time, I did not take myself through, nor was I asked to, a rigorous self-awareness process. I am still in contact with individuals from my user communities, so I take that as a positive sign.

Whilst my experiences as a workplace coach are outside the scope of my PWs, coaching also requires an insider-outsider positionality, of putting myself in the context of the coachees, without judgement, to consider the different constructions and meanings that my coachees place upon their experience (Easterby-Smith et al, 2018). What I also now appreciate is that I bring my coachees outside with me, to assess other people's perspectives whilst helping to raise their awareness of the world or truth of others which may shift them towards another form of truth.

I have referred to the different roles I have held in my career including client-side employee, procurer of consulting services and training, and on the other side of the fence working as a consultant, a coach and a trainer. The fact I have held multiple roles which facilitate a dual identity presents an influential set of learnings and practices within my career.

Harnessing My Researcher Identity

Autoethnography by its nature is reflexive and positions the researcher as both subject and researcher. As Lapadat (2017) writes "I acknowledge my account will be a partial perspective seen through my own point of view at a particular place and point in time". I know my identify then is already different to to-day's identity, and also tomorrow's. Petranker (2005) presents a notion of playing with time and that the present moment has two boundaries: the past and the future. The examination of my PWs positions me

in the now and I have to be mindful of this fact, and clearly identify who, when and where I am at all times.

> The moment of autoethnography coexists in the present with past and emerging future moments of qualitative inquiry (Lapadat, 2017, p597)

I shared previously how the discourses on autoethnography focus primarily on two theoretical paradigms which I will draw on: the narrative approach championed by Ellis and Bochner (2006) and analytical autoethnography which, according to Ellis and Bochner focuses on the destination (Ellis and Bochner, 2006). I appreciate the need to narrate the story of the PWs but analytical autoethnography also appealed as it situates the researcher as a "complete member in the social world under study" (Anderson, 2006, p379) and as a visible member of the research setting, which I was. It also incorporates analytical reflexivity and a commitment to theoretical analysis (Anderson, 2006). I adopted elements from both autoethnographic positions using the C-E-D-A-R coaching framework to recontextualise the PWs. As a full participant in the autoethnographic process I needed to shift, pause and recall, form and reform, between first and second order constructs (Anderson, 2006). The challenge was ensuring reliability of my reflections and convincing the reader of the trustworthiness of my knowledge narrative (Maguire, 2021). The C-E-D-A-R coaching framework enabled me to probe and heighten my self-awareness and inner wisdom (Iliffe-wood, 2014) and to position myself so that I could reflect and think 'from within', rather than 'about' my experiences.

Ethical considerations

Eakin (1999) contends that no person is an island and autoethnographic inquiries will through their narrative implicate others. Autoethnography does pose such ethical considerations in this area of relational ethics (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). I therefore present a transgressive account (Denshire, 2014), incorporating a conceptualisation of the hurdles and successes and an analysis of the actions of other agents, within the development of the PWs with respect and empathy. Achieving a critical distance was a challenge (Easterby-Smith at al, 2018, p219) and assumptions and prejudices did get in the way (Nixon, 2017) of my personal interpretation. Nixon (2017, p15) on

Gadamer claims that "understanding opens up the possibility of new beginnings but those new beginnings are grounded in the peculiarity of our origins".

In this chapter I have shared my motivations for developing the PWS and the key moments in my career which have influenced the development of my professional practice and transdisciplinary attitude (Augsburg, 2014) and I have introduced autoethnography as my primary research methodology. In the next chapter I present my critical frame in more detail and the C-E-D-A-R coaching framework as a conceptual framework developed to recontextualise the PWs.

CHAPTER 3. My Emerging Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This chapter presents the evolution of my conceptual framework. It explains my rationale for developing it, what it incorporates and the theoretical elements underpinning it to aid me in interrogating the PWs that were developed within a particular timeframe, in a particular ecosystem, with its particular contextual influences. As a practitioner I have always drawn on the tools available throughout my career. I have adopted the same approach to my own conceptual framework drawing on analytical frames from multiple disciplines such as coaching, professional practice, transdisciplinarity, contemporary anthropology and personal narrative to achieve something that could work. Kincheloe (2001) advocates the use of multiple perspectives when analysing an artefact claiming that it cultivates creativity and a synergy which emerges across different interpretive perspectives. Transcending multiple methods has enabled me to draw on the critiques of many diverse scholars (Kincheloe, 2001), in particular Hawkins, Clutterbuck, Maguire and Ingold.

The rationale for the conceptual framework

My PWs were developed in an 'apprenticeship ecosystem', comprising multiple levels of systems and influence, with each layer being influential, shifting independently, yet inter-connected to the others and stretching from an immediate context through to a wider social perspective. The recognition and representation of how systems at different levels relate to one another (Neal & Neal, 2013) is key to ecosystems theory and enabling access to the entire apprenticeship ecosystem is at the heart of the conceptual framework.

Gregory Bateson (1904-1980), an anthropologist, systems theorist, naturalist, philosopher, cyberneticist, and a true transdisciplinarian, played with ideas of ecology. He was especially interested in how things are connected, how systems evolve and how reality unfolds. His daughter Nora Bateson, whilst narrating her film on her father entitled 'An Ecology of Mind' (2005)[7] presented him sharing his hypothesis that "we

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[7] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnL0ZB1SzZY

live in a world that's only made of relationships" and that we "can't study one end of a relationship and make sense". If we go down that path Bateson (2005) intimated that "what you'll make is a disaster". By enquiring across the apprenticeship ecosystem, I would be sure to cover the system end-to-end across all the interconnections and relationships.

The term 'ecosystem' has been used within business for 20 years (Birkinshaw, 2019). Ecological systems theory was originally adopted by developmental psychologists interested in understanding individuals in context (Neal & Neal, 2013). More recently, the term has been widely adapted to represent other interdependent and multilevel systems (Neal & Neal, 2013) including business ecosystems, and social and knowledge ecosystems which are increasingly multi-layered, interacting and dynamic (Graca & Camarinha-Matos, 2017). Birkinshaw (2019) shares that "a vibrant ecosystem is one where all participants gain value" and that must be the ideal.

My aim is to mirror the same environmental complexity of the apprenticeship ecosystem in the conceptual framework, to ensure relevance, and provide adaptability and flexibility to the many moving parts and variables. A conceptual framework is often the precursor to theorising and Bhatnagar (2021, p4) citing Miles and Huberman (1994) describes how a conceptual framework "lays out the key factors, constructs or variables and presumes relationships among them". Bhatnagar (ibid) continues to observe that a "conceptual framework embraces the soft interpretations of intentions rather than knowledge of hard facts" and this aligns to my interpretivist philosophical foundation. The framework will enable a focus on individual layers of influence with the ability to helicopter across them (Hawkins & Smith, 2010), provide the flexibility for it to be viewed from different lenses and bring the full apprenticeship development ecosystem into my considerations (Smith, 2021). It offered a way to access the PWs and provided conditions for insights to emerge relating to the PWs themselves and the bigger complexity in which they sit.

Earlier, I introduced the concept of VUCA (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014) and the need for managing ambiguity as positive disruption allowing for innovation to permeate our workplaces and continue to reshape the way we work, and the way we relate to one another (Schwab, 2017). Utilising an ecosystem model within the conceptual

framework enabled the emerging dynamics and flux within the period of their development to be addressed. Another variable was the multiplicity of cultures which contributed to the VUCA scenario and Hamedani and Markus (2019) write of how cultural cycles are embedded within larger ecosystems and of cultural clashes and cultural practices. Such elements were, and still are, systemic within my PWs lifecycle.

How to help the ecosystem to reveal its dynamic interplay

Therefore, the PWs development ecosystem illustrated in Figure 1 embraces a microsystem, defining the immediate development context of the PWs; a mesosystem bringing together the interconnections between everyone and the relevant dynamics at the time and creates a macrosystem focusing on the wider, socio-economic culture, enabling consideration of future implications and outcomes.
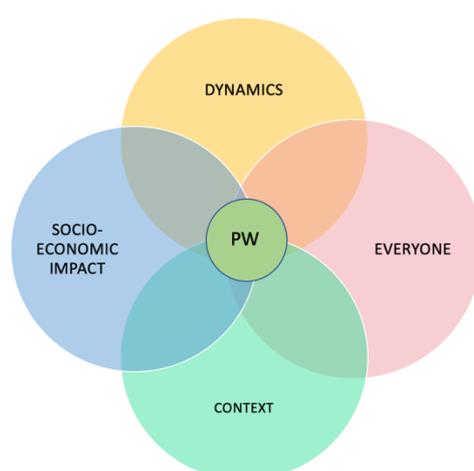
Figure 1 – PWs development ecosystem

The C-E-D-A-R conceptual framework draws on the principles of a systematic coaching approach, however multiple coaching paradigms exist which have evolved from established practices and root disciplines such as psychology, psychotherapy, organisational development and cognitive development theories (Bachkirova, 2011). All of these disciplines have had a major influence on the field of coaching providing a theoretical underpinning for the core skills and practice of coaching. Hawkins and Smith (2010) write that coaching is distinguished from these core disciplines through its focus on growth and change, with an overall intention of looking forward (rather

than back) and the facilitation of learning, both for the coach and the coachee. The facilitation of learning for the coach is a unique factor, and by drawing on models such as Gestalt we can acknowledge what has been brought into coaching thinking and theory and practice to lead to a mobilisation of thought generating a way forward (Pemberton, 2014). I and many coaches encourage our coachees to look back into previous experiences to then look forward more clearly. Whilst psychotherapy focuses on the complexity of an individual's life experiences, past and present, to facilitate a movement towards clarity, well-being and perspective (the whole person) which may include their relationships and challenges in their professional lives, it does not focus on the professional lives of their client groups. Prevalent coaching discourses focus on maximising personal, individual and, if in the workplace, professional potential. Coaching in the workplace in effect created a 'profession of coaching' from the professional, focusing attention not just on the individual but also on their professional environment.

The intention of using the C-E-D-A-R coaching approach across the apprenticeship development ecosystem was to identify different ways of thinking and new opportunities (Western, 2020), and to include all key stakeholders in my inquiry. Interactions, during the PWs, between the multiple stakeholders gave rise to value conflicts and contradictions according to McGregor (2020) who writes on transdisciplinarity and the C-E-D-A-R framework provided the opportunity to acknowledge these. I am both coach and researcher. For me, the role of the researcher was to develop a systematic coaching approach enabling an inquiry across the multiple levels of the apprenticeship development ecosystem. This enabled me to recognise the inter-connectivity from the immediate context through to the wider perspective, with a goal to deliver systemic change within it. Hawkins & Smith (2010) recognise that transformational change becomes systemic when "we focus on the shift in the part of the system we are working directly with, to create the shift that is necessary in the wider system". (Hawkins & Smith, 2010, p13). Addressing the wider system is a key requirement of the conceptual framework "to balance the variety of interests in the short and long-term" (Webb, 2020, p118) and to consider both moral and social outcomes. Building on Kahneman's (2011) System 1 of intuitive thinking and System 2 of thinking based on rational processing of information, Webb (2020) has defined what he calls System 3 thinking for wise decision making. A key ingredient

of System 3 thinking is 'the making of decisions for the common good' (ibid, p114). I was drawn to Webb's System 3 thinking which he also describes as "wise reasoning", and a "considerative way of assessing information" (ibid) aligning it to Aristotle's 'phronesis' or practical wisdom. Shotter and Tsoukas (2014, p227) write that wisdom is "often seen as synonymous with good judgement" and that it involves weighing up each parties' interests within a current context to solve a problem. I think of phronesis as practitioner knowledge and implicitly knowing, and wisdom as bringing in the old and merging it with the new to create a new and orderly whole for many (ibid). This means wisdom considers the micro yet is aware of and responds to the wider context. Kilburg (2000) observes that when coaching is successful it should promote wisdom and my intention is that the systematic coaching approach achieved through C-E-D-A-R will deliver a wiser reasoning across the PWs.

Coaches typically default to theoretical approaches from their own legacy fields and bring in tools and techniques from other root disciplines (Brock, 2008) to support their practice. My root discipline of coaching blends into my role as a practitioner supporting and enabling change. I came to coaching to trigger transformation in individuals and change in the workplace, through facilitating increased self-awareness, highlighting different perspectives (Clutterbuck, 2010) in individuals and supporting the personal development and growth of my coachees. The systematic approach of C-E-D-A-R will provide me with a disciplined space to reflect on specific work situations and relationships which occurred during the development of the PWs and on "the reactivity and patterns they evoke in my mind" (Hawkins, Turner & Passmore, 2019). Throughout, I drew on coaching concepts informed by my own practice as a coach, a change agent and as an educator. Staying firm to my coaching principles I attempted to keep an open mind and look for emerging instances of coherence (Hawkins & Smith, 2010) during the analysis of my works.

This coaching approach, which developed from other discourses is 'authentically me'. As well as helping me to connect what needs to connect using the 'helicopter' approach (ibid) it enabled me to probe and heighten my own self-awareness and inner wisdom (Iliffe-wood, 2014) and my phronesis. I can reflect from within a coaching process. It is a space I am familiar with, and coaching practice and knowledge helped to facilitate a shift in my habitual way of thinking (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018) about the

PWs and my experiences in their development embedded over the last few years. I began to see qualitative themes emerging plus the space between them (Clutterbuck, 2010).

The development of a structured story requires a reflective responsiveness according to Cavanagh and Lane (2012) and by thinking narratively a coach places an emphasis on the experience and less on the rush to interpretation, meaning or action (Drake, 2007). The emergence of a structured narrative aligns to Ellis and Bochner's (2006) autoethnographic approach with personal narrative at its core, but it also works to Anderson's (2006) autoethnographic analytical paradigm which focuses on the destination and on contribution to knowledge beyond self.

C-E-D-A-R

The C-E-D-A-R framework was inspired by Smith's (2021) personal construct approach to coaching supervision and influenced by systemic coaching supervision approaches including the 7-eyed process model[8] (Hawkins & Smith, 2010). Lenses of particular relevance in this model are the fifth lens focusing on relationships, the sixth focusing on the feelings, thoughts and images emerging and the seventh lens addressing the wider social, cultural and political context. Aims and elements from Clutterbuck's (2010), seven conversations of coaching[9] are also threaded throughout. The seven conversations of coaching were originally conceived as a supervisory approach to deconstruct the coaching dialogue (ibid) and to provide a structure to explore different perspectives, including the sometimes unspoken elements of a coaching narrative. Gloss (2012, p5) posits that "transformative learning comes about when we choose to think critically about our assumptions and reflect on our interpretations" and the rationale for threading Clutterbuck's seven conversations of

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[8] Lens 1: The coachee. Lens 2: The coach's interventions. Lens 3: The relationship between the coach and coachee. Lens 4: The coachee's awareness. Lens 5: The supervisory relationship. Lens 6: The supervisor's self-reflection. Lens 7: The wider context.

[9] (1) My dialogue with myself. (2) The coachee's inner dialogue. (3) My inner dialogue during the conversation. (4) The spoken dialogue. (5) The coachee's inner dialogue during the conversation. (6) My reflection after the conversation. (7) The client's reflection after the conversation.

coaching into my conceptual framework is to provide a stimulus for intuition and to recognise any filters or limiting perceptions I may have applied (Clutterbuck, 2010).

The C-E-D-A-R framework has five stages (Table1). It was an emergent process. I mapped out all of the key participants and all the development stages of the PWs. I was struggling to identify a conceptual frame so I decided to coach myself through this challenge asking myself how I would manage all these variables. I started to experiment with the idea of 'an organising frame'. This organising frame evolved into a conceptual framework and when I considered the elements and moved them around it spelled CEDAR which resonated for me, as it is a tree I like.

C	Context	Initial positioning of the PW context
E	Everyone	The key participants within the development ecosystem.
D	Dynamics	What shifted (within the here and there)
A	Awareness	Expanding and widening perspectives
R	Reflection and Reflexivity	Reflection, reflexivity and new possibilities

Table 1: The C-E-D-A-R Conceptual Framework (Sutton, 2021) ©

Trees are symbolic in many religions. The first tree named in The Bible is the Tree of Life. Ancient symbolism attributes the Tree of Life to wisdom, strength and longevity and Buddhists consider it the 'Tree of Enlightenment' where one can attain peace and knowledge. The CEDAR tree is described in The Bible as: strong, and durable (Isaiah 9:10), and spreading wide (Psalm 80 10-11) which is my aim for the PWs. It is mentioned in many poems and is a national symbol of Lebanon. Trees are vital members in nature's ecosystem, "in absorbing carbon and giving out oxygen they literally provide the breath of life" (Wittenberg, 2022). Standing tall, a tree has the capacity to pass on inspiration in a unique way and we owe it to ourselves and to society to plant them, literally and metaphorically, to establish firm roots for our future.

Using the C-E-D-A-R framework (Table 1) for inquiry across the PWs gave me the flexibility to refine or add to the framework and to develop a structured narrative (Cavanagh and Lane, 2012) covering the context; the role of key participants and their perspective; the dynamics and the wider world impacts.

Wall (2006, p148) writes that "the freedom of a researcher to speak as a player and to mingle their experience with the experience of those studied is precisely what is needed to move inquiry and knowledge further along". She suggests that an individual is best situated to describe his or her own experience more accurately than anyone else. Therefore, I set out to answer the coaching questions as a key member of the apprenticeship development ecosystem. Reflective and reflexive coaching questions conclude the coaching model when I consider how "my positionality might have influenced the emerging narrative" (ibid) but also reflect on future action (McNiff, 2010) to deliver on Anderson's analytical autoethnographic approach (2006).

The areas for questioning which I brought into C-E-D-A-R are below.

C	Context	The motivations for change The desired outcomes for the PW The key participants. The environment
E	Everyone	What the PW meant and to whom Contributions made and by whom
D	Dynamics	The edge of awareness Looking for what shifted Misalignments between rhetoric and reality
A	Awareness	Generating insights and possibilities
R	Reflection and Reflexivity	Reflections from the inquiry Emerging themes and wider impact

Table 2: The C-E-D-A-R stages and areas for enquiry (Sutton, 2021) ©

Ethical Considerations

Easterby-Smith et al (2018, p67) discuss "how we should try to understand and appreciate the different experiences that people have" and that "human action arises

from the sense that people make of different situations". Krauss (2005) claims that as each of us experiences a different reality, a phenomenon of multiple realities or truths exist. Achieving a critical distance in the coaching conversation with other key members may be a challenge (Easterby-Smith at al, 2018, p219) and assumptions and prejudices may get in the way (Nixon, 2017). I needed to be mindful of this. Lapadat (2007) proposes a way to overcome ethical dilemmas by repeatedly re-examining and making ethical decisions within each situational context and suggests that auto-ethnographers have a responsibility to themselves, implicated others, readers and society.

Summary

I recontextualised my PWs using the C-E-D-A-R coaching framework I developed to inquire into the development ecosystem of the PWs. The output was a broad, cognitive assessment (Bhatnagar, 2020) and a structured narrative incorporating an analytical autoethnographic account. The intention was to widen my perspectives and identify forward looking opportunities linked to the PWs using 'wise reasoning' and a system 3 thinking approach (Webb, 2020).

The challenges were: ensuring the reliability of my autoethnographic account; convincing the reader of the trustworthiness of my knowledge narrative; achieving a clear and critical engagement with the PWs; making clear the professional knowledge I have gained and developed and its possible contributions beyond myself.

The next chapter interrogates PW1 using the integrated approach outlined above.

CHAPTER 4.   PW1: The B2B Sales Professional Apprenticeship Standard

PW1 is the Business to Business (B2B) Sales Professional Apprenticeship Standard. and like many documents it is an artefact of 2 pages distilled from a considerable volume of negotiation, information, knowledge and action. It defines the occupation and the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours required of a B2B (Business to Business) Sales professional focusing on what an apprentice needs to know and do (Bravenboer, 2019).

My engagement with the artefact was 18-months of work, from writing the bid to submit to the Department for Education through to its approval by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) who are sponsored by the Department of Education (DfE) and are responsible for developing and approving apprenticeships and technical qualifications with employers. During this time, I led the development of The Standard working with a Trailblazer Group of Employer representatives. A Trailblazer Group comprises at least twelve employers, two of which need to be small or medium sized organisations who operate in the sector. The Trailblazer Group are responsible for developing the apprenticeship standard, which is at the core of an apprenticeship programme.

The process of developing the Apprenticeship Standard started in September 2016 and it was approved by IfATE in April 2017.

PW1 can be found at: https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/business-to-business-sales-professional-integrated-degree-v1-0 and in Appendix 3.

Key motivations for developing The Standard

(i)   The Apprenticeship Reform Programme established in May 2015 which introduced degree apprenticeships in 2016 and the apprenticeship levy in 2017 (DfE, 2020). The intention of the Apprenticeship Reform programme was to increase the quality and quantity of apprenticeships and to address the skills shortage and high-level technical skills needed for the jobs of the future (BIS,

2015a) whilst delivering benefits for individuals, businesses, and the economy (Augar, 2017, DfE, 2020)

(ii)   Degree apprenticeships were a flagship programme created to contribute to social mobility, address the skills gap, improve productivity within UK industry (Bravenboer and Crawford-Lee, 2020) and support "business success and sustainable employment" (McKnight et al, 2019, p150)

(iii)   For business to business (B2B) sales to be recognised as a profession

I use the C-E-D-A-R framework as I critique PW1, starting with the Context.

C	Context
E	Everyone
D	Dynamics
A	Awareness
R	Reflection and Reflexivity

The C-E-D-A-R Framework ©

(Sutton, 2021)
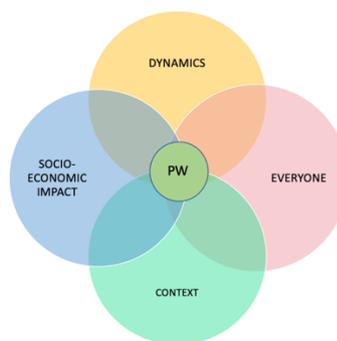
Figure 2

PWs development ecosystem

C. Context

The need to increase UK Productivity through Skills Development

Productivity growth in the UK plateaued at just 0.2% between 2010 - 2015 after the financial crisis. This was approximately 20% below other G7 economies (BIS, 2015). There was further projected uncertainty for trade and investment after Brexit (MGI, 2018) causing increasing concern. Raising productivity through improving the UK skills base has been a consistent, cross-party Government theme and a major preoccupation of UK industry since the recession of 2008 (MGI, 2018). Much attention has been given in the literature, as well as the press, to the UK's skills gap and the failure to provide the skills most needed for the 21st century (Sainsbury, 2016). The Government's goal to become a global leader in skills (Leitch, 2006) over the last 15

years needed to be manifested in policies that could be actioned. When the Government set out its vision for the apprenticeship reforms it was intent on increasing productivity through employer investment in apprenticeships, addressing the skills shortage in the UK and stimulating economic growth (Lester, 2020).

Another recurring theme has been the need to boost productivity growth by supporting the development of skills that are harder to automate. Such skills reflect the changing requirements of the workplace, such as creativity, higher cognitive skills, leadership skills and advanced digital skills (MGI, 2018). Specifically, the MGI report identified that

> … an education system was needed that meets the needs of a fast-changing digital economy, that can upgrade the skills of its existing workforce at scale and ensure that businesses have the managerial skill set to productively lead that workforce and support digital transformations.
>
> (MGI, 2018, p30)

The Government's plan was that new apprenticeships, including higher and degree apprenticeships, would deliver technical and professional skilled workers, in emerging knowledge based and technical sectors, such as cyber security and digital marketing as well as addressing occupations in more traditional sectors such as engineering and the public sector. The apprenticeship reforms specified that employers would have full ownership of the apprenticeships, designing and owning the content of The Apprenticeship Standard and Apprenticeship Assessment Plans (BIS, 2015). More details on these two documents will be provided below.

The requirement for employer ownership of the two, key apprenticeship deliverables was to ensure that apprentices would develop both relevant skills for the occupation and other, additional skills identified as 'value related' to develop broader capabilities for general employability, such as teamwork, organisational skills, self-awareness and reflection (Bravenboer, 2019). These skills were termed transferrable skills and all new apprenticeships in England were to include transferrable skills, including a mandated digital component. The overall intent was to ensure that apprentices would receive training to meet the specific sector needs but also those of the broader sector

and of the economy more widely (IfATE, 2017). "Apprenticeships would therefore future-proof apprentices skilling them for more than one job and for further skills shifts". (ibid).

Professionalising sales

Business to Business (B2B) sales are estimated at 44% of the UK's annual economic output (GVA) at £1.7 trillion (APPG for Professional Sales, 2021) and B2B sales is arguably one of the most important functions of any business particularly in the 21st century (Squire, 2021). A report from the World Economic Forum (2021) talks of the impact of digitalisation with increased pace and scale, of new entrants into a global market bringing with them increasing competition, and globalisation. Yet even with these immense numbers and predicted growth the challenge to get B2B sales universally recognised as a profession is ongoing: "deeply entrenched attitudes about sales politically and in the academic world" still proliferate (Squire, 2021, p15) and Britain has an "uncomfortable relationship with sales" (APPG for Professional Sales, 2021, p9). Supporting the recognition of the professionalisation of sales was a key aim of PW1.

The concept of a profession is often disputed (Evetts, 2013) and the discourse of professionalism is broad and evolving including what is and is not a profession. There are many who consider this discourse a "time-wasting diversion" (Evetts, 2013) but it has been a long aspiration for the sales sector for sales to be recognised as a profession (APPG for Professional Sales, 2021).

Traditional models of professions are linked to appointed and entitled professions and of designated holders of knowledge and wisdom (Cavanagh and Lane, 2012) in their sector. Historically, these types of professions provided status and wealth and were highly selective covering a limited number of occupations including law and medicine (Brock et al, 2013). Over time, the concept of a profession evolved to one requiring formal academic qualifications, a code of ethics and a chartered status which was achieved through proven experience and accreditation. Svennson (2006) aligns with this view contending professionalism is an outcome of knowledge and ethical culture acquired by higher education and work experience. Brock et al. (2013) share how

more recently professionalisation has emerged to become a "ubiquitous, socio-economic trend of our times" (Brock et al., 2013, p2) and posit how professionals are playing an increasingly important role in contemporary, knowledge-intensive societies (Brock et al., 2013) such as management consultancy and executive search. Svensson (2006) also shares how the concept of professionalism has been extended to new knowledge occupations to promote trust within an ethical, operational culture (Svensson, 2006). Evetts (2013) also identifies trust as the key to professionalism rather than a specific profession or occupation.

This emerging hypothesis that "professionalism requires professionals to be worthy of trust" (Evetts, 2013, p780) is of specific relevance to B2B sales and the quest for sales to be recognised as a trusted profession, given recent, high-profile, mis-selling and corporate scandals such as Enron, the PPI mis-selling scandal and the emerging concern of the 'green-washing' (ICAEW, 2022) of funds pertaining to be ESG (environmental, social and good governance) funds. These instances of unethical behavior in both individuals and organisational cultures, continue to invoke unease and mistrust in the sales sector (Squire, 2021).

Squire (2021) writes of two routes for the professionalisation of sales, one being where the profession is represented by a chartered institute "accountable for the setting of standards", and the second through the achievement of academic qualifications that meet the same standards. Bravenboer (2016) also links professions to occupations with an entry-criteria at degree level or above and with an associated membership body. (Bravenboer, 2016). In 2016 as we began the development of PW1 only two universities were delivering a degree programme with sales in its title. Neither were focused wholly on B2B sales, so when the Government approved the bid to develop a degree apprenticeship for a B2B Sales Professional it was a pivotal moment, assuming, finally, the recognition of sales as a profession by the UK Government (Squire, 2021). The ISP (2016) declared it a major milestone in the goal to professionalise sales and our trailblazer chair claimed it would lead to parity with marketing and other professions and open sales up as a career of choice (Davis, 2016).

The ISP (2016) confirmed the apprenticeship would be aligned with their Continuous Professional Development pathway and that it was a significant milestone to the organisation's quest to achieving chartered status. Linked to Bravenboer's (2016) requirements for professions to position entry-criteria at degree level or above with an associated membership body this was a promising development for establishing B2B Sales as a profession. More recent developments now support this. In 2020, The Office for National Statistics recategorized B2B Selling as a profession, as most B2B sales jobs advertised now require a degree and five years' experience. These candidate requirements demonstrate the wider recognition of the complexity of a B2B sales role in the current, commercially complex world and the shift to more consultative approaches in B2B sales, away from the stereotype of hard sell tactics (Marcos-Cuevas, 2018). They also provide recognition that sales talent is a dominant form of strategic advantage (Schwab, 2017).

Professionalism in a VUCA environment

The VUCA world we are living in (Bennet and Lemoine, 2014) and the growing need to be adaptable and agile is a theme threaded throughout this context statement. Relevant discourse describes the VUCA challenges we face requiring cross-disciplinary responses (Cavanagh and Lane, 2012) and the need for individuals to adapt continuously to new approaches within new contexts (Schwab, 2017). Maguire (2015) also writes of inter-connectedness and complexity in the workplace and the importance of translating between the different parts and that this requires evolving skills and attitude of mind. One can no longer be considered forever competent (Cavanagh and Lane, 2012) and the emerging landscape is that professionals are losing their monopoly of knowledge; that knowledge is no longer static; that knowledge is freely available and that it needs to be contextualised (Cavanagh and Lane, 2012). Jensen (2007) supports this view writing of the need for professionals to engage in continual learning as they are no longer able to exploit prior competence in a fast-changing world. An evolving ideology for professionalism therefore is one of continuous learning and 'growth mindset' (Dweck, 2017), unlocking the lessons of experience (Hoff and Burke, 2018) or of "reflective knowing" (Barnett, 1994, p182) through learning from experience leading to the production of new knowledge (Evetts, 2013).

These emerging paradigms of professionalism needed to be absorbed into PW1. Guiding the trailblazer group, through setting principles on how we should all work together helped to establish the trailblazer team culture and focus the energy (Senge, 2002). I had to ensure the occupation and the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) defined in the Apprenticeship Standard would meet the current day requirements of a B2B sales sector and of a 'knowledge' profession, that they would deliver an ethical core and stand the test of time in the evolving and complex commercial landscape (APPG, 2021).

Degree Apprenticeships: merging the world of work and higher education

The launch of degree apprenticeships in England in 2015 with the central role of employers in the apprenticeship development process was serendipitous in terms of timing, as the campaign for sales to be recognised as a profession picked up momentum. At an ISP meeting in April 2016, we agreed that a degree apprenticeship in sales should be one of the launch-pads in the quest for recognised professional status. From that meeting I submitted the bid to develop a degree apprenticeship in B2B sales and this was approved in June 2016 by IfATE.

Merging the world of work and higher education together, and "making the workplace the site for learning rather a site for its application" (Bravenboer and Crawford-Lee, 2020, p694) were two of the key objectives with degree apprenticeships. Further objectives were to: achieve policy objectives focused on social mobility and productivity (Queiros, 2020), create new routes into higher level work, enhance employment and career options and support the professionalism of new fields (Lester, 2020).

The desired outcome

The essential and short-term outcome for PW1 was a 2-page Apprenticeship Standard (Appendix 6) defining the occupation of a B2B Sales Professional, endorsed by the B2B sales sector and approved by IfATE. The longer-term outcome was a recognised, Government approved benchmark for a B2B Sales Professional and the launchpad for a degree in Business-to-Business Sales.

The Apprenticeship Standard

An Apprenticeship Standard, an artefact introduced by The Richard Review (Richard, 2012), is at the core of an apprenticeship. All things in an apprenticeship link back to The Standard. Its purpose is to define the occupation, in this instance of a *B2B Sales Professional* and the knowledge, skills and behaviours that the apprentice needs to be fully competent in, as they complete the programme (BIS, 2015). The IfATE (2020) website describes Apprenticeship Standards as an artefact to be used and lists pertinent stakeholders as: employers, parent and guardians, schools, employees, employers, end point assessment organisations (EPAOs) and training providers (IfATE, 2020). The use of the term 'occupation' is interesting. IfATE does not provide a definition for an 'occupation' but states:

> … the apprenticeship standards describe the level of skill, knowledge and competency required to achieve mastery of a specific occupation and to operate confidently in the sector, and that apprenticeship standards will meet professional registration requirements in sectors where these exist
>
> (BIS/IfATE, 2015).

They go on to define mastery of an occupation as when:

> … the skills learnt by an apprentice are sufficiently transferable for them to adapt quickly to undertaking the same occupation in another company in the same sector
>
> (BIS/IfATE, 2015).

Evetts (2013) cites Olofsson (2009) who questions whether a profession and occupation are similar social forms since the term 'occupation' is often used in the discourse of professionalism. Combining the requirement to achieve mastery of an occupation and the ability to achieve The ISP professional registration on completion aligns the B2B Sales Professional apprenticeship occupation to one of a 'profession'.

E. Everyone

The key members playing a central role

The second stage of the C-E-D-A-R coaching framework considers the role of the key stakeholders involved in the development of PW1. Three key members during the development of the apprenticeship standard were:

1. The B2B Sales Professional Trailblazer Group
2. The DfE, then IfA, now IfATE
3. Myself

The B2B Sales Professional Trailblazer Group

Employer involvement in the design of an Apprenticeship Standard was through a Trailblazer Group (B2B-TG) of sales experts. The requirement for employer involvement was mandated to ensure The Standard was relevant, that it would meet employers' current needs plus the emerging needs of the sector and the economy more widely (BIS, 2015).

The Government requirement for the trailblazer group was a minimum of twelve, approved employers, two of which had to be small-medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Our trailblazer employers included: BT, Royal Mail, Whitbread, WorldPay, BAE Systems, SIG Group, Kimberley Clarke, Koru Services, Pitney Bowes, McCurroch, Consalia and two technology focused SMEs, WBS Group and ADM Computing. Our Chair was Head of Sales at Royal Mail.

It was an impressive line-up of blue-chip, innovation-led technology employers, which clearly demonstrated the cross-industry support for the apprenticeship, but which also presented its own challenge: how to define the occupation of a B2B salesperson that would be relevant for all these organisations and across the B2B sales sector they represented. As the trailblazer members introduced themselves it was evident that the spread and level of knowledge was significant and that we had a group of 'experts' within the sector, who were arriving with "pre-formed sets of attitudes, experiences,

identities, life histories and ways of working learned elsewhere" (Hughes, Jewson and Unwin, 2013, p6). I think it is interesting to note that it transpired later that three of the trailblazer members started their careers as apprentices, including the Chair.

The B2B-TG also included three HEIs: Middlesex University, Anglia Ruskin University, Portsmouth University and The Institute of Sales Professionals (The ISP), the Professional Body for Sales. The value of involving HEIs was recognised as important enabling early collaboration with employers (Bravenboer, 2016). As the professional body for sales ISP representation on the B2B-TG was essential and necessary to achieve Government approval. They were still in the formative stages of their development and the development and approval of The B2B Sales Professional Standard was also on their critical path for growth and for achieving Chartered Status and the Chief Operating Officer of The ISP was their representative.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE)

A new body, the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA), subsequently to become The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) was set up to oversee the development of all apprenticeship standards in April 2017. IfATE were in effect the gatekeeper and the facilitator of the development of the apprenticeship, from its approval of the occupation of a B2B Sales Professional as an apprenticeship requiring a degree qualification to completion of the End Point Assessment plan. Their key representative on the B2B-TG was a 'Relationship Manager' appointed to provide guidance and bring expertise to the process.

Myself

My role was to lead the development activity with the B2B-TG members and to manage the interface with the DfE. The personal skills and characteristics I drew on to achieve this were one of leader, driver and completer-finisher and to use these characteristics to their best effect required a deep understanding of the apprenticeship development process. My aim with this project was to be an agent of change, to make a difference to the sales profession and to provide a new career in sales. As a team-player I work collaboratively and encourage and respect multiple perspectives and

dialogue within my professional practice. My values underpinned my approach and informed my positionality.

My leadership approach was one of servant leadership the giver and the listener, committed and available (Sisodia et al, 2014). Spears (1996) reflecting on Greenleaf's leadership philosophy writes of how it encourages everyone to balance leading and serving within their own lives, with the intent to enhance other lives, to raise possibilities, promote a sense of community and a sharing of power in decision making. This leadership approach set my expectations for the ethos of the trailblazer group but overtime I learnt that there was a mix of motivations, and every player had a unique agency.

Generating a creative environment

The B2B-TG vision was powerful, strong and shared by all. Poell (2006) describes communities of practice as a group with a "mutual interest in knowledge development within a shared domain and which provides its members with a collective identity" (Poell, 2006). This was the case. Members clearly felt pride in being asked to be a trailblazer member and held a strong and shared purpose of 'professionalising sales'. Žižek et al (2014) write of how supportive social relations engender creativity and innovation and are crucial for success. A team culture quickly formed within the B2B-TG with a strong sense of integrity, interconnectedness, and respect but there was also a culture of learning and fun. Expectations and standards were high. There was something wonderfully empowering about starting with a blank sheet of paper to develop or build an artefact and deciding where and how to start. The B2B-TG went back to basics - 'how to sell' - and used the concept of a typical sales cycle to structure a first draft of the KSBs.

Cook (2016, p162) observes that "conflict over ideas is a valuable resource provided it is harnessed and used" and creativity bubbled and formed from the diverse sales cultures around the table. Leading the learning activity of senior salespeople, ensuring each sales expert had an equal voice and opportunity to influence and allowing the discussions and debate to progress in a positive and constructive way heightened my own influencing and negotiating skills, and my knowledge of B2B sales.

Senge's third discipline for a learning organisation is that a shared vision builds long-term commitment in people (Senge, 1990). It became evident early as the B2B-TG was formed that a sustained effort would be needed. The passion and vision of professionalising sales and the belief that we were creating change for good is what helped to propel both myself and the B2B-TG through a convoluted and arduous development journey. In total seventeen versions of The Standard were produced. Nine by the B2B-TG between the inaugural meeting and January 2017 and a further eight as we went through the approval process with IfATE.

IfATE was formed eight months after the B2B-TG had formed and it just so happened it was the same time as the B2B-TG submitted their final version to them for approval. This is also when the development landscape became more complex as the process to develop an apprenticeship standard continually shifted as IfATE introduced new requirements and new processes. Cavanagh and Lane (2012) define a complex, adaptive system as not knowable or predictable and that was the emerging development environment. In versions 10-17 IfATE requested changes to content they had previously changed and agreed to in earlier versions, and it soon became clear that 'business to business sales' and the requirements of a B2B Sales Professional were a concept they just didn't grasp. The IfATE approval panel had recruited one sales expert who it transpired had the authority to over-ride the fourteen sales experts in the B2B-TG. The B2B-TG asked if they would join a trailblazer meeting, but they declined and they remained a 'faceless' entity. This challenged my belief in the IfATE process as whilst "mutuality, trust and the capacity to engage in meaningful dialogue" (Augsburg, 2014) are at the core of a transdisciplinary ontology they also set the foundation for a professional identify. As a group we knew we had developed a highly relevant standard that worked for the multiple sectors represented in the B2B-TG and this response was crushing. Passions were squashed and resilience became the key requirement that I needed to bring into the process.

Exerting power into the process IfATE diminished the advantages of drawing on the distributed knowledge system (Cavanagh and Lane, 2012) which had been present within the B2B-TG. Nixon (2017) shares how understanding necessarily involves an element of application and with the IfATE approval panel comprising just one, highly

influential sales expert, but who hid within the shadows of the process, plus other IfATE panel members who had no sales knowledge, understanding of the vision and intent of The B2B Sales Professional Standard was diminished. The reality is that the creative process hit a 'brick wall' in the guise of the IfATE approval panel.

That said, I / we, the B2B-TG persevered and we did not let go of our vision. At this point I was continually interfacing with the IfATE Relationship Manager and then reverting to the rest of the group, communicating the changes, the developments and ensuring we crossed the line. Approval of The Standard was achieved in May 2017. When I reflect on the development of The Standard and the creative environment for developing The Standard I see it in two distinct stages, with two 'case-study' examples. One of the best of team working, of creativity and passion driven by a shared goal and the other, demonstrating the exertion of power and rules, of a fixed mindset (Dweck, 2017) and how the siloed nature of newly formed and separate IfATE teams created more work and misunderstanding, between themselves and between them and us.

The impact of IfATE forming was so disruptive and de-motivating that after The Standard had been approved, I wrote to the Head of Standards at IfATE and asked to meet him, to share our experience. It seemed a good meeting, and he apologised for early errors in their ways of working. IfATE have recently introduced new processes to be more 'collaborative and supportive' and by all accounts some improvements have been made.

I will continue to investigate the 'E' and then the 'D' components of the C-E-D-A-R framework using an ethnographic lens seeking to understand (i) what the PW meant to the B2B-TG and IfATE recognising that I am recording their views from an insider researcher perspective and (ii) their contribution. I am acutely aware of the potential to bring in bias and need to ensure I operate with ethical considerations at the centre of the inquiry (McNiff, 2010). I will also reflect on what I noticed at the edge of my awareness during this time through an autoethnographic inquiry.

What did PW1 mean to the 3 players in the ecosystem?

B2B-TG 14 Group Members	IfATE 2 Relationship Managers and approval panel	Self
It meant the recognition of B2B Sales as a profession and the sector's ambition to professionalise those who work in a B2B selling environment. The trailblazer chair wrote: *"The PW set a standard for B2B Sales with ethics at the core, that meets the needs and requirements of today's sales organisations and the expectations of tomorrow's markets and customers".* *(Davis, 2017).*	There was no personal meaning attached to PW1. It was another Apprenticeship Standard to be supported and developed and it was approached in the same way as all apprenticeships according to the current process.	When I think back to that time I can recall achievement, recognition and pride. I had enabled "access *to a profession that hadn't really existed before"* *(Davis, 2017).* There was also a sense of vindication and I felt like a trailblazer.

Their role and contribution

I am mindful that each player in an ecosystem has a strategic theory, a mental map of how the ecosystem operates and how it should co-evolve (Moore, 2006, p15).

B2B-TG	IfATE	Self
The Government put the B2B-TG, into the 'driving seat' to define the occupation and the KSBs. (IfATE, 2015) As a group we shared our expertise and knowledge of B2B sales and how our	The role of IfATE is to: 1. develop and maintain quality criteria for the approval of apprenticeship standards 2. support the development of standards by employer groups, reviewing and approving them.	My role was to lead The Apprenticeship Standard development process: to ensure we submitted a fit-for-purpose, yet game-changing Apprenticeship Standard. I was the orchestrator of a community of practice (Poell, 2006).

organisations sold to its customers. We pooled explicit knowledge and drew on our tacit knowledge, '*the insights and ideas that are near impossible to read from the company manual'* (Gratton, 2021). As a Group we held a shared vision to define a world-class benchmark for B2B Sales and what emerged was exactly that, through a community of practice and leveraging off their collective learning (Poell, 2006).	3. They also have to '*pay regard to the reasonable requirements of industry, commerce, finance, the professions and other employers about education and training within its remit'.* (IfATE, 2019) This can be re-stated as: IfATE were the policy makers, and the gatekeepers. Specifically for The Standard their role was to ensure that the defined occupation for a B2B Sales Professional was unique and that the KSBs were set at the appropriate level for a degree apprenticeship.	I became the bridge between the B2B-TG and IfATE and I was the driver for the initiative. During the development of PW1 I represented the B2B-TG and The ISP at The National Sales Conference to raise awareness of and increase the profile of The Standard. Towards the end my contribution became one of perseverance and resilience leading to the achievement of the B2B-TG goal.

D. The dynamics and what shifted?

Formation of IfATE

When we started the development of PW1 in 2016 responsibility for apprenticeships sat within the Department for Education (DfE). We submitted the final version of The Standard for Government approval just as IfATE was formed as a new Government body, responsible for the development of apprenticeship standards. Sector route panels were also set up within IfATE at this time.

As IfATE formed they issued new rules and processes for the development of Apprenticeship Standards on a continual basis; it seemed almost monthly. Our trailblazer chair commented that working for IfATE was like working for his CEO, '*The more you gave them the more they asked for*' (Davis, 2017) and he challenged them, asking '*if the goalposts keep moving how can we get over the line*?' (Davis, 2017).

The Relationship Manager

Our first relationship manager from the DfE left in February 2017 which was a critical point in the approval period of our Standard. The second relationship manager arrived just as IfATE was being formed as a new Government entity responsible for the development of apprenticeships, and to increase economic productivity (IfATE, 2022). IfATE set up different departments and approval panels, akin to silos of responsibility, for standards, assessment, and funding and was establishing new processes and its own culture, just as any new organisation does. Our Relationship Manager was our gatekeeper into IfATE. Her agency and frame of reference was tightly linked to the new and constantly changing IfATE requirements and their evolving processes. Our mission to professionalise sales stood firm and our aim at this point was to achieve approval of our Standard as quickly as we could to move it forward. These factors pulled together led to an inability to maintain momentum.

From this point on, numerous feedback loops were required from the different IfATE panels for standards, assessment, and funding to the B2B-TG and then back-again, and our Relationship Manager operated as the messenger. This consumed significant time and significant resource to negotiate and move things on and it almost jeopardised the whole process. The pressure was intense, and I despaired many times during this period. The Relationship Manager and I moved to almost daily calls as I endeavoured to prove that they were asking us to undo what they had previously asked us to do, or that the IfATE assessment panel were repeatedly querying their own Standard team's panel recommendations. Somehow, through this the relationship persevered and even strengthened towards the end. Hawkins & Smith (2010) share Yalom's assertion of the need to attend to what is happening in the here and now of all professional relationships. I'll finish with Bourdieu's claim, cited in Crawley (2021) that 'the game is worth the candle that is burned to play it'.

Funding for the B2B Sales Professional degree apprenticeships

Funding for all apprenticeships, including Degree Apprenticeships is provided through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and it is withdrawn directly from an employers' digital Apprenticeship Levy account (Lester, 2020). The funding level covers both the training provider and assessment fees. In 2016 all degree

apprenticeships at level 6 (which included a full bachelor's degree) had funding bands of £27K which match the maximum price of a full-time degree at university at the time.

The ESFA began to query whether degree apprenticeships should receive the same funding and a new process for approving funding bands was introduced in April 2017. An additional governance body of Route Panels with a separate sub-committee for Approval and Funding was formed. Our apprenticeship was put into the Sales, Marketing and Procurement Route Panel. They began asking for extra information at a granular level of detail even at this very late stage in the approval process. Initially, we were awarded a funding band of £18K. Bearing in mind all other approved degree apprenticeships at that time had been awarded £27K it was hard not to link this to the perceived stigma of sales still being firmly embedded in Government minds, and to the deeply entrenched attitudes about sales politically (Squire, 2021) and the failure of the Government to recognise the importance of B2B selling to the economy (APPG, 2021).

Misalignments between rhetoric and reality
The role of employers in the process

In all the government communication about the apprenticeship development process it was made very clear that employers will be in the driving seat and would have full ownership of the apprenticeships, by designing and owning the content of The Standard and Assessment Plans (BIS, 2015). As IfATE formed, the reality was very different. IfATE recruited a 'sales industry specialist' onto their 'Sales, Marketing and Procurement Route Panel' which approved The Standard and this single person had the ability to over-ride the fourteen sales and industry experts of the trailblazer group. As sales leaders B2B-TG members were used to objections and challenges but they would use dialogue to resolve them. Senge (2006) shares how dialogue is derived from the Greek word *dia-logos*, 'a free-flowing of meaning through a group' and he proposes that dialogue can be used to explore complex issues, to present different views, and enter thinking together with the aim to define a new, shared view (Senge, 1990).

Given that the IfATE sales expert would not meet the B2B-TG or even the B2B-TG Chair on a one-to-one basis to discuss the differences of opinion between the route panel and the B2B-TG, IfATE confirmed our only option was to work with the feedback

from the route panel. The construct of Senge's (2006) mental models, one of his five learning disciplines, as 'deeply ingrained assumptions that influence how we understand the world and how we take action' (Senge, 2006, p8) comes to mind. Two of the IfATE published values, which one would assume are contributing to their mental model are collaborative and authoritative! What that seems to present is a dichotomy of how IfATE want to be seen and the mental model with which they operate.

A. Awareness

On the edge of awareness

> The edge of awareness - the frontier of thinking - borders a huge
> reservoir of possibility
>
> (Gendlin, in Preston, 2008, p362)

I bring the concept of edges and boundaries into my coaching and ask 'stretching' questions to help someone explore their mindset, raise awareness of their constraints and to recognise emerging leeway and potential. Helping people to stretch, to find elastic edges, can take them to new places and as Gendlin, cited by Preston (2008) suggests, to new possibilities. Working with edges and helping individuals to recognise their familiar zones and boundaries, and then to stretch them, has similarities with Vygotsky's notion of a zone of proximal development (Sanders and Welk, 2005). Let's in this instance call it a zone of 'proximal awareness' (ibid) where possibilities are identified. Taking myself to the 'edge of awareness' I inquired what I had noticed, and I identified the following:

- "The meaningfulness of the experience" (Senge, 1990, p13)
- Being part of a generative movement, of a significant and strategic change, within an actively unfolding process (Sharma, 2011), and importantly, with more to emerge from it
- Connection to a larger movement
- A personal metanoia

Emerging developments and insights

ISP Competency Framework

The Level 6 B2B Sales Professional Standard was a benchmark for the ISP competency framework, now developed into a B2B Sales certification framework.

Level 4 Apprenticeship

After the successful approval of the B2B Sales Professional Standard at Level 6 I co-led the Trailblazer Group for the Level 4 Sales Executive Standard. This has been approved opening up another channel for professional development in sales and a large number of training providers are offering the Level 4 Sales Executive apprenticeship. This activity continued to extend my sales knowledge as the Level 4 occupation was defined as business to consumer as well as business to business sales and the trailblazer group included organisations from sectors such as Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), utilities and media.

A benchmark within competency frameworks

Trailblazer organisations and other organisations in the UK and internationally have adapted the B2B Sales Professional Standard into their organisational, competency frameworks. This has enabled organisations to develop talent management strategies and define career paths in B2B sales.

> Selling-related knowledge is the highest predictor of performance in sales and sales professionals need to develop a wider range of competences throughout the lifetime of their careers (Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal, cited within Marcos-Cuevas et al, 2014).

Refresh and review of The Standard

There is an IfATE requirement to review The Standard after a 3-year period. After 3-years I wrote to IfATE to ask when this would be and have been advised there is no set date, and we will hear from them when it is needed. It will be an interesting exercise to review the knowledge and skills defined before covid to the post-covid era and the

hybrid home-working paradigm. I am confident much will remain the same with a greater emphasis on digital selling as there 'remains a wide gap between the digital haves – big business and growth-oriented SMEs – and the have-nots (APPG, 2021).

R. Reflections and Reflexivity
Surfacing Insights from the critical inquiry

There are some moments in your life which prove to be pivotal, and leading and delivering the development of The B2B Sales Professional Standard were key moments for me. As a coach, as a manager and a team-player I had helped people progress in the workplace on a 1-1 basis, but with The Standard I was creating a new career path and an opportunity for people to learn about sales and gain a degree without incurring debt. To have been a part of that, to have led its development has proved to me that transformational change at a macro level can be achieved. When I reflect on this, I feel a strength derived from this achievement.

I reflected further using Senge's 'After Action Review' model (Senge, 2006) which focuses on the gap between what happened and expectations. The 'After Action Review' (AAR) asks the following:

1. What happened?
2. What did I expect?
3. What can I learn from the gap?

'What happened' has been addressed though the C-E-D-A-R components inquiring of the context, everyone involved, the dynamics and awareness generated.

My expectations were that IfATE would be as committed as the B2B-TG were to make the Apprenticeship Standard development process work in a timely and effective way. This was based on their approval of our bid to develop a new degree apprenticeship, their target of 3-million new apprenticeship starts by 2020 (IfATE, 2015) and their very public rhetoric about the benefits of degree apprenticeships at the time. I had also expected IfATE to work as one organization and not as silos or disparate teams. Bloom

(2012, p1351) writes of how we inhabit a world of relationships and that "relationships are systems in and of themselves, as well as parts of even larger systems". Relating this to the apprenticeship development system, as the relationship interaction was flawed, the system was too. Learning occurs in communities (Senge, 2006) and results through a shared vision (Senge, 2006) and these factors were missing across the ecosystem.

What can I learn from the gap? Brannick and Coghlan (2007) describe reflection as a process of stepping back from an experience, to uncover and discover and to process what it meant, with a view to identifying further insights. I consider that the insights can be observations about self and the process from living through the complexities (Ellis et al, 2011) as well as opportunities to action and move forward. This is the reflexive process of autoethnography to shape something from both standing back and standing in and being shaped by it.

I have often reflected on how my thinking and actions contributed to the problem. As a practitioner did I bring in a heuristic approach, a default mode of leading projects which had worked well in the past for successful completion? "Our life experiences deliver a rich mix of assumptions, feelings and shape well-formed hypotheses" (Senge, 2006, p262). Shotter & Tsoukas, (2014) explain how Aristotle's '*phronesis*' or practical wisdom involves discerning perception and how this requires the agent to "bring themself fully to the situation, to feel its contours and its landscape of possibilities" (Shotter & Tsoukas, 2014, p235). I saw a connection to Gendlin's 'edge of awareness' (Preston, 2008) but landscapes can include barriers and hurdles and are not always smooth. I can see that I did not stop to appreciate the change in landscape as IfATE formed and the new relationship manager came on board. I was only looking ahead. This is a significant reflection to absorb into my practice. As a project manager I was taught to review the plan every day and check for what had changed, but in this case, I didn't look beyond, to consider what may be impacted when the system was disrupted. Graca and Camarinha-Matos (2017) cite Moore (1996) suggesting that "each player in an ecosystem has a strategic theory, a mental map of how the ecosystem operates and how it should co-evolve", and Neal & Neal (2013) write that social interactions are the building blocks of ecological systems. Going forward, I will re-set my mental map for an ecosystem as new players join,

others leave and/or other disruptors emerge. That said, the power of collaboration and learning communities was reinforced to me and the absolute power of working to a shared goal. It delivered a force of real strength and many lasting business relationships were formed out of the B2B-TG because "we did this together".

From a personal perspective this was a huge period of development for me which elevated my profile at the time to become the 'face' of the B2B Sales Professional apprenticeship. I spoke at The National Sales Conference about the apprenticeship, I networked, and I delivered. We also have a benchmark Standard which is still relevant today, and which provides a solid foundation for the B2B Sales Professional apprenticeship programme which is my second PW. Finally, a fact which cannot go unsaid is that I was working on something that really mattered to me as a person.

The emerging themes, wider impact and possibilities

PW1 is a benchmark standard for a B2B Sales Professional which is being used as a framework in sales organisations, in the UK and by the ISP, the professional body for Sales. It has also been shared with and appreciated by global sales organisations within Consalia's network. It was a major stepping-stone for getting B2B sales recognised as a profession, and we need to ensure it remains and continues to be relevant. It should not be forgotten that The Standard was developed as part of the UK Government's apprenticeship reforms and objectives within those reforms include "increasing social mobility, improving productivity" (Lester, 2020, p702) and enabling sales to be a career of choice for more people (Davis, 2016). We need to ensure that we support "these economic priorities and widen access" (Lester, 2020, p703) and continue to drive awareness of its potential within the sales sector.

An emerging development is that a few universities, both in the UK and overseas are starting to recognise sales as a discipline. Academic recognition is important as Squire (2021) states "if sales is to be transformed as a profession so should the academic routes to get there". Consalia is also exploring opportunities for the degree in B2B Sales to go digital and be delivered outside of an apprenticeship route.

Degree apprenticeships professionalise a job role and attract a different talent supply (Bravenboer and Crawford-Lee, 2020). They continue to offer significant potential for change, for developing relevant, transferable skills necessary for occupational competence and to take us into the fourth industrial revolution (Schwab, 2017). The degree apprenticeship programme, built upon PW1 is my PW2. It merges the world of work and higher education through the development of the B2B Sales Professional degree apprenticeship. It is a primary route enabling the professionalisation of sales and it develops a reservoir of opportunity for many.

CHAPTER 5. PW2 and PW3: The sales degree apprenticeships

This chapter presents a recontextualization of PW2 and PW3 using the C-E-D-A-R coaching framework working across the development ecosystem of the PWs. The C-E-D-A-R coaching framework and the development ecosystem are illustrated below.

C	Context
E	Everyone
D	Dynamics
A	Awareness
R	Reflection and Reflexivity

The C-E-D-A-R Framework ©

(Sutton, 2021)
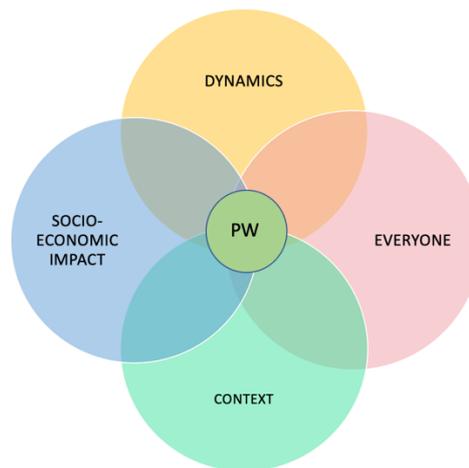
Figure 3

PWs development ecosystem

I have put both PWs in the same chapter because they are both degree apprenticeship programmes sharing the same development challenges. This will become more evident as I move into the chapter.

Introduction to the Public Works

PW2

PW2 is the BSc. (Hons) degree apprenticeship programme for a Business to Business (B2B) Sales Professional. Business to Business means that the apprentices are recruited by organisations to sell to other businesses, rather than directly to the consumer. It is a jointly validated programme between Consalia and Middlesex University (MU) and it delivers three awards: a BSc (Hons) Business to Business Sales, a Level 6 apprenticeship for a Business to Business (B2B) Sales Professional and accreditation by the Institute for Sales Professionals (ISP). I led the initial

development of PW2 with two universities: MU and Leeds Trinity University and my starting point followed on directly from the development of PW1, the Apprenticeship Standard defining the role and occupation of a B2B Sales Professional.

PW2 can be found at: https://www.consalia.com/sales-business-school/sales-apprenticeships/professional-practice-in-b2b-sales/

PW3

PW3 is a Level 7 apprenticeship programme for Senior Sales Leadership.
It was initially a 2-year programme, again jointly developed between Consalia and MU which delivered two awards: initially an MSc. and a Level 7 apprenticeship. The MSc. was discontinued in 2020 as the funding for the MSc. qualification was removed by the Government. IfATE (2020) declared that "there is no regulatory requirement to hold an MSc. qualification, there is no requirement to be a member of a professional body and an individual would not be significantly disadvantaged in the Senior Leader job market without such a qualification". Consequently, PW3 was amended, and it now delivers a Post Graduate Diploma and a Level 7 apprenticeship. Successful apprentices can apply to the Institute for Sales Professionals (ISP) for a Level 7 accreditation linked to the ISP Continuing Professional Development (CPD) pathway.

The need to develop PW3 arose as habits of professionalism need to be embedded at all levels to establish a professional sales culture and it was recognised that specific sales leadership qualities are required to create the optimum and ethical environment for a sales team to thrive (Squire, 2021). Successful and high achieving salespeople are often promoted into sales leadership roles and may "not have the skills to be a manager" (Squire, 2021, p193) as their strength is selling, not leading. Squire (2021) lists five sales leadership mindsets critical for success as a sales leader and which he considers essential to "elevate the professionalism of the sales team" (Squire, 2021, p209). These are: vision, desire to be the best, empowerment, potential and ambiguity. The first four were identified in Squire's research of 2010 but the fifth, ambiguity, has recently been included as a result of the need to respond to recent VUCA events (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014), such as Brexit and Covid-19 and "rapid economic change completely unpredicted thirty years ago". (Wolf, 2011, p24). PW3

educates sales leaders to be relevant for the VUCA world (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014) and develop the five-leadership skills that Squire (2021) identified for optimum performance. It also develops other leadership skills, such as Leading Innovation and Change and Enterprise and Risk, as defined in the Senior Leader standard v1.0 (Appendix 4).

The Apprenticeship Standard for PW3 was developed by a different trailblazer group who chose to develop a generic 'Senior Leader' apprenticeship applicable to different sectors and different senior leadership roles, such as Chief Information Officer, Chief Marketing Officer, Marketing Directors and in our case, Senior Sales Leaders. I led the development of PW3 with MU. The starting point for PW3 was to adapt the generic standard to be relevant for sales leadership working with the ISP and senior sales leaders from different sectors. We operated as a sales leader trailblazer group and the final approval of this mapping was achieved by consensus, from senior sales leaders and the ISP, with no government input. The mapping of the role of a sales leader to the Senior Leadership Apprenticeship Standard v1.0 is included in Appendix 5.

PW3 can be found at: https://www.consalia.com/sales-business-school/sales-apprenticeships/professional-practice-in-senior-sales-leadership/

Timing

PW2 came first and it was a ground-breaking milestone, providing the academic backbone for professional recognition for sales (Squire, 2021). PW3 was launched 18-months after PW2 in September 2019.

PW1 2016	PW2 2018	PW3 2019
B2B Sales Professional Standard	B2B Sales Professional Degree Apprenticeship (developed with the B2B Sales Professional Standard at its core)	Senior Sales Leadership Apprenticeship

I submitted the documents required for the validation of both degree apprenticeships and co-developed the programme specification and syllabus at both universities. Both programmes required considerable resilience, innovation, negotiation and

collaboration to lead and deliver. This critique of PW2 and PW3 focuses on the programmes I developed with MU.

Key motivations for developing the sales degree apprenticeships

- The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy (Appendix 2) as a funding mechanism for the programmes.
- The ambition to achieve professionalisation within the sales ecosystem (Squire, 2021). PW2 would take sales into academia with the first undergraduate degree programme dedicated to B2B sales in the UK. PW3 would be the first Senior Sales Leadership apprenticeship making sales leadership education affordable, and attainable, for many organisations and their sales leaders.
- There was anticipation and expectation within the sales sector as the momentum had been set with the approval of PW1 by IfATE.
- The ISP, the newly formed professional body for sales actively supported the development of both programmes, moving sales into a new era of professionalisation. Both programmes would align to the ISP continual professional development (CPD) pathways for sales professionals and sales leaders.

The desired outcomes

There are four aims for the two programmes:
1. To deliver high quality, relevant degree apprenticeship programmes which meet the needs of employers (Office for Students, 2019, p1)
2. To raise the spotlight on sales as a career of choice with a well-defined, professional, career pathway
3. To develop professional and agile salespeople and sales leaders for the workplace of today
4. To meet the apprenticeship quality and funding requirements of IfATE and the ESFA

PW aims

An additional overarching aim for both programmes is to develop "working knowledge". Symes and McIntyre (2021, p168) citing Gerhardt and Annon (2000), position this as "developing practical learning goals leading to transferrable skills fit for the future". 'Working knowledge' clearly encapsulates the aim of the PWs and aligns to the development of practitioner knowledge. It is the way to develop sales success, support business success and sustainable employment (McKnight et al, 2019).

During the development of PW1 elements of stigma and bureaucracy began to emerge. PW2 and PW3 surfaced the realities and challenges of these further when I began to operationalise the programmes. Awareness of two additional themes also emerged linked to employer culture and complexity. The four themes (as listed below) were threaded through the development of PW2 and PW3 and continue to impact the context and future success of the PWs. I cover them in more detail at the end of this chapter:

1. Stigma
2. Employer Culture
3. Bureaucracy
4. Complexity

The C-E-D-A-R Framework.

I use the C-E-D-A-R framework throughout the rest of this chapter to inquire into the development ecosystem for PW2 and PW3. The intention is to achieve a clear and critical engagement with the PWs and widen my perspective using an autoethnographic lens through the C-E-D-A-R framework.

C. Context

C	Context
E	Everyone
D	Dynamics
A	Awareness
R	Reflection and Reflexivity

The C-E-D-A-R Framework ©
(Sutton, 2021)
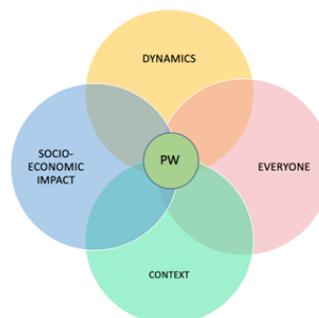
Figure 4
PWs development ecosystem

The contemporary degree apprenticeships are a relatively new concept (Queiros, 2020, p611). Yet apprenticeships have been in existence for centuries and vocational learning is also a long-established concept. What is different about degree apprenticeships is:

(i)   that they are funded by the apprenticeship levy (Appendix 2) with the overall governance and accountability managed through IfATE and the ESFA

(ii)   the context behind them

Degree apprenticeships were launched in 2015 (BIS, 2015) as a flagship programme to contribute to social mobility, address the skills gap and improve productivity within UK industry (Bravenboer & Crawford-Lee, 2020). For employers, the new context was the introduction of the apprenticeship levy (Appendix 2) which set employer contributions of 5% of the wage bill (Lester, 2020). For some employers, this is a significant amount in excess of £25M per year. For the apprentices, the key contextual concern was rising student tuition fees for university with no guarantee of a job related to their degree or graduate status.

According to Hyatt (2010, p175) "context is an active voice" with different messages. Hyatt shares how "context can behave like systems" and that different components of the system may operate in "opposition to each other", (Hyatt, 2010, p176). Different motivations and goals are prevalent across the apprenticeship ecosystem and the

introduction of degree apprenticeships has created conflicting discourse which continues today.

E: Everyone.

C	Context
E	Everyone
D	Dynamics
A	Awareness
R	Reflection and Reflexivity

The C-E-D-A-R Framework ©
(Sutton, 2021)
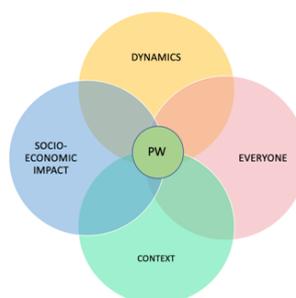
Figure 5
PWs development ecosystem

The key stakeholders

The 'everyone' element of this coaching inquiry narrates the views of the key players within the apprenticeship development system. By viewing matters from their agency, I will ensure their perspective is considered. The key members during the initial development and delivery of the PWs were:

1. The training providers: Consalia and Middlesex University (MU), working in partnership to develop the programme
2. The Employers
3. The Apprentices
4. IfATE and the ESFA: the funders and the quality gatekeepers
5. Myself. The director of the development activity

All key members are critical to the success of the programmes. All have unique agendas and exert different influences. They are integral to the apprenticeship value chain and are reliant on each other to succeed to greater and lesser extents. That said, some never communicate or meet with each other. More detail on the key members is provided below.

Consalia and Middlesex University (MU).

Consalia and MU have a long-term and valued partnership delivering high impact sales education as work-based learning programmes. The combined expertise in sales best practice and work-based academic rigour provides a powerful combination and USP. Consalia and MU were both trailblazer members of the B2B-TG. The intention, from the outset, had been to develop the B2B Sales Professional degree apprenticeship programme at MU as a jointly validated programme. Consalia are recognised in the sales world as innovators and thought leaders who have helped shape the market for sales education since 2006, developing a transformative suite of Master programmes in sales with MU. MU have pioneered work-based learning to deliver accredited programmes from undergraduate to post-graduate levels since it became a university in 1992. In 2017 it was identified as one of the top 50 universities in the European Union for university-business cooperation (UBC) through its work-based learning programmes (Bravenboer and Sutton, 2017). In this paper we concluded that as a partnership, we consider ourselves to be "uniquely positioned to offer life-long learning within the workplace", from Apprentice - BSc to Master – MSc and beyond. (Bravenboer and Sutton, 2017).

Employers

The employers are the sponsors for each apprentice, and they have a responsibility to provide an expansive learning environment, which is a "site of learning and knowledge production as well as knowledge application". (Lester, 2020, p705). The employers currently sponsoring the apprentices on both programmes range from large corporate organisations to SME's (small and medium sized enterprises) and they operate in sectors as varied as technology, finance, FMCG, logistics and not-for-profit.

Apprentices

The Level 6 apprentices.

Our first cohort of 20 apprentices on the B2B Sales Professional programme started in February 2018 and they graduated in February 2021. We typically run six to seven cohorts on the programme at any one time and we have recently started our twelfth

B2B Sales Professional Apprenticeship programme at MU. Consalia have also jointly delivered two cohorts at Leeds Trinity University. To date, 278 apprentices have started the programmes and 61 have graduated with 100% success rate.

The Level 7 apprentices.

Over 55 Senior Sales Leaders apprentices have embarked on the Level 7 programme. Eighteen have graduated to-date and as they enrolled in 2019, they have gained both their Level 7 and an MSc. qualification. Fourteen more will also graduate with both a Level 7 and an MSc. qualification. The apprentices who enrolled in 2022 will graduate with a Level 7 qualification and a Post Graduate Diploma.

IfATE and the ESFA

IfATE describe themselves on their website as an "employer-led organisation" (IfATE, 2022) and their values are stated as "collaborative, authoritative and efficient". It was established in 2017 to provide "leadership in the delivery of a high-quality system of apprenticeships" (McGregor-Smith, 2022). IfATE's Quality Strategy sets out best practice expectations to ensure quality in the design and delivery of apprenticeships. Further details on the membership of IfATE's Quality Alliance can be found in Appendix 6. They are sponsored by The Department for Education who oversee their work. Their vision is for "a world-leading apprenticeships system, that equips people from all backgrounds for skilled occupations contributing to increased economic productivity" (IfATE, 2022).

Myself

My role in PW2 and PW3 was to lead the validation and joint implementation of the degree apprenticeship programmes. My vision for the programmes was, and still is, to ensure a superb and high-quality student experience focused on relevant learning (Sutton, 2017). It is my personal and professional responsibility in that role to continue to learn and contribute to this growing area of apprenticeships, to critically engage with my own learning and the learning of others and constantly increase my skills as not only the Academy Director of these programmes but as the influencer between all the moving parts, in service to the quality of learning for the apprentices. Undertaking this

doctorate has provided the opportunity of advanced continuing professional development as well as recording the early days of development as a participant, in what I believe is a critical change in the purpose of higher education: closer and more dynamic partnerships between the professional world and academia that go beyond funding at a distance, and which get to the heart of what is required which is developing students to be more self, and other, aware leaders in the future. To do this I must keep in mind that I am not only a researcher but a participant and an observer.

I use an ethnographic lens seeking to understand (i) what PW2 and PW3 meant to the key members and (ii) their contribution. As before, I appreciate that I am recording their views from an insider researcher perspective, and I am acutely aware of the potential to bring in bias. I need to ensure I operate with ethical considerations at the centre of the inquiry (McNiff, 2010). I also reflect on what I noticed at the edge of my awareness during this time.

What the PWs meant to the key members

Consalia and Middlesex University (MU):

PW2 was of huge significance to both Consalia and MU. Working collaboratively, we developed a work-based pedagogy to develop professional competence. (Nottingham et al, 2017). It provided an opportunity to expand our collaboration with employers and reach out to new employers. It provided a collective experience of our own work-based learning i.e. for both Consalia and MU. Garnett (2020, p720) writes of how work-based learning is 'unsystematic, socially constructed and action focused' and concerned with creating new integrative knowledge. (Garnett, 2020, p720). This is what the PWs delivered for both Consalia and MU.

MU:

As the first integrated degree apprenticeship at MU and the first-degree apprenticeship within the Business School it was disruptive requiring fundamental changes across all major functions, including admissions, registry, finance and quality (Bravenboer, 2019).

Consalia:

Delivery of PW2 was a ground-breaking achievement. We had campaigned, worked for and waited for this moment - a BSc. (Hons) degree in Business to Business Sales. The first in the world!   It was an exciting time. Squire (2021) shared and promoted how it was a route to being a professional salesperson.

Employers

PW2 and PW3 provided employers with new workforce development solutions for upskilling and reskilling existing and new employees in sales (Nottingham, 2017). They delivered a talent management solution to fill skills gaps and to attract a different talent supply (Crawford-Lee and Moorwood, 2019). Due to the length of the programme some employers shared with me that it was useful as a staff retention strategy, particularly PW3.

The programmes enabled employers to 'mould' entrants into their working practices and specific contexts. (Bravenboer & Lester, 2016). For some employers, the key motivation for putting apprentices onto PW2 and PW3 was an opportunity to spend their apprenticeship levy. However, other employers declined to participate, despite being levy payers.

Apprentices

The PWs provided the apprentices with a route into a career in sales. For some, they were "an aspirational choice and a change-agent for social mobility" (Crawford-Lee and Moorwood, 2019). Other apprentices saw it as an opportunity to gain a university degree without debt (Lester, 2020). For people already in the workplace they provided "access to higher education and a vehicle for their ongoing professional career progression". (Nottingham et al, 2017, p2).

IfATE and the ESFA

PW2 and PW3 brought no new meaning to IfATE and the ESFA. They would be additional programmes to add to the portfolio of apprenticeships they were already managing. The ESFA would be responsible for the management and funding of the programmes and IFATE would be responsible for approvals, promotion and EPA oversight (Edge Report, 2020), using the same processes for all apprenticeship programmes.

Myself

When the first apprentices walked through the door for the first PW2 programme induction it was an emotional moment. I can still physically sense it. It was a relief and an achievement.

PW3 was as important as PW2. Launching an apprenticeship for sales leaders was critical to professionalise the sales ecosystem (Squire, 2021). By this time, I had seen the difference that good sales leaders and less good sales leaders made on their teams' engagement, motivation and performance.

The role and contribution of 'Everyone'

Each player in an ecosystem has a strategic theory, a mental map of how the ecosystem operates and how it should co-evolve (Moore, 2006, p15). This became more evident as we began the programme delivery.

Consalia and MU:

The role of Consalia and MU was, and still is, to deliver high quality apprenticeship training that complies with apprenticeship funding rules.

The programme leadership is shared. Consalia and MU both deliver 50% of the credits of the programme. Consalia deliver the sales content and MU deliver the

portfolio, proposal and work-based project modules. Working in partnership and utilising each other's strengths the emerging pedagogy supports a symbiotic relationship between the academic and work-based, on-the-job learning (Minton & Lowe, 2019).

Consalia lead on the PR, business development and recruitment activities and manage the early-stage relationship with the employers. MU are the main provider for the level 6 apprenticeship and manage the university enrolment and reporting to the ESFA.

Employers

From the outset the Government declared that employers were in the driving seat (BIS, 2015). The Government wanted employers to have choice and options to use their apprenticeship levy. Within the PWs the role of the employer is to offer "real and productive work" and to ensure the apprentice has opportunities to develop and practice the knowledge and skills of the relevant standard. (CIPD, 2022). Bravenboer (2019, p76) also emphasises the importance of the employer setting up the optimum workplace environment as an important source of "learning, knowledge generation, innovation and expertise".

Other employer responsibilities include operating to the compliance requirements of the apprenticeship, including the identification of the right talent and individuals to fulfil the apprenticeship role. (CIPD, 2022).

Apprentice:

The apprentices should attend all learning activities and meet the compliance requirements of the programme. Ultimately, they are responsible for managing their own learning and development and looking for opportunities to do this, through the programme.

IfATE and the ESFA
IfATE are the 'gate-keepers' for the quality of the provision and the ESFA are responsible for the funding of apprenticeships.

Myself
At the time the PWs were created my role was director, creator, implementor and joint Programme Lead. I am still operating as joint Programme Lead for Consalia. My key objective was / and still is to ensure they are high-quality programmes delivering an excellent student/apprentice experience, fully meeting the requirements of the apprenticeship. Initially, and externally, I was the face of the Level 6 programme speaking at The National Sales Learning & Development event and other conferences to raise awareness of it.

D. The dynamics and what shifted?

C	Context
E	Everyone
D	Dynamics
A	Awareness
R	Reflection and Reflexivity

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(Sutton, 2021)
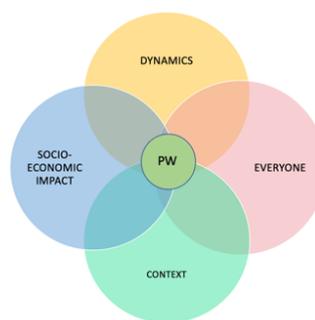
Figure 6
PWs development ecosystem

A pioneering process

The programmes were pioneering from the start and the change was constant. I have always described the first cohorts of each programme as *the pioneering cohorts*. With every module, and every new policy from IfATE, we encountered new territory and had to create new paths through it. Ingold (2022, p197) describes a process of

"wayfaring" which maps well to this experience of "keeping going, with a good measure of improvisation" (Ingold, 2022, p198). This process continues. Collaboration was essential to develop a successful and creative environment for the apprentices. The learning on all sides was significant. Hughes and Saieva (2019, p227) identified the "depth of the pedagogic and support structures" needed to be innovative in apprenticeship programmes.

Assumptions

> Assumptions we make act as 'de facto operational defining characteristics and criteria of creativity. Hyatt (2019, p63)

An early assumption was that MU would use their established admission and quality management processes which are the backbone of their operation. Another assumption was that degree apprenticeship provision would fit into the traditional MU way of working for standard, academic degrees. Other universities with a history of running work-based learning programmes were assuming the same. (Cleaver, 2022). These assumptions proved to be incorrect. As Hyatt identifies (2019) people can be emotionally invested in their assumptions and recognising an assumption as incorrect may take time Hyatt (2019).

New Skills

A different skill set has emerged to deliver the apprenticeship pedagogy and to manage the employers compared to standard, academic degrees. Rowe (2018, p65) describes this need as "enterprising, employer-facing practitioners" and (Lester et al, 2016) shares a need for academics to have credibility in the relevant sector and for being prepared to understand the employer/apprentice context. Having worked as a consultant and as a practitioner I was comfortable with this multi-faceted role, but it added a new dimension to the MU tutor workload, which took some adjustment and time to factor in.

COVID-19

In response to Covid-19 we had to rapidly develop more virtual and online learning solutions whilst dealing with varying demands from employers and apprentices.

Until February 2022, some of our more recent cohorts had only ever worked from home and attended the programme virtually. This "period of isolation and uncertainty was a difficult one in terms of well-being and work life balance" (Gerhardt & Annon, 2021, p178) for many apprentices. It also meant opportunities for creative interaction and social learning (Matthews, 2014) were significantly reduced. "Serendipity plays an important role in the cross-fertilisation of ideas" (Ben-Menahem & Erden, 2020) and the equivalent of 'water-cooler' moments had never occurred for some of these apprentices. One apprentice wrote in an assignment that *she couldn't begin to comprehend what it would be like to work in an office*. The economic climate varied across all employers depending on their sector and some apprentices were busier than ever, others were furloughed, and a few were made redundant. These were more variations across the cohorts creating shifting challenges for us as training providers.

Fluctuating QA and regulatory landscape.

When one is trying to introduce something, the recipient is as important as the donor. I can recall several stand-off situations between the universities sitting on the trailblazer group and IfATE. There were different perceptions of what was meant by a degree-apprenticeship and especially towards the end-point assessment approach for PW1. Despite being experienced assessors for decades the university end-point assessment approach was not accepted by IfATE and the trailblazer group spent a few weeks in a deadlock situation until the ultimatum came to align with IfATE or the PW1 end-point assessment plan would not be approved.

Degree apprenticeships also require significantly more administration and relationship management than ordinary degrees. MU perceptions and practices were not suited to these requirements, and this was coupled with limited resources to embrace what was emerging as the IfATE approach to degree apprenticeships. MU needed to be more receptive to the necessary changes earlier.

More shifting sands (Bravenboer, 2019) arrived when it was announced that from April 2021 Ofsted will be responsible for the inspection of apprenticeship provision at all levels (Office for Students, 2022) including degree apprenticeships.

IfATE and ESFA compliance requirements continue to flex and grow. Bravenboer (2019, p75) describes a "head-spinning array" of challenges of apprenticeships, and this is supported by Wolf's (2011, p9) assertion that English vocational education is extraordinarily complex due to repeated overlapping directives of central Government and the complex, counter-productive structures that result.   Wolf (2011, p8) also shares how "vocational learning has been micro-managed" from the centre for decades and discusses the ineffectiveness of this approach. Yet here we are again.

The fact is we never quite know what policy and/or funding rule changes are going to come next. Further details about the environmental complexity of the PWs ecosystem is provided when I come to the Awareness (A) component of the C-E-D-A-R framework.

The 'degree' in degree apprenticeships?

Degree apprenticeships were heavily promoted by the Government in 2015 -2018 as an employer-led productivity programme (BIS, 2015). IfATE advocated removal of the 'mandated' element of degree apprenticeships and the degree was removed from the Senior Leader Apprenticeship in 2020 (UVAC, 2021). This has impacted our Level 7 Senior Sales Leadership programme as the MSc. qualification was removed from the funding and the apprenticeship funding has reduced by £4K. Consalia and MU are now supporting a Post Graduate Diploma qualification within the Programme but the learning experience for the apprentice is impacted without the final work-based project.

More recently, support for degree apprenticeships has come back in from the new Minister for Higher Education and Qualifications, Michelle Donelan, who stated that she wants every university to offer Degree Apprenticeships (UVAC, 2021). Consequently, there was a policy re-positioning and IfATE announced a new apprenticeship model for degree apprenticeships (UVAC, 2022). The new model recognises the value of a degree in an apprenticeship and trailblazer groups can now

specify a mandatory degree in an apprenticeship for 'graduate occupations' (UVAC, 2022). Unfortunately, this still does not apply to the Senior Leader Apprenticeship as the current Senior Leader Standard and funding remains until the next review by IfATE, which will not take place until at least 3-4 years' time.

Hughes and Saieva (2019) write that when training providers encounter bumps in the journey, they should remind themselves they are widening participation in 'professional' training. The dynamics in the ecosystem will continue. Sharma's words continue to resonate here, "there is still so much more to unfold and emerge from this continuing generative movement" (Sharma, 2011).

Misalignments between rhetoric and reality
Employer positioning

From the outset the Government declared that employers were in the driving seat (BIS, 2015) and had choice and options to use their apprenticeship levy. Implicit in this declaration is the fact that universities and training providers were much further down the value-chain.

In 2019 forecasts indicated that the apprenticeship levy fund would be overspent by £1.5bn and a review to assess the return on investment of the apprenticeship reforms took place. Degree apprenticeships typically sit in the highest funding bands. The new model for the development and funding of degree apprenticeships was published (UVAC, 2022) and it is now possible to include a degree within an apprenticeship, subject to certain criteria being met (IfATE, 2022). Specifically, the occupation of the apprenticeship must be specified as a 'degree-level entry' occupation by the ONS. This means that if employers request a degree in the apprenticeship, but the ONS data does not list it as a degree level occupation, the degree element will not be funded. I wholeheartedly agree with Crawford-Lee (2020, np) who writes that "the decision on the value and appropriateness of including a qualification should rest with employers".

The good news is that sales account manager and business development manager roles have just been upgraded to a graduate role with 'professional' status. These roles are now ranked as the second most in-demand occupation after nurses in the latest

degree evidence tool (ONS, 2022). This only provides some short-term reassurance as one is always wary, given the areas of stigma I mentioned previously and the misunderstanding of business sales, demonstrated by the Government to-date.

There has recently been a shift in the language IfATE is using to describe the role of the employer, from being employer-led to employer-centred. Their CEO wrote in IfATE's strategic plan for 2021-2024 that "over the next few years, we plan to work hard to reinforce and extend the employers' place at the heart of the system". (Coupland, 2021, p4). The shift in language may indicate a power shift from employer-led to IfATE-led and repositioning employers to be at the core, or as Coupland (2021) writes, at the heart.

Enthusiasm and reality

Reichwald (2020) discusses how the "levy has ensured that apprentices are in the spotlight for employers" with many employers appreciating the benefits apprentices bring into the organisation, such as meeting the skills gap, delivering diversity into the workforce and contributing to social mobility (Crawford-Lee and Moorwood, 2019).

For some, the rhetoric and notion of 'free-training' through use of the apprenticeship-levy was soon squashed as the reality of the cost of an apprenticeship struck home with employers. One of the trailblazer employers spoke to me of the cost of the headcount, the time and cost to mentor and train, the impact on the line-managers contributions to sales and whilst fully supporting apprenticeships and the social benefits they deliver, advocated that apprenticeships were not low-cost, resourcing solutions. Support from the sales sector for the sales apprenticeships during PW1 was substantial and we had expected a significant demand for the two programmes. Yet. of the twelve sales organisations represented on the B2B Sales Professional trailblazer group only four have enrolled apprentices so far.

Two key factors contributing to the disparity between the initial support for degree apprenticeships and the reality in terms of demand are: (i) the perception of degree apprenticeships with schools, school-leavers and parents and (ii) the stigma surrounding sales. This is covered in more detail in the Awareness (A) component of

the C-E-D-A-R framework. Looking back now, it is evident each member had a different vision for degree apprenticeships and/or their visions shifted due to the changes in government policy, their experiences and what they may have heard on the grapevine. Gadamer (2004, p231) explains this by writing that "we understand the world through what we bring to it and also through our experience of the world" and that we interpret the world through what we have received and are receiving (Nixon, 2014). This has become more evident as the apprenticeship programmes have operationalised and the reality of the economic squeeze and vulnerabilities of the market have also begun to hit organisations.

A. On the edge of Awareness.

> nh'The edge of awareness – the frontier of thinking – borders a huge reservoir of possibility'.   (Gendlin, in Preston, 2008, p362).

C	Context
E	Everyone
D	Dynamics
A	Awareness
R	Reflection and Reflexivity

The C-E-D-A-R Framework ©
(Sutton, 2021)
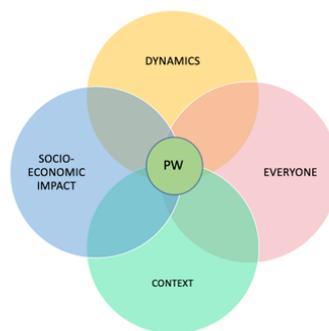
Figure 7
PWs development ecosystem

The awareness element of the C-E-D-A-R framework works across the PWs development ecosystem, identifying insights and possibilities for the future. PW2 and PW3 have created a constant stretch for me personally, taking me to new places, new frontiers and new thinking. Taking myself back I have revisited what I noticed and my awareness of others and our experiences. Key points focus on the creativity needed, the challenges and the successes. I then identify four themes which are impacting on the PWs and their success.

The Creative Activity

I can recall sitting in the Consalia office in Teddington, with Dr. Philip Squire, the CEO of Consalia and Professor Darryll Bravenboer, Head of Apprenticeships at MU to design the schema of the B2B Sales Professional Programme. As with PW1, we started with a blank sheet of paper. For a brief moment, it felt like we were unbounded and primed for "unconditioned action" (Deary, 2015, p221). It was an exciting moment. However, we knew what we had to develop, we had an intention. I can relate to Hyatt's (2019, p62) view that "intention can be very influential in our creative work" as there were of course conditions and constraints that needed to be woven into the design. We were also aware that participating employers would come from different sectors and sizes of organisations, ranging from large blue-chip organisations through to small and medium sized businesses (SMEs). Consequently, we had to introduce flexibility for "pace, place and mode of learning" (Lillis & Bravenboer, 2020, p730) enabling the apprentices "to take control of their learning" (Konstantinou and Miller, 2020) and make it relevant to their work context.

New pedagogy and systems

It is important for the theme of professional competence and ethical selling to be integrated throughout and both programmes had to align to the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours of their respective apprenticeship standards. We drew on MU's work-based learning principles aligned to academic learning and Consalia's expertise with work integrated learning and workplace coaching (Nottingham et al., 2019). What emerged over time was the development of a degree apprenticeship pedagogy. New online technologies were included to support the learning journal, a mandated component of the B2B Sales Professional apprenticeship and which provided 'a window into the apprentices' world of work (Sutton, 2017). It is extremely insightful and integral to supporting reflective practice for the apprentices and enables them to share their world of work with their tutors. It is also a source of content to show-case expertise and competence for the end point assessment.

Managing expectations of practitioner learning

Practitioner learning, where application is as relevant as theory, is a new concept to many employers. It goes beyond the development of skills and competencies and the more established "transmission learning" approach in organisations and of a master craftsman, or sales manager, passing on their de-facto knowledge. Senge (2006, p4) also points out how work must become more "learningful" as businesses become more dynamic, and the world becomes more interconnected. Senge describes it as "learningful work" (2006, p4), Symes and McIntyre (2021, p168) citing Gerhardt and Annon (2000) wrote of "working knowledge, leading to transferrable skills fit for the future". Gadamer (1998, p35-36) writes how "relevant knowledge" is created by reintegrating theoretical knowledge into the practical knowledge of everyday life. Whatever the term, they align to practitioner learning where the apprentice needs to be aware of the changes and complexity on the horizon and can ask questions about their role. By implication, the terms emphasise how integral the role of the employer is to the success of the programme. As training providers, we have to rely on influence, to ensure they are providing "learningful work" (Senge, 2006, p4) and relevant practitioner learning for their apprentices. Opportunities are provided for exchanges and collaboration between the tutors and line-managers or workplace mentors. The take-up and responsiveness are variable and at times escalation may be required.

Further detail on the importance of the Employer Culture is provided at the end of this section.

Perspectives of Success

It is easy to let the challenges and stresses take precedent during a coaching inquiry and when I am coaching, I often ask my coachees 'what has gone well?', to ensure we focus on the positives too. Bringing that approach in here and using an ethnographic lens I can share some of the PW successes.

Royal Mail, one of the trailblazer employers for PW1 was awarded The Princess Royal Training Award for their implementation of the B2B Sales Professional programme. The privatisation of Royal Mail, previously a Public Sector organisation completed in 2015 (UK Govt, 2015) and this award is notable in its own right, but especially so,

given the culture and challenges Royal Mail have had to overcome, and which most private sectors have not had to address. The award is given to those who demonstrate a standard of excellence in the delivery of training against three industry Hallmarks. The three hallmarks are:

1) The training/learning and development is integral to your organisation
2) The programme is designed and delivered efficiently and effectively
3) The programme has an impact on the success of the organisation and its people.

More information on the award and the three hallmarks can be found in Appendix 7.

Consalia have recently launched The Peter Critten Award in tribute to Peter, a transdisciplinarian, ambassador of learning in a workplace setting and of ways to develop 'corporate capability' (Critten, 2016). The criteria for winning the award were focused on the entrant demonstrating: learning reach from their studies; of an emerging cultural shift; the link between academic learning and professional practice and vice versa; financial and quantifiable indicators and looking ahead to what they could see the future contribution of their work would continue to bring to their organisation. I led the development of the award and the inaugural award event was held in September 2022. Two of the Level 7 apprentices from Royal Mail received an award with commendations for cultural shift.

Feedback quotes from some of the apprentices also evidence successes, through personal development and organisational benefits.

> *I have no words to describe how proud I am to have completed year 1.*
>
> *I have developed countless new skills and knowledge and have gained an abundance of confidence*

> *When I compare my self-management from year 1 vs year 2 there are considerable differences in my performance, conduct, and personal growth. I have become more accountable for my actions, enabling me to reach my goals.*

> *Doing this degree has taught me sales is more than just pitching products to customers, it's about becoming the best version of yourself so you can provide the best service possible. and solve your client's problems!*

> Sales is not just about 'selling stuff'. It's an art to be mastered, or a science to be understood. A professional career to be respected just as any other. It's for those that are passionate about solving problems and building solutions. So,dare to dream big, and say "yes" when the scary (MSc) opportunity presents itself, because you absolutely can do it.

> A large part of my learning has been learning about myself. Reflecting regularly has allowed me to challenge my thoughts and approaches which has enabled me to perform better.

> *I can now confidently say I contribute to a team and feel that I make a real difference to my team, customers and BT.*

And some of the feedback from employers includes:

> The B2B Sales Apprenticeship plays a critical part in our Sales Strategy. Ensuring that we have the future-fit workforce of new generational sales individuals with relevant capabilities needed to carry out their sales role successfully. The results we have seen have given us the confidence and evidence that Sales Apprentices can contribute to the success of the RM sales activity.
> Royal Mail National Sales Director.

> The programme has helped [the apprentice] to look at things in a different way. Their approach has changed in the way they look at situations, the conversations they are having and their understanding what's driving different people's motivations and how to support them.
> Apprentice line-manager

> I can see a lot of positive leadership behaviours emerging, evidence of a mindset change and a strategic way of thinking, which I attribute to the programme.   Apprentice line-manager

Increasing my awareness through this critique has enabled me to achieve a closer look both at, and around the PWs, and this has led to insights, which themselves have led to greater awareness.

Insights that have emerged for me

As a coach and practitioner, I am inspired by Ingold's text (2022, p197) of how people "enter into knowledge" and "how knowledge *is* relating the world around you" and "the better you know, the greater the clarity and depth of your perception" (ibid). I can feel that through my personal journey developing the PWs I have grown into knowledge through a process of discovery (ibid) and through my practice (ibid, p194) developing clarity and an awareness for what I now know.

Insights impacting the success of the PWs have emerged which include the stigma surrounding sales and apprenticeships, employer culture and the constraints of bureaucracy. These three all contribute to the fourth insight of the complexity surrounding the PWs.

1. Stigma
2. Bureaucracy
3. Employer Culture
4. Complexity

The stigma surrounding sales and sales degree apprenticeships.

The stigma challenge for sales apprenticeships is three-fold and traverses both social and cultural contexts. There is a long-term and established image problem with apprenticeships, and as discussed previously in chapter 4 there is also a stigma regarding sales, "money is shunned as a topic of conversation" (Bauman, 2017, p37) accompanied by the 'sales as a profession' debate (APPG, 2020). The third element, which being linked to an HEI we can lament, is the snobbery or reluctance of universities to embrace sales as a degree discipline. These stigmas are discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter.

The image challenge for apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are promoted as the flagship programme for skills development (Bravenboer & Crawford-Lee, 2020). Yet, attitudes to apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships range across a spectrum, from fully supportive at one end through to denigration at the other. The more negative views and their influence prohibit the success potential of degree apprenticeships, by impacting recruitment numbers and a general lack of advocacy for apprenticeships. Several factors contribute to this.

Traditional beliefs about apprenticeships

The challenges for apprenticeships start with the etymology of the word apprenticeship. It derives from an old French word 'aprentiz' meaning 'someone

learning' and the Anglian suffix -scip, meaning the 'condition of being'. Translating this literally an apprenticeship is when someone is in a state or condition of learning.

Another French word 'apprendre' was also used to describe apprentices meaning 'to learn' and so this would apply to a novice, but they also used 'apprenti' which also meant 'unskilled and inexperienced'. It is an understandable consequence then that apprenticeships have been associated with manual trades and lesser academic ability leading to a lesser status of apprenticeships (Lee, 2012). This stereotypical view, aligned to a Dickensian perspective, can even be dated as far back as Ancient Greece when Plato identified three categories of practitioners: artisans, artists and professions. Plato believed that the work of artisans and artists was of "low standing and limited worth", and "that they would be of limited capacity and unable to innovate" (Billett, 2014, p4). Billet (2014) also writes of how Aristotle coined the term 'techne'[10], meaning practical application, to describe how craft workers gained their knowledge as a category of truth. Over time 'techne' became synonymous with vocational education, limiting the concept of vocational learning to the development of practical application and an emphasis on manual procedural activities. (Billet, citing Aldrich, 1994, p4). Like Aristotle, the Ancient Chinese recognised the value of artisan apprenticeships, the importance of techne and the phronesis of the teacher, and as Ingold (2022, p197) reminds us of people "growing into knowledge through a process of discovery".

> Memorizing knowledge only, no matter how much you learn, won't
> educate a capable person, who could perform the tasks adequately
>
> – Confucius

In medieval times, Craft Guilds became established as the main route for specialist, vocational, skilled education. "Members traditionally advanced through the stages of an apprentice, journeyman and finally master" (Bosshardt and Lopus, 2013, p65). Apprentices, usually male, often began their apprenticeship at 12 and they could last

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[10] Aristotle's categories of truth comprise: (i) pure science (i.e. episteme); (ii) art or applied science (i.e. techne); (iii) prudence or practical wisdom (i.e. phronesis); (iv) intelligence or intuition (i.e. nous); and (v) wisdom (i.e. sophia)

up to seven years when they became a journeyman. Apprentices earned no money but were given room and board. Journeymen were paid by the day and earned the right to become a master when they had produced a 'masterpiece'. The Guilds were powerful institutions, which controlled the quality of goods produced and sought to better their own and members interests. Bosshardt and Lopus (2013, p66) compare them to labour unions today. The influence of The Guilds declined after the 16th century (ibid, p67) with industrialisation but some of the key principles and progression routes continued into apprenticeships, most commonly that of the apprentice learning and developing their skills from a master. An example, in the 'hierarchy of professions' is the legal profession, which has within it an 'apprenticeship system', often known by other names such as rotation, or traineeships, which deliver a path leading to professional status. My father was an articled clerk, in 1958, in effect a 'trainee solicitor' bounded by a formal contract and working under the supervision of someone already in the profession. In 2015 a 'solicitor' apprenticeship and a 'paralegal' apprenticeship were approved for delivery. These professional paths are well-trodden and established, and as law is a 'leading' profession, within the 'hierarchy of professions (Tieg, 2020) they hold no stigma. Yet, it should be remembered that sales also has historical origins. The first 'merchants' or 'salespeople', along with the geographers, were the cross-pollinators of civilisations, such as Zhang Qian, credited with the initiation of the 'Silk Road' that stretched from China to Greece and the Mediterranean (Squire, 2021, p8).

The long-held perceptions which are still entrenched today, about apprenticeships having lesser worth than other forms of training, are inextricably linked to the concept of vocational learning. Lucas (2015, p6) lists "widely believed" myths[11] about practical and vocational education, two of which include "practical learning is cognitively simple" and "clever people don't need to work with their hands" (ibid).

> Vocational education remains the less preferred form of study and continues to hold a low esteem (foreword by John Hayes in the Wolf Review, 2011)

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[11] clever people 'grow out' of practical learning; clever people don't get their hands dirty; practical education is only for the less 'able; practical learning involves only lower order thinking; practical teaching is a second-rate activity

Overcoming this deep-rooted perception of apprenticeships and vocational education is the fundamental challenge for the Government, to ensure their flagship policy for skills can fly and deliver.

> The idea of an Apprenticeship as being a route to professional status goes against the grain of universities being the 'gateway to the professions' (NAS, 2011, p. 11)

This is a self-perpetuating unfortunate matter, particularly for sales as the lack of sales degree programmes creates a scarcity of sales academics available to teach and research sales. This in turn, proliferates the image problem for sales and impacts the sales professionalism discourse. Some academic professionals have been reluctant to embrace the degree apprenticeship programmes in their universities. Bourner and Simpson (2014) share how the core competence of universities is the advancement of knowledge and how some academics "have less expertise and experience in the advancement of professional practice" (Bourner and Simpson, 2014, p122).

Over time, the 'sales' profession has had to battle with the long-held, caricature of the second-hand car salesperson and the stereotyping of salespeople which creates a negative image. Marcos-Cuevas (2017) describes sales as "being a profession in flux, undergoing an unprecedented degree of transformation" and I see this, from an ethical stance as well as a transformation of the role of a salesperson through digitisation and new ways of selling, to improve sales force effectiveness (Marcos-Cuevas, 2017, p208). In both degree programmes when questions of integrity and ethical dilemmas are explored it raises powerful contributions from the apprentices. The apprentice feedback from the modules, which focus on ethics in sales, indicate they are the most popular modules in both programmes.

When the Government responded to our bid to develop the B2B Sales Professional standard, their initial response was to compare it to an existing standard for Trade Sales. It is fair to say the Trailblazer Group were shocked and extremely disappointed

at their clear lack of understanding of B2B sales, the necessity for expert knowledge and skills and its contribution to the UK economy (APPG, 2020).

I also cannot ignore other responses from IfATE and ESFA during our endeavours to develop the B2B Sales degree apprenticeship, in particular the initial, indicative funding we were awarded of £18K. This was £9k less that the approved degree apprenticeships at the time and equivalent to a year of tuition for an academic degree. After a long and emotive appeals process with the ESFA the funding was subsequently raised to £21K. This is still £4K less than the approved degree apprenticeships aimed at other emerging professions such as the Digital and Technology Solutions Professional. Perhaps the belief is that anyone can sell. Perhaps they need to be reminded of the view of Marcos-Cuevos (2017, p206) which is that "the transformation of professional sales is a multifaceted phenomenon warranting multiple perspectives and the strategic management of increasingly complex customers".

Small steps have been made with the Government through the ISP (Institute of Sales Professionals) who facilitated an All-Party-Parliamentary Group with a mission to "improve the global recognition of the importance of sales and its impact on the UK economy; promote and advance the sales profession and boost the success of British industry, especially in international trade" (APPG, 2020). The first meeting had 60 supporters "making this one of the larger APPGs of the 600 in parliament" (APPG minutes, 2020).

Degree Apprenticeships

Degree apprenticeships are considered by many to be an inferior option to an academic degree, or even considered not to be 'real degrees' as one of my sisters once said. It is clear there is "a widespread confusion about the worth of the exit award" (Lee, 2012) and the term 'apprenticeship' when linked to a degree (Rowe, Perrin and Wall, 2016). Apprentices on the B2B Sales programme have frequently asked if they will have a graduation and wear a gown like other students. Even they have a perception their degree is different.

I read a linkedin post (July 2022) which recounted a radio 5 presenter talking to an apprentice who, having received multiple university offers, had chosen an apprenticeship over a degree. The post discussed the unconscious bias emerging from the presenter as she interviewed the apprentice, asking questions about how he felt about missing out on university life, and about not taking a university degree, with the implication that an academic degree was the 'gold standard' and 'rite of passage' into a successful career.

Richard (2011, p6) wrote of the importance of ensuring that apprenticeships are well-regarded.

> We cannot expect apprenticeships to be well regarded if we do not make it clear what they stand for. A university degree is valued in no small part because it is a degree. We infer from its award that the student met and exceeded a clear standard. The same is not true for apprenticeships. That must change.   (Richard, 2011, p6).

Ingold (2022, p197) describes "how the greatest impact of knowledge is not on how much you know, but how well you know". As apprentices develop their 'working knowledge' through teaching and then through embedding and extending their learning, they develop an awareness and ability to respond "to cues in their environment with a greater capacity to respond to these cues with judgement and precision" (Ingold, 2022, p197).

Knowing well and doing well is what apprenticeships stand for.
This is what differentiates degree apprenticeships from academic university degrees.

A Step Forward for Sales

The aged old debate and quest of whether, and when, sales will be fully recognised as a profession continues. We have the degree apprenticeships in sales, and at Middlesex University we have a cohort of sales professionals on the Doctorate programme. The ISP have an accredited learning path and are close to achieving Chartership. Squire (2021) stated that having an academic qualification and a recognised professional body providing an accredited learning path are the criteria for

a recognised profession. So, these developments are very exciting. Yet, speaking at the Sales Educators Academy conference, an international event, in June 2022, I was hugely disappointed when I asked the audience if they considered sales had reached the status of a profession. It was a 50-50 split. The audience were people immersed in sales education. It is very evident we still have a way to go.

Burdening bureaucracy.

Contemporary apprenticeships were launched under clear headlines including (i) putting employers in the driving seat; (ii) increasing their quality through a more rigorous assessment and grading process at the end of the apprenticeship; (iii) simple, accessible and straightforward (BIS, 2015). It was also stated that the relationship between the employer and apprentice is at the core of the programme. This core condition is the most challenging to achieve and evaluate due to the nature of 'relationship' which is dynamic, and the number of stakeholders involved that influence the quality of the relationship.

Bureaucracy has emerged as an influential factor affecting relationship. Consalia deliver the two apprenticeship programmes which I am presenting here as my PW2 and PW3. Consalia is a niche provider specialising in sales education. To convey a sense of why bureaucracy has emerged as an insight, in the last 6-months we have had:

(i)   a controls audit by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) ensuring we are meeting the funding requirements of English apprenticeships.

(ii)   our fourth re-application in 5-years, to be on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers. According to the ESFA (2022) the government strategy 'to drive up the quality of apprenticeship provision' is to progressively introduce more stringent entry criteria for the register. This meant all active providers had to reapply.

(iii)   an Ofsted inspection of the Level 6 B2B Sales Professional degree programme, under our sub-contracting arrangement with Middlesex University

(iv)   a new-provider Ofsted inspection for the Senior Sales Leadership, Level 7 apprenticeship programme, as we are the main provider for this programme.

It has been relentless and unhelpfully stressful. The audits and inspections are not insignificant. The consequences of a poor inspection are reputationally damaging and an unsuccessful RoATP application is catastrophic, leading to removal from the register which is effectively removal of the right to deliver apprenticeships. This is what happened to us, not because we were delivering low quality provision but because we uploaded abbreviated financial accounts in error, in place of full accounts. Despite an appeal and strong support from the employer community we were taken off the register for 12 weeks whilst we submitted a re-application process. Rules have changed further since that. A provider is now only allowed to apply once a year making it a very worrying time for training providers. This level of rigorous quality assurance and intensity can deviate focus. This in turn reduces the quality of the strategic energy training providers can put towards the programmes, not least in ensuring the quality of the relationships between providers, employers and government which can negatively impact the apprentice, as concerningly, Cleaver (2022) suggests that the learning experience for the apprentices may be affected, "and perhaps unnecessarily driven, by these wider operational systems and requirements" (Cleaver, 2022, p55). As of October 2022, I have also been advised that Consalia have a 'Territorial Manager at the DfE' and a meeting has been set to discuss our delivery model, review of progress and to outline the DfE's management and oversight of independent training providers.

The listed quality assurance approaches are not new to apprenticeships although bringing Ofsted inspection into universities was new as of April 2021. The Government reasoning was to ensure consistent judgements and approaches across the entire apprenticeship provision. Ingold (2018, p2) shares Henri Bergson's hypothesis that there is nothing creative in the rearrangements of previously used elements, and he compares it to shaking a kaleidoscope, "where each shake reveals a new pattern, but there is nothing in the new not already present in the old" (Ingold, 2018, p2). Whilst there are many similarities across the apprenticeship process, degree apprenticeships are very different in nature. They are longer and they already sit within a robust and external university quality assurance process. They also involve multiple module

assessments to achieve the university credits needed for the degree. Everyone is in agreement on the need for robust quality assurance, no-one is challenging that, but how much can be absorbed before the quality of energy decreases and the quality of delivery is affected by such processes. It leads one to ask the question: is the Government motivated by a compliance culture or a lack of trust? The reality is that what is being lost by the drive for metric 'account-ability' is of substantial value to the economy and will have a significant impact on the skills deficit in the UK and the higher and niche levels of technical training required. For example, the APPG report (2021) describes how "skilled B2B sellers were already in short supply before Covid-19" and how the demand for advanced selling skills have increased since then.

In 2011, Wolf concluded that "we are in a long-term rut, stuck in a habit of complex, micro-management of vocational programmes" (Wolf, 2011, p9). One could suggest this is aligned to the definition of insanity, attributed to Einstein, of doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting a different result. Feedback in a recent OfS report suggests this advising that 'the combination of Ofsted, ESFA, OfS, and Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) expectations had created an overall sense of bureaucratic burden' (Cleaver, 2022, p7). In my experience bureaucracy can be a form of confinement (Foucault, 1967) in that it can stifle what is different and creative in service to the achievement of the generic. It is not about one or the other but the complementarity, the balance between both.

I will not be the last to identify 'bureaucracy' as an obstacle to achievement and many philosophical criticisms of bureaucracy are levelled against the practice rather than the idea. Cook (2016) considers the word 'bureaucracy' to have acquired a pejorative quality associated with delays rather than the qualities of precision, reliability, and efficiency which (Merton, 1963) links to an effective bureaucracy. Merton (1963, p562) introduced me to the term 'professional deformation' which describes the practice of looking at things from one's own professional perspective rather than a broader or more humane perspective. He notes that the elements which deliver efficiency may also lead to regulations which 'induce conservatism' (ibid, p564) and a stress on depersonalisation of relationships as a feature of bureaucracy, which I have experienced through faceless feedback, generic and the bulk categorisation of

significant matters. The antithesis of this approach could be described in Ingold's (2015, p2) words as "relationally co-evolving".

Clear guidance emerged from the Wolf report 11 years ago, on how the vocational education system "needs to be simplified dramatically to free-up resources for teaching and learning and to encourage innovation and efficiency" (Wolf, 2011, p9). Yet we are here again. Innovation and efficiency are far removed from recent feedback

> … that the multiple accountabilities associated with apprenticeships are practically and culturally heavy and that the sector's collective energy was balanced towards, and maybe even driven by, inspection and monitoring requirements (Cleaver, 2022, p55).

Cleaver (2022) continues to suggest that the bureaucratic burden may be a 'wicked' problem, involving "multifactorial solutions which in turn necessitate nuanced understandings of stakeholders, contexts and circumstances" (ibid, p55). It is clear that running multiple quality assurance systems, across the same provision, all of which are ultimately focused on ensuring quality apprenticeship provision, fair assessment, and appropriate use of the allocated ESFA funding is not value for money for the levy payer or taxpayer.

Ingold (2015, p2) writes of how differentiation can occur by drawing things out from the flux of potential and presents a term 'concrescence' meaning growing and developing with another, and relationally co-evolving. I would like to see creativity, innovation, simplification and efficiency through a cross-organisational, co-evolving, practical quality assurance approach. This will be a challenge and it is a 'wicked' problem as Cleaver (2022) identified. My experience of the Government teams within IfATE and the ESFA in particular, during the funding appeal for the B2B Sales Professional and the RoATP register appeal is that they worked autonomously, in silos, without handover and cross-team communication. Achieving concrescence will be a significant culture change, but one that could achieve significant benefit for so many in the apprenticeship ecosystem.

Linking to Ingold's (2015) inspiration to draw things out from the flux of potential the diversity and mixed economy of apprenticeship provision offers just that. There are

many degree apprenticeship standards across diverse employment settings of all sizes and across most sectors, a range of different professional body accreditation requirements, and specialist provision versus provision focused on volume. The OfS report (Cleaver, 2019) suggests that this diversity should inform our understanding of high-quality degree apprenticeships.

The risk of this not happening, the risk of continuing to over-burden providers, is leading to a sense that many of the broader organisational, educational and socio-economic benefits, and the contribution to policy agendas that degree apprenticeships can offer could be lost (ibid.). Even I, with all that I have invested into the PWs, and even with the Consalia mission so intertwined into the programmes, once turned to my CEO and said 'I'm not sure. Is it really worth us doing this?'.

My last comment on this theme is that in their 2020 Vision for Apprenticeships it was clearly stated "the relationship between the employer and apprentice is at the core of the programme" (BIS, 2015). There are no audits or reviews that address this directly between the employer and apprentice. The responsibility is put on the training provider to ensure the employer is delivering the optimum environment for the apprentice, but without any means for support from the ESFA or other Government bodies. This is one of the most important factors for ensuring apprenticeship success and I will be addressing it in the next theme: Employer Culture.

Employer Culture

Culture is a nebulous term. Friedson (2007) suggests it is 'catch-all' term that can refer to almost anything. If you type 'organisational culture' into google you are swamped with models, definitions, the four types of organisational culture, the five types of organisational culture and so on. The aspect of employer culture that I am focusing on is the learning culture, the culture within an organisation which promotes, supports and enables learning.

The etymology of the noun culture stems from the Latin '*cultura'* for 'growing' and the verb from '*culturare'* to tend or cultivate (Berger, 2010). For a learning culture this translates to cultivating a way of being in the workplace. Ingold (2022, p190) shares Geertz (1973) proposition for culture as a body of information containing all the

essential guidelines for a certain way to live, or when describing an employer culture, it can be translated to guidelines for work. The key is that the guidelines are passed on. Suddaby et al (2010) refer to culture as an 'institutionalised environment', a 'taken-for-grantedness' environment based on symbolic elements. Ingold (2019, p76) also describes a 'legacy of tradition, believing that cultural variation is passively absorbed and impacts the values and behaviours of people'. I especially appreciated Mosley's (2017) inclusion of a quote from Amazon's founder, Jeff Bezos who asserts: "One of things you find in companies is that once a culture is formed it takes nuclear weaponry to change it'.

The core points are that employer culture is embedded and very sticky, it is typically linked to the brand or sector and often brings in a 'taken-for-grantedness' way of being. One thing that is certain across the PWs is that employer cultural variation is multitudinous and wide-ranging.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) espoused that the relationship between the employer and apprentice is at the core of an apprenticeship programme (BIS, 2015). The apprentice should be learning on the job at least 80% of the time, with 20% of time allocated to off the job learning (BIS, 2015) and so the relationship between apprentice and employer is critical. In the previous section, outlining the theme of Bureaucracy, I listed the audits and inspections a training provider is required to complete to ensure they are delivering high quality apprenticeship provision. This includes tracking that the employer is providing the necessary learning environment. One way to interpret this is that the ESFA has given the training provider the responsibility to validate the immediate culture surrounding the apprentice within their working environment. I will call this immediate culture their 'environ'. The challenge for the training provider is significant as our influence comes from outside of the environ. We flag the lack of on-the-job learning opportunities when we see them occurring, we share our concerns when there is too much guidance or conversely too much hand-holding, impacting the apprentices ability to think for themselves, and we actively support the 20% off-the-job learning targets for the apprentices. The reality is we have little influence and no sanctions.

Over the last 4 years and across the two PWs I have witnessed multiple employer cultures, which is not surprising, given the variety of sectors that our employers operate in, including technology, logistics, Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), and the different sizes and structures of organisations and the plethora of organisational structures, from hierarchical to more networked and collaborative models (Schwab, 2017).

> The realities of working and studying in degree apprenticeship
> provision cannot be separated from the wider circumstances in which
> each programme is built and the contexts in which it operates
>
> (Cleaver,2022, p52)

Employers and apprentices reach the PWs with their own culture embedded. Not one is identical to another. From my recent experience employers typically fall into four[12] broad categories having a direct influence on the apprentices 'environ'. More information about the four employer types are listed in Appendix 8.

The consequences of these different employer cultures are clear: (i) some apprentices can morph into 'organisational clones' who are taught to sell 'one way' and are not able to challenge or bring their own thinking into their work. (ii) employer-led 'quality reviews' may be managed by people who have no knowledge of the apprentices' projects and impact and may not have spoken to the apprentices about them. (iii) there are employers who prioritise the sales role and demands of the business over the development of the apprentice. We know of apprentices who missed scheduled workshops because of customer meetings. (iv) Others expect the training provider to provide all the off-the-job learning, as confirmed in a study by Minton & Lowe (2019) into how universities are supporting employers to facilitate effective 'on the job' learning. Here, employers spoke of "the burden of workplace facilitation" (Minton & Lowe, 2019, p206). However, in contrast we have seen employer cultures where a learning culture (Senge, 1990) is adopted. Here, the line managers support, mentor,

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[12] Those fully engaged with the demands of an apprenticeship programme; employers whose primary motivation is to spending as such of their levy as possible; employers who put too much emphasis on the off-the-job learning and not enough on the on-the-job learning; employers providing distant and central management of the programme.

coach, challenge the apprentices and are open to learning themselves. In a learning organisation everyone learns and extends their capabilities (Senge, 1990).

The impact of the type of environ the apprentice is working in can be explained by Ingold (2019, p43) as he describes how "human beings have to learn how to do things and starved of opportunities to do so, they become stunted and crippled". If learning is stunted, the apprentice's ability to function in the workplace is too. This can impact grades and even generate attrition.

A second influencer within the environ is the culture of sales professionalism. Habits of professionalism need to be embedded at all levels to establish a professional sales culture, The sales leader or line-manager is the role model for the apprentice. Professional cultures breed professionalism. Professional line managers will foster learning for everyone (Senge, 1990).

Experience also shows that Middlesex University and Consalia spend more time working with the apprentices who do not have a supportive, employer culture to compensate for what they are not getting in the workplace. It also takes time to manage the issue with the employer. A flawed employer culture has implications for the apprentice and delivers time and funding challenges for the training provider. But it is more complex than that, as the employer is not held accountable by the ESFA, adding to the burden of the training provider.

In the next section I will consider more of the complexities within the apprenticeship ecosystem and the wider socio-economic environment.

Complexity

When I describe the apprenticeship programmes and what it has taken to develop and deliver them, people often comment how complicated it sounds. In an earlier chapter I identified the public works (PWs) development ecosystem and the importance of the connectedness between the four elements: context, socio-economic impact, the key stakeholders (everyone) and the dynamics of the system. This aligns to Green and Sadedin's (2005) approach describing ecosystems as the products of their interactions. Poli (2013) describes a golden rule for distinguishing 'complicated' from

'complex' problems and systems which aligns with the consensus amongst complexity and systems theorists. Complicated problems can be addressed piece-by-piece and each piece can be individually managed whereas complex problems are the result of multiple interacting causes that cannot be individually distinguished and must be addressed as an entire system (Poli, 2013), such as an ecosystem. Poli (2013) continues to describe how, in complex systems, small shifts may result in disproportionate effects. Donella Meadows shares Sufi wisdom as follows:

> You think because you understand 'one', that you therefore must understand 'two', because one and one makes two. But you forget that you must also understand 'and'

> "Sufi Teaching Story", cited in Meadows (2008, p12)

Boulton et al. (2015) identified five elements which make-up a complex system. The five elements are that the system is *systemic* and needs to be looked at holistically and not through understanding each element separately. Bateson's writing suggests agreement, and that putting things into parts is a process of convenience (Bateson, 2000).

> Complex systems are *path dependent* where history matters and the present shapes the emerging future, they are *sensitive to context* and one size does not fit all, they are *emergent* in a world that is not chaotic*,* but neither is it predictable and *episodic* where things are 'becoming, developing and changing' but the change seems to happen in fits and starts. (Boulton et al., 2015, p8).

To refresh, and at first glance (see Figure 8) the apprenticeship development ecosystem looks relatively simple. It embraces a microsystem, defining the immediate development context of the PWs; a mesosystem bringing together the interconnections between everyone and the relevant dynamics. Finally, a macrosystem view focuses on the wider, socio-economic culture, enabling consideration of future implications and outcomes. Complexity emerges from the changing context as a result of dynamics within the system, heightened by global

socio-economic disruptors, such as the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Complexity is also created by immutable, apprenticeship management rules, contextual variables and the behaviours and various cultures of the stakeholders, and everyone involved within the system are interconnected parts of the complexity. If humans try to either 'fix' or give supremacy to any part without understanding the relationship between all parts, then complications are added to the complexity disrupting the balance of the ecosystem. One way of ensuring this does not happen is to fully understand the parts and the wider system and to negotiate between them. Key factors influencing the complexity of the ecosystem are illustrated in Figure 9.

Maguire (2020, p39) explains how transdisciplinary knowledge is also in flux and that it fits well into complexity and interconnectedness. Gibbs and Beavis (2020, p11) citing Serres (1974) share his view of a transdisciplinary approach as "a practice of translation" which provides "opportunities to explore different ways of thinking into complex scenarios" and Adams and Maguire (2023, p5) describe a transdisciplinary perspective on practice where "the whole is constituted by the relationships existing within it, the properties of each part influenced by and influencing its relationship to other parts".

Bringing a transdisciplinary or complexity lens onto the PWs development ecosystem can help to provide new perspectives on old, yet current questions (Green & Sadedin, 2005), such as how should we develop adult skills optimally and sustainably to help with the productivity crisis in the UK? And it may also raise new questions or illuminate new truths, "that light the way for us to formulate our own answers" (Ali-Khan & Siry, 2012). Green & Sadedin (2005) raise their own question whether ecosystems should be tightly coupled and co-adapted or more random and autonomous and this is a question worth considering in the context of the PWs as they continue to develop. What is not helpful is to develop more complications which present as knots that become increasingly difficult to unravel and obscure our view of what the original vision of the 'thing' was supposed to be. Covered in knots, it starts to increase the entropy in the system (Ophuls, p21) reducing the quality of the energy, because some of the energy is spent trying to undo knots.

The questions and phenomena emerging from the assessment in Figure 9 include: Is the upskilling policy one that is really supported by the Government? How can the management approach be made more fit for purpose and adaptable to suit the changing world? How can sales overcome the academic stigma and what influence have I got? What are the essential, emerging skills and are our programmes addressing them? How can policies be more agile and demonstrate greater sensitivity to respond to cues in the environment (Ingold, 2022, p197). When will policymakers consider a long-term solution to improve the long-term situation, rather than search for "short-term, immediate solutions" which (Bateson, 2000, xiv) suggests worsens the problem over time. When will people stop worrying less "about the status of persons, companies, political parties, commercial and financial agencies" (Bateson, 2000, p452) and establish new habits, which "look for direction and value" (ibid, p162).

Complexity theory leads to broader questioning and encourages the vision of, or envisaging, a better way. From a coaching and practitioner perspective I would start the process with the simple questions: What are we aiming to achieve? What can we simplify? What's stopping us? Sometimes these obvious questions get lost or diluted in the complications but are the right questions from a complexity perspective. The processes Bateson (2000, xiii) drew on as he studied complex systems and interconnections, developing steps to an ecology of mind, were processes of knowing, including perception and communication, coding and translation. These can also be addressed through coaching and the CEDAR framework. Recognising and working between interconnected parts seems a daunting task but identifying what we can control, or influence will help. Boulton et al. (2015, p 25) have an encouraging remark: that in "complex situations there is all to play for" especially as the goals of professionalising sales, increasing social mobility and upskilling remain unchanged. Bateson (2000, p452) also shares how complex systems, as self-correcting systems, oscillate and that the learning never stops. The questions, emerging from the insights, align to Anderson's (2006) analytical autoethnographic approach to deliver
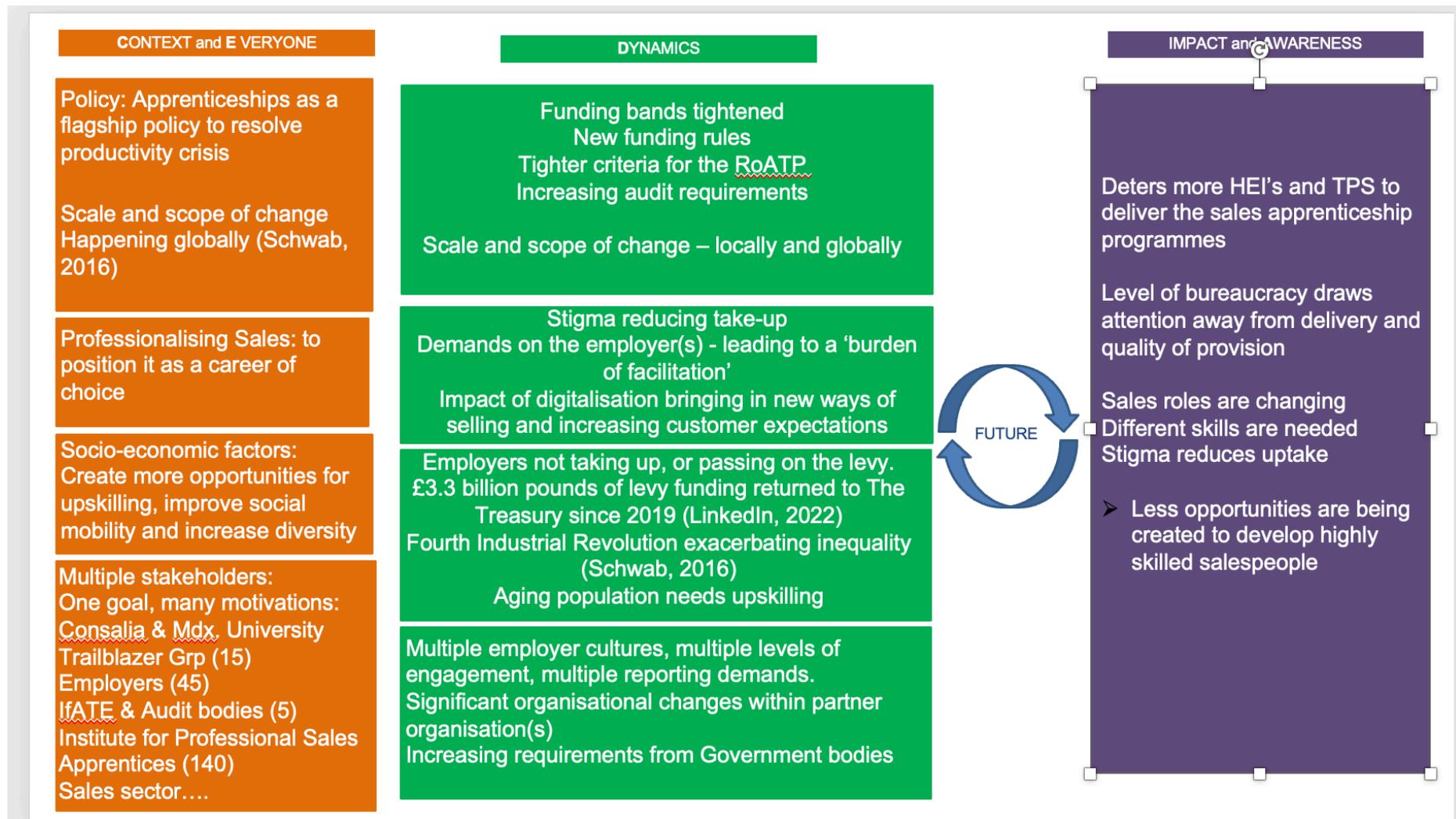
Figure 9. Factors and impact of the complexity within the development ecosystem of the PW

usefulness. I'll carry these questions into the next chapter as we move into the R element of the C-E-D-A-R conceptual frame and reflect on what has emerged through the inquiry so far.

R. Reflections and Reflexivity

C	Context
E	Everyone
D	Dynamics
A	Awareness
R	Reflection and Reflexivity

The C-E-D-A-R Framework ©
(Sutton, 2021)
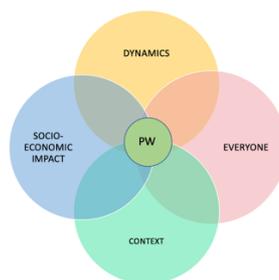
Figure 10
The PWs development ecosystem

PWs 2 and 3 were developed to support the professionalisation agenda of sales. Immediate observations are that:

- the PWs have supported this goal
- delivering quality degree apprenticeships in the current operating requirements is a very complex and challenging activity

The analytical autoethnographic research method has evidenced how use of my C-E-D-A-R framework can contribute to shifts in thinking, seeing and doing, in myself and other stakeholders. It demonstrates how C-E-D-A-R can be used within adaptive environments and flexing situations. The coaching inquiry across the degree apprenticeship development ecosystem highlights that "things inter-relate, and affect each other in a messy, complex systemic fashion" (Boulton et. al, 2010, p33). Disruptive events have impacted the PWs and as our world will continue to be "increasingly complex, fast-changing and uncertain" (Boulton et. al, 2010, p38) they will continue to do so. The emerging findings show our apprenticeship development ecosystem is sitting in a quagmire where the objective for order, consistency,

prediction, and control (Boulton et. al, 2010, p38) is pernicious and impacting apprenticeship recruitment and retention.

Wolf (2011, p9) warns of the complexity of repeated overlapping directives of central Government and that England has had twenty years of micromanagement and mounting bureaucratic costs and it is time this changed'. Eleven years later current thought-leaders are still writing of overwhelming bureaucratic burden (Cleaver, 2022). "I can confirm that the number of accountabilities and associated expectations can be practically and culturally heavy for stakeholders to carry and manage" (ibid, p55). Cleaver (2022, p55) posits this may be a 'wicked' problem, involving "multifactorial solutions which in turn necessitate nuanced understandings of stakeholders, contexts and circumstances". The C-E-D-A-R concept can support with identifying and working with this complexity. Wicked problems are complex problems and Boulton et al's (2010) advice for complex systems is to embrace the world as interconnected, open to influences and where variation and diversity are necessary for creativity, change and emergence (ibid, 2010, p33). Embracing variation and supporting adaptability requires trust, based on shared values and visions across ecosystem members and potentially the decentralisation of authority and the sharing of power (ibid, p38). Imagine?

I classify the PWs development ecosystem as a business ecosystem. Pidun et al (2020) compare designing a business model and a business ecosystem to designing a house or a whole residential district: "the ecosystem is more complex, has more players to coordinate, and more layers of interaction and unintended emergent outcomes" (ibid, p1). According to Simard (2022, p189) we know that "ecosystems are built on relationships and the stronger they are the more resilient the system". It is the unintended outcomes that need attention, and which, provided that balance is maintained and a symbiotic relationship between the key members is formed, new possibilities may be generated. Trust, reciprocity (Cohen & Bradford, 2005), connection, communication, and cohesion (Simard, 2022, p230) are necessary features. Ingold (2015) calls it 'concrescence' or relationally co-evolving.

Reflective dialogues emerging from C-E-D-A-R, and rhetorical questions

I wonder: what would be the consequences if employers could manage their own levy spend or spend more levy to help with more coaching if they do not have the capacity to do this well? What is the optimum amount of reporting needed across the degree apprenticeship development ecosystem? Could this be assessed systemically rather than separately. How can niche providers be supported to provide more specialist knowledge rather than penalised through the burden of bureaucracy? Do the ESFA need the same monitoring measures for a supplier with under hundred apprentices compared to one with thousands? Could the employers and apprentices be trusted to do more reporting to the ESFA? Could a funds threshold be identified for different monitoring approaches. Radical ideas but the current aim of predictable perfection and order inhibits the ability to be agile, responsive and innovative. "There needs to a path to keep policies alive" (Boulton et al., 2010, p36). More words from Boulton should raise concern:

> Systems which are diverse, richly connected and open to their environments can evolve form through the way connections are synergistic or antagonistic; such forms may be more harmoniously in tune with their surroundings than what was there before and prosper; or they may be less tuned to the context, and hence may disappear
>
> Boulton (2010, p33)

What new possibilities are surfacing?

Support for Apprenticeships

The Minister of State for Higher Education and Further Education has encouraged all HEI providers to significantly increase the proportion of students on higher and degree apprenticeships (Bravenboer, 2022). The targets being set to increase the number of degree apprenticeships offered by universities are encouraging.

Recruiting Apprentices

A recent UCAS report (2022) shared that more students than ever say they want to hear about apprenticeships with demand for information growing by 123% last year.

This is promising though it also included concerning feedback showing one in three applicants did not receive any information about apprenticeships at school (UCAS, 2022). As well as not getting enough information, there are clearly questions over the benefits. Only 8% of people associated apprenticeships with leading to a good job and whilst 76% associated the word 'prestigious' with university degrees, only 4% associated the same with apprenticeships.

Raising the profile of (degree) apprenticeships

An article in The Sunday Times, August 2022, suggests universities may increase students' fees to £24K per year. The impact any rise in student fees would have on social mobility is significant but to leapfrog to that amount is catastrophic. Degree apprenticeships are the route to enable many more people to achieve a university degree. The perception of them as a lesser qualification must be squashed.

Impartial careers advice at schools is a factor (Rowe, Perrin and Wall, 2016). Much can be linked to "the voices and sentiments of powerful others" (including ministers, and academics and schools) that have "long been privileged and influential in the discourses about the standing of occupations and their preparation" (Billet, 2014, p3). On August 18th, 2022, A-level results were published. Every news bulletin I heard discussed A-levels as the route to university and a degree. No mention was made on any news programme of the opportunity of degree apprenticeships. When awareness is low it perpetuates the stigma surrounding apprenticeships.

Employers

Employers need the promised free choice (BIS, 2015) to spend their levy and invest in the apprenticeships their businesses need (Anderson, 2020). If employers are going to be at the centre of the degree apprenticeship programmes then "the line-managers role cannot be overestimated" (Matthews, 2013, p208). Experience has proven and Hughes & Saieva (2019) remind us, that the role of the work-place mentor or line-manager is a necessary support to balance the rigorousness of work and study. This needs to be stretched to every workplace culture by ensuring more structured and 'formal support' to the workplace mentors (Minton & Lowe. 2019). As we move into a

potential, if not probable, recession and due to the current economic and energy crisis more support may be needed from the government to ensure this can happen.

Skills for the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Agility and transferrable skills remain paramount as the impacts from covid-19, the proliferation of digitalization and other disruptors take hold. Schwab (2017) writes of the need for social, creative and systems skills, and highlights their need for sales as "B2B customers are increasingly at the centre of the digital economy" (Schwab, 2016, p53). Findings from a McKinsey & Company survey (2018) suggests that companies are aware they lack the talent they will need in the future with a reported 87 percent saying they are either experiencing gaps now or expect them within a few years. As the economy emerges from covid-19 the demand for more salespeople with advanced sales skills is ramping up (APPG, 2021) and the companies which will suffer most from these skills shortages will again be the small and medium sized enterprises (APPG, 2021), that contemporary apprenticeships can support. For sales specifically, degree apprenticeships provide a route to de-stigmatise sales, and to attract a different talent supply (Bravenboer and Crawford-Lee, 2020).

Let the creative and advanced skills thrive

Creativity and inspiration directed towards our provision will ultimately be sapped by the complexity of the compliance demands if it continues to grow. It is generating a 'wicked problem' within the ecosystem as Cleaver (2022) identified. There is potential for innovation, simplification, and efficiency through a cross-organisational, co-evolving, practical quality assurance approach. My recent experience of the Government teams within IfATE and the ESFA is that they work autonomously, in silos. Achieving concrescence (Ingold, 2015), growing and developing with another, has potential.

IfATE began as a new entity and had an opportunity to simplify ways of working. Pidun at al. (2020, p7) ask interesting questions about the participation of key members in an ecosystem. "To what extent are ecosystem partners invited to shape the ecosystem? And how can you find the right level of openness for your ecosystem?".

I reflect on the views of Lillis and Varetto (2020, p799) who argue that the government draws power to itself centripetally to control discourses, between itself and those it relies upon in the world to act, and I wonder if we can ever create the trust and openness to revisit the questions from Pidun et al (2007).

> Wicked problems need creative solutions drawn out from the flux of potential. (Ingold, 2015)

Shifting the apprenticeship stigma and changing perceptions

The two most prevalent stigmas encroaching upon the success of the PWs are (i) the stigma linked to vocational learning and apprenticeships. (ii) the stigma that surrounds sales as a career and a profession.

I shared earlier about the need to shift the deep-rooted perception of vocational education, including apprenticeships, and that they are only for the 'less-able' and require lower-order thinking (Lucas, 2015). Shifting this perception is a complex matter with many influencers including schools, parents, universities, and the Government.

A headline on The Apprenticeships newsletter dated August 2022 declared that 'three out of four teachers, i.e. 75% of teachers, are not confident helping people apply for apprenticeships' (Conway, 2022). The report recommends a centralised application for all degree apprenticeships within UCAS' portal which would help people to compare side by side higher education, technical education and apprenticeships.

Just last month, BTEC results at both Level 2 and Level 3 were seriously delayed impacting thousands of students deciding their next steps in education. If A-level results or GCSE results were delayed there would be a public outcry and a government inquiry, but as it stands, two weeks later, many BTEC students are still waiting for their results. Speaking on 'The Today' programme Robert Halfon MP, Chair of the Education Select Committee advised there was no clear reason for this to happen and that it "sums up everything that is wrong about how vocational education is treated in this country" (Halfon, 2022). I also wrote previously how some academic professionals

have been reluctant to embrace the sales degree apprenticeship programmes in their universities.

These three factors alone: lack of knowledge in schools, lack of government action and the lack of universities offering degrees in sales unconsciously reinforce the stigmas and pass them onto degree applicants and their key influencers including schools and parents. If there is no degree option for sales, then people will assume it can't merit one.

Whilst we can now celebrate degree apprenticeships in sales and proclaim that we have put sales on the academic curriculum in England, the shame is that the sales degrees did not exist in the first place. Linkedin (2021) data irrefutably demonstrates the size of the B2B sales profession, with over 661 thousand currently listed as B2B Sales Professionals and so it is an enigma that universities and academic institutions have not embraced sales as a discipline and an opportunity to widen their research and curriculum.

Christensen et al. (2022, p2) believe that apprentices often feel a stronger connection to their learning, as it is more personal, and "how it can contribute to a greater sense of meaning which increasing numbers of employees seek". We have an opportunity to build on this now there are 'graduates' from the PWs. The success rate and progression of the apprentices who have graduated tell a powerful story which we need to narrate clearly and loudly, raising the profile of degree apprenticeships as a high quality brand (Lester, 2020) delivering sales professionals.

R: Reflexivity

This critical inquiry has taken me on a journey of reflection and provided me with an opportunity "to challenge and question my actions and those of others" (Rowe et al, 2020, p791).

Bateson (2000, p452) shares how complex systems, as self-correcting systems, oscillate and that the learning never stops. Through my experience with the PWs, I've realised that learning about the system is part of the system. That the learning triggers small shifts and vibrations, and that unlocking the complexity through learning, leads

to innovation within the system, and beyond. At times I have had to feel comfortable with not-knowing.

People often ask me what kept me going? I pull on one value more than others and it is fairness. It is fair that our education system provides more opportunities for more people. The lower funding band we were awarded for a 'sales degree' was not fair. I was determined to deliver and prove that sales is a profession, that there is a 'higher' end of sales providing a personally and professionally rewarding career and to open up that option as a career of choice, rather than a job that people fall into. The government have not made the delivery environment easy, although I recognise, I have an internal bias (McNiff, 2010) influencing this view.

The ecosystem and its members are changing and adaptive. As a key member I have gone through that process too. I am likening it to a VUCA (Bennett and Lemoine, 2014) vortex, with wave after wave of disruptive change, whilst trying to hold the apprentices high, 'out of the spiral' as the customer and student experience has always been a high priority to me. I have learnt lessons enabling me to recognise more swiftly what is in my area of control (Covey, 2020) and who I can influence and who I can't.

My reflections recognise the change in myself, my approach, my role, my status. Within the VUCA vortex and swirling through the ecosystem I have experienced my own personal vortex. Resilience and agility have a much greater weight in my practitioner toolbox. Pemberton (2015) describes resilience not as bouncing back but bouncing forwards and I have appreciated the need to bounce far enough forward, out of the vortex, to find space to reflect on where we are and what's potentially coming next. Sometimes, my leap is not far enough, or I am pushed back. When this happens, I find nature to help propel me forwards again.

In the concluding statement I will summarise the knowledge emerging from the critique of my PWs using the C-E-D-A-R frame and how my own professional practice has evolved through the process of developing the PWs and who I have become.

Concluding Statement

This section concludes my analytical autoethnographic narrative which, through using C-E-D-A-R as my critical frame has enabled me to draw on my experiences as the researcher and contribute to practitioner knowledge (Anderson, 2006). I knew I had a story to tell, and it has been an informative activity with beneficial reflection. I have narrated the endeavours to get the PWs to where they are today, and identified further actions needed, to ensure they continue to progress successfully which sets the future intent. Confirming the full complexity associated with their development and continuing success is revealing and concerning.

Complexity and C-E-D-A-R.

Complexity theory leads us to broader questioning and encourages us to envision a better way. The processes Bateson (2000, xiii) drew on as he studied complex systems and interconnections were processes of knowing, including perception and communication, coding and translation. These can be addressed through using the C-E-D-A-R framework I developed to raise awareness and insights across my PWS. This thesis has presented a case for the C-E-D-A-R coaching framework being used to support and coach Thinking, Seeing and Doing across a complex scenario. C-E-D-A-R can reveal more of what sits behind our insights and within a shifting ecosystem insight leads to greater awareness and possibilities. I have used the C-E-D-A-R coaching framework beyond this thesis to help individuals explore their relationship to their field and explore complexity. It has helped evoke, provoke and contribute to these scenarios.

My intentions from this critical analysis of the PWs were to identify what makes a sales degree apprenticeship programme successful within our contemporary, agile and volatile world and potentially contribute to a metanoia of a 'learning organisation' paradigm for degree apprenticeships, focused on the "practices in working life" (Buch, 2015), where work is "learningful" (Senge, 2006), interconnected, and is a potential source for transformation (Critten, 2016). The PWs were developed to support the professionalisation of sales and I have explored the concepts of professional practice and professionalism and explain that professional practice is; aligned to contextual

competence (Svennson, p2006), knowledge acquired by higher education, practical knowledge acquired by knowledge in use, where trust is key (Evetts, 2013) and "ethics are placed inside professional work rather than a peripheral afterthought" (Thompson-Klein, 2020, p48). Appendix 9 identifies how the continued success of the degree apprenticeships is the shared responsibility of all key members in the PWs development ecosystem and identifies a need for collaborative integration and dialogue to learn more about each other's positions and perspectives (Augsburg, 2014).

Autoethnographic research as pioneered by Ellis et al. (2011) emphasises the emotional and personal experiences (Atkinson, 2006) and persuades through the power of narrative (Wall, 2016, p1) that can then be harnessed to wider contributions to thinking and practice. So, what have I learnt through this reflexive analysis and how does that make me feel? I know I am a different person to when I started the programme.

> Understanding begins …when something addresses us
>
> Gadamer (2004, p298)

Gendlin, in Preston (2008, p362) took me to the "edge of awareness, the frontier of thinking" and this inspired me. Downey (2003, p90) shares how "there is much, much, more available to us if only we dare look". Resilience seeds through necessity, and then it grows, and I have become more resilient. I wrote earlier about growing into an identify and endorse Ingold's (2022) philosophy that identify shifts as knowledge emerges and beliefs embed. Practice is the richest source of knowledge and producing this thesis has been insightful personally. Reflexively, I have come to appreciate the value a utility player, a practitioner, and a transdisciplinarian identity delivers and I am comfortable with this identity, recognising that it is a position which has consolidated throughout my career. Augsburg (2014, p236) describes the "cultivation of a transdisciplinary attitude" and proposes that a key characteristic for this is "openness to and acceptance of the unknown and the recognition of the different levels of reality governed by different types of logic" (ibid). I recognise what I can bring as an interconnector and a hermeneut within an ecosystem, and for the apprenticeship

development ecosystem, between the employers, apprentices and academics. My recent appointment as the ISP trustee responsible for Education and Qualifications will provide opportunities to interconnect with the government agencies as well. Producing this context statement has helped to augment my belief that there is much to gain and produce as a practitioner working across silos, traversing boundaries and also finding new horizons. As my identity is emerging so am I, stronger and clearer. A 'Jack of all Trades' can be a master of interconnection.

> Knowledge is a function of being. When there is a change in the being of the knower, there is a corresponding change in the nature and amount of knowing
>
> Aldous Huxley (2009).

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Appendices.

Appendix 1: My CV

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Louise Sutton

Senior L&D Professional and Executive Coach with strong commercial acumen and consulting experience. Passionate about helping people to achieve their potential and an accredited Leadership & Performance Coach who provides powerful coaching to individuals, senior managers and executives in organisational or personal transition. Skilled in delivering strategic, talent development and learning solutions across different cultures and ensuring organisations and individuals benefit from the learning outcomes.

Core Strengths

- **Leadership Development –** leadership behaviours, mindset, awareness and engagement
- **Learning & Talent Development** - developed a 'success profile' for high performers in sales
- **Driving tangible business value** – led a sales enablement programme to deliver $10m annual savings plus improved margin at Sony Mobile
- **Leadership & Performance Coaching** – from CEO to emerging leaders
- **Career Coaching** – helping people to make meaningful & fulfilling career decisions
- **Consulting –** my track record in consultancy supports operating as a business partner. Ensures L&D initiatives are appropriately integrated and aligned with strategic and business goals
- **Facilitation and Workshop Design –** designed and delivered workshops to deliver organisational value through people development: best practice sharing, team building, leadership & sales enablement
- **Project Management** – of HR, Business & IT transformation projects ensuring business objectives are met
- **Curriculum development –** development of accredited, university programmes built on work-based learning principles

Career History

Academy Director – Consalia   2016 - present

As Academy Director, I am responsible for the strategic direction and delivery of accredited programmes delivered in partnership with Middlesex University. The programmes are developed for practitioners and apprentices and they are based on proven practices for performance improvement and real world learning at both Masters and degree level. The programmes include an emphasis on becoming a reflective practitioner helping students to think differently. Responding to apprenticeship reforms I created and developed an integrated degree apprenticeship for B2B Sales Professionals and a Senior Sales Leadership programme at MSc. / PG Diploma for sales leaders.

Commercial Academy Manager - Sony Mobile   2014 - 2016

Developed Sony Mobile's Commercial Academy assessing business needs across ten global regions and scoping learning interventions for the sales community. The Academy is a core component of Sony Mobile's L&D portfolio. I was responsible for sourcing & delivering best in class training to successfully deliver business outcomes with a proven RoI. The philosophy of the academy includes sharing best practice, partnering with the sales organisation and promoting the behaviours to sustain a high performance community. A flagship programme within the academy was the Sony Mobile Masters (MSc) Professional Practice in Sales Transformation accredited by Middlesex University for

our emerging leaders and which has resulted in £10M RoI to date. I nominated and supported the winner of the " Women in Sales Awards - Technology Sector 2015", a fantastic achievement for our winner and a credit to the Academy programmes we had introduced over the previous 2 years.

Leadership & Performance Coaching – Sony Mobile   2013 - 2016

Delivered Executive & Performance coaching to senior & middle management at Sony Mobile during a period of significant restructuring, offering strategic support and helping them to deliver the best from themselves and their teams.

HR Project Manager of a Global Integration Programme – Sony Mobile 2012-2014

Project Manager for the HR workstream of a global integration Programme. The role required strong PM skills, stakeholder management across mulitple cultures and close working with the Regional Heads to clarify the organisational goals. Key to success in the role has been the ablity to work with virtual, international team members as well as in-country HR leadership resolving their local implemention requirements and issues. Project has delivered annual cost savings in excess of £30M.

People Development Manager - Medley Business Solutions   2008-2012

Medley is a niche consultancy that specialises in IT & Business enabled change. I managed the Employee Engagement & Talent Development activities within the organisation and assessed learning and development needs across the pool of consultants focusing on emerging trends and the consultants' development needs. Other responsibilities included leadership and skills development, performance coaching, interview coaching and preparation and the facilitation of knowledge share events. The CEO reported tangible evidence of increased employee engagement & assignment hires.

L&D Programme Manager – Open University   2011

Took on an interim assignment within the Professional Development Programmes unit, supporting the in-house team to deliver an e-learning solution to a major corporate client. My primary role was client project manager, ensuring successful delivery to time, budget to meet client requirements.

People and Capability Development Manager - Alpheus Solutions   2005-2008

Alpheus is an IT Consultancy with offices in London and Frankfurt. I was tasked with setting up a People & Capability Management function introducing performance and talent management and the implementation of a 'capability management' toolkit. Subsequently led the operational activities within Talent, Capability Development and Recruitment.

Earlier career
Business Programme Manager - AT&T Communications UK

Performed the role of Business Programme Manager with responsibility for ensuring new product launches were viable within planned timescales and could be supported by the Provisioning, Customer Care, Billing and Fault Management systems.

Senior Consultant – PriceWaterhouseCoopers

Project Management and client support across a number of IT enabled, logistics change programmes for BP, Shell and Elf UK with an international remit covering Central and South America and the UK. Project managed the development of a customisable Production Reporting Package for multiple oil fields jointly sponsored by PWC and BP.

IT graduate programme – BP International

Through the graduate programme I performed IT roles from programmer, systems and UAT testing, analyst, designer and project manager whilst working on a number of specific applications for BP Exploration and BP Chemicals. Selected for a secondment to BP Calgary for 6 months.

Associations & Memberships

Fellow of the Association of Professional Sales (FAPS) ; Associate Member of the Association for Coaching; Member of the British Psychological Society

Professional Qualifications

- Post Graduate Diploma(Level 7): Executive Coaching and Leadership Mentoring
  - accredited by The Institute of Leadership and Management
- Coaching for Performance Excellence
  - accredited by Middlesex University and affiliated with the EMCC
- Assessing Personality in Organisations (Level B)
  - accredited by the British Psychological Society
- BSc. (Hons 2:1) degree in Geology and Computing at Leicester University
- Certified Firework Career Coach

Appendix 2. The Apprenticeship Levy

The apprenticeship levy was introduced in England by the UK Government on the 6th April 2017 to create long term sustainable funding for apprenticeships. From this date, 0.5% of an employers' wage bill over £3M is reserved through PAYE for apprenticeship training (Lester, 2020). The employer has 24-months to spend their levy. If the employer does not spend it, it is transferred to a central fund for non-levy paying employers to access for apprenticeship training. These smaller employers i.e. those with a total annual pay bill of less than £3million pay just 5% of the cost of their apprenticeship training and the Government pays the rest. Levy paying employers can also transfer up to 25% of their levy funds to other employers. Bravenboer (2019, p68) describes how its introduction 'is arguably the most significant development in skills policy in decades'.

Business to Business Sales Professional (Degree)

A Business to Business (B2B) Sales Professional is responsible for delivering value to business customers, including corporate, public sector, SME, not-for-profit organisations as well as their own organisation. In addition, the individual may work in a national or international environment. It is a multi-facteted role which includes leading on long term, complex propositions, such as multiple pricing options or which may interface to procurement specialists. Using insights, critical thinking and commercial judgement they deliver commercial benefit to a number of customers or a complex, high value account. Commercially astute, they strategically and financially manage customer accounts, lead cross-functional teams through the sales process and deliver winning solutions and customer satisfaction. Influential, they are adept at understanding the needs of customers and developing strong stakeholder relationships whilst demonstrating strong, ethical practice.

Occupation / Profile: B2B Sales professionals operate in organisations of all sizes and across multiple industry sectors such as manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, fast moving consumer goods (FMCG), business services, professional services and technology. The occupation profile covers different areas of B2B Sales such as: Account Management, Sales Specialist, New Business Development and Channel Sales.

Requirements:

Knowledge and understanding of how to:	
Prospecting and Qualification	Analyse the business environment, industry, sector and competitors to identify potential new customers. Build, prioritise and manage the pipeline of prospects according to their potential, ensuring strategic and commercial fit with own organisation.
Sales Planning	Plan strategically and consistently to meet sales targets through prospecting, qualification and pipeline management. Define, refine and validate specific customer requirements in the terminology of the customer's business and industry.
Solution Development	Use customer insight/requirements underpinned by an excellent level of portfolio and product knowledge. Analyse and create innovative solutions and propositions that deliver tangible business benefits to customers.
Developing Proposals	Develop effective sales proposals, tender documents and presentations utilising a range of communications tools and techniques. Produce compelling formal proposals using the customers' terminology and framed in a way to meet the customers' needs.
Commercial Acumen	Contribute to commercial strategies with a deep understanding of financial principles and the external environment such as relevant markets, competitors and associated products and services. Assess opportunities and risks for consideration through line management of others to support successful outcomes.
Post Sales Delivery	Manage customer's expectations and the strategic value of achieving these. Influence teams to ensure company alignment with the customer. Analyse the company's performance together with the customer's view of every interaction and summise how this can be used to inform continuous improvement.
Applied Insights	Interpret and apply customer, competitor, consumer and market insight and intelligence from digital and traditional sources. Use these insights to effect actionable and ethical change of behaviors for mutual commercial benefit.
Skills	

Working with others	Influential, able to conduct stakeholder analysis and develop strong relationships at all levels, internally and externally, to build trust. Interacts professionally and ethically maintaining a positive and flexible attitude. Demonstrates emotional intelligence.
Consultative Selling	Works with customers to identify new business and market challenges, utilising insights and good questioning and listening techniques. Identifies strategic & innovative solutions integrating products and excellent service solutions, to meet customer needs.
Pitching	Leads a confident, clear and compelling sales pitch in front of a customer, which builds rapport, establishes credibility and delivers commercial benefit. Handles questions, objections and demonstrates the value of the proposal in a clear, quantifiable way.
Negotiation and Closing	Applies the principles of negotiation, develops strategies and tactics to a mutually agreeable outcome, ensuring both customer and supplier leave committed to outcome.
Psychology of Sales	Critically reflects on the different psychological needs of customers and other key stakeholders in the buying/selling process. Takes into account strategic and organisational context when adapting their sales approaches, by using the psychological models pertinent to developing positive and ethical buyer and seller relationships.
Leveraging Digital Business	Adopts different approaches to social selling & digital technologies which aid the sales process. Develops a digital selling strategy that leverages social selling to support lead generation, nurturing and customer engagement. Develops digital networks and drives insight led engagements. Measures results and return on investment.
Professional Behaviours and Values	
Ethics, Trust and Integrity	Promotes and protects good sales practices (in accordance with the organisation's Sales Code of Conduct). Maintains the highest level of integrity in all business relationships.
Management of Self	Ensures effective time management, prioritisation and strategic alignment of activities. Continually reflects and reviews own performance. Understands impact on others.
Interpersonal Skills	Relates well to all people and builds effective relationships diplomatically and tactfully. Demonstrates a positive mindset and attitude and has a range of skills and approaches and knows when to use different models of communication and influencing with whom.
Customer Focused	Acts as a customer advocate within their own organisation.

Duration: The typical duration for this apprenticeship is 3 years, but will depend on the previous experience of the apprentice.

Entry requirements: Individual employers will set the selection criteria for their apprentices. Most candidates will have A levels (or equivalent) or existing relevant Level 3 qualifications, and English, Maths and ICT at Level 2. Relevant or prior experience may also be considered as an alternative.
Level: This apprenticeship standard is at Level 6.
Qualification: Bachelor's degree (Hons) in Business to Business Sales. This will be an integrated degree based on the standard. Apprentices without Level 2 English and maths will need to achieve this level prior to taking the end-point assessment.
Professional Registration: Achievement of the standard meets the eligibility requirements for Sales Certification with the Association of Professional Sales (APS).

Review Date: After 3 years.

Appendices

Appendix 4. The Senior Leader Standard v1.0

Knowledge	What is required
Organisational Performance – delivering a long-term purpose	
Strategy	Knows how to shape organisational vision, culture and values. Understands organisational structures; business modelling; diversity; global perspectives; governance and accountability; the external environment, social, technological and policy implications. Understands new market strategies, changing customer demands and trend analysis.
Innovation & Change	Understands innovation; the impact of disruptive technologies (mechanisms that challenge traditional business methods and practices); drivers of change and new ways of working across infrastructure, processes, people and culture and sustainability. Knowledge of systems thinking, knowledge/data management, and programme management.
Enterprise & Risk	Knowledge of ethics and values based leadership; regulatory environments, legal, H&S and well-being and compliance requirements; corporate social responsibility; risk management, environmental impact and cyber security. Understands competitive strategies and entrepreneurialism, approaches to effective decision making, and the use of big data and insight to implement and manage change.
Finance	Understands financial strategies including scenarios, modelling and identifying trends, application of economic theory to decision-making, and how to evaluate financial and non- financial information. Understands financial governance and legal requirements, and procurement strategies.
Interpersonal Excellence – leading people and developing collaborative relationships	
Leading & Developing People	Knowledge of organisational/team dynamics and how to build engagement and develop high performance, agile and collaborative cultures. Understands approaches to strategic workforce planning including talent management, learning organisations, workforce design, succession planning, diversity and inclusion.
Developing Collaborative Relationships	Understands large scale and inter-organisational influencing and negotiation strategies. Knowledge of the external political environment and use of diplomacy with diverse groups of internal and external stakeholders. Understands working with board and company structures. Knowledge of brand and reputation management.

Skills	What is required
Organisational Performance – delivering a long-term purpose	

Strategy	Use of horizon scanning and conceptualisation to deliver high performance strategies focusing on growth/sustainable outcomes. Sets a clear agenda and gains support from key stakeholders. Able to undertake research, and critically analyse and integrate complex information.
Innovation and Change	Initiates and leads change in the organisation, creates environment for innovation and creativity, establishing the value of ideas and change initiatives and drives continuous improvement. Able to manage conflict. Manages partnerships, people and resources effectively, and measures outcomes. Acts where needed as a Sponsor, championing projects and transformation of services across organisational boundaries.

Enterprise and Risk	Challenge strategies and operations in terms of ethics, responsibility, sustainability, resource allocation and business continuity/risk management. Application of principles relating to Corporate Social Responsibility, Governance, Regulatory compliance. Drives a culture of resilience and supports development of new enterprise and opportunities.
Finance	Oversees financial strategies/management, results and setting organisational budgets, and challenges financial assumptions underpinning strategies. Is accountable for decisions based on relevant information e.g. Key Performance Indicators/scorecard. Uses financial data to allocate resources. Oversees procurement, supply chain management and contracts.
Interpersonal Excellence – leading people and developing collaborative relationships	
Engaging Employees	Uses personal presence and "storytelling" to articulate and translate vision into operational strategies, demonstrating clarity in thinking and using inspirational communication. Creates an inclusive culture, encouraging diversity and difference. Gives and receives feedback at all levels, building confidence and developing trust, and enables people to take risks.
Leading and Developing People	Enables an open and high performance working, and sets goals and accountabilities for teams and individuals. Leads and influences people, building constructive working relationships across teams, using matrix management where required. Ensures workforce skills are utilised, balancing people and technical skills and encouraging continual development.
Building Collaborative Relationships	Manages complex relationships across multiple and diverse stakeholders. Builds trust and rapport, with ability to positively challenge. Leads beyond area of control/authority, and able to influence, negotiate and use advocacy skills to build reputation and effective collaborations.

Behaviours	What is required (developed and exhibited in the workplace)
Personal and interpersonal effectiveness	

Leads by Example	Has high levels of self-awareness, emotional and social intelligence, empathy and compassion, and able to identify mental well-being in others. Works collaboratively enabling empowerment and delegation. Acts with humility and authenticity, is credible, confident and resilient.
Judgement and Challenge	Takes personal accountability aligned to clear values. Demonstrates flexibility and willingness to challenge when making decisions and solving problems. Instils confidence demonstrating honesty, integrity, openness, and trust.
Courage & Curiosity	Is confident and brave, willing to innovate, seeks new ideas and looks for contingencies. Manages complexity and ambiguity, comfortable in uncertainty, and is pragmatic.
Valuing Difference	Engaging with all – is ethical and demonstrates inclusivity, recognising diversity, championing, and enabling cultural inclusion. Empowers and motivates to inspire and support others.
Professional	Reflects on own performance, demonstrates professional standards in relation behaviour and ongoing development. Advocates the use of good practice within and outside the organisation.

Appendix 5. The Apprenticeship Levy Mapping the Senior Leader Standard to the role of a Senior Sales Leader

Knowledge	What is Required	Mapping our Profession
	Org Performance – delivering a long-term purpose	
	Senior Leader Standard	**A sales leader knows and understands:**
K1 – Strategy	Knows how to shape organisational vision, culture and values. Understands organisational structures; business modelling; diversity; global perspectives; governance and accountability; the external environment, social, technological and policy implications. Understands new market strategies, changing customer demands and trend analysis.	• How to shape the sales organisational vision/strategy, culture and values, by developing and executing strategic go to market sales plans that deliver long term profitable and sustainable growth. • New market strategies, changing customer demands and trend analysis. • How to critically analyse sales and customer management strategies • How to realign resources to achieve growth targets. • Understands organisational structures; global perspectives; the external environment, social, technological, diversity and policy implications.
K2 Innovation & Change	Understands innovation; the impact of disruptive technologies (mechanisms that challenge traditional business methods and practices); drivers of change and new ways of working across infrastructure, processes, people and culture and sustainability. Knowledge of systems thinking, knowledge/data management, and programme management	• Understands innovation; the impact of change and disruptive technologies (mechanisms that challenge traditional business practices eg impact of digital/marketing automation on the sales pipeline). • Understand the drivers of change for own organisation and customers and how new ways of working across infrastructure, processes, people, culture and sustainability affect them • Knowledge of sales enablement and knowledge/data management, and programme management

		• How to optimise the sales systems, processes and teams to drive change and innovation
K3 Enterprise & Risk	Knowledge of ethics and values-based leadership; regulatory environments, legal, H&S and well-being and compliance requirements; corporate social responsibility; risk management, environmental impact and cyber security. Understands competitive strategies and entrepreneurialism, approaches to effective decision making, and the use of big data and insight to implement and manage change.	• Understanding of the sales industry best practice and codes of conduct such as that promoted by their organisation, regulators and the APS • Knowledge of sales ethics and values-based leadership; regulatory environments, legal, H&S and well-being and compliance requirements; corporate social responsibility; risk management, environmental impact and cyber security. • Understands competitive sales strategies and entrepreneurialism, approaches to effective decision making, and the use of big data and insight to implement and manage change.
K4 Finance	Understands financial strategies including scenarios, modelling and identifying trends, application of economic theory to decision-making, and how to evaluate financial and non- financial information. Understands financial governance and legal requirements, and procurement strategies.	• Understand the financial implications of strategic sales planning (i.e. cost of sales) • The elements of a healthy sales funnel, pipeline, win rates and their impact on revenue forecasts/targets. • How to conduct reviews on accounts, sales funnels, and pipelines to identify gaps in actual vs forecasts and how to address those gaps. • Financial governance and legal requirements, and procurement strategies. • Financial strategies including scenarios, modelling and identifying trends, and how to evaluate financial and non-financial information. • application of economic theory to decision-making, and how to evaluate financial and non- financial information

	Interpersonal Excellence Leading People and Developing Collaborative Relationships	
	Senior Leader Standard	**A sales leader knows and understands:**
K5 Leading & Developing People	Knowledge of organisational/team dynamics and how to build engagement and develop high performance, agile and collaborative cultures. Understands approaches to strategic workforce planning including talent management, learning organisations, workforce design, succession planning, diversity and inclusion.	• Ethical and values based sales leadership. • Organisational and team dynamics and how to build engagement and develop high performance, agile and collaborative team cultures. • How to lead and coach to achieve sales performance targets and use sales coaching models with their team to unlock opportunities or potential. • Understand the value of a flexible approach and style to engage team/ customers/ procurement/other key stakeholders depending on the context. • Understands approaches to strategic workforce planning including talent management, learning organisations, workforce design, succession planning, diversity and inclusion.
K6 Developing Collaborative Relationships	Understands large scale and inter-organisational influencing and negotiation strategies. Knowledge of the external political environment and use of diplomacy with diverse groups of internal and external stakeholders. Understands working with board and company structures. Knowledge of brand and reputation management.	• Manage complex relationships across multiple and diverse customers and stakeholders • How to build trust, and co-create value with customers and understands the importance of trust on brand and reputation management. • The customer's internal and external political environment and use of diplomacy. • How to seek feedback from customers and how to action that feedback. • What drives buying decisions and how they are made (including the application of behavioural economics).

		• The dynamics of negotiations and how to ensure value is maximised.

Skills	What is Required	Mapping our Profession
	Org Performance – delivering a long term purpose	
	Senior Leader Standard	**A sales leader knows and understands:**
S1 Strategy	Use of horizon scanning and conceptualisation to deliver high performance strategies focusing on growth/sustainable outcomes. Sets a clear agenda and gains support from key stakeholders. Able to undertake research, and critically analyse and integrate complex information	• Use of horizon scanning and conceptualisation to deliver high performance strategies focusing on growth/sustainable outcomes • Use the organisation's business strategy, customer feedback on products and services and market analysis/trends to develop high performance sales strategies to deliver profitable and sustainable growth outcomes. • Set a clear agenda and gain support from key stakeholders. • Lead and undertake research, and critically analyse and integrate complex information into the sales process / go to market approach
S2 Innovation & Change	Initiates and leads change in the organisation, creates environment for innovation and creativity, establishing the value of ideas and change initiatives and drives continuous improvement. Able to manage conflict. Manages partnerships, people and resources effectively, and measures outcomes. Acts where needed as a Sponsor, championing projects	• Initiates and leads change in the sales organisation, creates environment for innovation and creativity, establishing the value of ideas and change initiatives and drives continuous improvement • Adapt quickly to changes in the market.

	and transformation of services across organisational boundaries.	• Manages customers, partnerships, people and resources effectively, and measures outcomes, to achieve innovation and change • Uses technology to drive innovation and change in the sales organisation • Act as a Sponsor, championing projects and transformation of services across organisational boundaries.
S3 Enterprise & Risk	Challenge strategies and operations in terms of ethics, responsibility, sustainability, resource allocation and business continuity/risk management. Application of principles relating to Corporate Social Responsibility, Governance, Regulatory compliance. Drives a culture of resilience and supports development of new enterprise and opportunities.	• Challenge strategies and operations in terms of ethics, responsibility, sustainability, resource allocation and business continuity/risk management • Drives a culture of resilience and supports development of new enterprise and opportunities and social value • Challenge strategies and operations in terms of ethics, responsibility, sustainability, resource allocation and business continuity/risk management (i.e. sustainable consumption and ensuring legacy)
S4 Finance	Oversees financial strategies/management, results and setting organisational budgets, and challenges financial assumptions underpinning strategies. Is accountable for decisions based on relevant information e.g. Key Performance Indicators/scorecard. Uses financial data to allocate resources. Oversees procurement, supply chain management and contracts.	• Oversee sales forecasts, results and setting of organisational sales budgets, and challenges financial assumptions underpinning strategies. • Develop and interpret Sales Key Performance Indicators/scorecard using them to optimise and allocate sales resources. • Oversee procurement, supply chain management and contracts. • Monitor sales performance/activity and their impact on sales results and growth targets.
	Interpersonal Excellence Leading People and Developing Collaborative Relationships	

S5 Engaging Employees	Uses personal presence and "storytelling" to articulate and translate vision into operational strategies, demonstrating clarity in thinking and using inspirational communication. Creates an inclusive culture, encouraging diversity and difference. Gives and receives feedback at all levels, building confidence and developing trust, and enables people to take risks.	• Articulates and translate vision into operational strategies, demonstrating clarity in thinking and using inspirational communication • Creates an inclusive culture, encouraging diversity and difference. • Give and receive feedback at all levels, building confidence, developing trust and enabling people to take risks. •
S6 Leading and Developing People	Enables an open and high performance working, and sets goals and accountabilities for teams and individuals. Leads and influences people, building constructive working relationships across teams, using matrix management where required. Ensures balancing people and technical skills and encouraging continual development	• Enable an open and high performance sales environment, set goals and accountabilities for teams and individuals. • Leads, coaches and influences people. • Ensures balancing people and technical skills and encouraging continual development
S7 Building Collaborative Relationships	Manages complex relationships across multiple and diverse stakeholders. Builds trust and rapport, with ability to positively challenge. Leads beyond area of control/authority, and able to influence, negotiate and use advocacy skills to build reputation and effective collaborations.	• Manage complex relationships across multiple and diverse stakeholders. • Build trust and rapport with the ability to positively challenge. • Encourage an environment of co-creating solutions to deliver value. • Adapt their style to engage team/ customers/ procurement/ other key stakeholders depending on the context. • Leads beyond area of control/authority, and able to influence, negotiate and use advocacy skills to build reputation and effective collaborations. • Manage conflict to successful resolution.

Behaviours	What is Required	Mapping our Profession
	Personal and Interpersonal Effectiveness	
	Senior Leader Standard	A sales leader has:
Leads by example	Has high levels of self-awareness, emotional and social intelligence, empathy and compassion, and able to identify mental well-being in others. Works collaboratively enabling empowerment and delegation. Acts with humility and authenticity, is credible, confident and resilient.	• Has high levels of self-awareness, emotional and social intelligence, empathy and compassion, and able to identify mental well-being in others. • Works collaboratively enabling empowerment and delegation. • Acts with humility and authenticity, is credible, confident and resilient. • Modelling a coaching mindset
Judgement & Challenge	Takes personal accountability aligned to clear values. Demonstrates flexibility and willingness to challenge when making decisions and solving problems. Instils confidence demonstrating honesty, integrity, openness, and trust.	• Takes personal accountability aligned to clear values. • Rationale and willing to challenge when making decisions and solving problems. • Instils confidence demonstrating honesty, integrity, openness, and trust.
Courage and Curiosity	Is confident and brave, willing to innovate, seeks new ideas and looks for contingencies. Manages complexity and ambiguity, comfortable in uncertainty, and is pragmatic.	• Confident and brave, willing to innovate, seek new ideas and look for contingencies. • Manages complexity and ambiguity, comfortable in uncertainty, and is pragmatic.

Valuing Difference	Engaging with all – is ethical and demonstrates inclusivity, recognising diversity, championing, and enabling cultural inclusion. Empowers and motivates to inspire and support others.	• Engaging with all. Ethical and demonstrates inclusivity, recognising diversity, championing, and enabling cultural inclusion. • Empowers and motivates to inspire and support others.
Professional	Reflects on own performance, demonstrates professional standards in relation behaviour and ongoing development. Advocates the use of good practice within and outside the organisation	• Reflects on own performance, demonstrates professional standards in relation behaviour and ongoing development. • Advocates the use of good practice within and outside the organisation. • Demonstrates and promotes good sales practice (in accordance with the organisation's Sales Code of Conduct) • Maintains the highest level of integrity in all business relationships

Appendix 6: IfATE's Quality Alliance. Summary of Accountability for Apprenticeships

Accountability for Apprenticeships	
	Responsible body
Overall accountability for quality, including the occupational standard and the end point assessment	The Department for Education (DfE), acting through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
Standards development, review and approval	Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (The Institute)
Quality of training provision	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)
Quality of qualifications in Register of Regulated Qualifications	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)
Standards of HE qualifications awarded by degree awarding bodies	Office for Students (OfS)[13]

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[13]   The OfS is responsible for regulating higher education providers and the quality of HE qualifications. In the case of apprenticeship providers delivering higher education as part of an occupational standard, the Office for Students will provide Ofsted with relevant information to inform inspection judgements.

Appendix 7: Three Hallmarks of the Princess Royal Award

Royal Mails, Business to Business Sales Professional Apprenticeship programme has triumphed following a rigorous assessment process led by the City & Guilds in being awarded the **Princess Royal Training Awards 2020.**

The award which has been personally confirmed by HRH The Princess Royal, is given to those who demonstrate a standard of excellence in the delivery of training against the industry Hallmarks. The Business-to-Business Sales Professional Apprenticeship is the first level 6 sales apprenticeship that integrates workplace learning whilst undertaking a BSc degree in Sales Professionalism.

Confirming the award, HRH The Princess Royal said:

"*You have further demonstrated that investing in your people through training and skills development has delivered real and tangible impact and benefits, and it is appropriate this will now be recognised though your award.*
The commitment of your organisation to the development of your employees, especially during these acutely difficult times and as we aspire to recovery post Covid-19, demonstrates that you will be prepared to play your part on the nation's economic recovery"

Princess Royal Award Hallmarks

The First Hallmark Training/learning and development is integral to your organisation.	
A strategic approach	Towards a sustainable learning culture
• The need for training/learning and development has been identified and supports the organisation's strategy for improvement. • The aims and objectives of the programme are provided and show how they link back to the organisational need.	▪ There is a clear commitment from all levels of management to training/learning and development. ▪ The organisation creates equal opportunities for unlocking individual potential, actively encourages training/learning and development and motivates employees to learn. ▪ Employees clearly understand the importance of training/learning and development and how their

	training contributes to the success of the organisation.

The Second Hallmark	
The programme is designed and delivered efficiently and effectively	
Planning and delivery ▪ Learning is planned appropriately and delivered by activities that are well-matched to the needs of individuals. ▪ Technology and/or resources are used effectively and efficiently. ▪ Evidence is provided about the inclusive nature of your training programme and how you measure the success of this.	**Measure of Success** ▪ The financial and/or other input resources (e.g. time) are considered to be cost-effective in relation to the outcomes and how this was measured. ▪ Evaluation has taken place and supports improvement in the quality of training.

The Third Hallmark	
The programme has an impact on the success of the organisation and its people.	
Impact on the organisation ▪ The programme has an identifiable impact on improved business performance that can be measured quantitatively and/or qualitatively. ▪ The programme has a sustainable impact on its people and their performance in the organisation.	**Impact on the individual** ▪ Implementation of the programme has improved individual performance. ▪ Participants are involved in taking ownership of their learning and development needs.

Royal Mail Commercial Sales Directors, Programmes team and Sales Apprentices are delighted to accept the award;

National Sales Director Peter Reed said:
"This is a great achievement and reflects the dedication and hard work of our Business to Business Sales Professional Apprentices in their learning and work place practice which is now resulting in successful Sales performance."

Parcel Sales Director Jon Nicholson added:
"This fantastic award comes just as Royal Mail Commercial Sales is really pushing its forward its own journey in professionalising its sales team and is underpinning the development of our future talent in helping them gain valuable sales knowledge and skills"

Programme Leader André Lahiff said:
"After spending time producing our detailed submission and leading the Royal Mail panel interview to Sir John Armitt CBE Chair of the Council of the [City and Guilds Institute](#), I am delighted that we have achieved this status for our programme.

Appendices

The award is testimony to the hard work and dedication of all those involved, from the original trailblazer apprenticeship group, particularly our leaning partners Consalia Sales Business School, Middlesex University, the Association of Professional Sales (APS) and Huthwaite International.

This is great recognition of the approach we are taking in the continued professionalisation journey of Sales, with the support of Royal Mails Sales leaders, Apprenticeship Programme teams and importantly the Sales Apprentices themselves who continually push the boundaries of learning and workplace practice to new heights – I am delighted HRH The Princess Royal has recognised the fantastic efforts made by our Sales Apprenticeship programme, in bestowing this award"

Appendix 8: Employer Types.

From my experience employers typically fall into four broad categories of employers:

1. **Those fully engaged with the demands of an apprenticeship programme**. These employers provide an effective learning environment in the workplace (Cortini, 2016) and purposefully position their apprenticeship provision within wider talent management and workforce development strategies and plans (Cleaver, 2022). They have worked closely with us, enabling a connected activity and delivering a higher quality learner experience. More recently some employer managers have offered to present to the apprentices and talk of their experiences. This is a partnership approach ensuring the business is set-up and that 'the investment can be maximized for all concerned'. (Cleaver, 2022).

2. **Employers who are motivated by spending as much of their levy as possible.**
   Some employers pay levy in excess of £25M per annum. This is a significant amount and a key motivating factor for employers to employ apprentices is to spend all their levy (Cleaver, 2022). For some apprenticeship teams this is their main target. This means the starting point for these employers is based on what standards are available rather than what skills do we need? Given that their context and motivation is monetary rather than one of skills development the priority of providing an expansive learning environment to develop the KSBs may be low.

3. **Employers who place too much emphasis on the off-the -job learning.**
   I have seen employers significantly minimise learning opportunities by providing a culture which develops over-reliance on the work-based coach or line manager (Mikkonen et al, 2017), and limiting the autonomy required to fulfil an apprenticeship or by holding-back on opportunities for practice,

4. **Employers providing more distant and central management.**
   Some of the larger organisations run apprenticeship teams who support the whole organisation in their provision of apprenticeships, ranging across multiple levels and multiple disciplines. Their role is more distant, metrics focused with less or minimal appreciation of the benefits is delivering.

Appendix 9.

The continued success of the sales degree apprenticeships is the shared responsibility of all key members.

Factors for success	Universities as academic institutions	HEIs / Training Providers	Employers	Apprentices	ISP	Government Agents ESFA, IfATE Ofsted, Ofqual	Indicators of success
Change perception of sales as a profession	x		x	x	x	x	The Government recognise the value of sales as a profession to the wealth of the economy. The Institute of Sales Professionals achieve Chartered Status. Schools advocating sales as a career of choice. **Positive indicators.** The ISP have a campaign to promote sales as a career in schools. Plans to use sales apprentice alumni as 'younger ambassadors for sales' in schools are in place.
Shift the academic perception of sales	x		x				More universities recognise sales as a discipline. University Business Schools encourage departments to-deliver higher level degrees in sales. **Positive indicators.** As of 2022 UCAS are now advertising apprenticeships on their portal. This will include B2B Sales Professional degree apprenticeships.

Factors for success	Universities as academic institutions	HEIs / Training Providers	Employers	Apprentices	ISP	Government Agents ESFA, IfATE Ofsted, Ofqual	Indicators of success
Shift perception of vocational learning	x	x	x	x		x	Key members work to achieve concrescence linking vocational learning to the wealth and health of the country, making the UK a world leader in meeting future skills needs, creatively and productively. Agile, government training policies to focus on improving productivity and personal growth by focusing on employer needs. The Government espouse the parity between vocational and academic learning in terms of funding and status.
Level of Bureaucracy						x	There is only one key member identified, which, under the rules of complexity, should make this an easier fix.
Employer Culture impacting learning environment		x	x				The most critical for the apprentice / apprenticeship to succeed. Support is needed from the employers and from Government. The only agent holding the employer to account is the Training Provider, without any sanctions.