Gamekeeper turned poacher: discursive shifts in apprenticeship reform in England, 2011-2021

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Gamekeeper turned Poacher: Discursive Shifts in Apprenticeship Reform in England, 2011 – 2021

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Declaration

I declare here that, except where explicit referencing is made, the work presented is my own. The views expressed within this research project are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the supervisory team, Middlesex University, critical readers, or examiners of this work.

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Abstract

This analysis takes both a historical view of higher and degree apprenticeships in higher education and a discursive perspective on a period of educational reform that experienced much turbulence and adjustment in the decade that is examined. The discursive perspective has become very significant in the field of apprenticeship, not least with the rise in populism and public narrative and the influence of that narrative to inform public policy making. Where once professional entry routes, outside of a very few fields, were historically 'apprenticeships', the decline of apprenticeship training in the mid to late twentieth century saw their later revival and recasting into a (vocational) educational narrative rather than that of a 'community of practice' one. As a result, there was a government failure to recognise that development through many of the best traditional apprenticeships did not simply stop at what is now referred to as Level 3, whether in 'real' crafts or in what are now regarded as formalised professions. The revival of an integrated entry route to professional careers has been long overdue given 'professions' have been largely missing from the discourse on education and skills policy despite having a meaningful significance on what is and is not viable in the qualifications system.

The methodology used positions the authors public works as 'texts' for empirical analysis with the analysis identifying and organising oppositions, alliances, and juxtapositions to show how each public work, as text, is located and operating within apprenticeship policy and higher education. In exploring the concept of the higher education discursive field, the author relies on both Bourdieu's description of a social field of forces and struggles and Foucault's description of discursive formation and takes an adapted approach that explains how the texts have operated by deploying 'technologies of truth' to uncover a 'catalogue of possibilities' from an analysis of 'knowledge, power and subject' (k-p-s) relations. Good use of what Dowling calls 'conceptual spaces' and what Bravenboer terms 'discursive spaces' is made in the finding of oppositions and alliances identified within each text.

CONTENTS: Context Statement

ABBREVIATIONS: Context Statement

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
AELP	Association of Employment and Learning Providers
Annales School	A group of historians with a style of historiography developed in France
AoC	Association of Colleges
APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
DBIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
FE	Further Education
FEC	Further Education College
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
HAF	Higher Apprenticeship Fund
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESWBL	Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
IfA/IfATE	Institute for Apprenticeships/Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education
ITP	Independent Training Provider
LED	Local Economic Development
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
NAS	National Apprenticeship Service
NDPB	Non-Departmental Public Body
NHS	National Health Service
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OfS	Office for Students
PARN	Professional Associations Research Network
PSRB	Professional, Statutory and Regulator Body
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
QCF	Qualification and Credit Framework
RQF	Regulated Qualifications Framework
SASE	Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England
Semta	Employer-led skills champion for advanced manufacturing and engineering sector
SFA	Skills Funding Agency
Skills for Life	The national strategy in England for adult literacy, numeracy, and language (ESOL)
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admission Service
UK	United Kingdom
UKCES	UK Commission for Employment and Skills
UVAC	University Vocational Awards Council
WEF	World Economic Forum

NAVIGATION: Context Statement

Chapter 1	Charting the context of recent apprenticeship policy in England is the purpose of this introductory chapter and looks at vocational education in the context of turbulent reforms and government policy regarding first higher and then degree apprenticeships. It introduces as the main thread to my context statement my role in influencing apprenticeship reform in England, vis-à-vis higher education engagement, since 2011. My selected **public works are described and introduced as occurrences of socio-cultural action** within the field of higher education. This chapter usefully situates my professional practice setting out what has influenced me and why.
Chapter 2	This chapter **presents the foundation of my approach** to recontextualizing my public works including an exploration of the role of historiography in critical discourse analysis and the basis for my practitioner-researcher subjectivity. Semi-autobiographical in nature, it charts the course of my early scholarly and professional career and reveals my first passions and influences informed by first Bloch and then Foucault, and to an extent Fairclough, in recognition of **the importance of history** and 'critical language study'.
Chapter 3	This chapter **sets out my conceptual framework and grounds for the method of approach** and for specializing and localizing the sharp end of my field of interest – *higher and degree apprenticeship policy in HE*. This includes pulling on the work of Foucault and the Foucauldian 'catalogue of possibilities' that describe technologies/techniques of truth as a way of navigating the conceptual landscape of higher and degree apprenticeship discourse. In addition, it looks at Bourdieu's formation of the discursive field and the exchange of different forms of cultural capital. It also introduces a separate method of analysis by exploring Dowling's methods of constructive description (as a less sterile way, comparatively, of analysis) by using cross-products to illustrate how discourse operates in closed and open and similar and dissimilar discursive formations to recontextualize the description of higher and degree apprenticeships. Together, the methods offer different but complimentary levels of analysis. Both approaches help me organise what I know and understand about higher and degree apprenticeship policy.
Chapter 4	The methodology in this chapter **provides evidence of how public work 1 is producing or resisting the idea of apprenticeships in higher education**. The 'opening up' of what Dowling calls 'conceptual spaces' and Bravenboer terms 'discursive spaces' is built from the finding of oppositions and alliances identified within the text. In this chapter the conceptual space described as modes of authority action relate oppositions of open or closed authorship and open or closed fields of practice and adapts Dowling's **'Modes of Authority Action'** which helpfully describe techniques that can be used to determine who is permitted to 'speak' and whether claims to authority are individualised or institutionalised. This chapter takes 'Foucault's Triangle' and the 'triangulated', 'fractal' approach detailed in chapter 3 to recontextualise **this public work as an instance of the 'technologies of government'**.
Chapter 5	In this chapter I further explore my work in apprenticeship policy. The ideation of authorial and audience voices within public work 2 is connected to

	the construction of apprenticeships in higher education as a 'textual object'. It employs the language of parliamentary practice to describe higher apprenticeships and is another example of a text that speaks of 'technologies of government'. It is government that is identified as the foremost authorial voice in the public work; the body which is authorised to 'speak' about what HE is in the context of apprenticeship policy, and what it must be.
Chapter 6	This chapter is an analysis of how the text relates to 'technologies of discourse' and this public work sets out what is and what is not written about higher and degree apprenticeships in HE (and skills) policy and the UK technical and vocational education system and expresses who is authorised to speak, who is not, and how those authorised, should speak. Applying Dowling's methods again, the four 'Modes of Interactive Social Action' are applied to the analysis with specific reference to Sustainability 2030 which include the following modes: exchange of narrative, pastiche, hegemony, and equilibration.
Chapter 7	Locating opposites and alliances is described in the analysis of my public work 4 and recontextualized in relation to my own devised cross-product I name 'Modes of Discursive Subjectivity' to provide a new level of analysis. Modes include shaping, constructing, normative and reflective. The analysis explores the distribution and formation of these modes within the text. The analysis also shows how the text relates to 'technologies of self'. Inherent to this is how power/knowledge and governmental controls operate in relation to my positioning (subjectivity). In this way 'technologies of the self' provide the critical lens and the dialogical tool to 'think through' the challenges of higher and degree apprenticeship policy and assist to 'make sense' of the many voices arising from this 'contested' and highly politicised discursive space.
Chapter 8	The idiom of 'Gamekeeper turned Poacher' is explored considering the achievements and outcomes of my public works and sets out my claim for how I meet the standards required of doctoral research. The development of a new mode of analysis that is not reliant on others and can result in new definitions and descriptions of the ways in which official texts function in a 'subjectified' mode is made out as contributing original knowledge in the field of higher and degree apprenticeships. Other achievements are highlighted such as the way in which my public works construct the field of apprenticeship, in HE, in a variety of modes which operate dynamically and turbulently but which can help inform practice and policy.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

An initial standpoint

English apprenticeships are an educational and productivity success story. With the stretch from traditional craft and trade occupations in advanced and intermediate apprenticeships to technical, managerial, and professional job roles, via higher and degree apprenticeships, the development of new work-based progression routes are doing what they were intended to do: increasing productivity and supporting social mobility by opening up routes to the professions for under-represented and disadvantaged cohorts where apprenticeships are seen as an aspirational choice for young people and adults from all backgrounds (Crawford-Lee and Wall, 2018, p. 238). Yet there are those who make a moral claim about what the purpose of apprenticeships in England today *should* be. Namely, that apprenticeships as defined by the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE) (DBIS, 2009c) must remain synonymous with further education[1] delivered by colleges[2] and independent training providers (ITPs)[3]. Such highly principled, and at times amplified, views are equally wedded to the idea that apprenticeship must remain a social inclusion route solely for the young and the unqualified (Crawford-Lee, 2019). Apprenticeships have seemingly become a totem for 'purists' of the England skills system who support and perpetuate a variety of myths and opinions on the grounds that 'proper' apprenticeships should be designed to specifically meet the needs of disadvantaged young people or adults furthest away from accessing jobs and labour market opportunities. Indeed, higher and degree apprenticeships have been described as 'too expensive', diverting funding from young people who need lower-level skills programmes, 're-packaged graduate schemes' abused by employers who re-badge existing staff as apprentices (see Dawe, 2019, p.22; Gravatt, 2019, p. 10; Augar, 2019, p. 152), represent a 'middle-class land grab' (House of Lords, 2018, p. 75) and, in one

[1] Further education (FE) includes any education or study in addition to that received at secondary school that is 'usually' distinct from the higher education (HE) offered in universities.

[2] Colleges in England operate within a national framework, which is set by legislation and by Westminster Government and its agencies. Every college is under the overall direction of a governing body and in more than 95% of cases, the governing body is a further education corporation established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The Act, in effect, removed colleges from local authority control and set up the majority as free-standing public bodies, with a small number of exceptions that became 'specialist designated institutions' regulated by their own trust deeds and operating as independently constituted charities.

[3] Independent Training Providers (ITPs) provide 'vocational' education and training to young people and adults. They are sometimes known as 'independent learning providers' or 'private training providers'. They are distinct from colleges in that they are not run or controlled directly by government. However, much of their education and training delivery is funded and regulated by government agencies. Most ITPs are companies (for profit and not-for-profit), and some are in the third sector.

report, that they are not really in the spirit of apprenticeships at all, but 'fake apprenticeships' (Richmond, 2020, p. 2).

Such striking opposition are intended to illustrate how differing descriptions of apprenticeships in England relate to their purpose and use and demonstrate how (at times, dramatic) descriptions of higher and degree apprenticeships are operating within the wider higher education (HE) and skills discursive terrain. Those who vocally oppose higher and degree apprenticeships and make claims as to their 'proper' quality or economic value provide the narrative and background to my recent personal and professional journey. They also provide the context and rationale for my choice of public works.

The description of higher and degree apprenticeships is contrasted with a description of what apprenticeships have historically been or even what 'they should be'. However, my work is concerned with how the idea of higher and degree apprenticeships has been constructed within official higher education and national skills policy discourse. I am not concerned with attempting to discover what kind of description of apprenticeships, specifically higher and degree apprenticeships, is true or false, or determine what the fundamental principles of apprenticeships are or should be. Rather, descriptions of the emergence, role, and purpose of higher and degree apprenticeships in England are 'implicated' in the 'discursive struggles' (Bravenboer, 2009, p. 10), or *discursive shifts,* leading to a determination of which descriptions are operating and have dominance in the field.

My specialised field of interest: discursive shifts and discursive dynamics in apprenticeships in higher education post 2011

The main thread to my context statement is my role in influencing apprenticeship reform in England, vis-à-vis higher education engagement, since 2011. Then, it was a time when apprenticeships, specifically higher and degree apprenticeships, did not bring much to bear on English universities (Longmore, 2020). Move forward ten years or more and more than 100 UK higher education institutions (HEIs) providers are approved as deliverers of

apprenticeships in England. But *how* has the discursive position of higher and degree apprenticeships shifted within the wider higher education discursive terrain? In my view, it is the relative shift that tells you something about how discursive technologies have operated. The 'object' of my analysis, presented in my context statement, are my public works constituted as 'texts' for analysis. Higher and degree apprenticeships are constituted as a specialist area of practice that is described in my public works and in official texts produced in the discursive field of higher education. Indeed, the analysis looks to identify and organise oppositions, alliances, and juxtapositions as a way of presenting an enhanced descriptor of how the texts are located and operating within the localised field.

These texts together with my context statement as another 'text' also presents the development of my professional practitioner subjectivity (in dynamic relation to my public works texts) as empirical objects. The concept of the higher education discursive field pulls on not only Bourdieu's description of a social field of forces and struggles (Bourdieu, 1988, 1998) but Foucault's account of discursive formation as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). In addition to following Barthes (1981) who asserts that historical narrative does not differ significantly from the literary discourses of fiction, myth and the historical epic, annals or drama and states that the becoming of texts from objects is only by 'the act of engagement by a reader' (Bravenboer, 2009, p. 44), I also include reference to Simola *et al*'s (1998) Foucauldian 'catalogue of possibilities'. This explains how my public works have operated by deploying 'technologies of truth', by considering the discursive 'technologies' that have been, are being, used to establish the discursive position of my selected texts as well as their inter-relationships.

My selected public works are seen as 'instances of socio-cultural action' located within the field of higher education and an examination of them as instances of discourse form the evidence for empirical analysis here. They are each 'related to, implicated in and emergent upon the historically contingent social structures and cultural practices' (Bravenboer, 2009, p. 9) of the apprenticeship and higher education discursive fields. As such, in containing particular kinds of descriptions of apprenticeships they reveal an opposition to or an alignment with the ideal of higher and degree apprenticeships in higher education. My

work is ultimately concerned with how the official discourse in higher education has operated to create the idea of higher and degree apprenticeships in the context of a 'contested, if not a conflicted, policy terrain' (Butcher, Cornfield, and Rose-Adams, 2012, in Bravenboer, 2012, p. 124).

Situating my professional practice

In truth, until now, I have not considered the construct of my professional practice or shown an interest in pursuing personal research. I attended at a Russell Group university in the north of England after completing 'A' levels, to study history as an undergraduate – and in this regard I was a product of the sequential and full-time, campus based higher education model followed by work and on the job training which has typified and dominated graduate and professional entry for many decades (Crawford-Lee, 2020a, p. 2). Perversely, as a student my subject discipline required me to use narratives to describe, examine, question, and analyse past events and inquire as to patterns of cause and effect, often based on a series of competing narratives. I am now reminded of my studies of Descartes, the first philosopher to describe the relation between discourse and reason, and I wrote convincingly of his fundamental aim - to attain philosophical truth by the use of reason and system of true propositions, in which nothing would be presupposed which was not self-evident and indisputable - alongside that of Marx whose view of history is based on the idea of the dialectic: a struggle of opposites, a conflict of contradictions. In purporting that I have not taken the time to be 'reflective' of my own professional practice, I am perhaps reliant on Sartre's account of freedom; another one of my areas of undergraduate study. Seemingly, I have depended heavily on the fundamental premise of existentialism - that everyone is of necessity free to construct their own selves and their own lives - and in our freedom of choice 'we are what we will' and our lives are nothing but what we make of them and, I have indeed, until now thought no more and no less than that.

So, my career can be divided into two main areas of professional practice. From graduation until 2002 I was concerned with the practice of local economic development (LED) and urban regeneration working for a publicly funded Development Agency as a labour market

researcher and skills economist. This was a time where jobs in the economy grew exponentially in business and professional services and declined in traditional engineering and manufacturing sectors resulting in a two-speed economy that led to Leeds (which was Britain's fastest-growing city outside London at the time) staking a claim to millions of pounds of European funding by submitting what amounted to the first 'two-speed economy' bid (1999) under new European Community rules, which allowed Objective 2 status and funding to be allocated for pockets of urban deprivation, (in this case Leeds Inner Area) as well as for declining industrial areas, such as former coalfields. My labour market analyses underpinned this successful application and I typically designed and implemented innovative LED strategies, examined small area economies, trends in employment and unemployment, and carried out labour market studies. I undertook metrics-based research into local economic performance, created new measures of success, promoted economic growth, and attracted inward investment in the city of Leeds and the sub-region, West Yorkshire.

This early experience (and burgeoning hypothesising from that practice in areas such as ‘sustainable development’, green growth, market failure, orthodox classical, neo-classical, and Keynesian/neo-liberal definitions of poverty, social exclusion, laissez-faire policies, and economic policymaking), I can now acknowledge, influenced further my early (but not earliest) thinking and areas of research, as a ‘practitioner-researcher’. Perhaps more crucially it is how it lends itself to my understanding of what it means to ‘learn by doing’, a subject-identity further explored in later chapters, that gives rise to my more personalised theories of practice and explains the origins of my interest in the exercise of power and control over the production of discourse (in my case in the form of written texts but not excluding language). These are key themes I explore in the analysis and critical re-evaluation of my Public Works, using the approach set out in chapters 2 and 3. Where instead of studying the world through various formal approaches to epistemology as a practitioner, I seek to understand my experiences of living in the world, understanding the historical context in which I operate and the implications of questioning my practice.

My experience as an economic development practitioner in the 1990's reflected how government's employment, skills and economic development policy areas were rarely integrated to maximise the benefits for the economy and society including to foster effective business engagement. Indeed, I observed how economic development activities and labour market skills policies (often reduced to and referred to simply as 'training') were routinely managed locally in parallel but independent of each other. The role of skills was not considered in policies about stimulating economic growth across the city of Leeds despite skills development being important to both components of economic growth: employment and productivity. It was never the case that in defining local economic conditions the issue crystalised around understanding how raising skill levels can increase economic growth and poor skills can constrain it or how the city should have explicit priorities for skills development linked to emerging business development opportunities and make skills development the cornerstone of their economic development strategy. The narrative was entirely dominated by the number of jobs created or counted and a comparative analysis of the Leeds economy; not how better to 'connect' skills and jobs so the city could achieve its growth potential and foster higher living standards but any volume of job, regardless of level or skill. My produced work, including, *Made in Leeds* (1993), *Leeds's Economic Development Statement (1993, 1994, 1995, 1997)*, *Economic Development Plan* (1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999) and *10-year Economic Development Strategy* (1993) were all linked to various practices of intervention, regulation, and control of economic behaviours, to tackle the key constraints to growth dictated by certain historiographic principles of mainstream economics. These experiences presented several difficulties and opportunities. Namely, as a practitioner and researcher how were I to situate and convey meaning to the population of Leeds as an economic, social, and political issue (Foucault, 1978, p. 31) and introduce a set of organised economic ideas and policies that led to the rethinking of the role of local government towards markets and the care of its resident population? Indeed, what would the outcome be for the many individuals we claimed to represent?

The 1990s can be considered as a historical period in the UK of slow population growth and an ageing workforce generating skills shortages that hindered business and productivity growth, while many low or unskilled workers remained stuck at the bottom or outside of the labour market, representing an untapped benefit for the economy and a failure of social mobility. As a public policy researcher responsible for economic analysis, I had control over the 'discourse' and could introduce a set of economic ideas and policies, that when organised, caused a rethinking with regards to the role of government towards markets and 'population care' (Guizzo and Vigo de Lima, 2015, p. 204). As such I would say now that I played a strategic role in constructing 'new technologies of power', arising out of a British classical political economy that created a system of 'truth' that changed economic norms and practices but whose discourse also led to actions and activity that was responsible for creating an apparatus of control that distributed new forms of power relations.

It has very recently been contested whether Leeds City Council, where I started my professional career, was a hotbed of *Foucauldianism* in the late twentieth century 'that put societal power structures and labels ahead of individuals and their endeavours' (Riley, 2020). For me, when Foucault writes about the relationship between *power* and *knowledge*, and, indeed, the interchange between 'knowledge, government and power' (Foucault, 1971) he is describing how, *historically*, power has reinforced itself by modelling and controlling knowledge, and that all knowledge is historically contingent, i.e., that the 'truths' we apply to our world are fashioned by who we are and the communities we reside in; that in modern times power is hidden, and to search for what is really happening takes knowledge. In my time as a researcher my concept of 'power' had its basis in traditional liberal terms; that power is something to be suspicious of, something oppressive, something that should be limited rather than power exists always, and everywhere, that it is all around us at every moment; that power is not negative in an ethical sense, nor, necessarily, a bad thing. It would take me more than two decades more to recognise that none of us can escape from power. We are better-off uncovering how it exists and where it operates.

What followed my years at Leeds City Council was a substantial period working for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) (the largest 'quango' in the country at the time) and its successor organisations varyingly as a research manager, skills for life manager, interim economic development director, skills policy manager and national apprenticeship lead where I managed or led geographically important projects in further education (never knowingly straying into matters of higher education), adult skills policy at the local, regional and national levels, including apprenticeships, both at a time of 'full' employment and then during and after the global recession in the late noughties. Firstly, as a civil servant (until 2014). Then as an independent consultant providing consultancy services majorly in the field of higher-level skills advising on strategy and policy including apprenticeship design and delivery working with universities, higher education providers, further education colleges (FECs), ITPs, awarding organisations, employers and publicly funded agencies to successfully navigate, understand and implement a government process of qualification and skills policy reform.

Taken together, I found myself positioned in my professional experiences, as a subject under complex forms of hidden control, oppressed and constrained in how I practised, and looking for ways and opportunities to get around that control. Revelation of these once invisible constraints and confirmation of their hold and authority over how I behaved and what I wrote and analysed also revealed that I was a subject positioned to exercise control over the discourse. That I could influence how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the behaviour of others and that just as discourse 'rules in' ways of positioning what one says and does, so also it 'rules out' other ways of talking or constructing knowledge about a topic (Hall, 2001, p. 72). Attempts to comprehend and advance a means to creatively operate within the bounds of such constraints emerged here for me.

> Part of what is implied in the notion of social practice is that people are enabled through being constrained; they are able to act on condition that they act within the constraints of types of practice - or of discourse. However, this makes social practice sound more rigid than it is; …being socially constrained does not preclude being creative (Fairclough, 2014, pp. 60-61).

Helping me understand how I worked to operate *creatively* as a subject within the constraints experienced as a public employee/civil servant, researcher-practitioner, I needed to take the first step in breaking through the taken-as-given with the I/me question: "What is ***it*** that I am really doing?" (Devereaux, 1967, p. 7) which is concerned more with the 'it' than the 'doing'. During my time working in economic development, when my attempts to discern whether my work was 'making a difference' in opposing the trickle-down theories and supply-side economics which dominated policy for over forty years I was often advised that I was experiencing the drip-drip effect (Hall, 1988, 1992) of my profession and that I was contributing towards gradual change in the long term in terms of social change. Foucault provides a description:

> …people know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 187).

The question I asked myself encompasses the *how* of Foucault's power; how power circulates in society and in the organisations in which I work and am a part of. For Foucault, power is not top to bottom, it does not radiate in a single direction or function in a form of a chain. It circulates and is never monopolised by one centre. All of us are the oppressor and the oppressed and power is embodied in our own subjectivity and makes us accomplices in its creation. His 'Power/Knowledge' (Foucault, 1980) describes how we inhabit regimes of truth validated by the privileged text and professional discourses (Gordon, 1980, p. 96-97) that as practitioners we may embed into practice as a 'taken as given' way of working, and his 'Orders of Discourse' (Foucault, 1971) reflects the world where I had worked, where the same discursive events 'refer to the same object, share the same style and…support a strategy…a common institutional administrative or political drift and pattern' (Cousins and Hussain, 1984, pp. 84-85 cited in Hall, 2001, p. 73):

> I am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality. (Foucault, 1971, p. 8).

By 2015, I was operating as director of policy and operations of a not-for-profit membership organisation that, since 1999, exists to advocate on behalf of higher-level vocational learning with an agenda to support universities and higher education providers, working with stakeholders, to successfully engage in and deliver this agenda and more recently became its first female chief executive. Both roles have allowed me to develop an interest in constructing apprenticeship as HE practice which in turn has influenced a certain type of output; one that has created a range of possibilities for those involved in skills policy and apprenticeship design and delivery.

Professionally, moving from economic development practice to working on the borderline between education and the labour market; from studying issues around employment and unemployment to working with providers of skills training; and, from advising Westminster Government on the skills people require to meet the changing needs of the economy to operating within the bounds of higher education allowed me to start to reflect on my professional 'praxis'. My regular concerns over how knowledge is put to work through discursive practices to have power over and regulate the conduct of others led me to focus on the relationship between knowledge and power and how power operated within, what Foucault called, an *institutional apparatus* (incorporating discourses, institutions, regulatory decisions, laws etc.) and its *technologies* (or 'techniques'), and searched for any opportunity to wrestle free control of the discourse for strategic purposes:

> The apparatus is thus always inscribed in a play of power, but it is also always linked to certain co-ordinates of knowledge…This is what the apparatus consists in: strategies of relations of forces supporting and supported by types of knowledge' (Foucault, 1989, p196).

My better understanding of the role of skills in determining economic success and labour market outcomes enabled me to move more easily from ideas and argument to action. It filled a knowledge gap and I felt more able to establish the 'economic' case for skills and training, introduce clever incentives, financial or otherwise, to make reskilling and upskilling

more desirable and beneficial; to improve the 'offer', enhance the quality of programmes, and improve the 'market' for education and skills training including getting more people trained in and through the workplace. This led to a researcher-practitioner-led concept paper which outlined support for adopting a 'people-centred approach to economic development' (Crawford-Lee and Hunter, 2009) and presented both a model for an integrated workforce development system, including careers education, and a framework for improving links between human capital (including skills) and local economic development. My/our interest was in how far we could influence and promote an understanding within those local areas with a strong, adequately skilled working age population that are best placed to deploy knowledge transfer into leading-edge and forward-looking techniques to produce goods and services. It mooted the idea that investment in people's skills and knowledge is a critical feature of achieving sustainable economic growth in a connected, innovation-driven, global economy. Schwab (2016, p. 114) would later call on leaders and citizens to 'shape a future that works for all by putting people first'. Now, on reflection, I would say that I was consolidating and adopting a theoretical position from this practice informed by a variety of theorists but more clearly influenced by Foucault, Fairclough, and Simola *et al*, giving rise to a recognition that it is *how* the contingent factors of the economy, society and history ,which relate to the intrinsic value and intentions of my work, have operated and not whether discourses, in themselves, are true or false but instead, how 'truths' are produced and sanctioned. And in my case for example, in apprenticeship discourse at the higher level, what utterances are accepted as 'true' or not? In what ways are 'true' and 'false' declarations recognised and identified? Who is given the power of status, or authorised to decide what is and what is not accepted as 'true'?

> Discourses, in the Foucauldian sense of the word, are first and foremost techniques, practices, and rules, which can be divided into three sets: those concerning the speaking subject, those connected with power relations, and those internal to discourse itself (Simola, Heikkinen and Silvonen, 1998, p. 65).

My professional practice experience is now some 30 years old. Having insight to and recognition of the interaction between 'knowledge/power' and the concept of 'government' (referring not only to political structures or to state management - those legitimately constituted forms of political or economic subjection - but modes of action designating the way in which individual or group conduct might be directed) in the practice of control over the official discourse and how I operate as an individual subject, become increasingly important as I reflect more deeply on my experiences, in creating this analysis, and help frame my professional perspectives.

Taking Simola *et al*'s approach to discourse analysis that argues 'a catalogue of possibilities' can be generated rather than any precise summing up of a theory of 'truth', it positions centrally the question of 'how are the technologies of truth operating within an identified discourse?' (Bravenboer, 2009, p. 32) using the 'axis' of *knowledge*, *subjectivity,* and *power*. These themes are reflected in the methodological approach and analysis I have taken in recontextualising my public works. Like Foucault, I will conduct an 'ontology of the present', a philosophical analysis of how I am constituted and made recognisable as a subject of what I say, do and think. This 'critical ontology of ourselves' Foucault (1997, p. 319) says:

> … must be considered not… as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge… it must be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.

To say I am increasingly influenced by the notion that to operate in an increasingly complex and disruptive policy environment, a leader (whatever the context) must approach problems, issues, and challenges through flexible and adaptive practices means to explain how this influence has emerged. Like Foucault, the challenge of my thinking lies in 'the process of developing a position and not solely defending it' (Cook, 1993, p. 1). This leads me to the realisation that 'apprenticeships in higher education' were not 'lying in wait' (Foucault, 1972) outside of discourse for capture and apprehension by those destined to discover them, to decode them, and know their truth. Indeed, apprenticeship, as an object,

is constituted by discourses, the shifts, drifts, ruptures, and disruption of which has led to current understanding.

Schwab, in his book The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) (2016) draws from Davos and the work of the World Economic Forum (WEF) and argues that we need to create new narratives to guide us. As an argument this has meaning for my public works:

> Good leaders understand and master contextual intelligence.[4] A sense of context is defined as the ability and willingness to anticipate emerging trends and connect the dots… To develop contextual intelligence, decision makers must first understand the value of diverse networks. They can only confront significant levels of disruption if they are highly connected and well networked across traditional boundaries. Decision makers must possess a capacity and a readiness to engage with all those who have a stake in the issue at hand. In this way, we should aspire to be more connected and inclusive (Schwab, 2016, p. 107).

Comparing what Schwab is saying here with the 'technologies of truth' frame, and with relevance to my public works, it shows that it is those in government, the economy and academia who are positioned as the authorities of how 4IR is defined, what its limits are, and who make it visible while recognising that no group presides over and controls the whole apparatus of power. It is in relation to this that Foucault's (1972) point about discursive formations, not necessarily emerging from single points of origin and with historical continuity in deterministic ways, become relevant. Discursive formations come from various sites (in this case the WEF, government and academia), and on different levels (local and global) and get to be 'enunciated' by certain people who bring the discursive formation into existence and visibility.

[4] The term 'contextual intelligence' as defined by Anthony Mayo and Nitin Nohria, 2005

My specialised field of interest: discursive shifts in apprenticeship reform in England post 2011

The discursive technologies that have operated to dynamically constitute 'public policy and legislation' regarding higher and degree apprenticeships is my specialist field of interest. It is in the examination and impact of my works and practice (constituted by my public works and context statement) on the localised and specialised aspect of the higher and degree apprenticeship discursive field. 'Apprenticeship' in this Context Statement refers to employment and training defined by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and The Apprenticeships (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2017. The Enterprise Act 2016 gave apprenticeships the same legal treatment as degrees and the term 'apprenticeship' is protected by UK law.

Apprenticeship reform[5] in England since 2010, (DBIS, 2010, 2012; Holt, 2012; Richard, 2012; SASE, 2013; Finance Act, 2016), refers to changes that led to alignment of apprenticeships with higher education qualifications following revision to the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards in England (SASE) of 2013 which not only gave the changes a regulatory underpinning but presented potential for bringing apprenticeships in line with higher education 'as the basis for constructive collaboration between employers, professional bodies and universities' (Bravenboer, 2019, p. 10). It also refers to changes accelerated by the publication of The Richard Review (2012), motivated by concerns over the consistently poor quality of apprenticeship provision, which recommended that employers should decide the 'standards' apprentices need to reach to attain requisite occupational competence and how employers should have improved control over the purchasing of apprenticeship training by becoming the primary 'purchaser'.

The selected public works are situated either side of the introduction of the apprenticeship levy (Finance Act, 2016) in the UK and considered by me to be an important milestone in the discursive shifts in apprenticeships as detailed by my contextual statement. This is because

[5] 'Reform' refers to a government driven process of improvement or amendment of what is perceived as wrong or unsatisfactory and, in this case, denotes change to systems, definitions and funding.

before 2017, the public funding of apprenticeships was based on payments to training providers paid at different rates, with uplifts, depending on learner age and address and where smaller employers historically playing an important role in helping (primarily) young people into employment claiming 50-100% of the cost of training from the funding body, the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). It is additionally so because the funding environment also differentiated between qualifications approved under section 99 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 (known as section 96 and 97 or non-prescribed qualifications) and 'prescribed higher education', the latter *not* fundable thereby representing a significant hindrance to engagement with higher apprenticeship policy by universities (Anderson *et al.,* 2012; Bravenboer, 2016). It also represents a time when apprenticeship skills policy focused on lower level 'intermediate' (equivalent to GCSE) and 'advanced' programmes (equivalent to 2 A levels) and little or no association with higher level apprenticeships despite the introduction of criteria and recognition of apprenticeships in England at undergraduate and post graduate levels. These barriers, when combined with HE policy that placed 'students at the heart of the system' and the subsequent shift towards 'academic excellence', signalled that the 'skills agenda' was not a central feature of university life. With the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, mandating employers with a payroll of over £3m per annum to pay 0.5% of their payroll to the levy, it shifted the dial on the perception of apprenticeships in England and allows for a comparison between the conception, position, and purpose of apprenticeship, before and after.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS) (2015) on introducing the apprenticeship levy expressed it as wanting to overcome the lack of investment by employers in the training and development of new and existing employees with its resultant impact on UK productivity. UK government Ministers 'put employers in the driving seat' (DBIS, 2015a) of apprenticeship development and stated that employers were best placed to determine where they invested in apprenticeships. 'The rationale' brings into being several relationships that map onto the specialised discursive field of apprenticeships and higher education and brings forward a field of possibilities in which people think and act. Social mobility is now positioned as an apprenticeship policy objective too and is visible in public policy on higher education. Policy discourse has shifted from simple expansion (more

places) to diversity and 'widening participation' (different cohorts), to engineering social mobility (different outcomes) and has become central for construction of the 'need to reform'. By the time the levy was introduced, the apprenticeship system in England had already experienced successive waves of significant change. In 2008, apprenticeships were given additional funding and relaunched under a newly created body, the National Apprenticeships Service (NAS). Reflecting a renewed emphasis on higher technical skills in the Dearing (NCIHE, 1997) and Leitch (Leitch, 2006) reports, they were expanded to include new higher apprenticeships at levels 4 and 5 (sub/foundation degree level). These programmes followed the same format to existing apprenticeship frameworks that were typically used to train individuals in the crafts and trades, in that they required achievement of separate 'knowledge' and 'competence' qualifications. Initial engagement from higher education was limited largely due to the mandated dual qualification requirement, a lack of recognition (or understanding at that time) that 'competence' could be integrated into university qualifications, that higher apprenticeships needn't deliver more than 'small' qualifications (a minimum qualification size of 37 credits was specified), and finally, resulting from low levels of funding that also precluded the availability of apprenticeship (government) funding for prescribed higher education qualifications.

Relating my public works to the discursive field of apprenticeship reform, and higher and degree apprenticeships in higher education

The introduction of apprenticeships at the higher level and their potential for reforming and transforming our understanding of the role higher education in skills has its origins in my first public works selected (NAS, 2011, 2012; DBIS 2013). Commissioned by government, they contributed to the specialised discourse on apprenticeship reform and the policy relationship with HE. Until these works were produced the prevailing discourse positioned a clear distinction between university awards (including degrees) and higher apprenticeships and the regulatory framework limited the potential for alignment of higher apprenticeships with higher education qualifications. My first public works are examples of how I operated, and had control over the discourse (Blommaert, 2006) as a 'bureaucrat' and how I became constituted as a subject within and through discursive constraints. Whilst universities were referenced in my first public work as the originators of much innovation in models of

delivery, higher apprenticeships were positioned as ‘an alternative’ to university and *not* as a route to access highly skilled, higher paid careers.

> 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).

With the launch of the £25 million coalition government investment in the expansion of higher apprenticeship frameworks (from 2011) resulting in the production of my first public work, together with a revised Specification of Apprenticeship Standards in England (SASE) (DBIS, 2013), my second public work, opportunity to challenge the perception and conception of ‘what an apprenticeship is’ emerged. SASE allowed for a single qualification that assessed both ‘knowledge’ and ‘competence’. It further extended the criteria of apprenticeship to levels 6 and 7 (the level of the professions and professional skills) and required higher apprenticeships to include qualifications closer in size to the norms in higher education (increased from 37 credits to a minimum of 90 credits for levels 4 and 5, and introducing 120 credits for 6 and 7, equivalent to one year of study in HE). All of which were the precursor to the concept of degree apprenticeships. Professional recognition, or membership towards it where relevant, was to be included in all higher-level apprenticeships and it was these ‘second-generation’ higher apprenticeships (Lester and Bravenboer, 2020, p. 17), even without equity in terms of funding, that constituted a turning point for higher education providers, along with professional bodies, and employers looking to support routes to the professions or upskill existing staff (PARN, 2015). The conditions for apprenticeships to become an accepted norm and valued form of higher education practice was created. Indeed, Bravenboer (2019) argues that with the advent of higher and degree apprenticeships our understanding of the relationship between higher education and the workplace has been disrupted, with apprenticeship likely to become the most prominent and fastest form of work-based learning in HE.

My third and fourth public works (Crawford-Lee and Wall, 2013; Bravenboer and Crawford-Lee (eds.), 2020) focus on the research, policies and practice in higher level work-integrated learning including higher and degree apprenticeship and challenge existing perceptions of what they are and for. They reflect the discursive, subjective, and governmental

'technologies' (I like to refer as techniques or strategies) that are utilised to surrender to and/or counter the notion of apprenticeships in HE. These wider discursive instances that relate to my practice can be best described when using the metaphor of an unfolding narrative in which I am constituted in one position and then another, in one narrative, then another within the story of higher and degree apprenticeships. Additionally, that I stand in many positions and negotiate new ones by 'refusing' the ones articulated, by posing alternatives. My role, or subject position, across these two periods situate me within the discourse in one category (as gamekeeper), and then another (as poacher). I was a civil servant but changed my role to one which is opposite to the one I had before, yet both had access to certain rights and duties to perform kinds of meaningful action, 'a cluster of short-term disputable rights, obligations, and duties' (Harré, 2012, p. 193). This notional idea of 'resistance' (a concept captured by Foucault) implies the concept of an 'agent' or 'agency', shifting the focus away from me functioning under the control of social structures and practices. According to Davies and Harré, positioning is:

> …the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines. There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself (Davies and Harré, 1990, p. 48).

In chapter 3 I review the range of academic and real-world literature which emerged in response to these changes and examine how the early expansion of the concept of what is a recognised (publicly funded) apprenticeship affected the course of apprenticeship reforms and higher education engagement. and speak to my emergent professional-practitioner-researcher subjectivity in that I adopt a dual perspective – looking out towards an established field of research, exemplars and theories on work-based learning, apprenticeships, and the role of higher education, as well as inwards towards my experiential creative processes and practice.

My public works

I have selected the following four public works as examples of written texts in the evolution of higher and degree apprenticeship discourse and the role of higher education in skills and all formulate my approach to strategic leadership in higher apprenticeship policy:

Public work 1 – *Higher Apprenticeship Fund Prospectus* (DBIS, 2011)

Public work 2 – *Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England* (DBIS, 2013) including *Meeting Employer Skills Needs* (NAS, 2012)

Public work 3 – *Sustainability 2030: a policy perspective from the University Vocational Awards Council* (*Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning, 2018*)

Public work 4 – *Transforming the Perception of Apprenticeships in England: Professional Careers in the Public Sector* (*Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning, 2020*)

Each text constructs subjectivities, namely authors and audiences, writers and readers that are closely connected in 'power/knowledge relations' (Bravenboer, 2009, p. 34) and equally within the texts oppositions and alliances can be chronicled as working as techniques to decide 'who' can speak, 'when' and 'how'. Each public work were produced at a key point in the constitution of my 'policy-practitioner' and 'practitioner-researcher' (or should that be 'insider-researcher'?) subject identities – unknowingly at the time propelling me towards becoming a researcher investigating my professional field (Lester, 2016, p. 119) – and each is an example of where I co-led (with leading responsibilities) the public work. Each public work I intended to be transformational of thought, policy, and practice, with the power to determine policy direction changes, personally motivated by affiliation and adventure and considered in their social and historical contexts. The purpose of my context statement is to illustrates how higher and degree apprenticeships and the engagement of higher education in apprenticeship reforms were influenced and changed by the public works themselves.

My critical (re)examination of the public works analyses my journey as a professional practitioner but does not examine the text alone (for either plenitude or scarcity of

meaning). Rather, the analysis examines the 'discursive phenomena beyond the text' and speaks to how I operated and became constituted as a subject within and through constrained or enabled 'discursive practices' (Hook, 2001, p. 17, p. 2).

Differing views between policy makers, influencers, academics, and political commentators on how and what apprenticeship reform might transform led to different perceptions of who would lead and control that transformation. Apprenticeships were pitched as the UK government's flagship skills programme (DBIS, 2015b, p.35). There are now those ranked among the foremost universities in the world engaged in its delivery (Crawford-Lee and Wall, 2018, p. 239; Crawford-Lee, 2020). It is this aspiration and reality that provides the challenging and dynamic environment within which my work is situated, and my role and professional identity explored.

By reflecting on my influence and experiences and in reviewing my selected public works through a critical discourse lens I intend to re-appraise who can and cannot act and all the associated implications for my ongoing professional practice. Higher and degree apprenticeships in England are challenging the idea of the 'academic-vocational divide' by giving equal status to academic and practical skills and represent perhaps the single greatest effort to close the gap in British vocational education and training since the conversion of most polytechnics into universities in 1992 (Dadze-Arthur *et al.*, 2020, p. 25). Indeed, having Apprenticeships at higher education qualification levels has helped with the raised perception of apprenticeships as an aspirational programme available at all educational and skill levels: from level 2 (equivalent to GCSEs) to level 7 (master's degree level) and can be said to represent the best of both worlds; a degree qualification and a job with training that is neither solely an academic nor solely a vocational programme, but both (see Anderson and Crawford-Lee, 2016; Anderson, 2020). Furthermore, the degree apprenticeship model carries high expectations, and it is these high hopes that I feel in part ownership of and not an insignificant degree of responsibility for. The Office for Students (OfS), the main regulator of HE in England, comments:

> Degree apprenticeships carry the weight of expectations of multiple stakeholders. They are expected, for instance, to meet economic needs and those of employers; to increase social mobility and diversity in higher education; to bridge the gap between different levels of qualifications; to create a new gateway to the professions; and to imbue a vocational route to education with the prestige accorded to more conventional routes (OfS, 2019, online).

My public works have been selected as they reflect my professional contribution and positionality vis-à-vis higher education engagement and understanding of the HE role in apprenticeships in England. Together they articulate 'how' my public works are operating within the higher and degree apprenticeship discursive field notwithstanding the relevance of the dynamic discursive tension regarding the relationship between the higher education and apprenticeship discursive fields, which continues to be played out (Augar, 2019; LWI, 2019, 2022). My public works are focused on the genesis of HE engagement in apprenticeship and the policy rationale and the drivers for embedding apprenticeships through government ideas and institutional response. Most importantly they assist in showing that these discursive formations or narratives are central to how I have (re)constructed my identity through my professional practice.

Public Work 1

My public work 1 is a government prospectus that positions a large scale, multi-million-pound opportunity fund as an invitation to employers, key partners, stakeholders and providers of education and skills training to be 'at the forefront of the development and growth of Higher Apprenticeships' (NAS, 2011, p.5) in England. My role in its creation was as the National Apprenticeships Service's policy lead for higher apprenticeships with overall responsibility for agreeing with Ministers and senior civil service officials, and advising on, the strategic direction of the fund and for managing the allocation and implementation. Although universities are referenced for models of delivery, in the text higher apprenticeships are positioned as an *alternative* to university with the idea of an apprenticeship as a route to professional status going against the grain of universities being the 'gateway to the professions' (NAS, 2011, p.11). Though constrained in the production of the public work I was given a high degree of freedom to operate creatively in its

implementation with practitioners and leaders in higher level vocational, technical education and skills and across institutional and organisational boundaries. I positioned myself strategically, but inherently in a relational role in an irregular area of expertise and operated flexibly to provide opportunities for employers. Universities, and higher education providers were to embrace the possibility of and the chance to influence greater realignment of higher apprenticeships with HE provision. I was a knowing subject, positioned as an agent of government and aware of its power to mandate and coerce, but I could, nevertheless, operate creatively, positioned among other subjectivities involved in this public work. I firmly situate my work as primarily aiming to and achieving change in policy and practice, taking on multiple corresponding skills. To remove constraints to university engagement with the apprenticeship agenda meant, not withstanding, that these barriers combined with a central government policy-control that situated 'skills' outside of core university business.

Public Work 2

The legislation and papers that constitute public work 2 sets out the criteria included in the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE) that introduced major changes to the definition of apprenticeships by extending higher apprenticeships up to level 7 (master's level), bringing the minimum number of qualification credits more in line with HE norms and specified requirements for alignment with professional body recognition where available. Passed by secondary legislation in 2013 it is described as making 'significant progress' in aligning higher apprenticeships with HE qualifications (Bravenboer, 2019, p. 10) and aimed to reduce the metaphorical distance between apprenticeship skills policy in England and higher education. The guidance and consultation paper are positioned as introducing and controlling a new discourse, with a focus on the role of higher education qualifications.

Public Work 3

No longer a civil servant, public work 3 is positioned along a trajectory of government policy control, thought leadership and research which variously controlled and contested

apprenticeship reforms within a wider review of vocational, technical and professional education and skills. It adds to the literature on aligning HE with the world of work (Helyer, 2011) but contributes to the 'how' and 'why' question of higher education engagement. As a peer reviewed manuscript, it is the first UK policy perspective outwardly connecting sustainability and sustainable development to higher education, skills and work-based learning including higher and degree apprenticeships. Not only wishing to maintain my legitimacy in policy making and influencing I was also looking to secure professional scholarly credentials, concerned as I was with positioning myself as receptive, active, and engaged in the 'real world'. My subjectivity and understanding of 'self' were being consolidated here and I was an 'evolving amalgam' of organisational leader and practitioner-researcher.

Public Work 4

Public work 4 is constituted by my co-guest editorship of a peer reviewed journal, that I am also associate editor of. It positions higher and degree apprenticeship engagement in a variety of ways: as models of new delivery, in curriculum design, as learning from previous HE experiences in work-based learning, and as constituting new literature to the field of study. In its coming about I actively pursued a certain type of academic output so incorporated an element of advocacy and intentionality. I envisaged my relationship with the audience as a peer and for the public work to have status within the field of HE by creating a set of possibilities for consideration by those practitioners and those interested in higher and degree apprenticeship policy, design and development.

As Barthes and Foucault posit, my authority as the author of my public works should also be considered as a 'doubtful consideration' (Haase, 2010, p. 137). This may sound alarming and paradoxical, but this extends the idea of 'intertextuality' first introduced by Julia Kirsteva that no text is unique or original but a text that results from other texts. Referencing texts as coming from an inevitable network of references and quotations from other texts has the effect of reducing, to a minimum, the influence of the authorship. What this represents is the crux of how my work relates to my professional learning journey. Foucault wrote:

> In dealing with the 'author' as a function of discourse, we must consider the characteristics of a discourse that support this use and determine its differences from other discourses (Foucault, 1977, p. 124).

He also wrote about the function of the author in this way, 'The third point concerning the *author-function* is that it is not formed spontaneously through the simple attribution of a discourse to an individual. It results from a complex operation whose purpose is to construct the rational entity we call an author' (Foucault, 1977, p 127) meaning that the term 'author-function' is a concept introduced to replace the idea of the author as a person, and instead refers to the 'discourse' that surrounds an author or body of work. Thereby, as the author, creator, of my public works I fulfil the role of author as a function of discourse and therefore a carefully constructed social position.

Indeed, with a focus on how people are positioned, my focus is on the power and politics behind the discourse. As Foucault himself wrote, 'discourses have a strong impact at the individual level, with individuals *as subjects* discursively constructed and constituted'. The strong link between history and the concepts that people have on subjects at points in time speaks to my interest in discourse as a mode of power. My inquiry into the shifts in discourse of apprenticeships in higher education now present me with a web of discourses to examine (Hampton, 1993, p. 263).

CHAPTER 2: Foundation of my approach

Personal origins

I originate from Grimsby. The result of a blind date in the Black Swan pub (locally known as the 'mucky duck') on the corner of Flottergate and Victoria Street between my cockney father, on leave between trips as a marine engineer on the fishing trawlers, and my Cleethorpes born mother. Often embarrassed by the town of my birth I always felt Grimsby, an English coastal seaport town on the South Bank of the Humber Estuary (first in Lincolnshire, then in Humberside and finally in a newly invented North East Lincolnshire and near but never in Yorkshire) was damned by its name alone. If the legend is to be believed, its name derives from the name *Grim*, a Danish fisherman, and to tell people that you hail from Grimsby means the conversation typically goes one of two ways. The first involves the inevitable fish jokes; the second, a riff on the word 'grim'. And that was well before Sacha Baron Cohen's comedy film and social satire (titled *Grimsby*, 2016), which portrayed the place as a derelict town where everybody lives on welfare. To be known as a *Grimbarian* or by its colloquial synonym, 'codhead' is a reminder of the ugliness, origin, and association of the name.

Growing up I had a strong sense of the inertia that characterised the place even after we moved to Cleethorpes, Grimsby's slightly less down-at-heel next-door neighbour on this bottom lip of the River Humber. There is now scant legacy of its fishing heritage, when it was the world's largest fishing port where trawlers would bring in 500 tonnes of fish each day. After a long and slow decline, the fishing industry finally died in the mid 1980s and Grimsby became a byword (not for the quality of the fish it once docked) but for the loss of the British fishing industry and its trawler fleet, precisely at the time when I was formulating and consolidating my idea of 'self'; the person I wanted to become and be perceived as, neither intellectually nor geographically constrained. In time at Alexandra Dock, cranes were to become busy emptying a different type of haul. Not fish, but new cars. Today, take a look out to the North Sea from the Humber Estuary and you can see what some consider Grimsby's future, the innumerable white blades of offshore windfarms and renewable

energy. A fleet of engineers now sails from what was once the world's largest fishing port, servicing turbines all along this East coast. Grimsby is and remains geographically isolated, located at the end of the M180 motorway in an area of North East Lincolnshire surrounded by field and marshland, which actualised my own teenage feelings of isolation many times over: cut-off from the rest of the country and from the wider world.

I witnessed the building of the Humber Bridge - a single-span road suspension bridge - which when opened in 1981 was the longest of its type in the world, a status not surpassed for seventeen years. It was a beacon of modernity and while it only takes you over the Humber to Hull joined two areas with the promise of improving communication and growing commercial, industrial and tourist development. But it is a 24-mile drive west of Grimsby, meaning the town doesn't benefit from passing traffic. Grimsby typifies the place that 'replicated' its economy rather than reinventing itself, replacing reliable low-skill jobs that paid well (in this case fishing) with precarious low-skilled jobs that paid little (casual factory work in food manufacturing and processing). The Centre for Cities (2018), which looks as the largest 63 urban economies in the UK and defines towns and cities as a settlement of a certain size and economy stopped tracking Grimsby in 2011. It is a truism that if you come to Grimsby, you come for a reason. Needless to say, my reasons for leaving at the first opportunity were not obscure but Grimsby gave me an acute sense that history is important, and the discourse about how a place is defined and remembered matters too.

I was the 'first in family' to go to university and a prestigious Russell Group university too. I opted not for a subject that led to higher earnings nor that had a clear progression pathway from university to the jobs market. I studied history. Before studying at the University of Leeds in the late 1980's my history syllabus brought forward a classically liberal view of modern elite individual, political, economic, and social history. I was taught and saw history as being the record of 'progress' (Comninel, 2000, p. 2) with the West out-front, more or less, as a cohesive economic and social unit. This liberal take on history postulated that, from the high Medieval Period, Western European countries developed, grew and urbanised more or less uninterrupted and in parallel, into the modern, free-market societies we know today. Virtually all my historical texts were founded on this laissez-faireism, and the liberal

idea of competition, free-enterprise – capitalism – was core to most Marxist approaches to history too (Hill, 1965; Hobsbawm, 1962, 1975, 1987; Thompson, 1963). In my first year as an undergraduate I came across one notable and influential exception.

In medieval studies at Leeds, I was tasked with translating (from French to English) Marc Bloch's 1936 lecture notes on the long-lasting and chronicled impact of the comparative differences between the French *seigneurie* and the English manor (Bloch, 1967). This work quickly taught me to abandon the conventional use of narrative as a primary technique of historical writing which traditionally imposes a 'plot line' and a 'timeline' containing subjective assessment of the meaning of the past for the present and instead to describe events and structures as they are objectively used rather than as they are subjectively perceived. I was encouraged to abandon the concept of periodisation as a 'contrivance of subjective interpretation' (Hutton, 1981, p. 240) and survey the past as a continuum – a trajectory of long-term series of events, in which the structure of the series rather than the events themselves, provides the more interesting pattern for analysis. When looking at the work of Bloch and Lucien Febvre who co-founded the Annales School[6], and Michel Foucault who proved more adventurous in drawing the implications from these insights, all of them employed a structuralist technique to probe the history of Western culture. I did not want to be a conventional historian, dramatizing individual events as landmarks of significant change. Rather, like the Annales historians I wanted to redirect attention to those vast, anonymous often unseen structures which shape events. And in the case of my study of *Seigneurie Française et Manoir Anglais*, by going beyond the technical study a purist medievalist would typically write to 'dismantle a social structure', in this case Feudalism, I was unknowingly taking a critical discourse approach to analysing its text. And yet, like a lightbulb moment, suppose we want to talk in a quite free and general way about all manner of different things? What makes it possible for those objects to come into being and into our sphere? It is appropriate to bring them together by discussing 'what is', or ontology. And if we care about the coming into being of possibilities and prospects, is that not

[6] This new approach to the study of history emerged around the scholarly journal, *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*. It placed an emphasis on 'mentalities' (a code for culture) and broke with tradition by insisting on taking the lives of ordinary people into consideration and not just the political elites.

historical? As such I am a believer that we constitute ourselves at a place and time, using materials that have a distinctive and historically formed organisation. As Hacking observes:

> Historical ontology is about the ways in which the possibilities for choice, and for being, arise in history. It is not to be practiced in terms of grand abstractions, but in terms of the explicit formations in which we can constitute ourselves (Hacking, 2002, p. 23).

Bloch, along with Febvre, by emancipating 'economic and social history' (once considered no more than a fringe subject) formed a new direction in historical thinking, by considering the 'third level' (Ernest Labrousse 1933, 1944), of culture, forms of consciousness and ideology. For me, to inquire merely about 'ideas' and the 'spirit of the time' was no longer sufficient, and the factors previously considered 'intellectual' now needed to be considered as 'social facts' (in the Durkheimian sense[7]) and be made the object of specific inquiry (Schöttler, 1989, p. 38). I can now give credit to the school of Annales, and Bloch in particular, for honing my method of historical scrutiny towards narrating a more human history and away from the dominance of political events and institutions. From his belief that the narrow methodology which had dominated historical discourse, with a too narrow perception of historical reality, be replaced with the use of comparative literature and an alliance with linguistics, I came to understand that meaningful history must be comparative, constructed around long-term social and economic forces (Lyon, 1987, p. 201). As Bloch himself concluded:

> The clearest and most cogent lesson to be drawn from comparative history is that…the outmoded topographical compartments within which we seek to confine social realities…are not enough to hold the material we try to cram into them. The student must find his own geographical framework, fixed not from the outside but from within (Bloch, cited in Lyon, 1987, p. 200).

[7] To include social roles, norms, laws, values, beliefs, rituals, and customs; this change in perspective was signalled by the new concepts of *mentalité* and *outillage mental*

From Foucault, I take literal encouragement that discourses are not documents to be read but 'monuments' to be mapped upon the historical landscape whose logic structurally relates to the broader episteme (structure of knowledge) of the historical period in which it arises (Foucault and Sheriden, 1991; 2003). This visualisation allows me to dispense with the meaningless task of studying discourse for the meaning it signifies. Rather the ideas, statements, customs, and institutions are of interest for the way in which they fit into larger systems of discourse. He also provides me (amongst other things) a theoretical framework for a non-subjective discourse-oriented reading of texts.

Professional Origins

From undergraduate to graduate I entered the world of work as a researcher of labour markets, small area economies and in the field of economic development at the Leeds Development Agency, a department of Leeds City Council. My area of expertise was undertaking policy research and analysis and I was expected to act to ensure that economic development activity brought maximum benefit for Leeds and its people. I was part of a team that was newly created to undertake policy-design and augment policy-delivery capacity. At that time, the policy-thinking was outcome-oriented in nature, and I was responsible for developing qualitative and quantitative outcome indicators and measures that could be tracked and monitored as evidence of the direction and progress of policy (Barca, McCann and Rodriguez-Pose, 2012, p. 146).

I started my practitioner role at a time of challenge to the prevailing policy orthodoxy of market led economic development following the decimation of manufacturing and engineering industries which had left a legacy of large-scale intergenerational unemployment and the need for re-skilling following the Thatcher years. The prevailing economic philosophy at that time was influenced in part by Friedrich Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* which warned of 'the danger of tyranny that inevitably results from government control of economic decision-making through central planning' (1944). It meant that those industries remaining were being developed by the market, leading to the privatisation of state-owned companies which was summed up by Andrew Gamble (1994) as reflective of

'the free economy and the strong state'. While there was a focus on 'rolling back the frontiers of the state' from the economy which impacted on the services and activities of local government, the role of Westminster Government did not shrink and central government took control over developing the economy of the UK, with consequences for metropolitan or city level forms of governance (Radice, 2014, p. 279).

My main ontological influence at the time was Michael Porter (1990) who argued that localised clusters of economic activity were critical for driving the national UK economy. This idea aligned with four other highly influential pieces of work by Scott (1988), Krugman (1991), Glaeser *et al.,* (1992) and Jaffe *et al.,* (1993), that became the starting point for a spatial theory that became known as 'new economic geography'. Combined they informed my model of practice as they raised interest in the role of place and geography in matters of competitive growth and came together as a theory of change which underpinned economic policy design. By starting a master's degree in public policy at Leeds Metropolitan University in the late 1990s, led by Professor Mike Campbell, I was introduced to other expert in the fields of skills, local labour markets and small area economies, focusing on research, policy analysis and high-level strategic thinking. I remember my excitement and satisfaction at studying and exploring alongside other, nearby, practitioners who helped shaped my professional passions and deepen my interest in policy formulation and implementation. In understanding policymaking constraints such as 'bounded rationality' and in processes such as network theories, where some rules are visible or widely understood, such as the 'standing orders' of parliament, and where others are less so – such as the 'rules of the game' in politics, or organisational 'cultures'.

Until then mainstream economic growth research largely overlooked place-based reasonings, preferring to focus on macroeconomics and initiatives conducive to growth with London, and its hinterlands in the South East, the main economic driver whose growth impacts were expected to disperse benefits to the rest of the UK. While this failed to happen, on almost any level in the economy and in society, these types of portrayals, including the narrative of 'trickle-down economics', had (still have) a powerful hold on the national discourse. As Foucault observed:

> I am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a set certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality (Foucault, 1971, p. 8).

It was also a time of policy change with the emergence of area-based regeneration schemes such as City Challenge and the Single Regeneration Budget coupled with an emphasis upon using partnership working to improve urban areas. In this role I analysed and presented a good many aspects of economic development including the use of data to show the impact of globalisation, to evidence the effects of liberalisation and decentralisation on the socio-economic fabric of the city. I acknowledged the role of critical infrastructure, knowledge, social capital, values and beliefs in steering urban economies on high-growth trajectories, and recorded market failures and negative externalities. My role was described as public policy maker and as strategy led. However, the lack of a fully articulated template as to how economic development should take place in UK regions (typically characterised as a 'patchwork quilt' of funding streams) presented a significant challenge to localities like Leeds to define and articulate their workable options. It was in this early professional practice that I found myself positioned as a subject under myriad forms of unseen control. Subjectified in how I could operate as an economic development practitioner and as a labour market researcher, I searched for ways to work around the control. A determination to understand and develop the means to work creatively and navigate intuitively within these constraints began to evolve.

Spheres of policy and policy making

A 24-year career as a public servant was never my intended career following university. I oscillated in my relationship with the public sector from the outset resulting in an uneasy alliance between the social good and value of my work and, at times, my irreverence to bureaucracy typified by first a local authority, followed by a non-departmental public body (NDPB), an Executive Agency of the UK government and finally, Whitehall, the British government itself. Yet in the early noughties I moved spheres of policymaking and policy:

from local economic development to national skills development, first working regionally in South and West Yorkshire, and then England wide. Here I could continue to stay connected to my economic development and researcher practitioner networks given the considerable overlap in roles, initially, and theoretical frameworks, knowledge, and skills within and between these two spheres. Having responsibility for local skills policymaking and overseeing the implementation of national skills policy in South Yorkshire (designated a 'less developed region' after the collapse of the steel and mining industries) meant I was more acutely aware of how power over and in discourse affected the success and cooperation of local partnerships in delivering national literacy and numeracy (Skills for Life) targets. I started to look for opportunities to mitigate the control of discourse from those in authority in favour of those that lacked power or felt powerless. I loved this work and was able to connect to many interests around marginalisation, organisational change, and community behaviour. There were many tensions and conflicts to resolve but I fell on Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers' (1998, 1999) fourth maxim:

> People who do the work do the change – so you need to involve the do-ers…Keep connecting the system to more of itself – to release the collective intelligence you have to be connected (Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers, 1999, online).

Origins of Practice

This maxim has become my mainstay in practice, achieved through close attunement in relationships with those operating or influencing on the ground. In these early professional experiences, in economic development and skills policy work, while I easily found myself positioned as a subject, subjected to complex forms of unseeable control, constraining to varying degrees how I behaved as a researcher and a practitioner, I was always seeking ways to get round that control. This groundwork has continued to inform the method, pace, and approach to my work at more senior strategic levels. Thinking about how power over and use of language not only constrained but also made possible discursive territory claims, behaviour and practice in skills policy began to inform my practitioner behaviour in the context of history and place. In this way power relations were not split between those powerful and those powerless. If we agree with Foucault that because 'truth isn't outside

power, or lacking power…it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint' (Foucault, 1978, p. 22) then power can be considered as not just an instance of negativity with a single purpose of repressing discourse but also as a 'productive network' (Foucault, 1990) where the constitution of subjectivities are creative, and where all forms of knowledge and communication are embedded. A consciousness of my understanding and my developing a way to work creatively within such invisible constraints by establishing a creative space in which to operate, has its origins here. The following also helps me understand how I tried to operate creatively as a subject, constrained in how I operated:

> Part of what is implied in the notion of social practice is that people are enabled through being constrained; they are able to act on condition that they act within the constraints of types of practice - or of discourse. However, this makes social practice sound more rigid that it is; …being socially constrained does not preclude being creative (Fairclough, 2016, pp. 60-61).

Finding more easily my practitioner voice, backed by my researcher practice, I became more practised and conversant at offering ideas to secure support for action from those in authority from within the communities in which I operated: formal and informal adult further education. The effect of this was that I mobilised the collective authority of communities of practice to support discursive territory claims for my ideas which while reflecting Foucault's emphasis that power is a continuous outcome of social relationships does not deny that 'the essence of such relationships is that they exist as different levels, under different forms' (Lane, 2002, p. 461).

As I found that I could move between these researcher-practitioner subject identities to find the creative space to guide and advise within governmental authority, the distinguishing aspect for me, between power relations and forms of domination, was the ability of those communities of practice to 'invert the relation' so that our respective roles could be 'effectively and substantially reversed', (Lane, 2004, p. 461). Thinking about the discursive authority relations between my authority as researcher-practitioner, the authority of communities of practice and governmental authority, they are, it is clear, concerned with the 'patterns of *relations* between *positions'*, said to 'comprise *alliances* and *oppositions'*

(Dowling, 2009, p. 46). In the area of text analysis and at the level of discourse, applying and adapting Dowling's methodology of textual analysis and relational spaces giving rise to his modes of 'authority action' provides the means with which to frame these, and other, social relationships and cultural practices.

Opportunity to demonstrate the authority of my practitioner voice and the construction of my 'authorial' voice followed, with the publication of a highly influential international report (World Bank, 2009) which examined new ideas on modern place-based economic growth and queried the potential policy responses. I captured some of this new found recognition of how I operated or could operate as a subject in a peer reviewed article I co-authored on 'A People-centred Approach to Economic Development', (Crawford-Lee and Hunter, 2009), that revisited a mostly forgotten polarity first advanced by Winnick (1966) who claimed that *if* the underlying logic of development policy could be either 'people-based' or 'place-based' and *if* the policy aim is to enhance the livelihoods of people, then, absolutely, recommended policy should be more 'people-based' and thereby 'space-blind'. Finding my authorial voice as a practitioner (alongside my practitioner voice, backed by my researcher practice) in setting out ideas and to use them to solicit support for policy change from those who exercised authority, meant that my awareness grew and became consolidated. I could be both practitioner, positioned and able to act, but I could also act as researcher and move seamlessly between these subject identities in search of the creative space to operate, within governmental authority, '(subject) to the rules of social games and (using) the ability to capitalise on them', (Heikkinen *et al.,* 1999, p. 145).

Spheres of influence

At this time in my career, I have a sense that my earlier self, both in terms of professional work, and life experience, has been informed by first Bloch and (inevitably) Foucault, and to an extent Fairclough, in recognition of the importance of history and 'critical language study' (Fairclough, 2014, pp. 229-230). Their respective work in pioneering a whole new approach to looking at history, social relationships and providing the all-important drive that is needed to call forth reflection on existing elements of historical linguistic analysis and to

establish it as a new problematic i.e., as discourse analysis – and in recognition of the interplay between 'knowledge, subjectivity and power' (Foucault, 1971) – the practice of control over discourse and how I behaved (or might operate) as a subject is framed.

> I am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised, and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality (Foucault, 1971, p. 8).

CHAPTER 3: My field of interest

Discursive shifts in apprenticeship in higher education in England

This chapter's purpose is to investigate and make known the many accounts related to the institution and purpose of apprenticeship[8] in England, specifically in its reform[9] over the last ten years, as a 'discursive field'. In chapters 1 and 2 I explore how my early understanding of discourse analysis was forgotten or at best hidden from me in my daily experience and practice but how on reflection and with a developing consciousness of my own subjectivity (and that of others) within 'orders of discourse' (Fairclough, 2014, p. 69) I can now better acknowledge how it has influenced the production and recontextualization of my public works.

In this chapter I will be describing apprenticeship as operating in higher education as a historical phenomenon (see Gademer, Hegel, Laclan as well as Foucault) in terms of social structures, and to help contextualise the cultural narrative, cultural practices, and discursive action. Relying on the work of Foucault and Bourdieu to describe the discursive field I will consider 'how' the notion of apprenticeship in higher education and the way in which apprenticeships as represented are 'true', are created, what is comprised, and what is not comprised in the formulation of such 'truths' and how are techniques (technologies) or strategies employed to validate these *truths*? Put another way, what are the techniques and technologies that permit, compel and/or constrain social and cultural production within the discursive field? For me, there is no ambiguity in the idea that discourse, in all events and aspects, has history. I read this to mean that discourses do not simply describe the social and political world; they constitute it by bringing certain circumstances into sharp relief by the way in which they categorise, formulate and make sense of what would be in any other way 'meaningless reality' (Parker, 1992). This is further sharpened by Foucault's work on discourses, or discursive formations, because he defines them as bodies of knowledge that

[8] I define the institution and term of apprenticeship as both legal and contractual rules and relationships governing the status of the apprentice, of their employment, associated workplace entitlements and the formal and informal academic processes involved in developing workplace and occupational competencies and culture.

[9] Reform here should mean improvement and progress. What I describe may also be considered 'change'; making sense of a process of adjustment and re-organisation, some of which have had profound implications for the concept and perception of apprenticeship.

'systematically form the object of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972, p. 42) meaning – they retain a wide range of 'socio-historically contingent linguistic, cultural, technical and organisational resources which actively constitute fields of knowledge and the practices they instantiate' (Reed, 1995, p. 195). The idea that discourse, in all events and aspects, has history is important because it is a useful mode for conceptualising the reading and writing of history (whatever the subject or timeline) through a critical lens (Graham, 2021).

My selected public works are positioned either side of two important junctures in apprenticeship policy. Firstly, the introduction of degree apprenticeships (BIS, 2015) with the inclusion of a mandatory bachelor's or master's degree which either sit alongside the apprenticeship and retain a separate end-point assessment or an integrated type where the degree includes end-point assessment and does not require a separate assessment of occupational competence (BIS, 2015, p.13). This model of apprenticeship emerged after the Cameron-Clegg coalition government (2010-2015) and its commitment to increasing the number of higher apprenticeship programmes available at a time when many skills researchers and policy 'influencers' held negative perceptions about apprenticeships (Wolf, 2011; Brophy *et al*., 2009; UKCES, 2012). Such negativity followed the New Labour government's expanded apprenticeship provision, positioned as a relatively high-status option for those seeking intermediate and technician level training and offered with an 'apprenticeship guarantee' or 'entitlement' (Lee, 2012, p.225), that one in five young people aged 16 to 18 would be apprentices by 2020 (DIUS, 2008, p. 5), but which led to poor quality standards of delivery and the treading of water educationally (Fuller *et al.*, 2017). Secondly, the advent of an apprenticeship levy (or hypothecated tax) in 2017 of 0.5% of all public and private sector payrolls over £3m in 2017 (Finance Act, 2016) alongside the setting up of a new body with responsibility for apprenticeships, the Institute for Apprenticeships (and later, Technical Education, IfA/IfATE), an employer-led crown NDPB. While it is no coincidence that many of these announcements were issued in the context of economic rather than education policy, together they signalled change in the engagement of higher education in apprenticeships. Collectively they would become known as 'game-changers' that would alter the market for higher technical and professional education provision (Anderson and Crawford-Lee, 2016, p. 346).

Origins of literature and knowledge generation

Additionally, the aim of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, to review the literature which has responded to the reforms and examine how the early conceptualisation of apprenticeship – controlled through increasingly shifting voices, oppositional discourse, and new visions for apprenticeships in England – was to affect the conduct and course of these reforms and control production of the public works themselves. Secondly, to set out the approach I have taken for the recontextualization of my selected public works and why. In a Bourdieusian-framed look at apprenticeships as a discursive field of study, this means 'reading' my public works as instances of 'socio-cultural fields of action' (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 32) and nothing more. Following Bourdieu, 'social fields' that are contingent historically and 'constituted by the strategic formation, maintenance and/or destabilising of oppositions and alliances' (Bravenboer, 2009, p. 52) within my field of professional discourse, are framed as including 'agents', practices, and texts. Key for me is to describe how my public works (as 'instances of socio-cultural action') in chapters 4-7 are operating within the respective field of professional discourse to recontextualise the practices.

By the time the coalition government formed there had been a decade or more of UK government encouragement to increase university attendance, primarily through a variety of widening participation policies and initiatives, (see DfEE, 1998; DfES, 2003) coupled with a 'global surge in the number of young people going to university' (Coughlan, 2011). For some, such 'normalisation' of higher education after half a century or more of expansion - in numbers of students, staff and institutions - at the beginning of the 21st Century reflects wider changes to the economic and social context (Bathmaker, 2003, p. 172) while for others it perpetuated the belief that a degree is more valuable than vocational training (Wright *et al*., 2010) given that technical and vocational training had long been regarded as inferior to academic and professional attainment and therefore that *knowing* is more highly regarded than *doing* (Gribble *et al*., 2015). This is no less true of arguments applied to the status of apprenticeships in England.

The variety of misconceptions and ideologies that create the centuries long held view of the academic and vocational divide, in a study by Wall and Perrin (2015) (cited in Crawford-Lee and Wall, 2018, p. 235), sit alongside an established societal belief, particular among the

middle-classes, that a degree has an intrinsic (and extrinsic?) higher value than an apprenticeship; that '[…] choosing a path other than university is a mark of failure' (Bawden, 2011). The emergence of a higher-level skills debate by government that positions universities as central to UK economic recovery (DBIS, 2009; DBIS, 2010; Cable, 2010, 2011) and challenges them to demonstrate and justify their 'world-class' status occurs at the same time as the National Strategic Skills Audit (UKCES, 2010a, 2010b) highlights the need for apprenticeships to support further learning at HE level while at the same time describing the purpose of higher education institutions (HEIs) as providing education and not 'training' (UKCES, 2010a). This presents as an early challenge around balancing higher education's purpose with that of apprenticeships.

The nexus between universities and apprenticeships started to emerge under New Labour with the promise to pilot honours and master's programmes centred on the principles of the apprenticeship: namely employed status, technical expertise, and occupational competency (DBIS, 2009, p.6) as part of an 'expanded apprenticeship system'. Formal dialogue about the lack of progression from apprenticeship programmes to higher education started to emerge in early 2010 (but had been debated since 2005). Framed by a debate about equity and social mobility, the Lifelong Learning Network - a joint initiative in the UK between the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the LSC and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) – published a policy paper that raised the idea for the first time of a 'missing link' in the apprenticeship system in England. The paper was informed by 3 pieces of research written by the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC)[10]: firstly, on progression from vocational and applied learning to higher education across the UK undertaken on behalf of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) (2010c); secondly, apprenticeships (Anderson and Hemsworth, 2005) and thirdly vocational progression (Carter, 2009) carried out on behalf of Westminster government. Each research contributed to the coalescing of the debate about the limits of the existing apprenticeship system in terms of breadth, prestige and opportunity and argued that the lack of progression to HE of apprentices was not due to UCAS tariff points, articulation, or

[10] UVAC was founded in 1999 as a not-for-profit Higher Education organisation to champion higher-level vocational learning including the development and delivery of higher and degree apprenticeships, and is my present employer.

barriers to admission, it was more to do with the lack of flexible part-time, work-based, higher education pathways – like higher apprenticeships – for them to progress on to:

> …there is a lack of flexible, part-time, discrete higher education pathways open to these learners who made a decision […] to take up a work-based learning route rather than a full-time academic route. To put such higher apprenticeship routes in place has the potential to dramatically open up access to the professions to young people from lower socio-economic groups, who are more than twice as likely to undertake vocational qualifications as those with parents in professional occupations. Higher apprenticeships are the missing link in the apprenticeship family, the component that provides for apprenticeships, parity of esteem with academic routes. Without clear work-based progression pathways, leading in appropriate sectors to professional or para-professional accreditation, apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships will always be seen as having a ceiling at level 3, only leading to technician occupations (Hall *et al*., 2010, p. 2).

History and Ontology

I pause here to reflect on the historical context so far and present some interpretations on subject positioning and control of discourse and how this informs my approach and influences the inclusion of 'discursive practices' in my analysis. In Foucauldian terms this is 'the process through which (dominant) reality comes into being' and in Faircloughian terms as 'the production, distribution, and consumption of texts' (Fairclough, 1992a). For Foucault, and for me, the focus is not on 'what *people* say' but on '*what* people say' or on the 'things said', and by extension not the 'things said' in terms of content but the inclusion of relationships that make those 'things said' have legitimacy and meaning (Bacchi and Bonham, 2014, p. 178) and indeed on what basis it is possible certain things are *sayable*. Phrasing it another way, it is an exploration of how 'things said' could be 'in the true' - accepted as 'knowledge'. In what Foucault calls 'rules of formation' these rules 'at a given period… define…the limits and forms of the sayable' (Foucault, 1991, p. 59) and demonstrate not how (for example, in apprenticeship policy terms) how political practice has determined the meaning and form of apprenticeship discourse but *how* and in what form political and policy practice takes part in apprenticeship discoursal activity. Throughout my professional career I have experienced a developing awareness of my own subjectivity within these rules of formation and 'orders of discourse' and internalised questions of how I have operated in relation to them. I readily acknowledge the periods in my life when, not quite an active social and political commentator, I have questioned socialised norms and

constraints. It is in pursuing this doctorate that I now recognise that discourse can be a site of both power and resistance, with scope to 'evade, subvert or contest strategies of power' (Gaventa, 2003, p. 3).

By 2010 apprenticeships at the higher level were not new; but they were in a very small number of occupational areas and industries. Apprenticeship frameworks comprising National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or NVQ units up to Level 4, functional skills, and an HE 'technical certificate', typically a foundation degree, were offered in engineering, ICT, telecommunications and accountancy (at the technician level). Higher Apprenticeships with 850 starts in 2009 were considered 'a significant programme' by the National Apprenticeship Service[11] (NAS) at a time when apprenticeship starts at all levels were growing rapidly from 280,000 in 2009/10 to 457,000 in 2010/11 (BIS, 2016), dominated by opportunities in low-level job roles in, for example, health and adult social care, business administration and customer service. NAS's commitment to *consider* the development of new higher apprenticeships at QCF levels 5, 6 and 7 was first mooted in 2009, to be developed in consultation with professional bodies and sector skills councils (SSCs)[12]. This development was positioned as enabling individuals with the aspiration and ability to progress from technician jobs to professional and possibly chartered job roles with an employer thereby providing a work-based progression route comparable to the established and traditional 'academic' undergraduate route. Much of the argument for the implementation of higher apprenticeships was to open up higher education pathways that both apprentices and their employers understood: programmes that were designed for people in work that combined technical knowledge with work-based competence.

In February 2011, the age of higher apprenticeships was described as *having arrived* (Joslin, 2011, p. 1) when the latest Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE)[13] (Employment and Training, 2011) was published and included for the first time the criteria

[11] The National Apprenticeship Service, founded in 2009, (part of the Education and Skills Funding Agency - an executive agency of the UK government) is a government agency that coordinates apprenticeships in England.
[12] Sector skills councils (SSCs) are employer-led organisations that covered specific industries in the United Kingdom. They were introduced by Adult Skills Minister, Rt Hon John Healey MP in 2002 with responsibility for supporting employers in developing and managing apprenticeship standards; reducing skills gaps and shortages and improving productivity; boosting the skills of their sector workforces; improving learning supply and contributing to the development of National Occupational Standards (NOS).
[13] The Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE) sets out the minimum requirements to be included in a recognised English framework. Compliance with the SASE is a statutory requirement of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act, 2009.

and specification for higher apprenticeships at levels 4 and 5. This was followed in March 2011, to accompany the spring budget, the government published 'Plans for Growth' which announced 10,000 new advanced and higher apprenticeship places and stated 'higher apprenticeships provide a good alternative to full-time higher education for young people who want to develop a career through on-the-job training' (HM Treasury, 2011, p. 85).

In what can be described as the start of a period of constant policy in 'motion' at the national level of government, concerning education and skills, (in the same way the Leitch Review of Skills (Leitch, 2006) was testimony to the way in which the UK's over-arching policy goals were framed in relation to catching up and beating competitor OECD nations) 'New Challenges, New Chances: Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan' quickly followed on from SASE and *Plans for Growth.* Combined, they established the systems architecture for apprenticeships that frame my public works. *New Challenges, New Chances* laid out a government ambition to provide a *ladder of opportunity* through apprenticeships to 'clear and flexible progression routes to Higher Vocational Education' (DBIS, 2011, p. 3). In the same year, Westminster Government demonstrated its intentions practically with the launch of the Higher Apprenticeship Fund (HAF). In providing £25 million to boost the development of 10,000 higher apprenticeship places (NAS, 2011) it looked to stimulate the creation of new apprenticeship programmes and, seemingly, in recognition that the lack of a higher apprenticeship route might not just be a problem in terms of ensuring employees learn the right way but that it might also be limiting opportunity and social mobility based on the findings that half of all apprentices completing an advanced apprenticeship (at level 3) showed interest in progressing to a degree-level equivalent course (UKCES, 2010c, p.34), but failed to progress. From a policy makers perspective, from my perspective, there was a dual objective in using the HAF for the development of a 'new wave' of apprenticeships: for employers it was to address the challenge of growing skills at the higher levels, and for apprentices to create access to new employment opportunities with greater career progression options and a route to professional recognition and status (Crawford-Lee, 2012, p. 285). An additional intent to investing in the expansion of higher apprenticeships was to change the popular perception of apprenticeships in England. Industries traditionally associated with apprenticeships (in engineering, construction and manufacturing) were to be joined by sectors associated with the professions in the hope that as higher

apprenticeships grew in numbers, in sector coverage, in recognition and in importance to business and to individuals, the artificial division in parity of esteem between *traditional* academic disciplines and higher level learning provision designed to raise skills levels in the workplace could be challenged and reduced (Crawford-Lee, 2012, p. 286).

It is this last point that became central to the discursive narrative of apprenticeships in higher education, as a form of work-based learning, in England from 2011 onwards. Given the strong tendency to see work-based learning as identified with low status vocational qualifications or not appropriate to higher education at all, HE and vocational training have been long considered as alternative sides of the English education system, characterised as '…a bifurcated system in which *either* narrow, specifically occupational qualifications, *or* traditional academic qualifications are offered…' (Wolf, 2011, p. 74). By this construct apprenticeships were seen as the vocational option and A levels, followed by an honour's degree, as the conventional, linear, route to employment, post-graduate. In reality, HE has always had vocational elements represented by its long association of training for the professions where the minimum of a degree is required to practice but, like apprenticeships, the popular perception of higher education has also been misconstrued and reflects how:

> The change in the size and character of the publics who have an interest in higher education and exert an influence on higher education policy greatly influences the nature and content of the discussions about higher education; particularly, who takes part in them, and the decisions that flow out of them (Trow, 2007, p. 25).

It is ironic that at the same time as more UK universities were welcomed into membership of the Russell Group – the most highly selective, research intensive, association that counts Oxford and Cambridge among its membership (Shepherd, 2012) – HE was becoming more vocational than ever. Having come under pressure to improve the employability of students this led to the substantial development of higher-level vocational programmes in universities and an expansion in the range of vocational programmes beyond those recognisable 'first generation' professional subjects in architecture, engineering, law and medicine to 'second generation' subjects such as business administration and social work (Guile and Evans, 2010, p. 5). Working with employers honed HE's response to the development and/or delivery of work-integrated learning opportunities relevant for the

modern-day jobs market, resulting in 'programmes of a bespoke negotiated, adaptable and often multi-disciplinary nature' (Helyer, 2015, p. 20). The association with and move to align non-technical apprenticeships with a funding and delivery mechanism for bachelor's degrees and master's programmes was still a number of years away but the revision to SASE in 2011, which put apprenticeship standards on a statutory basis for the first time and provided for apprenticeship programmes up to and including level 5, coupled with the HAF (NAS, 2011) became watershed moments for the role of universities in higher apprenticeship development: as much for what they failed to address as they succeeded to initiate. Bravenboer (2016) describes the bifurcation of higher-level skills policy, which contributed to a low level of engagement by HE institutions in higher apprenticeships and the higher-level skills policy area more generally (Anderson, Bravenboer and Hemsworth, 2012, p. 241). This was despite government funding initiatives in which I had a leading role, as a civil servant employed in 'policy delivery'. In particular, the lack of alignment between the second SASE (DBIS, 2011) and higher education qualifications operated as an additional inhibitor to institutional engagement.

Anderson *et al* (2012) and Bravenboer (2016) are clear that chief amongst the inhibitors were the fact higher apprenticeships could not extend above level 5 (or beyond sub-degree level); the size variability of the qualifications that could be delivered; the separation of academic 'knowledge' and technical 'competence' in the development of higher-level skills through separate qualifications or assessments; and the lack of an even playing field given the absence of any public funding for prescribed higher education qualifications that were included in delivery. Despite in principle support from professional bodies, the restriction on qualification level meant that higher apprenticeships could not be used to support learners' progression to professionally qualified status, which is more typically at the equivalent of bachelor's or master's degree levels (Williams and Hanson, 2011, p. 20, 24).

In the UK, the development of higher-level vocational programmes in universities came out of the introduction of work-based learning (defined as learning through, at and for work) in the HE curricula through formal policy making in the 1980s. Initiatives included accreditation of workplace knowledge and skill through methods associated with the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) or the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning

(APEL) within degrees, 'sandwich' courses involving work experience and vocational foundation degrees (HE intermediate level or level 5); the latter becoming a recognisable feature of vocational HE in the early noughties. The Leitch Review of Skills in 2006 (HM Treasury, 2006) revisited the need to raise minimum levels of adult skills, with particular emphasis on the urgent gap at technician level, which in 2011 was the policy focus of higher apprenticeship development, plus a need to focus on those already in work. Many universities developed provision aimed at people in work matching the four models of good practice for the development of work-based learning programmes identified by Guile and Evans (2010, p. 15). From a shaky start, where early provision contained little work-based content, foundation degrees emerged that, when linked to professional standards conferred a 'licence to practise' (particularly in the public sector), became the focus of highly innovative work-based provision designed to meet employer needs and targeted by HEFCE funding. It became a key 'selling point' for both learners and employers and an incentive for the involvement of professional bodies as set out in a report on foundation degrees carried out for the Professional Associations Research Network (PARN) that reported, in most cases, foundation degrees were relevant to their sector (Williams and Hanson, 2010, p.17). This relevance was repeated when further PARN research recorded that 70 per cent of the professional bodies surveyed considered higher apprenticeships to be a suitable programme to becoming fully qualified and professionally recognised and 73 per cent were interested in developing higher apprenticeships as a progression route (Williams and Hanson, 2011, pp.20, 24). However, in the context of higher apprenticeship development in 2011, the specification recognised a level 5 foundation degree as the highest university qualification for delivery, whereas the report also highlighted attainment at level 6 as the level of status and skill for professions recognised by most professional bodies and observed:

> This may indicate a need for Apprenticeship frameworks to be expanded to even higher levels to ensure a clear vocational pathway through Apprenticeship to professional status (Williams and Hanson, 2010, p. 16).

The Wilson Review, with its statements on the need for stronger links between universities and employers, recognises that apprenticeships at the higher level have importance in meeting the 'long term skills need of employers' and provide "a highly valued alternative for school leavers who wish to combine work with gaining a higher qualification" (Wilson, 2012,

p.46). The Review also recommends that work-based pathways to HE qualification such as higher apprenticeships should become 'a priority development'. Perversely, the Review also announces that higher apprenticeships, along with professional qualifications, 'are not congruent with the requirements of an honours degree but are equal in rigour and esteem' (Wilson, 2012, p.46).

The statement that positioned higher apprenticeships as 'not congruent' but 'equal' effectively obfuscated their status and, conceivably, at the time consigned higher apprenticeships to the margins of 'core' university business. Positioning was not assisted by a statutory constraint given the highest university qualification that could deliver a higher apprenticeship was at level 5 (equivalent to a foundation degree or Diploma of HE). The advent of level 6 and level 7 higher apprenticeships that allows inclusion of an honours degree would challenge the oft repeated mantra that apprenticeships represent an 'alternative' to university; an idea which highlights the struggle amongst policymakers, higher and further education, businesses, learners and agencies responsible for promoting work-based learning to articulate the relationship between practice-based discipline and work-based knowledge and accept a growing educational debate in favour of how to facilitate professional and technical learning within HE.

While clear that 'skills' was not a central concern of university business, progress was being made to engage HE with the apprenticeship agenda with the alignment of apprenticeship frameworks with higher education qualifications in the revision to the statutory instrument known as SASE in 2013 following secondary legislation (my second public works). Significant changes introduced new criteria to recognise apprenticeships at levels 6 and 7 *for the very first time* although it is perhaps relevant that some professions including accountancy and law had already established 'apprenticeship-type' routes to qualifying that included degrees – though without very much integration between the degree and working practice. Comprised of at least 120 credits (equivalent to one full-time year of undergraduate study) this new recognition sat alongside revised criteria for provision of at least 90 credits at levels 4 and 5 and requirements for alignment with professional body recognition (where applicable). Most crucially SASE allowed for the inclusion of a single integrated qualification that was not reliant on assessing 'knowledge' and 'competence' separately (Bravenboer and

Lester, 2016, p. 16). With considerable pedagogic and ideological distance still to travel, these regulatory changes offered a tantalising opportunity for realignment of higher apprenticeships with HE and the prospect of constructive collaboration between employers, professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PSRB) and universities (Bravenboer, 2019, p. 67). The development of this new type of HE linked to previous work-based learning initiatives, sub-degree provision like foundation degrees and government funded employability schemes was set to champion workplace learning to deliver higher level programmes more directly to employers and would become the driver for and reflector of new curriculum development (Lester, Bravenboer and Webb, 2016, p. 5; Nottingham, 2017, p. 134).

A secondary standpoint

From a present-day standpoint, apprenticeships have become a fast-growing and recognisable feature of the higher and professional education landscape. Degree apprenticeships were launched in England in 2015 by the then UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, who said:

> Equipping people with the skills they need to get on in life and backing businesses to create jobs are key parts of our long-term economic plan. Degree Apprenticeships will give people a great head start, combining a full degree with the real practical skills gained in work and the financial security of a regular pay packet. They will bring the world of business and the world of education closer together and let us build the high-level technical skills needed for the jobs of the future. I want to see many more businesses and universities begin to offer them (BIS, 2015).

From the outset degree apprenticeships were intended to bring together the worlds of work and higher education under a dual policy objective: to attract a new cohort of skilled worker with their employer to grow the economy by increasing productivity and to raise levels of social mobility in terms of supporting greater access to HE. The introduction of degree apprenticeships is described as one of the biggest changes to impact on HE in recent decades. Hailed by Jeffrey (2016, p. 1) as 'the greatest opportunity ever seen for anyone concerned with skills and employment' and described by the City & Guilds Group Strategy Skills Board (2015) as offering a viable 'alternative' to traditional degrees. Crucially, the term

‘alternative’ in the context of degree apprenticeships becomes laden with meaning for the recontextualization of my four public works.

Intended as complete training programmes designed from the ground up (Edge, 2017) higher and degree apprenticeships are described as bringing together and integrating theoretical and practical learning (Lillis, 2018; Bravenboer, 2019). Positioning them in this way gives the HE qualification a critical role in apprenticeship delivery as higher and degree apprenticeships effectively adopt teaching, learning and assessment methods that are distinct from those of either classroom teaching or more typical vocational training programmes at lower skill levels. They are less formal, independent, practice-or project-oriented and collaborative (Lester *et al.*, 2016; Lillis, 2018). Such a work-integrated learning (or learning- integrated work) approach is intended to be performative: developing experienced workers’ professional practice and effecting workplace change. The latter emphasises transformatory aspects of teaching and learning on the job such as ‘to think and work outside the box’ (Rowe *et al*., 2017, p. 187) and incorporating work-based pedagogies and increased individual activities such as ‘action learning, critical reflection, investigation and to what has been termed practice as research’ (Lester *et al.*, 2016, p. 23). Most importantly, at this juncture, higher and degree apprenticeships reposition our understanding of what is implied and required in developing and accrediting higher level occupational and professional competence in and through work (Lester *et al*., 2016; Rowe *et al*., 2016).

The importance of history (or historical context) and a ‘new kind of history’ informed by Bloch (1954, 1958, 1960), and Febvre’s calling for a ‘history of the sensibilities’ (1941) essentially underpins my conceptual/organisational framework. My aim is for a unique approach to looking at the history of apprenticeship in higher education and to provide a much-needed reflection on current analysis while establishing a new problematic. The discursive shifts that are evidenced by the history of reform and within my public works that recognise the interplay between ‘knowledge, subjectivity and power’ (Foucault, 1971) can then be ‘read’ with meaning. And as Derrida wrote, ‘Il n’y a pas de hors-texte’ (there is no outside-text), he was saying we use context to make sense of things. Indeed, without context, the text can have no meaning.

A framework for analysis

I examine the link between power and discourse and propose a framework for understanding the complex, mutually constitutive relationship between them in analysing my public works. That at any particular moment in time, discourses influence and shape the system of power in any given context by fixing in place the 'categories and identities upon which it rests' (Hardy and Phillips, 2004, p. 299). Over time discourses evolve as the system of power privileges certain authors enabling them to construct and disseminate text. The power relations thus determine (in part) why some authors can influence the processes of textual production, dissemination and consumption that result in new texts that revolutionise, revise, or reinforce discourses. In this way, discourse determine power relations while power relations determine who influences discourse over time and how. It is important here to describe subjectivities in the process of constructing this context statement text and recontextualising my public works. When applied within this context statement, 'the subject', the conventional notion of which is an individual, is not automatically a synonym for 'person' (Heyes, 2010). The term instead captures the meaning of being a certain type or kind of person, which is typically a contingent historical possibility by coming into being based on culture and a particular period, who may produce texts but who are, taking Foucault's discursive approach, operating within the limits of the *episteme*, the discursive formation, the regime of truth. There is a purpose in taking forward Foucault's most far-reaching hypothesis. That is, the 'subject' is *produced within discourse* where the subject must submit to the rules of discourse and its conventions but cannot stand outside power/knowledge either as its source or author (Hall, 2001 p. 79). In 'The subject and power' Foucault states that 'my objective… has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects…' (Foucault, 1982, p. 208). Indeed, he goes further. In making discourse and subjectiveness more historical:

> One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that's to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework (Foucault, 1980, p. 115).

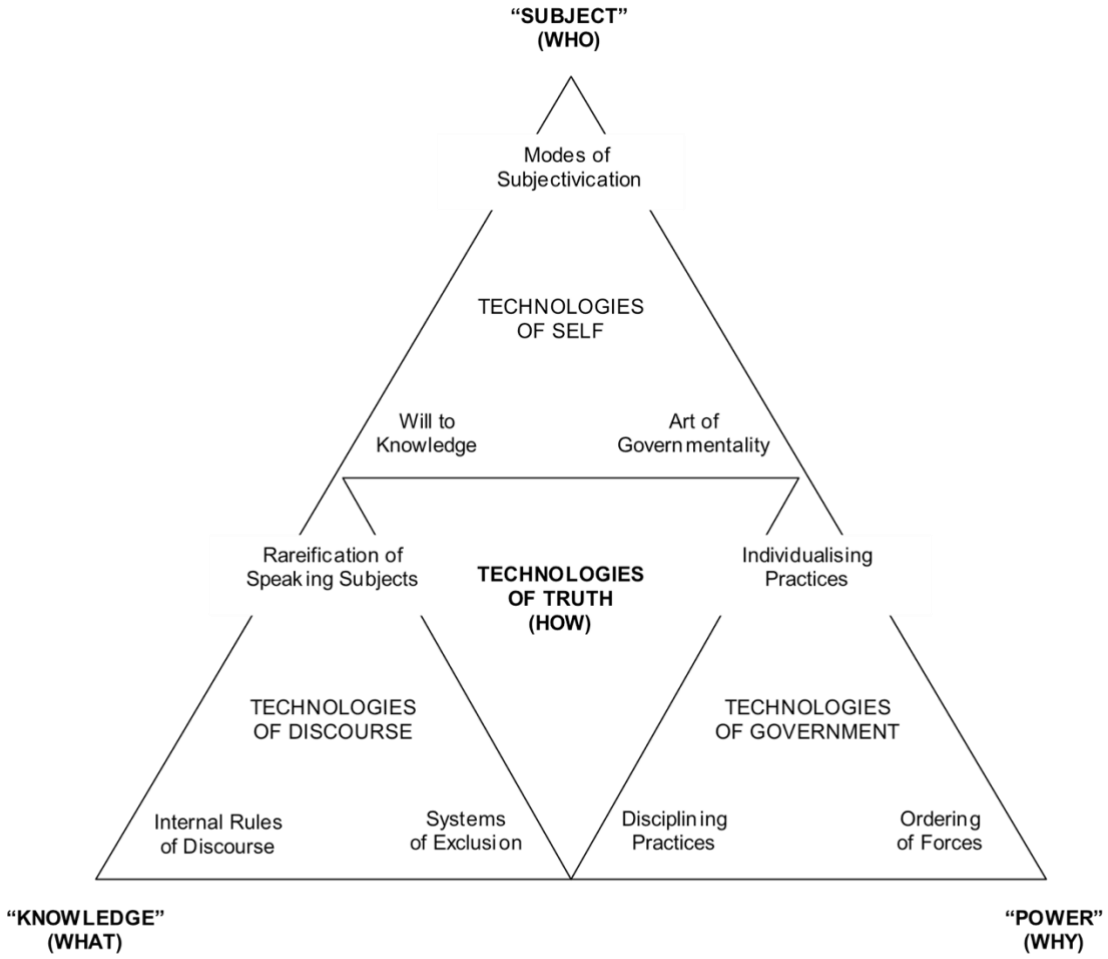
Where the Foucauldian view mostly disregards agency by self-interested parties, critical discourse theory also considers the space accommodated by a particular 'discursive

context'; where the use and exercise of power related to positions within a discourse provide for the possibility for change in discourse over time. In this sphere, as new texts are created and added into the discourse, the discourse inevitably evolves, resulting in changes in the concepts, objects, and subject positions and crucially the power relations. This approach adopts the view that relations of power affect the production of texts and shape discourse through time. It therefore helps to position my public works within the field and domain of official apprenticeships in higher education discourse.

Having set out the case for the inclusion of discourse analysis and employed use of Foucault's formation of 'discourses' (Foucault, 1972) to study the idea of apprenticeships in higher education, what I hoped for, and found, was an approach that accommodated analysis of both *text* and (historical) *context* (or chains of events) and their symbiotic relationship in the production of meaning. It is an approach which permitted me to examine the exercise of power in the production of control and knowledge in the discourses in each public work and the situating of subjects within them, with an emphasis on inter-relationships and intertextuality (Fairclough, 1992b; Kristeva, 1986), with the latter conceptually referring to the links that texts have with texts before them and after.

I equally seek to give coherence to the structure of my public works. Simola *et al*'s (1998) Foucauldian-framed 'catalogue of possibilities' is one approach, used to generate and describe 'technologies of truth' that have been deployed in their creation, and further developed by Heikkinen *et al* (2012) that models the inter-relationships between a tripartite of discursive technologies that they argue are at work, which includes: the 'technologies of self' concerning the *subject* (**who**), the 'technologies of discourse' concerning *knowledge* (**what**) and the 'technologies of government' concerning *power* (**why**) with the central inquiry, 'how are the technologies of truth (**how**) employed within a known discourse?

Figure 1: Technologies of Truth (Simola, Heikkinen and Silvinen, 1998, p. 70) or Foucauldian 'history of truth' (Heikkinen et al, 2012, p. 142)



Heikkinen *et al* (2012) characterise Foucault as a trader in 'the history of truth' (p. 141), but importantly not a pedlar in any precise (or general) 'totalising theory of truth', in which he asks not 'What is true?' but 'How is truth created?'. In following his interest in how truths were built, Foucault, they express, used the equal-sided 'who-what-why' triangle with its 3-axis framework of knowledge, power, and subject (k-p-s) to study 'how the human subject enter(s) into games of truth' (Foucault, 1984, p. 1) which in totality consists of techniques of self, discourse, and government. His writings on 'history as a practice' (Foucault 1972, 1977) reflect on a new approach to textual analysis of the document (text). The function is not to interpret but instead it 'organises the document, divides it up, distributes it, orders, arranges it in levels, establishes series, distinguishes between what is relevant and what is not, discovers elements, defines unities, describes relations' (Foucault, 1972, cited in Dean, 1994, p. 14). Here, and it links to the foundations of my approach set out in chapter 2, Foucault claims to be carrying out 'from within the history of knowledge' the same abandonment of conventional historical writing, as those championed by the 'serial history' of the *Annales School*.

This three-dimensional space of knowledge, subjectivity, and power with its fractal, entropic, quality, in that the pattern of technologies, subject (who), knowledge (what) and power (why) repeats not only at the level of the technologies of self, discourse, and government but again into further dimensions where *technologies/techniques of government* split to include 'disciplining practices' (*knowledge*, *what*), 'the ordering of forces' (*subjectivity*, *who*), and 'individualising practices (*power*, *why*), has important benefits for the recontextualization of my public works. Firstly, the approach provides a theoretical map to display the inter-relationships – or the triangulated 'technologies' – that are operating in the discursive field of apprenticeships in higher education by producing a map, if you will, indeed a 'catalogue of possibilities' (Heikkinen *et al.*, 2012, p. 149), of the many probable 'differentiated networks', 'lines along which they are connected', 'relations of force, strategic developments, and tactics' (Foucault in Rabinow, 1984). It allows me to examine how discursive practices - text and context - construct subjectivities (earlier described as authors and audiences, writers and readers but also individuals, and institutions) that are often in dynamic power/knowledge relations, similarly in opposition or alliance. It allows an analysis of how I became constituted as a subject. Finally, it provides an

approach to ask questions of my public works in relation to each of the axis of knowledge, subjectivity, and power, 'to unfold space for new ways to ask questions' (Heikkinen *et al.*, 2012, p. 149). Adapted by me, taking the best of hermeneutics, I have subjected my public works to the Foucauldian **k-p-s** triangle for analysis and for the triangle to be used as 'catalogue of possibilities', a tool that brings order and coherence to the questioning of my public works. It is the fractal quality of 'Foucault's triangular onion' in deconstructing the k-p-s that I now turn given the paradox of 'following Foucault's methods', when they are so often compared to the visually graphic but paradoxical objects of M. C. Escher's ascending stairs or cascading waterfalls. Nevertheless, adaptation of Heikkinen *et al*'s (2012) 'Technologies of Truth' by its attempt to shine a light on the major themes of Foucault's work, is used as a metaphorical fractal for the purpose of situating my public works as empirical objects for analysis. Where a related 'catalogue of possibilities' linked to the 'truths' of apprenticeships in higher education can be constructed for each public work. I am, though, mindful of the 'light-hearted' advice given by Heikkinen, *et al*:

> Not quite seriously but half, we might formulate instructions for use as follows: (1) make sure that the subject of your study is located in the realm of history of truth. Warning. If you are scrutinizing the progress of science, the role of genius subjects in history, ideologies as false consciousness, power as an (sic) repressive action only, subjectivity as anthropological standard or individual as a unique psychological phenomenon, never use the triangle. (2) Put your research material into the triangle, shake carefully and check if something has been gathered in the corners. Warning: Do not push oversized pieces of material into the triangle—all the material must be preworked. (3) Collect the material found in the corners of the triangle and start thinking. Warning. Remember that the triangle cannot be used as explanation, theory, system etc. You have to create those by yourself (Heikkinen, *et al*., 2012, p. 155).

Here my public works and the subjects of my analyses are the 'preworked' material made necessary and explicit in the *instructions* above and all are examined to illustrate the potency of 'techniques of discourse' (knowledge, what), 'techniques of government' (power, why) and 'techniques of self' (subject, who, including practitioner-researcher, institutions, and other subjectivities) with the fractal results summarised.

End word

In summary, the conceptual framework presents discourse and power in a 'mutually constitutive' relationship where one direction of influence – discourse to power – is representative of a moment in time when examined, while the other – power to discourse – evolves and reveals itself over time. Here, in what is known as a 'sphere of action' (Hardy and Phillips, 2004), the practices of textual production, communication and consumption occur that make provision for interaction and interpretation, enacted over a period resulting in new texts that either reinforce or redirect discourses. It also draws on Dowling's conceptions, of modes of authority action and 'constructive description' (2009) in the analysis of the texts/public works. In the case of 'modes of authority', this concept is extended further by Bravenboer's application in the analysis of designated and officially produced higher education texts in the fields of credit recognition and transfer (Bravenboer, 2009, 2012) and fair access to HE (Bravenboer, 2021) and extended yet again, by me, in my own adaptation in Chapter 7 that I call: *modes of discursive subjectivity*.

CHAPTER 4: PW1 The Higher Apprenticeship Fund Prospectus, NAS, 2011

Championing higher apprenticeships

This public work is a co-authored procurement prospectus, with a set of policy objectives, published by the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)[14]. Its beginning was set in a time of public-service austerity, amid the 'Great Recession' in the United Kingdom (Sowels, 2014, p. 165), though equally affecting much of the industrialised world, where the depth of the fiscal cuts implemented across all Whitehall departments (except for overseas aid and health) and local authorities up and down the country to reduce government debt was 'unprecedented in the post-war period' (HM Treasury, 2010, p. 1). The main problem for the UK government was whether it should seek to implement fiscal policy to support economic growth in a typical 'Keynesian way' or deal with the public sector debt to ignite confidence in the private sector, which will - so the theory goes - invest and spend, and therefore create growth. In the spirit of the Annales School approach to history, capturing concepts such as the study of 'mentalities' and the Longue Durée (Bloch; Braudel; Chartier; Duby; Febvre; Labrousse), I distance myself from the hegemony of political narrative (Sewell, 1996, p. 841) and avoid strong reflection on the event-oriented history of the 'origins of the cult of austerity' (Peston, 2017, p. 27). But as an 'event' which 'at the very least, may include a series of meanings and relationships…may provide the evidence of very major changes' (Braudel and Wallerstein, 2009, p. 174), I align with the 1st Annales historians to incorporate their approach within my own field of inquiry by using the Annales model to give contextualisation and a more nuanced and fuller understanding of my public work by examining the motivations and beliefs of the time.

In November 2010, George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Secretary of State for Business, Vince Cable, detailed the commitment by government to create the conditions for economic growth by delivering a programme of structural reforms and set out a strategy for improving and using skills for sustainable economic growth, and to extend

[14] A discrete part of the Skills Funding Agency - a non-departmental public body (NDPB) - and officially launched by Westminster Government in 2009.

social mobility and inclusion. Commitment to improve apprenticeship standards and quality was also the ambition:

> We will not only increase numbers, but we will also improve the programme. As an advanced economy needs advanced skills, we will reshape Apprenticeships so that technician level - Level 3 - becomes the level to which learners and employers aspire. To widen access, there will be clear progression routes from Level 3 Apprenticeships to higher level skills, including Level 4 Apprenticeships or higher education (DBIS, 2010, p. 7).

The resultant Plan for Growth (HM Treasury, 2010) published alongside Budget 2011, included a key proposal for the delivery of this commitment: a £25m programme of targeted support to help employers benefit from new developments in higher level apprenticeships. Prior to this event, apprenticeships in the UK had not been considered a preferred choice to a managerial or professional career or a route to higher level learning. Where apprentices and their employers had sought progression in work, by the 1990's there were limited apprenticeship opportunities (Crawford-Lee, 2012, p. 285) despite a decade or two earlier some employers such as British Rail and Rolls Royce having sponsored apprentices to continue to HNCs, HNDs and degrees all while working. This programme of investment and proposed development was positioned as needed to provide accessible ladders of progression for apprentices to achieve their aspirations for accessing higher level skills, including graduate and post-graduate study (UKCES, 2011) and the attainment of professional qualifications, recognition, and status. The announcements from government gave NAS a mandate to create the Higher Apprenticeship Fund (HAF) for the development of a 'new wave' of apprenticeship frameworks.

I was a newly appointed policy adviser in NAS when assigned to the public work initiative. Arriving in this post was merely incidental after a period of 'machinery of government changes' had resulted in a major reorganisation of the LSC, and, in truth, this senior middle management job was of less important to me than retaining my general status of 'public servant'. Being a long-standing 'Crown employee' or civil servant, I considered my career in the public sector to have a large degree of distinctiveness. According to the Max Weber theory of bureaucracy, civil servants are a profession set apart from other careers (Randma, 1999, p. 14). To be one requires certain skills and the upholding of specific values. By its very

definition, working for the civil service involves a political outlook, the subordination to all too often 'hidden' rules and a signing up to a civil service ethos or code. Although they give an American perspective, Huddleston and Boyer (1996, p. 133) conclude that working in the public sector demands the following characteristics more so than being employed in the private sector: political smartness, bargaining ability, and sensitivity to 'diverse constituencies'.

While I never experienced feelings of moral superiority in my roles, I always felt a sense of pride and privilege in serving the state. Whenever I was asked 'what do you do for a living?', I would typically reply 'civil servant or, more ambiguously, 'bureaucrat'. Confucius, Plato as well as Max Weber have historically characterised the 'ideal' bureaucrat as able, loyal, and selfless whereas the more popular attitudes take the very opposite view. I have never described myself or any of my fellow civil servants as 'dumb, lazy, malevolent, and/or venal' (Niskanen, 1973, p. 3 cited in Randma, 1999, p. 33) but I have encountered, in some colleagues, elitism, a level of arrogance that comes with rank and more than occasionally a lack of sympathy for individuals and their problems who work in other sectors or fields (Ridley, 1995, p. 18). On taking up the role in 2011, I had considerable experience as a researcher, policy adviser and public policy maker and of involvement in government and EU funded research/project procurement processes, the design and management of public procurement contracts and public-private partnerships. I saw public procurement as central to public service delivery and vitally linked to growing concerns over economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability (Arrowsmith, 2010; McCrudden, 2007). In terms of my positioning, I was at ease with being self-referential; happily describing my intellectual and professional labour in terms of 'policy', 'policy adviser' 'policymaker', 'practice' and 'practitioner' situating my work as primarily about achieving change in policy and evolving practice (Williams, 2020, p. 1082). At this point it is important for me to state, if not restate, that I recognised early on in this doctoral work:

> …critical discourse analysis is particularly appropriate for critical policy analysis because it allows a detailed investigation of the relationship of language to other social processes, and of how language works within power relations. CDA provides a framework for a systematic analysis - researchers can go beyond speculation and demonstrate how policy texts work (Taylor, 2004, p. 436).

Public work 1 is an example of a public policy text in that it made an actual resource allocation (£25m) intended to be presented by projects and programmes designed around meeting a perceived need (progression opportunities in apprenticeships to higher levels of skills and learning). Anderson (1997) characterises policy as 'a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or a matter of concern' (Anyebe, 2018, p. 8). In its purist form, public policy is that which is created and implemented by officials of government (authors like me) and their agencies (in this case, NAS) though non-government 'actors' (in this instance, higher and further education providers) and non-state factors may have influence over its process and impact. In this way, public work 1 constructs subjectivities ([co]authors and intended audiences) recognisably tied up in power/knowledge relationships and I seek to describe the strategy of discourse and evidence of tactics involved. While the descriptions in the text are historically contingent, at the same time, oppositions, and alliances (i.e., the role of higher education vis-à-vis apprenticeships, employability, and skills) can be said to be operating as strategic technologies/techniques, deciding *who* can speak and *how*. The homing in on the discursive strategies used aligns with that of Foucault's (1972) account of the formation of objects of discourse, constituted in systems of dispersion and with multiple points of origin, and what he refers to as 'enunciative modalities' (Foucault, 1972 pp. 50-55) including 'who is speaking' (p. 50) and the 'sites' (p. 51) from which they speak as well as Bourdieu's description of a social field of forces and struggles (Bourdieu, 1988a, 1988b).

Foucault describes those who *articulate*, *enunciate*, or *speak* the discourse as 'authorities of delimitation' (Foucault, 1972, p. 52) in that by being authorities they are prescriptive and proscriptive as to what is included and excluded (Carrim, 2022, online). As a result of this actualisation, 'grids of specification' (Foucault, 1972, p. 53) are created as a metaphor for describing the formation of objects and how they relate to one another within a discourse. As such we can analyse the text, in the style of Foucault, and the systems according to which the different 'kinds of apprenticeships' in England are 'divided, contrasted, related, regrouped, classified, derived from one another as objects' (Foucault, 1978, p. 46) of higher education discourse. According to the Foucauldian idea, discourses are best described as 'groups of signs' that constitute 'practises that systematically form the objects of which they

speak' (Foucault, 1978, p. 49). Put another way, they can be described as 'socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned' (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 258), forming not only a social construction of reality but a form of knowledge (Foucault, 1978) that functions to sort out and categorise the world as we know it according to subjective standpoints (Tchozewski, 2017, p. 5).

In its creation, public work 1 was the outcome of an approach typical of a public agency acting as a NDPB with my role and that of others dependent on the political-administrative relation of NAS and its location in government; it was process driven, and subject to a hierarchy of approval and decision-making layers. Within this frame Bauman and Vecchi argue government presides over the following variances: order and chaos, law and lawlessness, belonging and exclusion, useful and useless (Bauman and Vecchi, 2004, p. 33), and institutional rules, codes and norms 'privilege' particular habits in public discourse and decision making. In the same year as public work 1 was published, the then Minister for the Cabinet Office Francis Maude argued in 2011 that:

> …civil servants often find themselves frustrated by bureaucracy and red tape, by numerous layers of management, and by a culture that tends to value the generalist over the specialist, and process over outcome.

In addition, the then Prime Minister, David Cameron's ambition, pre-government, of moving the civil service into a 'post-bureaucratic age' and transform government from its previous identification as inert and stifling innovation remained, once in government, just that: an ambitious idea. Nevertheless, despite these perceived constraints and self-recognition that in apprenticeship policy terms I was the 'generalist' (having argued previously that apprenticeship was just 'one supply-side solution' and I described myself as having an overall professional interest in adult skills policy), I had considerable writing autonomy and exercised a large degree of individual initiative and self-management. I did not succumb to poor levels of motivation, compared to, say, the two thirds of public-sector workers found to be dissatisfied with their job (Cooper, 2015), and motivation as an issue has never once defined my career. I would, however, declare that my intrinsic and extrinsic motivation overlapped. Although I was strongly motivated by the meaningful impact of my work, I also needed to see that my work was achieving the desired outcomes and, quite crucially, lent

itself to improved personal reputation and feedback. In meeting my assignment, I was able to bring to the practical task of writing the prospectus, knowledge, and analysis of the political and multi-stakeholder context but also 'other kinds of knowledge in policy' (Aubin *et al.*, 2018, p. 18), including more than 20 years of past achievements and experience of both political and administrative processes.

Good government and good policy making

Reflecting on my achievement and experiences before joining NAS, the idea that 'good government depends on good policy making' resonates. As does full recognition that even successful policy makers are often left with agreeing to ad hoc solutions to market failures and that the whole system of government leaves too much to chance, individual skill, and strength of personality (Hallsworth and Rutter, 2011, p. 10, 11). For Hallsworth and Rutter, the political dimension of policy making which had rendered policy formulation and delivery as 'separate and distinct activities' had consequences. From my perspective it implied that 'policy makers' have control over creating the policy, including the policy design principles, which then is 'fixed' and handed over to others who then implement it 'faithfully'.

As ever, the reality is far more nuanced. Following Hallsworth and Rutter, favouring the idea that 'a policy is not just made and then executed; it is made and constantly remade by multiple players' (2011, p. 17), of which the potential outcome of the policy itself may change considerably during implementation, was always central to my style and approach. This is developed further by Sin, who gives the *policy object* a new standpoint: a focus on what a policy evolves as and becomes 'through the process of enacted ontology' (2014, p. 437). A necessary skill was to understand how and if possible, under certain circumstances, 'agency was possible' (Wiseman, *et al.,* 2011, p. 216; Mair and Marti, 2009, p. 421). Such as, in seeking good policy making, in emphasising the importance of feedback, and in supporting innovation in its myriad forms. Within the civil service it meant I was often wearing multiple faces with emotional detachment and understated self-presentation seen as the behavioural hallmarks of the 'good civil servant', but which melded with my conflicting desire to disrupt, connect the disconnected and create difference first. To me, policy work and dealing with a policy problem is not just about research and analysis, it is relational too.

Truths of apprenticeships in England

While I co-produced and co-authored public work 1 – passing its many iterations to and from my senior officials including Ministers for comment and revision – and had a significant role in project managing the production, writing, and editing of the work, NAS was constituted as the author of this 'official text', forwarded by the Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning and presented by the Executive Chair, National Apprenticeship Service. The public work constitutes a range of authoritative subjectivities (Simola *et al*., 1998) which include and/or exclude authorial and/or audience voices and presents as written by experts. NAS, an institution of government central to planning and justifying policy reform, is positioned as articulating the official truth on apprenticeships in England. Although the result of individual civil servant effort, public work 1 gives the appearance of anonymity, 'of an official truth' (Simola, *et al*., 1998) in which it may be assumed there are suggestions and indications of what is the 'true' knowledge about apprenticeships at the higher level, what a 'good' apprenticeship system is like and what kind of power is 'right' in the field of apprenticeships in higher education.

Other subjectivities constituted within public work 1 include 'employers, key partners, stakeholders and providers' (NAS, 2011, p. 5) positioned as audiences and receivers of the official notice of the intended Higher Apprenticeship Fund that will impact on their operation and practice (Bravenboer, 2022). Not defining 'providers' from the outset but then lastly inviting collaborative partnership bids from those organisations eligible for funding including: 'employers; Sector Skills Councils; professional bodies; National Skills Academies; employer groups; learning providers, including independents, FE colleges and HE institutions' (NAS, 2011, p. 22) which referenced universities and higher education providers bottommost, played its part in controlling the discourse of apprenticeships in higher education at a crucial moment in the history of HE. Indeed, the government's skills strategy, *Skills for Sustainable Growth* (DBIS, 2010, p. 18) whilst it outlined the need for SSCs to:

> Work closely with employers, further education colleges, other providers, universities and professional associations to ensure that there are clear ladders of progression to employers and apprentices can more easily understand and access higher level skills opportunities…

…skills were seen almost without exception as a FE and not an HE issue (Anderson, *et al.*, 2012, p. 245). Indeed, there is no recognition of the role of universities in developing workforce skills and higher apprenticeships are referenced only in passing. The challenge presented to me as (co)author of the Prospectus was the coalition government's shift to minimising of the role of universities in higher level technical, vocational, and professional learning, including in higher apprenticeships, in contrast to the earlier Labour government's HE policy framework, *Higher Ambitions* (DBIS, 2009a) and skills investment strategy (DBIS, 2009b) where the thinking was to get more working adults into HE to raise their aspirations and skill levels and for a major change in HE culture to include more diverse models of learning including higher level apprenticeships (DBIS, 2009). In mentioning universities just a few times, the public work Prospectus had the effect of mirroring the White Paper by forming a policy preference, with HE institutions seemingly the least preferred option for involvement in the higher apprenticeship initiative, to the point of almost exclusion. The Prospectus relied on HEFCE data (which alongside PARN are other authoritative subjectivities referred to in the text but are not positioned as authors) that reported only 6% of Advanced Apprentices (a level 3 programme, equivalent to 2 A levels) progressed to HE within four years compared with 90% of A level students following the conventional academic route to professional careers (NAS, 2011, p. 11). Like the Skills Strategy, public work 1 also presented higher apprenticeships as 'an alternative to HE' with regards to accessing 'higher-skilled careers'.

> 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).

The positioning of 'apprenticeships' and 'universities' in opposition to each other in the Prospectus has been described as 'indicative of a degree of ambivalence, in policy terms, at the time regarding the extent of university involvement with the higher apprenticeship initiative' (Bravenboer, 2016, p. 392). Scant mention of universities (just three times) is one example of perceived ambivalence. The unclear reference to the terms of engagement beyond ensuring 'universities are fully able to support Higher Apprenticeships' (NAS, 2011, p. 12) without setting out what is implied by 'support' and with wanting universities, in addition to all other types of apprenticeship providers - namely FECs and ITPs - to 'work

alongside' employers to 'come up with' innovative new models for higher apprenticeships are others. More importantly, this ambiguity of language created ambiguity of intent and intention in the discourse of higher apprenticeships in higher education/universities. Pierre Bourdieu's work on practice and its relationship with 'habitus' gives a perspective on policy as a 'practice of power'. The conception of habitus in so far as it is an attempt at reconciling the relationship between our dispositions and habits, objective social structures and personal history and upbringing, when applied to my role means, in this Bourdieusian-framed discussion of power relations, a policy maker's habitus will 'structure policy structures at the same time as being structured by them' (Heimans, 2012, p. 377). Inevitably though, the habitus is never just an individual response. It is organised and intensified through the many and various discursive formulations engaged in. Habitus is described by Bourdieu as:

> …that system of dispositions which acts as a mediation between structures and practice; more specifically it becomes necessary to study the laws that determine the tendency of structures to reproduce themselves by producing agents endowed with the system of predispositions which is capable of engendering practices adapted to the structures and thereby contributing to the reproduction of structures… Through our dispositions, the most improbable practices are excluded as unthinkable, which inclines us to be predisposed to act in ways that we have done in the past. The habitus produces practice that reproduce the regularities of experience while slightly adjusting to the demands of the situation. In practice the habitus is history turned into nature. Our unconscious is therefore the unforgetting of our history turning our actions instead into second nature… It is through this that objective structures and relations of domination reproduce themselves (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 72-83).

Public work 1 captured these tensions in framing a strategic and policy direction. The dominant discourse in 2011 described traditional forms of HE and vocational and technical education - including apprenticeships - as separated sides of the UK education and skills system in which 'education policy… tries to enforce a bifurcated system in which either narrow, specifically occupational qualifications, or traditional academic qualifications are offered…' (Wolf, 2011, p. 74). In policy terms it would now seem inconsistent to promote a model for the development of new higher apprenticeships that by its very policy design principle, limits, or at best misconstrues, university collaboration. Yet, in writing the HAF Prospectus, research from PARN was referenced without consideration of the likely impact

and implication for university engagement in the higher apprenticeship growth agenda. Citing how PARN indicated that around 70 per cent of professional bodies 'thought that Higher Apprenticeships would be an appropriate way to gain full professional status in their sectors' (Williams and Hanson, 2011 citied in NAS, 2011, p. 11), the Prospectus omitted to make mention how PARN also acknowledge that for the majority of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) the level at which professional status and skills is recognised, is at level 6 (the level of a bachelor's degree) and above. It meant the mainstay of university provision was always going to be at odds with the ambition of the HAF Prospectus when the limit of higher apprenticeships was to level 5 as regulated by SASE (DBIS, 2011). What emerged from the criticism that public work 1 was 'off mission' (Bravenboer, 2016, p. 393) was a personal awakening to the idea that the discourse on apprenticeship in higher education could shift to address many of the issues of misalignment with university mainstream qualifications and this is reflected in chapter 5 where public work 2, the revised SASE (DBIS, 2013), created fresh opportunities for universities who had an interest in aligning their provision with the development of higher level apprenticeships with employers (Bravenboer and Lester, 2016; Bravenboer and Workman, 2016).

Modes and mapping

To illustrate how public work 1 is operating within the apprenticeship in higher education discursive field to strategically position university engagement, the work of Dowling's concept of constructive description (2009) and further developed by Bravenboer (2009, 2013) in the recontextualization of 'official' texts in HE is utilised. The methodology provides evidence of how public work 1 is producing or resisting the purpose of apprenticeships in higher education. The authorial, audience and other 'voices' have already been reflected on, but the relationship 'is more complex than a binary opposition between author and audience' (Bravenboer, 2009, p. 52). The 'opening up' of what Dowling calls 'conceptual spaces' and Bravenboer terms 'discursive spaces' is taken from the describing of oppositions and alliances within the text and relate at least two sets of bifurcated or binary variables. Taking Dowling's schema forward, the conceptual space described as modes of authority action (Figure 2 below) relate oppositions of open or closed authorship, and open or closed fields of practice. 'Modes of Authority Action' helpfully describe techniques and strategies

that can be availed to establish the rule of who is authorised to 'speak' (Bravenboer, 2009, p. 54), and whether claims to authority are individualised or institutionalised.

Author Category	**Field of Practice**	
	Open	Closed
Closed	*Charismatic*	*Traditional*
Open	*Liberal*	*Bureaucratic*

Figure 2: Modes of Authority Action (Dowling, 2009, p. 53)

The presentation of modes of interaction and authority in a pared back cross-tabular form represents a set of possibilities which in practice constructs a set of complex instances. Authority strategies are the result of the way an author derives their authority and the type of discursive space the author creates. What is important here is the question of what role did public work 1 play in the opening up or closing down of the discursive space in the development of apprenticeships in HE? By this reckoning, the public work 1 Prospectus can be declared an example of 'closed discursive practice', the opposite of encouraging participation and building alliances. The identification of 'NAS' as the chief author (or authority) indicates a closed category of authorship and the practices that it constitutes are ambiguous, if not limited. According to Dowling, it is 'the closure of authorship and practice… achieved together in alliances and oppositions that both define membership and regulate the rules of the discourse' (2009, p. 53). The description of the role and purpose of higher apprenticeships is given to include certain learning providers and stakeholders and, whether intentionally or not, marginalise or exclude others, in this case universities. The small number of references to universities and a loose description of higher education (styled 'an academic preserve' (NAS, 2012, p. 12)) makes the discursive field of practice 'closed' constituting either 'traditional' or 'bureaucratic' modes of authority action by NAS. At first glance the Prospectus would seem to be clearly bureaucratic given its branding and prefacing but the category of authorship has already been determined as 'closed'. Therefore, as evidenced by the Prospectus, the mode of authority action is 'traditional', a

signifier of a particular habitus, the non-transferability of government. According to Dowling:

> Here is the domain of the rule of discourse, the rule of subject as subject to. The pathology of 'traditional' authority is depression (Dowling, 2009, p. 54).

As a governmental public body, NAS had the 'power' to determine what is, and what is not, described in the higher apprenticeship fund Prospectus, in the context of what is and what is not procured. The closed category of authorship draws a veil over the procedure of textual production for the audiences given that my identity and those of my co-authors involved in the drafting, approving and finalising processes are hidden, if not 'subsumed within the singularity of the organisational body' (Bravenboer, 2009, p. 56), in this case NAS. From the schema it is clear that 'the liberal' mode is constituted as opposite to the traditional form of authority: open category of author and open field of practice, where authority is relinquished by the author(s) and given over to the audience(s). In this exchange mode, the Prospectus positions NAS as an 'investor' with a desire to, in the context of the fiscal challenge, 'back' high quality applications and 'kick-start activity' with a transfer of authority to the audience by way of an open invitation to those who have a 'sound business case and are able to clearly articulate the approach you will take and the benefits it will deliver' (NAS, 2012, p. 23). The specification against which applicants were to self-evaluate suitability in the development of higher apprenticeships is not overly prescribed, recommending that consideration to who is involved, what is the need, what is the plan and what will it achieve, be the starting point so in this way the 'provider' is necessitated to act as the captivating author of criteria against which its success with the HAF will be evaluated (or not). While the Prospectus' description of self-evidencing and evaluating is presented as a carefully and beguilingly authored and open field of discursively practice, the authorial voice of government makes it clear that NAS ('we') retains the decision-making authority and power to decide 'what it is that we're willing to invest in, the basis on which we will invest, and the requirements on which projects will proceed if we invest' (NAS, 2012, p. 15).

The aim in publishing the Higher Apprenticeship Fund Prospectus in July 2011 was:

> …to stimulate and create well regarded, high profile and sustainable higher apprenticeship programmes based on clear and evidenced employer demand that involve education and business partnerships in an innovative and exciting way (Crawford-Lee, 2012, p. 285).

Here the focus of the discourse shifts from employing a traditional structure, a traditional authority strategy, to constitute higher apprenticeships (high profile, sustainable, based on employer demand) to charismatic originality described in relation to what is innovative and what is exciting. A (higher apprenticeship) practice not fulfilling this expectation, is excluded by the Prospectus text. The distribution of authorial or audience voices vis-à-vis the modes of authority action in the Prospectus (identified in the text as NAS, government, employers, apprentices, stakeholders and 'providers') allows for the identification of a critical moment in the construction of knowledge in the discourse of apprenticeships in higher education. From the standpoint of 2011, the coalition government did not see apprenticeship as a university's central business concern or an opportunity to be explored. The discoursal effect was to separate the language and discourse of higher apprenticeships from those relating to HE.

Charismatic Mode of Authority *Open Practice / Closed Authorship*	**Traditional Mode of Authority** *Closed Practice / Closed Authorship*
- Self-appointed applicants and collaborative partnership bids to the HAF, *may* include Learning Providers, including independents, FECs and HE institutions - Innovation to produce new models of higher apprenticeships - Universities, amongst other providers, to 'work alongside' employers to develop new models	- *Plan for Growth*, 2011, targeting support to improve skills and widen opportunities for employment and progression - Government setting the limits to develop higher apprenticeships, below the level of the degree - Higher apprenticeships as route to professional status, against the grain of university being 'gateway to the professions'
Liberal Mode *Open Practice / Open Authorship*	**Bureaucratic Mode** *Closed Practice / Open Authorship*
- Public 'investment' to 'kick-start' activity - Employer leadership commitment and 'co-investment' to drive 'occupational partnerships' and contribute to programme costs - 'A missing link' in the skills system - 'Building a bridge to the professions'	- NAS, as 'author' of the Prospectus - £25m programme of targeted support - Creation of 10,000 additional higher apprenticeship places - Universities to 'support' higher apprenticeships

Figure 3: Mapping the discourse of higher apprenticeships in public work 1

If 'thinking' is an 'event' for Foucault (Scott, 1984, p. 75), then *thinking* about the function and form of public work 1 in controlling the discourse is an *event* for me more than a decade on. Other than SASE (DBIS, 2011), the Prospectus was the first framing of the concept of higher-level apprenticeships (even though in retrospect it can be interpreted as yet another example of the appropriation of apprenticeship by government). From an authorial perspective there was no determination to obfuscate or generate from the beginning a

'schizophrenic approach' (Bravenboer, 2016, p. 394) to policy but what I would state now is that it represents the operation of power by government in that it remained mostly inconclusive about the role of universities and HE. Yet, public work 1 was written with optimism and ambition, proposing that higher apprenticeships were 'a missing link in our skill system' (NAS, 2011; Sakhardande, 2012) and about 'building a bridge to the professions' (Hamnett and Baker, 2012; Lee, 2012).

Having mapped the modes of authority above and discovered the rules of discourse in public work 1, **Table 1** takes Foucault's Triangle and the 'triangulated', 'fractal' approach detailed in chapter 3 to recontextualise this public work as an instance of the 'technologies of government'. The k-p-s (knowledge - power - subjectivity) analysis operates to reveal how technologies/techniques of government inter-relate to order and control the public work discourse.

Knowledge – Power - Subjectivity

Table 1[15]

***Higher Apprenticeship Fund Prospectus* (2011)**		
Technologies / Techniques of Discourse (k)	***Technologies / Techniques of Government (p)***	***Technologies / Techniques of Self (s)***
k-k internal rules of discourse	***p-p ordering of forces***	***s-s modes of subjectification***
- ministerial forward controls context of 'restoring economic growth' - uses language of 'rebalancing', 'productivity', 'efficiency' and 'innovation' - adopting 'we' and 'our' to signify government policy and affiliate the intended audience - seeking employer-education partnerships	- NAS / government is the body with the authority to act - determination to control the direction of funding to develop 'good' higher apprenticeships - undifferentiated definition of learning provider/higher education institution - uses public investment to 'kick-start' activity aimed at encouraging employer contribution to higher level skills - demanding return on investment and lower risks in times of limited funds	- acting as and on behalf of government, gaining no authority as a 'practitioner-researcher' - drawing agency from acting as 'NAS' and by extension, government
k-p systems of exclusion	***p-k disciplining practices***	***s-p art of governmentality***
- differentiating between invited applicants - from employers to universities (bottommost) - controlling positioning of 'universities' vis-à-vis apprenticeships and their 'gateway to the professions'	- limiting content and context to developing higher apprenticeships in England based on 'employer demand'	- creating an 'unintended' discursive space to analyse critically the discourse of apprenticeships in HE - developing awareness of gaining power and directing others

[15] Taken from Heikkinen, *et al* (1999)

- excluding idea of 'degree level apprenticeships' at expense of seeking ideological equivalency or parity of esteem for apprenticeships - retaining barrier to aspiration of higher apprenticeships as route to professions		
k-s rareification of speaking subjects	***p-s individualising practices***	***s-k will to knowledge***
- appealing to a disparate audience of the needs of high-value workplaces and business benefits and working with existing training cultures	- exercising power through the allocation of funding and prestige of award - articulating the primacy of government to demonstrate the value of higher apprenticeships	- aiming to create the conditions for higher apprenticeships to become an established part of the skills system -innovating the idea of new models of apprenticeship learning at higher skill levels

Reflections on my emerging practitioner-researcher identity

When looking at the other subjectivities involved in this public work, the government position had stratified a long list of possible beneficiaries to the Higher Apprenticeship Fund, with universities, while not excluded per se, failing to find much traction or recognition in its production. Interest in the HAF by universities and subsequent awarding of funding was low despite the view that developing higher apprenticeship frameworks with little or minimum HE involvement would intensify the artificial vocational and academic divide (Helyer, 2012, p. 223). Like Helyer, I would write for the same special issue of the journal, *Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning* but with a more optimistic outlook by observing:

> Investing in the expansion of good quality higher apprenticeships not only creates a viable new career option for many young people and adults but also changes the popular perception of apprenticeship. A vibrant higher apprenticeship programme …help *(sic)* to position higher apprenticeships as a valued career option for high

> achievers as well as an accessible way into work. They also enable up-skilling and progression in the workplace and, more importantly, challenge the way that employers typically recruit to the professions (Crawford-Lee, 2012, p. 286).

But at the time of creating public work 1, universities and HEIs as subjectivities were at a distance from the 'centralising authority of government' (Lillis, 2016, p. 55) and had no direct influence over NAS. This is mostly because the rapid growth in apprenticeship in England had focused on intermediate and advanced skills levels delivered mostly by independent training providers and 'some' FE colleges. With no agency over the operation of the discourse beyond which would be exercised through the limited participation in the Higher Apprenticeship Fund itself (just 2 projects of the 28 eventually approved were from universities) it would be argued (Anderson *et al.*, 2012, p. 241) that this should have been of major concern to policy makers and strategic decision makers given the established record of universities innovating in professional work-based learning which 'could have been brought to bear to support the development of innovative models of Higher Apprenticeships' (Bravenboer, 2016, p. 392).

This HE response to the overt pull of government power would have considerable impact on my professional practice and my later public works. I could not anticipate how significant this public work would be in framing and forming my researcher-practitioner subjectivity. I did not have difficulty in operating creatively in the production of the public work or retaining a focus on its outcomes. Like Heimans (2012) I considered the importance of the space between policy production and policy implementation. Taking the Bourdieusian view, as to how different types of capitals relate to the policy process and how the embedding of power relations in every stage of the policy cycle can produce 'possibilities and constraints' (2012, p. 374), I looked towards the possibilities and tended to circumvent the constraints.

End Word

I began to understand how a researcher subject identity could bring with it a degree of authority and confidence. I was at the time the report was published unfamiliar with apprenticeship systems and programmes, its language and practices but being a *researcher* allowed me to perform what Blommaert and others describe as 'scale jumping' (or should that be 'space jumping' given its links to history, space, and time?) where space is not a

blank background but ‘where knowledge of language is rooted in situation and dynamically distributed across individuals as they engage in practices’ (Blommaert *et al.*, 2005, p. 205) and I was soon lifting the discourse of university engagement in apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships in HE into a scale-level beyond the reach of my civil-service colleagues.

CHAPTER 5: PW2 The Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE), 2013

Championing higher *and* degree level apprenticeships

In 2013 public work 2 was published as law by secondary legislation, under powers given to Ministers by an Act of Parliament. Authored by me it came about as a direct result of public work 1 and was an unexpected outcome of my role as the 'government official' responsible for the Higher Apprenticeship Fund on behalf of NAS. Indeed, in early 2012 I was mostly concerned with problematising the model for managing the funded projects and legitimising the approach as the HAF Prospectus had been clear on NAS's intent:

> In a time of limited funds, we want to be sure that we achieve the greatest possible return from these investments. For that reason, we intend to collaborate closely with each project, to help learn from their experience and also to ensure that we work with them to remove barriers to their success (NAS, 2012, p. 8).

In the beginning I could not have anticipated that I would be the author of significant legislative change to the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning (ASCL) Act 2009, or that the work I undertook in creating public work 2 would enhance my knowledge and confidence in apprenticeships in HE, or that I would become, eventually, due to my 'personal capital' (Bourdieu, 1986), acquired through self-improvement, a nationally recognised advocate for apprenticeships delivered by HE. No, my main concern initially was ensuring that for each project there was an assigned NAS relationship manager and my designated role, as I perceived it, was to coordinate and manage the managers and have assumed overall responsibility for the Fund's achievements as described by the Prospectus. There is no doubt that NAS represented a bureaucratic organisation in the 'Weberian rational-legal tradition' (Gatenby *et al.*, 2014, p. 1126), reliant on rules, hierarchy and vertical accountability for coordination and control (Currie *et al.*, 2008; Hales, 2002), and, by definition, prone to inertia; reforming legislation was never foreseen as an intended outcome. On first look it easily appeared I was situated in the enduring role as 'government agent' responsible and accountable for monitoring success against centrally determined policy and targets (Hood, 1991; Power, 1997), no more, and no less.

During the early and middle management phases of the HAF delivery, the practitioner-researcher in me spent time, out of necessity, rapidly building my own capacity to understand the concept of apprenticeship beyond the tendency for it to be generalised to any craft, trade, profession, or process by which individuals gain expertise or skill in and through work *and* in building the capacity of those involved in developing and delivering new higher apprenticeships in new sectors and occupations. Conscious that in apprenticeship policy terms I was 'still climbing the expertise hierarchy' (Jarvis, 1999, p. 68) on knowledge, in practice terms I was more often 'thinking on my feet' and 'learning by doing' (Schön, 1983). By meeting and speaking regularly to project leads, partner organisations and employers, my understanding of the apprenticeship programme soon sophisticated certainly enough for me to convey authoritative meaning. That for apprenticeships, the process of learning is not 'invariant', and, in practice, work contexts are varied depending on whether the knowledge and skill required is a 'traditional' craft or trade or rapidly developing body of 'theory' (Gott, 1995 cited in Guile and Young, 1998, p. 177). This fit with an establishing government philosophy and idea, influenced by me in my work relationships with specific employers, of developing higher apprenticeship to align with the 'increasing importance of applied technical knowledge in… dynamic industries' (NAS, 2012, p. 10).

One of my first discussions in the New Year in 2012 was with some of the first recipients of the HAF. Project lead Semta with BAe Systems, the Science Council and UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) were a consortium developing a higher apprenticeship in advanced manufacturing and engineering to meet the specification for apprenticeship standards in England requirements at level 4. It was also a seminal moment as the 'main barriers' to higher apprenticeship success coalesced around a single argument: the need for higher apprenticeships to stretch beyond technical and associate professional skill levels. Semta set out an ambition for an apprenticeship at level 6 described as including 'a range of options such as a full Bachelor of Engineering degree… [that] will also link to professional accreditation' (Twigg, 2012, p. 300) to meet employer needs in their sectors. Although this was outside the scope of the HAF and proscribed by SASE (DBIS, 2011), given the highest level of qualification that could deliver a higher apprenticeship was a level 5, Semta had

started to develop a level 6 framework to meet the Specification for Apprenticeship Standards in Wales (SASW, 2011) – the first of the devolved nations to recognise higher apprenticeships at the level of professional skills. As a result, the question then became for me and for apprenticeship policy more widely, if a higher apprenticeship in Wales can include an honours degree, then why can't it be true of apprenticeships in England? In this one engagement I knew that thereafter I would be negotiating the fine line between managerial imperatives of the HAF, on one side, and the needs of 'professional elites' and stakeholders on the other (Harrison and Pollitt, 1994). I was now problematising a new situation and in turn it problematised the role I played, in which the *habitus/*practice/field as Bourdieu describes them (1973, 1990) were about to be disturbed.

Alignment

Separate conversations with universities leading or involved in HAF projects in the early part of 2012 also raised questions about the limits of the policy's ambition and the regulatory framework for apprenticeships that underpinned it. SASE (DBIS, 2011), I was advised, constituted a significant barrier to university and HEI engagement despite government's funding incentive (NAS, 2012). Both Anderson *et al* (2012) and Bravenboer (2016) identified the same barriers as those first employers and industry bodies; that, higher apprenticeships, limited by the level 5 ceiling, lacked alignment with qualifications in HE, and excluded the potential for degree level provision (typically the main pillar of university business) that could better meet economic needs and open up access to the professions. Moreover, SASE 2011 did not support apprentices to achieve professionally qualified status with its primary emphasis on the separation of 'knowledge' qualifications (more typically delivered by ITPs and FECs) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) to assess 'competency'. In addition, the variability of the size of qualifications that could be included - from 10 credits in size to 240 credits for Foundation Degrees and Higher National Diplomas - did not articulate consistently with university requirements, and where the minimum credit value of 37 credits applied this aligned with the same criteria for apprenticeship provision at levels 2 and 3. Finally, the lack of an even playing field for public funding support of any prescribed HE qualification used became a focus for challenge from universities working with their FE partners.

The challenges presented to me proved decisive in moving the discourse of higher apprenticeships along and in connecting the dots to creating new entry points and progression pathways from technician roles to managerial and professional occupations (Lester *et al.*, 2016). As an exercise in policy practice my method followed a 'dominant paradigm' in so far as the problem was identified, data collected, and advice given whereupon a decision was made which was then implemented (Colebatch, 2006, p. 309). But as an exercise in production the making of public work 2, despite every indication of 'a need for apprenticeship frameworks to be expanded to even higher skill levels to ensure a clear work-based route through apprenticeships to professional status' (Williams and Hanson, 2011, p. 16), was not without contention amongst some universities, FECs, ITPs and, somewhat surprisingly, my own NAS colleagues too. Opposition or reluctance to changing the status quo manifested itself as concern over disruption to traditional institutional and sectoral hegemonies, cultural misalignment and 'conflict around role, interest and regime' (Graham, 2019, p. 125). It is worth visiting Colebatch's description of policy too as something which in theory:

> …is made by government making a clear choice of the most effective response to a known problem, but in practice it emerges from struggles between powerful interest pursuing different agendas and is marked by contest and uncertainty (Colebatch, 2002, p. 104).

For me 'the work of policy' was about choice and I chose to engage with those who could help me make the best choices even though at times it was not always easy to discern the outcome. Being aware of the overt competition to the idea of approving apprenticeship frameworks at level 6 and above, required a Foucault approach to 'governmentality' and the use of appropriate 'technologies' of governing. I chose to hitch my wagon to UVAC with its epistemological respectability and commitment to advocating and promoting the importance of 'seamless' apprenticeship and work-based progression routes to higher education (UVAC, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2007) and its very early work championing and advising government on 'Graduate Apprenticeships' (HEFCE, 2003) with pilot funding from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), later becoming the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Then, Graduate Apprenticeships were

positioned by Margaret Hodge MBE MP, Lifelong Learning and Higher Education Minister, in January 2002 as:

> … an excellent example of how businesses and higher education institutions can work together. Combining work-based learning with an honour's degree creates a win-win situation which develops the skills of graduates and meets the needs of employers. We are working closely with the Higher Education Funding Council for England to ensure that work-related skills become a more intrinsic part of higher education. This will enable us to build upon what has already been achieved through Graduate Apprenticeships and the new Foundation Degrees.

It would take another decade and more from this early example of combining an honours or post-graduate degree with work-based learning, underpinned by 'occupational standards', to be aligned with apprenticeship policy and considerable lobbying effort to re-establish full recognition of the value of the three-way relationship between employers, HEIs and PSRBs in the co-design and delivery of programmes that effectively bridged the divide between the occupational/professional competence required by employers and academic qualifications (Bravenboer and Lester, 2016, p. 412). But it was UVAC who offered me not only historical context but an aspirational and coherent push towards the achievement of higher apprenticeships alignment with university HE qualifications.

Good government and good policy making

In 2012, I (representing NAS) undertook an England wide consultation on *Meeting Employer Skills Needs: Consultation on Criteria for Higher Apprenticeships at Degree Levels* (NAS, 2012) (see Appendix A) using the guidance and support of UVAC which resulted in a sizeable revision to SASE that looked to address many of the barriers to the aspiration that higher apprenticeships in England could (and should) provide an 'alternative' route to professional status and senior job roles, and correct the misalignment with university qualifications on the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). Other subjectivities were constituted within the consultation text. The consultation exercise was designed for a mixed audience of potential respondents – described as employers, learning providers, further education colleges, universities, awarding organisations, professional bodies, SSCs and 'others' (NAS, 2012, p. 3) – and served more than one purpose. It posed a number of questions specifically related to how the SASE can best develop to support the criteria and

design of higher apprenticeships, including the naming and terminology of apprenticeships at level 4 and above, but it also started to frame apprenticeships in a new context. Higher apprenticeships were described as 'putting employers in the driving-seat', where employer-provider collaboration is key in determining what constitutes an apprenticeship on 'the basis of business need', and as enabling employers to develop their workforce to a higher level of skill. For individual apprentices, higher apprenticeships provided opportunities for career progression and for developing professional skills and for wider society, by including opportunities for professional body accreditation and membership, they presented 'a significant new route for enhancing social mobility'. While a coherent approach, one that reflected employer, learner, and government desire to see apprenticeships at degree level, the production of public work 2 was perceived by some internal and external partners as problematic and this dominated the discourse. I gave numerous talks to NAS colleagues and external stakeholder groups including all the HAF project leads and their partners to promote the idea and intention. Opposition appeared from those who were nervous that the public work was cutting across known apprenticeship divides: between FE and HE institutions, between FE and HE funded programmes, between traditional vocational and academic pathways, between different qualification types and sizes (Lillis, 2016 p. 80) and that confusion would be the result given the perception of apprenticeship as socially downgraded. I realised how little traction I had achieved within NAS (except for the chief executive, chief operating officer and one or two other senior officials and a DfE Apprenticeship Unit colleague who shared my vision) when I was advised very late in March 2013, by a key and influential official, that my secondary legislation could not be passed to take effect from the new financial year of 6th April without guidance available for framework developers on day one of the legislative change.

This knowledge and advice had not been forthcoming. In fact, it 'felt' that this disclosure had been deliberately withheld. Indeed, it had only been solicited during a chance conversation and with the clock ticking, and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary and Secretary of State engaged, I had just 7 working days in which to leverage resources (including that of UVAC) and write a comprehensive document that would become *Developing quality Higher Apprenticeship frameworks for England* (2013) (see Appendix B). The first version made its publication debut on 2 April 2013. It was a salutary reminder that

too much in policy making is left to 'chance, personality, and individual skill' (Hallsworth *et al.*, 2011, p. 5) and that while *I* was incentivised to look forward to the next big policy issue or initiative, I was butting up against some individuals who were far more culturally interested in the past and in perpetuating those traditions. Alliances came from those employers and HEIs with a strong mission to develop the skills of adults in work and for whom the policy was a major incentive to create higher apprenticeship opportunities. The level of support garnered was helped by my deliberate strategy of 'plugging into' as many external networks and connections that could provide me with the latest, high-quality thinking. UVAC and its extensive network of university membership became critical in this regard. For me, to develop, actively communicate, engage others, and hold onto a vision became key elements of my leadership and while not everyone was convinced by the revision and creation of new criteria in SASE, by Easter 2013 the results were tangible.

Analysis

The 'good work of the revised 2013 SASE' (Bravenboer, 2016, p. 395) is how the public work is later described and presented. The task of recontextualising public work 2 provides an opportunity to review it as an instance of discourse in apprenticeships in HE 'across boundaries' and read it distinctly differently, with the process of knowledge formation itself becoming an object of knowledge. The official text – public work 2 – constitutes a range of subjectivities (Simola *et al.*, 1998) which includes a number of organisations as the 'author' including DfE, DBIS and SFA. While I am not identified as the author in the text, from a Foucault perspective, this is ok given the bigger concern is to capture the 'historical turning point' (Turkel, 1990, p. 173) when higher apprenticeships became categorised and organised through the discourse of apprenticeships in, HE. In this regard 'the *author* makes discourse appear as activity, as originating in an entity with an identity that forms a core and partial reference to discourse, thereby providing a boundary to it' (Turkel, 1990, p. 176). The authority of the 'authors' subjectivity has been constructed with reference to the exercise of a legal right to act, of 'parliamentary sovereignty' and a parallel rise in the 'administrative state' and the executive power which when diffused to ministers, makes them semi-autonomous rule makers. This is how secondary legislation is made. SSCs or sector bodies are other authoritative subjectivities referred to in public work 2 but not as authors. Other subjectivities constituted within the text are not named but are inferred and

positioned as audiences of this official text which is giving them official notice of intended government action that will have an impact on their delivery operation and practice. In the case of SASE these other subjectivities include universities, higher education institutions, further education colleges and independent, private, training providers which are described by the Higher Apprenticeships Fund Prospectus (NAS, 2011, p.12), and confirmed later by the Augar Report (DfE, 2019), as making up England's post-18 education institutional structures. The 'apprentice' and 'employer' subjectivities present an interesting problematic as neither are directly mentioned - although SASE, by inference, positions the employer voice as carried by SSCs as industry representative bodies. However, the need 'to develop clear work-based career routes to senior technician, managerial and professional job roles' (ASSC, 2013, p. 1) and for stronger ladders of opportunity through apprenticeships to widen access to HE *is* set out as the purpose of public work 2 in the guidance written to 'complement' SASE. What is interesting is the subjectivities constituted for both don't yet position them as authorial voices or, indeed, the audience although it wouldn't be long before the notion of both the apprentice and employer as 'customers' and 'purchasers' of apprenticeship training would begin to emerge from the discursive strategies employed (Anderson and Crawford-Lee, 2016, p. 347) alongside a better recognition of the role that higher education has in the delivery of HE programmes that develop and accredit work-based learning and occupational competence.

The subjectivities that have been constituted are indicative of the discursive shifts that are evident within this official text. Prior to 'authoring' SASE, the minimum number of credits for all apprenticeships, irrespective of level, was the same (at 37 credits) and while many apprenticeships were larger in size, many were not. Using the FE credit system for attaining a qualification on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), 37 credits equate to 370 guided learning hours. When contrasted with the size of HE qualifications such as the size of a foundation degree of 240 credits or 2,500 notional learning hours, or a bachelor's degree with 360 credits or the equivalent of 3,600 hours of learning, the difficulty for progression by individuals on intermediate and advanced apprenticeships (Joslin and Smith, 2013) to their next level of learning and for the engagement of HEIs in the delivery of higher apprenticeships, often seen pejoratively as 'an alternative to university' is now all too apparent. Without the cooperation of UVAC, the revision to SASE would have simply

become a technical exercise as I grappled (and eventually failed) to convince the Minister and therefore the Secretary of State of the merits of aligning the number of credits in apprenticeships at level 4 and above with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), i.e., 120 credits at level 4, 240 credits at level 5, 360 credits at level 6 and a minimum of 180 credits at level 7. It was UVAC who assured me that by including changes to raise higher apprenticeships to the level of a bachelor's and master's degree for the first time and making the qualifications constitute at least 90 credits at levels 4 and 5 and 120 credits at levels 6 and 7 (which could be a single integrated qualification and therefore did not need a separate assessment of 'knowledge' and occupational 'competence') positively aligned higher apprenticeships 'nearer' to the size of university awards. This meant it more likely that for those HEIs with a strategy to work with employers to develop the skills of the workforce and a focus on supporting routes to professional recognition, the policy drive to create opportunities for higher apprenticeships would be of increased importance and interest. I have explored the oppositional positioning of apprenticeships and 'university' previously but the argument for their engagement was already being reinforced by the independent review of business-university collaboration led by Professor Sir Tim Wilson, former Vice-chancellor of the University of Hertfordshire:

> Higher level apprenticeships […] and work-based pathways have the potential to address the needs of employers and meet the aspirations of individuals. These could be developed to provide a highly valued alternative for school leavers who wish to combine work with gaining a higher qualification. Work-based pathways to higher qualifications have the potential to be a prominent feature of the HE landscape, addressing some of the long-term skills needs of employers and the aspirations of individuals (Wilson, 2012, p. 46).

The construction of authorial and audience voices within public work 2 is tied to the construction of apprenticeships in HE as a textual object. It employs the language of government authority and parliamentary practice to describe higher apprenticeships as 'rationally planned strategic governmental policy' (Bravenboer, 2009, p. 102) and action, and is an example of a text related to 'technologies of government' in so far as it 'operates to structure the field of action for others' (Simola *et al.*, 1998). Enacted with the full force and sanction of 'the State', public work 2 can be read as an example of disciplining practice

that sets out in legislative terms what is included and excluded in the official description, by type and size, of apprenticeships in England.

Knowledge - Power - Subjectivity

Table 2 takes Foucault's Triangle and the 'triangulated', 'fractal' approach detailed in chapter 3 to recontextualise this public work as an instance of the 'technologies of government'. The k-p-s (knowledge - power - subjectivity) analysis operates to reveal how technologies/techniques of government inter-relate to order and control the public work discourse, and flags where power was situated in the production of the public work.

Table 2[16]

***Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England* (2013)**		
Technologies / Techniques of Discourse (k)	***Technologies / Techniques of Government (p)***	***Technologies / Techniques of Self (s)***
k-k internal rules of discourse	***p-p ordering of forces***	***s-s modes of subjectification***
- constituting the regulatory framework for higher apprenticeships - requiring minimum criteria on standards to be met while leaving flexibility to determine size and type of HE qualification - realigning apprenticeships with higher education qualifications up to level 7 (master's level) - re-establishing the basis for collaboration between HEIs, universities, employers, and professional bodies	- understanding where discursive exchange was strategically deployed to promote descriptions of higher apprenticeships that are operating to close or regularise discursive exchange - using the public work to gain agency with UVAC who were able to facilitate wider discourse in HE and government - recognising where power resided in the approval of the public work	- acting as and on behalf of government, gaining no authority as a 'practitioner-researcher' - drawing agency and authority from acting as 'NAS' / DBIS / DfE and by extension, government - transitioning to becoming the expert; invited to join HE led institutional discourse - conceptualising the practitioner-researcher as a self-reflective and self-realising 'moral agent' (Hunter, 1994, p. 2)

[16] Taken from Heikkinen, *et al* (1999)

	- operating to shift own subject position to respond to the ordering of control	- seeking new knowledge, practice, and control
k-p systems of exclusion	***p-k disciplining practices***	***s-p art of governmentality***
- providing and resisting the idea of apprenticeships in HE - maintaining a regulatory system that opposes increases in HE engagement	- operating to promote the maintaining of government power over university power	- introducing a legislative mechanism designed to promote the expansion of HE in apprenticeships - governing the HAF projects, learning how to control the release of knowledge to counter government power
k-s rareification of speaking subjects	***p-s individualising practices***	***s-k will to knowledge***
- operating to give singular authorities and subjectivities a role to regulate and control aspects of HE practices in higher apprenticeships	- gaining agency within government as a practitioner-researcher, seeking ways in which to circumvent governmental controls to achieve pragmatic and moral objectives in the policy and process	- recognition of dissonance between language and practice in the official discourse - becoming self-conscious as a practitioner-researcher to the possibilities of new practice

End word

I can now acknowledge that SASE operated as a 'soft form of domination' through which inequalities were reproduced and perpetuated. It is Westminster Government that is positioned as the foremost authorial voice, the principal body which is authorised to 'speak' about what HE *is* in the context of apprenticeship policy, and what it must *be*. This is best demonstrated by its decision to set the minimum number of credits at levels 4 and 5 at an arbitrary 90 credits and levels 6 and 7 at 120 credits (DBIS, 2013, p. 17). Yet, additionally, while the changes left unresolved the issue of securing equity for HE/FE apprenticeship funding due to a complicated and seemingly inconsistent set of rules, and retained that apprenticeship frameworks should still be developed in accordance with National Occupational Standards (NOS), the revisions to SASE 'opened the door' for more universities with an alignment of existing provision to professional learning and competence qualifications, and an interest in working with employers, to develop apprenticeship programmes at the level of the degree. Indeed, it was this single policy initiative that provided the 'fertile ground for developing a more integrated approach to professional learning and competency' (Bravenboer and Lester, 2016, p. 412), notwithstanding the issues related to aspects of the FE focussed apprenticeship system which also acted as a brake on university engagement (Anderson *et al.*, 2012, p. 241). With the revision to SASE in 2013, and introduction (newly) in England of criteria for higher apprenticeships at degree level, it brought the size of the qualifications closer to the norms in HE and encouraged the use of integrated qualifications at any level with no requirement for separate assessment of 'knowledge' and competence' (Chappell, 2011, p. 4).

This revised approach also directed, where relevant, higher apprenticeships should be developed collaboratively with professional bodies, forming a pathway to professional registration and/or recognition. I admit that in apprenticeships policy terms, the significance of creating public work 2 was not clear to me at the time although I recall vividly my satisfaction in carrying out my authorial and leadership role with integrity. I know that I fulfilled Selznick's requirements (1952, 1990, 2000) for effective organisational leadership in that the following applied (applies) to me.

> Honoring *[sic]* commitments, developing principles, and protecting organizational integrity were essential to developing distinctive competence, creating social integration, and ensuring long-term success (Kraatz, 2009, p. 66).

That public work 2 would form a continuing process rather than constitute 'an end of an exercise in decision-making' (Colebatch, 2006, p. 311) is now a matter of history. My newly acquired understanding that creating integrity requires real effort to 'knit together diverse constituencies' and 'to engender cooperation and win consent' (Kraatz, 2009, p. 73) became my watchwords and continue to inform and influence my practice today. By extending the statutory basis for apprenticeship standards to level 6 (the level of a bachelor's degree) and beyond, I materialised a long sought-after promise; of a 'ladder' of apprenticeship opportunity, extending progression pathways from craft, trade and technical skills to honours and post-graduate levels which signalled 'to all those with a potential stake in higher apprenticeship development that universities have a pivotal role to play' (Anderson *et al.*, 2012, p. 246).

CHAPTER 6: PW3 Article: Sustainability 2030: a policy perspective from the University Vocational Awards Council, 2018

Championing higher and degree apprenticeships

Public work 3 is a peer reviewed article in a UK academic journal, *Higher Education Skills and Work-based Learning* (HESWBL), considered to be unique in that it is the only published journal to focus on the interface between higher education and the workplace. The 'official' journal of UVAC, it covers higher level skills, higher level work-based and work integrated learning and higher education, and since 2011 has published articles with strong impact implications for practice, practitioners and policy development.

This article was published in 2018, the year after I became the part-time Director of Policy and Operations at UVAC, and four years after I had left the civil service to start a 'portfolio career'. While I eventually enjoyed my move from organisational paid employment to portfolio contract working and transitioned to 'a collection of different bits and pieces of work for different clients (Handy, 1994, p. 175) operating with 'independence from any one employer and the packaging and exercising of one's skills in a variety of ways with different organisations' (Mallon, 1998, p. 169), the truth was that after redundancy from what I thought had become my life-long career, I had been forced into a form of self-employment (Smeaton, 2003) due to a perceived lack of employed alternatives (Clinton *et al.*, 2006, p. 180).

In the period between NAS (2012) carrying out its consultation on *Meeting Employer Skills Needs* which resulted in historic changes to SASE and my co-authoring of this article, several noteworthy events in apprenticeship policy making occurred. Firstly, as I was consulting on the revisions to SASE, UK Westminster Government had also commissioned an independent review of what apprenticeships should be and how they could meet the changing needs of the economy. The now infamous Richard Review (2012) with its front cover featuring paintbrushes and crossed spanners and rolling pins was mainly concerned with the more traditional apprenticeships in crafts and trades and made no explicit focus on higher apprenticeships other than to give tacit support for growth in 'higher apprenticeships' (at

levels 4 and 5) and beyond' (Richard, 2012, p. 35) and acknowledge the benefits that parity of esteem for apprenticeships, when considered alongside HE, would bring. Fundamentally the Review did not reflect the expressed outcomes of the UVAC led consultation on degree level higher apprenticeships, nor how university qualifications might be integrated with apprenticeships (Bravenboer, 2016, p. 394). What the Review did do was recommend that it should be employers who agree the design of an apprenticeship 'standard', detailing what an apprentice should know and be able to do on day one of completion of their apprenticeship, that they should be the 'purchasers' of apprenticeships and that quality of outcomes should be measured through holistic 'end tests' (Richard, 2012, p. 18). All of which became the foundation of the apprenticeship reforms. Secondly, The Future of Apprenticeships (DBIS, 2015a) newly described the 'Trailblazer' process by which apprenticeship standards would be created and approved and introduced the concept of 'degree apprenticeships' that would 'see apprentices achieving a full bachelor's or master's degree as part of their programme' (DBIS, 2015b, p. 9). Crucially, at this stage in the discourse on higher and degree apprenticeships, the stipulation was that where a degree apprenticeship is developed it must involve employers, universities, and professional bodies (where relevant) and modelled two ways; either using an existing degree combined with additional training to meet the apprenticeship requirement plus a separate test of full occupational competence at the end or as the guidance suggests:

> Employers, universities and professional bodies can come together to co-design a fully integrated degree course specifically for apprentices, which delivers and tests both academic learning and on-the-job training. We think this will be the preferred approach for many sectors, as the learning is seamless and does not require a separate assessment of occupational competence (DBIS, 2015b, p. 13).

From a personal and professional perspective, and from an intellectual contribution, this development reflected the significance of the revised 2013 SASE (public work 2) in not only consolidating professional body involvement in the design process but in creating a distinctiveness in apprenticeships at level 6 and 7 which, by their very definition, are HE. I now believe as a researcher-practitioner (and what I have learned from Febvre, Bloch and Foucault) that:

> We cannot wait for great visions from great people, for they are in short supply at the end of history. It is up to us to light our own small fires in the darkness (Handy, 1994, p. 271).

And public work 1 and public work 2 were my own 'small fires' in the historical unfolding of higher and degree apprenticeship policy developments in England. Thirdly, the White Paper, 'Success as a knowledge economy' (DBIS, 2016a) positioned degree apprenticeships within the chapter on 'Choice' as the mechanism by which HE will help employers to raise UK productivity levels and strongly posits the importance of universities in this policy area not least of all because the launch of the apprenticeship levy was heralded as a 'powerful incentive' for employers to work with universities as 'valued and innovative providers':

> The success of Degree Apprenticeships will depend on employers and universities working together. Employers will take the lead in designing the occupational standards taking account of the innovation and excellence universities can offer (DBIS, 2016a, p. 52).

It also established the 'Institute for Apprenticeships' (IfA) as a new independent employer-led body to oversee the quality of all apprenticeships from April 2017 to coincide with the introduction of the levy (announced in the Chancellor George Osborne's Summer Budget 2015 speech). So, the stage was set. It was in 2016 that UVAC first advocated that the government should focus on the development of high quality higher and degree apprenticeships, and that universities and HEIs have a crucial role to play (Anderson and Crawford-Lee, 2016, p. 349). Lobbying on this point reflected the remaining inconsistency in policy approach which favoured and promoted employer-university-professional body collaboration for degree apprenticeships on the one hand while limiting their engagement in non-degree higher apprenticeship development on the other.

Good government and good policy making?

Public work 3 was presented as an opportunity for me to curate a UVAC policy position with the guest editor and assistant editor-in-chief of HESWBL. The result was a manuscript for a special issue of the journal on work-based and vocational education as catalysts for sustainable development (Wall and Hindley, 2018) by selecting a number of key issues in relation to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2017; Wall,

2017a) which utilised 'The Manifesto for Work' (CIPD, 2017) for generating 'a manifesto for the professional sphere of higher education, skills and work-based learning' (Wall, 2017b, p. 311). I was the co-author with Tony Wall, Professor and National Teaching Fellow, and billed as lead author on publication in line with what several international bodies concerned with publishing ethics in academia suggest is 'someone who has made a substantial intellectual contribution to the conception, design, analysis and writing' (Tress *et al.*, 2014, p. 18). My responsibility was giving the UVAC policy perspective in relation to Professor Wall's Manifesto Paper, the broader sustainability context in relation to the global 2030 agenda and how *HESWBL* as a field fit in and the paper was positioned as the only UK policy perspective committed to sustainability and sustainable development in the policy and practice sphere of higher technical education and skills. It was not only a 'reflective policy and practice piece' (Crawford-Lee and Wall, 2018, p. 233) but also a form of 'ideology critique'. Which, when deployed across myriad disciplinary and subject areas including the political sciences (Žižek, 2006) *and* workplace learning (Wall and Perrin, 2015; Wall, 2016), much in the same way that Foucauldian discourse analysis is embedded in virtually all fields of critical inquiry which 'rendered visible' elements of *our* encounters in 'profoundly new ways' (Rabinow and Rose, 2003), ideology critique examines power structures usually overlooked in other spheres of reflective theory.

Following Wall (2017b), I perceived a need for another independent call to action by policy makers and practitioners to respond to contemporary challenges in relation to the apprenticeship, vocational, technical, and professional education system which was being subject to and framed against a background of reform.

> England's long experience of reform and development in apprenticeships particularly at the higher skill level is partnered with unprecedented change in its vocational and technical education for more than a generation. Indeed, proposals for T levels, institutes of technology (IOTs) and the early stages of a review of technical/technician level education at Level 4 (Certificate of HE) and Level 5 (Foundation Degree) comes at the same time as the announcement by the British Prime Minister of a year-long review of post-18 education including higher education tuition fees […]. This is placing particular emphasis on the content of technical qualifications and alternatives to traditional full-time three-year degree programmes, varying fee levels and demonstrating the value added of different HE courses including higher and degree apprenticeships (Crawford-Lee and Wall, 2018, p. 236).

Eager to contribute to discourse as the macro level as well as promote the positionality of UVAC on aspect of higher education policy to a global readership, public work 3 was an opportunity for me to establish a legitimate form of intellectual engagement with academic colleagues and with 'academia' but without the 'frenzied' subjugation to a poorly fitting theoretical framework fed by what Hambrick has termed 'theory fetish' (2007, p. 1349). Indeed, my purpose was to establish practical relevance, not 'a theoretical brick […] [*that*] may not translate easily into a nugget of meaningful knowledge that informs our world' (Elangovan and Hoffman, 2021, p. 70) by engaging with the most recent skills literature to examine the big questions in both policy and practice terms. I left the need to balance theoretical rigour with the more interesting aspects of the big, 'sustainability in HE' question-focused inquiries to my co-author who, having long succeeded by the metrics of the academy as a full professor and a 'professional academic', was free to pursue less orthodox and more provocative research and writing (Skea, 2021, p. 401).

In chapter 3, I gave a description of the higher and degree apprenticeship in HE discursive field and described Foucauldian 'technologies of truth following Simola *et al* (1998) which include 'technologies of self', technologies of government' and technologies of discourse'. Peer reviewed articles are of relevance to the analysis of the technologies of discourse and 'knowledge'. The process of authoring and subjecting the work to the scrutiny of other experts to check its validity and evaluate its worthiness for publication is an example of a technology employed to constitute 'what' is the 'true knowledge' about higher and degree apprenticeships in the discursive field of higher education and skills. Using a Foucauldian framework here, the questions of what is 'truth', the construction of 'truth' and what 'values' should be affirmed are made legitimate through a strict process of a peer review system including experts in the field.

Truths of apprenticeships in England

This public work text was produced after the introduction of the apprenticeship levy for employers with a payroll over £3m, arguably one of the most, if not *the* most significant development in fiscal and skills policy in several decades which is said to have had a transformative effect on the environment of higher-level skills in the UK by 'creatively

disrupting' the relationship between HE and the workplace and our understanding of it. A disrupting effect situated aside from the challenges introduced by the introduction of degree apprenticeships concerning such things as what is knowledge, what is competence and what is the difference between academic and professional standards, on-and-off the job learning (Bravenboer, 2019, p. 57, 68)? The aim of the text was to establish the 'true' knowledge about higher and degree apprenticeships in HE to guide the policy and practice of HEIs at this important juncture in the history of higher and degree apprenticeship policy.

For Foucault, of course, these types of questions would simply reproduce competing discourses which make known their own cultural assumptions of 'what is true, what is good and how we should act in the world' (Foucault, 2000 in Caldwell, 2007, p. 784). As an example of a technology of discourse, *Sustainability 2030* operates to describe in 2018 what is written and what is not written about higher and degree apprenticeships in HE (and skills) policy and the UK technical, vocational and professional education system and expresses who is authorised to speak, who is not, and how those authorised, should speak or, what Foucault calls, 'the screening among the speaking subjects' (Foucault, 1972, p. 222). Such rules about who can speak, how and when are steeped in the system rituals of – in HESWBL's case, double-blind – peer review and publication overseen by academic standards of rigor and transparency.

My co-author in *Sustainability 2030* used embellished language of sustainable development, sustainability and responsibility of apprenticeships, work-based learning (WBL), technical and vocational education to construct 'higher education' as that which could/should be described in relation to a set of principles utilising the sustainable development goals as a discursive framework including; well-being; reflective practice; equality and diversity; workplace inequalities; research and development and acknowledges the 'complexity of the sustainability aspiration' (Wall, 2017a, 2017b). I am not arguing that the description of HE within public work 3 is right or wrong. Indeed, I am concerned only with describing 'how' it is operating within the HE field. What I do argue, however, is that one of the important ways in which it operates to construct apprenticeships in HE is to create oppositions and alliances between the 'authors' and 'audiences' such as the United Nations, UVAC, UK government and HEIs.

As such, recontextualising the public work provides an opportunity to review it as an instance of discourse in higher and degree apprenticeship development across themes and institutional boundaries: between FE, HE and ITPs (including new types of institutions); between practical training and academic learning; between new and old methodologies of reflective practice and pedagogy; between different levels and types of qualification; between different quality regimes and systems of funding; between matters of productivity, skills, social mobility and widening participation, and to view it from new perspectives here. The specifics of the description of higher and degree apprenticeships in higher education (re)produced within *Sustainability 2030* is also determined by what is included and what is excluded in the construction of such alliances and oppositions, all of which both enable and delimit the discourse.

> Here, we are no longer dealing with the mastery of the powers contained within discourse…it is more a question of determining the conditions under which it may be employed, of imposing a certain number of rules upon those individuals who employ it, thus denying access to everyone else (Foucault, 1972, p. 224).

Additionally, it is supposed that authors choose what they write, but as Foucault talks about internal rules so it is that I was not entirely free since the process for writing an article is greatly determined and controlled by the peer review system. The point being, writing and publishing practices also determine the shape of the discourse.

The main authorial voice within public work 3 is UVAC's and my subjectivity as 'author', writing on behalf of and representing UVAC, is made explicit within the text. UVAC is described as 'the national representative organisations for universities committed to the vocational agenda and an independent voice in the sphere of higher education, skills and work-based learning' (Crawford-Lee and Wall, 2018, p. 237). While the term 'independent' can be read as not directly representative of or responsible to the UK government or any particular university (despite my name appearing above the University of Bolton, where UVAC has a registered office), and therefore free of policy or regulatory constraints, it is clear that UVAC does not represent disinterested parties. UVAC's authority is underpinned by the extent of its representation and its status as 'commissioner of the *Higher Education,*

Skills and Work-based Learning journal' (Crawford-Lee and Wall, 2018, p. 235) and the text is described as a 'call' or appeal to the audience of 'stakeholders' which includes HEIs, international readers and workplaces to 'raise the game of sustainability and sustainable development in the policy and practice sphere of higher education, skills and work-based learning'. It is reasonable to state that while the audience of the article any number of organisations and to an extent a 'general global readership', the principal audience of *Sustainability 2030* is universities and other HEIs with a nod to strategic policy makers and government influencers.

Public work 3 describes the role of HEIs in apprenticeships as both *positive*, including many aspects of successful practice, and *problematic* - which in the article I seek to highlight and address. The problems highlighted construct a range of oppositions and alliances including an opposition to: the academic vocational divide which made vocational programmes the poor relation and the 'choice of other people's children'; measures that favoured quantum over quality; the retention of level 2 skills as the focus of apprenticeships in England; resistance to change and the upward migration of apprenticeship skill levels at the level of the degree; and UK government inertia to changing the funding system with little understanding of HE and its 'further education first' approach to apprenticeship reform. More 'opaque' or non-explicit opposition is to those audience voices that resist the advent of higher and degree apprenticeships as a route to the professions and higher level, higher paid job roles for underrepresented cohorts.

Modes and mapping

According to Dowling (2009), there are four modes generated as cross products of discursive action and alliance. The diagram below describes each of the four 'modes of interactive social action' with specific reference to *Sustainability 2030* which include exchange of narrative, pastiche, hegemony, and equilibration. Modes of interaction are a useful way of constructing relationships between individuals (authors and audiences) and describing the nature of their engagement with each other:

	Discursive Action	
Alliance	Closure	Openness
Similars	*Equilibration*	*Exchange of Narrative*
Disimilars	*Hegemony*	*Pastiche*

Figure 4: Modes of Interactive Social Action (Dowling, 2009, p. 46)

My co-author and I both agreed that discursive openness of the style and approach of public work 3 would allow UVAC to build alliances of *similars*. This approach allowed me to present and share UVAC opinions and build a critical mass of ideas that would be instrumental to engagement. A key question was how I go about opening the discursive space to form an alliance through my interaction with the audience (understood as developing an alliance of similarity), sharing ideas under exchange relations through the exchange of narratives and invoking liberal authority strategies as described in chapter 4 (Dowling, 2009, p. 46)? The article's hegemonic moves (positioning UVAC as a conventional 'authoritative voice', i.e., the discourse of the audience is to give way to the discourse of the authors) also proved critical in knowledge construction by unpicking and commenting on the explicit oppositions to higher and degree apprenticeships in HE but, by return, invoked traditional authority. In this sense, as the author I was like the 'teacher' and the audience subjectivities the 'students' with an anticipation that at some future point the latter would join the former in 'academic' equilibration, to develop the 'discipline' and discourse of higher and degree apprenticeships in HE. As for pastiche, neither an alliance not an opposition, more a form of creative engagement between *disimilars*, this mode is expressed by the heavy citation of academic papers and authors' work, 'their respective work being referred to only by a reference' (Dowling, 2009, p. 23).

Equilibration **Mode of Discursive Action** *Similars / Closure*	***Exchange of Narrative*** **Mode of Discursive Action** *Similars / Openness*
- Assimilating what it means to develop and accredit occupational and professional work-based competence in and through work - Accommodating and adapting to a change in the focus of apprenticeships in England from level 2 craft and trade to higher technical, managerial, and professional job roles - Clarifying dual government objectives of apprenticeships: productivity and social mobility	- Chronicling and contextualising higher and degree apprenticeships within a debate between vocational and academic - Evidencing need for new pedagogical innovations to tackle complex demands of sustainable developments in the workplace - Congratulating HEIs of all types and sizes on responding to market opportunities and migration upwards in the skill level and professional occupational focus of apprenticeships - Articulating apprenticeships as aspirational
Hegemony **Mode of Discursive Action** *Disimilars / Closure*	***Pastiche*** **Mode of Discursive Action** *Disimilars / Openness*
- Tackling issues of skills policy and practice to engage both FE and HE - Challenging audience subjectivities on matters of technical education reform including responses to progression opportunities - Insisting the UK government acknowledge universities and HEIs as recognisable partners and interested stakeholders in vocational and technical education - Embedding notion of employer choice in choosing higher and degree apprenticeships in key public and private sector occupations including key graduate professions	- Calling for a raising of the stakes in sustainable development of higher-level skills and work-based learning including higher and degree apprenticeships -Signposting to sustainability learning content and emerging pedagogical perspectives including in areas of social innovation and social change work - Welcoming the rise in degree apprenticeships and the impact on social mobility and widening access

Figure 5: Mapping the discourse of higher and degree apprenticeships in public work 3

Having mapped the modes of interactive social action and discovered the rules of discourse in public work 3, **Table 3** takes Foucault's Triangle and the 'triangulated', 'fractal' approach detailed in chapter 3 to recontextualise this public work as an instance of the technologies of discourse and 'knowledge'. The k-p-s (knowledge - power - subjectivity) analysis operates to reveal how technologies/techniques of government inter-relate to order and control the public work discourse.

Knowledge - Power - Subjectivity

Table 3[17]

Sustainability 2030: a policy perspective from the University Vocational Awards Council (2018)		
Technologies / Techniques of Discourse (k)	***Technologies / Techniques of Government (p)***	***Technologies / Techniques of Self (s)***
k-k internal rules of discourse	***p-p ordering of forces***	***s-s modes of subjectification***
- Bounding and delimiting of academic 'internal rules' in producing the public work text or evidencing the 'myth of the academic community' - Hiding of the practitioner-researcher first person point of view; an absence of the subject pronoun 'I' - Placing emphasis on UVAC institutional subjectivity and perspectives as 'commissioner' of HESWBL and leading independent body for the field of HE, skills and work-based learning and the most	- Celebrating success of apprenticeship reforms resulting in wide reaching engagement of HEIs in England delivery of higher and degree apprenticeships - Style and content of the public work shaped, ordered and delimited by *HESWBL* and publication protocols including academic peer review - Establishing a position from which individuals can or cannot be described as 'peers'	- Writing on behalf of UVAC, positioned to assert authority as 'practitioner-researcher' and authoritative voice on higher and degree apprenticeships in HE

[17] Taken from Heikkinen, *et al* (1999)

authoritative voice on all strategic and operational aspects of higher and degree apprenticeships	- Desiring to make explicit the opportunity for university access via higher and degree apprenticeships to support widening participation and social mobility	
k-p systems of exclusion	***p-k disciplining practices***	***s-p art of governmentality***
- Omitting conflicting discourse of UK government and within HE of the relevance of apprenticeship delivery; instead describing engaging world learning universities in higher and degree apprenticeship delivery as good for the perception and brand - Implying a causal link between HE and strong, productive economy, operating largely as a rhetorical device, while other key determinants are excluded - Remaining silent on how curriculum development in the field of higher and degree apprenticeships requires a theoretical sensitivity that recognises recontextualisation as central to taught practice.	- United Nation's policy position on integrating notions of responsibility and sustainability into programmes of workplace learning - UVAC's stated policy position and opinion on the advent of degree apprenticeships and the role of HEIs; reframing HE understanding of how to develop and accredit occupational and professional competence in and through work – being ambitious for degree apprenticeship investments and engagement	- Willingness to subject the public work discourse to academic, peer review thereby opening up and constructing a discursive space - Identity and promotion of the practitioner-researcher and UVAC co-identity expanded to interact through written communication as a means of exchange with constituted subjectivities in discursive action

k-s rareification of speaking subjects	*p-s individualising practices*	*s-k will to knowledge*
- Describing HE delivery of higher and degree apprenticeships as valuable in the design and creation of programmes that deliver a professionally competent and highly skilled workforce - Making the macro and micro 'economic' and 'individual' case for expanding higher and degree apprenticeships delivered by HE	- Rethinking the role of HE as relevant to apprenticeship delivery in England in the same way as FE colleges and ITPs	- Implicating that what counts as valid research on higher and degree apprenticeships is determined by the 'research community' and university systems - Understanding the historically contingent way apprenticeships are associate with craft and trades (false) as demarcated from an all age, all level programme (true) - Acknowledging *Sustainability 2030* counts as knowledge contingent on publishing and peer review systems - As practitioner-researcher gaining association and recognition of HE and HEIs in UK skills policy and association of brand of apprenticeship with 'world-leading universities'

End Word

The creation of this text is the product of discursive practice where a number of subjectivities were operating in its production, and I was eager to write a paper that was both coherent and aspirational about the role of HE in apprenticeship policy. Public work 3 provides a very neat and concise summation of my intellectual contribution and professional learning at that time. Both impassioned and polemic in style from time to time, *Sustainability 2030* foreshadowed a sustained period of opposition in the England apprenticeship market to university involvement, where degree apprenticeships would be strongly opposed (e.g., Dawe 2019, Gravatt 2019, Augar 2019) and these vocal criticisms would begin to hold sway over policy, particularly on funding and issues of affordability, that influenced my subsequent work. Public work 3 was also an appeal to the HE sector itself; to recognise the opportunities for engaging with a new cohort of employers and a new cohort of learner and for embracing the 'creative disruption' that developing higher and degree apprenticeships can bring to innovation in approaches to teaching, learning and assessment 'to ensure that the position of universities at the leading edge of higher education provision is maintained' (Bravenboer, 2019, p. 75).

In 2020, UVAC wrote:

> Government should be proud of the policy success of the apprenticeship reforms - The integrity of the apprenticeship brand is not being damaged as some claim. Apprenticeship is increasingly being seen as an aspirational programme and not just a programme for other people's children. Apprenticeships has moved from being an intermediary and provider led programme with little focus on skills gaps and shortages to a high-quality employer led programme where apprenticeship is focused on the real skills needs of employers and the UK economy. This success should be celebrated (Anderson, 2020).

From their very beginnings, degree apprenticeships were considered appropriately and strategically well positioned in business and management subject areas in HE and this is where early adoption of delivery can be found in many cases in, HE. In the year following their inception Rowe, Perrin and Wall (2016) argued that they 'uniquely' extend the opportunity for individuals to engage newly in a form of HE which exists explicitly for the purpose of developing their professional competence. More so, that by linking higher and

degree apprenticeships to professional body outcomes and licences to practise and integrating their cost into what is a hypothecated tax, positions them as a serious business opportunity cost and investment. In contrast to public work 1 and public work 2 there was no involvement of government or the 'State' to determine its objectives. I was no longer the gamekeeper to HE's poacher I was now positioned as a subject 'inside' higher education. 'UVAC' controlled the discourse but was subject to it as its construction was subject to 'peer review' and therefore reflected the language and process of academic journal production.

CHAPTER 7: PW4 Special Issue of Higher Education Skills and Work-based Learning – 'Transforming the Perception of Apprenticeships in England: Professional Careers in the Public Sector', 2020

Championing higher and degree apprenticeships in the public sector

Public work 4 is a 120-page special issue (SI) of the UK academic journal, *Higher Education Skills and Work-based Learning* (HESWBL) comprising a guest editorial paper and 8 separately written, individually authored articles. Published in November 2020 it is another example of co-produced work, and as with public work 3, a collaboration with a university professor known to me professionally and who works in the same field. Like the other public works in this context statement, I not only had a main role in project managing and authoring, but in peer reviewing and peer editing, in its very inception, inviting and identifying manuscript authors, paper selection and ordering, along with problem framing, emboldened by a previous collaboration as guest editor for a special themed volume of the same journal (Crawford-Lee and Moorwood, 2019). This is the journal that I have been an active associate editor of since 2017, during which time I have overseen a 63 per cent uptake in readership and an increase in the journal's rankings by Scopus (Emerald Publishing, 2022).

Publication of this public work was intended to tie in with the milestone year set by the UK Government Apprenticeship Taskforce when it launched its vision for English apprenticeships (HMG, 2015) and declared a target of 3 million new apprentices by 2020. It also intended to be an anniversary edition as HESWBL would be celebrating its 10th year of publication The special issue's proposal on my written submission to the publisher in 2018 was framed by me as a 'showcase'. Of how apprenticeships in England, accelerated by increased HE entry into the market to deliver and raised ambition amongst public sector employers, have since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy became an aspirational choice for individuals wishing to pursue careers as nurses, healthcare and adult social care professionals, police constables, teachers, and social workers. The rationale was evident: public sector employers pay a substantial proportion of the Apprenticeship Levy with the NHS alone paying around £200m in Levy, equivalent to 8% of all Levy payments. Police

Forces and central and local government pay significant sums too. The NHS is using Apprenticeship to train registered nurses, nursing associates and health and adult social care professionals. The Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) is developing as a principal way of recruiting and training new police constables. Such developments occurred because of the apprenticeship reforms and the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy.

HESWBL had already published two special issues on higher apprenticeships (Helyer, 2012) and on higher and degree apprenticeships (Tudor and Helyer, 2016), with a third in development though unpublished (Crawford-Lee and Moorwood, 2019), but the system of apprenticeships in England had undergone significant change since their release. The public work opened up an opportunity and further possibility to explore and demonstrate the use and value of the relatively new concept of degree apprenticeships alongside higher apprenticeships to the public sector and to developing recognisably public sector roles. Additionally, the strategic importance of public sector degree apprenticeships for UK universities was only just starting to be realised and recognised and my co-guest editor and I estimated that by 2020, the impact on social mobility, diversity, and opportunities for widening access to the professions, on teaching and assessment practice, would be better understood, researched, and reflected on.

At this stage in the public work's evolution, degree apprenticeships had in part developed a reputation as the flagship apprenticeship programme, helping transform the image and perception of apprenticeship in key public sector role (Anderson, 2018). Yet, degree apprenticeships had had a mixed initial reception amongst public sector bodies (UUK, 2019, p. 26). This was partly related to challenges of funding constraints, staff shortages and issues of abstraction and partly because of concerns around maintaining high professional standards while introducing different approaches to training. It is in this context that the purpose of the special issue becomes critical to the discourse on higher and degree apprenticeships in HE.

Production of this public work was never about subjecting academics and practitioners to the aphorism 'to publish or perish' (Hyland, 2011, p. 58). The public work from the outset was aimed at collating and reporting best practice insights, covering a variety of angles from

stakeholders directly involved in higher and degree apprenticeships in the public sector, through peer review; a known method for recognising 'quality or scholarly legitimacy for research, while also often distributing academic prestige and standing on individuals' (Tennant and Ross-Hellauer, 2020, p. 1). Its aim was to bring new perspectives to and recognition of the value of 'learning integrated work' and work-integrated degrees (Lester *et al.*, 2016) by viewing best practice within and across sectors (health, government, policing, education) using several reference points to identify 'success and quality characteristics' from pedagogical practice in each public sector profession (Lillis, 2018, p. 6). To enhance and inform best practice in delivery and encourage new reflections on high level teaching and assessment in the workplace was also the ambition. It was my belief, and that of the other guest editor, that universities in the UK should have the opportunity and responsibility to showcase and share what constitutes best pedagogical practice in higher and degree apprenticeships and set standards and benchmarks which would raise expectations amongst apprentices, employers, and policy makers alike. Although the idea for the SI was conceived well before the Covid-19 pandemic, its final publication in late 2020 meant the context and therefore the discourse had shifted dramatically. The public work's guest editorial (Bravenboer and Crawford-Lee, 2020, p. 693-700) reflects on the public sector's resilience and its unprecedented growth of higher and degree apprenticeship starts. Several of the articles refer to the pandemic and the change in practice required to meet the global health challenge which consequently altered the nature and level of analysis. I now observe that the public work serves as evidence of 'sensemaking' (Weick, 1988, 1995, 2005), particularly relevant during a time of crisis (Cuevas Shaw, 2021 p. 11), itself seeking to translate 'a world of experience into an intelligible world' (Weick, 2001, p. 9), 'interpreted from the perspective that people enact the environments which constrain them' (Weick, 1988, p. 305) or, indeed, affords them opportunity to make sense of the world they encounter. By publishing such perspectives via a double-blind peer-review process, a process that strictly determines and adheres to the standards of scholarly publication, I endeavoured to open a discursive space to achieve academic credibility and acceptance, 'in the context of doing research' (Dowling and Whiteman, 2020, p. 783), with the academic practitioner and apprenticeship decision maker the ultimate audience, and arbiter of whether 'new knowledge' is given legitimacy, or not (Powell, 2015, p. 403).

Truths of apprenticeships in England

This chapter takes public work 4 as a text identified as an instance of social-cultural action within the higher and degree apprenticeship discursive field. Of relevance to the discussion of the discursive field is the form of 'discursive exchange' (Bourdieu, Habermas), the transaction between the text and the text reader, author, and audience, where the discourse is ongoingly shaped and reshaped and the relationships contingent and relational. I am concerned with the way that the text strategically constructs textual subjectivities and constitutes the object(s) of which it speaks, and how this public work (re)constructs higher and degree apprenticeship policy as a socially produced discursive object (Bravenboer, 2009, p. 72). In setting out the higher and degree apprenticeship discursive field, chapter 3 described Foucauldian 'technologies of truth', following Simola *et al* (1998) as a model of the power relations within discursive fields which included 'technologies of self', 'technologies of government' and 'technologies of discourse'. The analysis of the journal gives an example of a text related to 'technologies of self' by providing a theoretical framing of how subjects are made, as it describes a deterministic process for official approval of academic manuscripts and therefore the identification of the 'right' authorial subject and 'voice' for a special volume on transforming the perception of apprenticeships in England. Inherent to this is how power/knowledge and governmental controls (Foucault, 1988) operate in relation to my positioning (subjectivity) as guest-editor and peer reviewer. In this way 'technologies of the self' provide the critical lens and the dialogical tool to 'think through' the challenges of higher and degree apprenticeship policy and assist to 'make sense' of the many voices arising from this 'contested' and highly politicised discursive space (Black, 2019, p. 179).

New modes and mapping

In constructing a new description of the public work as text (see Brown and Dowling, 1998; Dowling and Brown, 2009; Dowling, 1998; Bravenboer, 2009) I have constructed a discursive space that I call *modes of discursive subjectivity* to describe the discursive strategies present and the relations between subjects (editors, writers, readers, authors, and audience). The approach makes perfect sense as the nature of guest editing a journal is all about each author and their own individual claims. The public work is equally all about capturing the

dynamics of individual subjectivities in the higher and degree apprenticeship discursive space. As in chapters 4-6 the 'analysis entails the establishing of divisions' in consideration of the binary variables or oppositions and alliances (or juxtapositions) that are the first 'organising principle' in this interrogation mode (Dowling, 2009, p. 48).

By constituting subjectivities, the cross-product analysis that is framed as *Figure 6* looks to describe how recontextualising higher and degree apprenticeship policy and practice is made distinctive in the setting of open and closed discursive exchange. As such homogenous subjectivity is constituted as equivalent with an open category of other subjects that are comparable. Put another way, a mode of subjectivity that is homogenous (or similar) positions a subject as that which can be compared with other subjects with shared attributes whereas a heterogenous subjectivity is constituted as dissimilar and diverse. In my discursive space *constructing*, while related etymologically to *shaping*, the difference between them is this: that constructing is formed *from* parts while shaping *gives* shape and definition. My various *modes of discursive subjectivity* aim to describe a range of discursive strategies in the analysis of my public work and does not rule out that the text employing a number of *modes of discursive subjectivity* at the same time.

	Discursive Exchange	
Subjectivity	*Open*	*Closed*
Homogeneous	*Shaping*	*Reflective*
Heterogenous	*Constructing*	*Normative*

Figure 6: Modes of Discursive Subjectivity

The analysis presents the shaping and normative modes as opposites, defined in turn as homogenous and heterogenous subjectivity in the context of open and closed discursive exchange. The schema also describes two other ideal types or modes as opposites: reflective and constructing, that differ from each of the others on only one variable. Indeed, the homogeneity of subjectivity and openness of discursive exchange are achieved together in alliances, oppositions and juxtapositions that regulate the rules of the discourse.

Public work 4, with its descriptions of 'higher and degree apprenticeship delivery and policy' as practice, positions the object and positions the subject to align with other subjects, with the subjectivity of discourse a crucial aspect since it concerns 'language as an expression… of perceiving, feeling, *speaking subjects'* (Marin-Arrese, 2010, p. 22). It is an elaborate description of the 'fast-growing aspect of the higher education and professional skills training landscape in England' (Bravenboer and Crawford-Lee, 2020, p. 693) and the role that 'higher and degree apprenticeships play in determining skills priorities; no more so than when they are enhancing the delivery of key public sector services' (Anderson and Crawford-Lee, 2020b, para. 7.3). The public work demonstrates the presence of open 'discursive heterogeneity' given the presence of competing discourses in higher and degree apprenticeship policy by providing the opportunity for individual subject authors to take a critical position in relation to 'the rich and challenging context for public sector working' (Bravenboer and Crawford-Lee, 2020, p. 694). Indeed, it appears that the text operates as a mode of open discursive exchange aided through the power of language (Fairclough, 2001, p. 4) as a way of shaping and constructing language and for making subjects behave.

The guest editorial in itself could constitute a form of discourse 'manipulation' involving the usual forms and formats 'such as emphasising *Our* good things and emphasising *Their* bad things' *(my emphasis)* (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 359) but I like to describe it as a form of 'persuasion' or 'informing'; the audience as subjects are not passive, but free to accept or not the discourse presented to them. Its salient position at the front of the journal is an example of homogenous subjectivity that is governed by a euphemistic 'closed' mode of discursive exchange between subjects given its role in formulating the opening narrative, being the 'foreword' of the text, reflecting on past scholarly works and reproducing well-rehearsed positioning on 'the growing scale and significance of public sector higher and degree apprenticeships' (Bravenboer and Crawford-Lee, 2020, p. 695). My intention and that of my guest-editor was not to exercise control over others on the status and perception of higher and degree apprenticeship policy but we were aware that our subjectivity (position), including as guest-editors, and the knowledge that we had in our respective roles in higher education emphasised our credentials and gave us control of the discourse - but only in so far as we knew the guest editorial would be interacting and communicating with

(amongst others) subjects with a shared culture and similar beliefs (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 369). I concede that the guest editorial construes well-known oppositions between '*Us*' (higher education) and '*Them'* (Government), '*Old'* (modes of delivery) and '*New'* (thinking) and oscillates between descriptions constructed through a normative mode of discursive subjectivity – requiring an understanding of the inferred and less obvious rules, norms and mores governing the discourse on higher and degree apprenticeship policy - and more opening exchanges in the context of homogenous descriptions of higher and degree apprenticeship delivery by HE and of equally comparable ideas.

As a process of compilation, the academic peer-review process is seeking compliance from the author subject with the norms of publishing behaviour but not conformity to the type of thematic area each author may wish to describe. The public work presents differing instances of subject knowledge and higher and degree apprenticeship provision and even though the coverage by authorial voices range from best practice advice to critical observations, from case studies to reflection on policy and practice and broader, contextual perspectives public work 4 does determine that it is possible to bring forward comparisons between different things that can, although distinct, be comparably described.

Figure 7 below maps the distribution of the various forms of description of higher and degree apprenticeships in the public sector within public work 4 that constitute the dynamic strategic relations between modes of discursive subjectivity.

***Shaping* Subjectivity**	***Reflective Subjectivity***
- Drawing on best practice in work-integrated learning (WIL) to enhance access to public sector professions including police constable, registered nurse, social worker, and teacher - Tutors and apprentices informing pedagogical innovation in the use of VR and AR to develop skills, safely but which 'closely reflects real life' - Professionalising job roles, attracting different cohorts and raising standards in public sector leaders - Questioning constraints and controls	- Providing opportunities for new work-based progression routes to professions and higher-level occupations - Emerging apprenticeship progression opportunities within the public sector, opening doors for underserved groups - Higher and degree apprenticeships representing the fastest growth in starts and proportion of employer spend from the Levy - Reflecting on what it is to be a professional, learning on the job -Engaging in reflective practice
Constructing Subjectivity	***Normative Subjectivity***
- Employers and apprentices accepting the benefits of online and blended approaches to apprenticeship delivery and the value of mor work-integrated approaches - Introducing new thinking about the role of practitioners and employers in co-developing, delivering and optimising higher and degree apprenticeships - Challenging practitioners to look critically at how well-established approaches may require repurposing when delivering to public sector - Reconstituting the notion of HE that recognises the workplace as a source of learning and in creating 'learning organisations'	- Entry of the market by large levy paying employers replacing the dominance of small and medium-sized enterprises - Demonstration that higher and degree apprenticeship programmes are more resilient to economic shocks particularly in key public sector roles - Disrupting the relationship between HE and the workplace, changing wider understanding of the role of HE, working with employers - embedding of degree apprenticeships as means of entry to nursing - Recognising that occupational 'competence' can be embedded into HE qualifications and professional recognition

Figure 7: The dynamic distribution of discursive subjectivity in public work 4

Knowledge - Power - Subjectivity

There are a number of themes in Foucault's work that are relevant here to the discursive practices present in this public work and which affected its conduct and control. In chapter 3, I set out how where there are discourses, there is power; and Foucault frequently returns to this point as, 'Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it' (Foucault, 1978, p. 100) achievable by virtue of the fact that there 'can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth' (Foucault, 1980, p93). Meaning discourses are powerful, as they operate as rules in which the 'truth' statuses of a knowledge comes from the field in which it is deployed, and not from an individual subject's beliefs or motivations or, put more simply:

> Those individuals or institutions whose discourses are accepted as "truth" are practising the power to label and to set the conditions and regulatory framework in which other discourses must compete (Shepherd, 1996, p. 57).

This statement reiterates an important point. Concern is with the visible features under which *what* is said has a 'truth value' and not with *who* says what (Shepherd, 1996, p. 58). It suggests that the discursive shifts in higher and degree apprenticeship policy in HE is better understood when referenced to *practices*, and higher and degree apprenticeship seen as a practice of power, given that 'it is a practice that has its own form of sequence and succession' (Foucault, 1972, p. 169) and not when referenced to why individuals carry out these practices at a particular time. The emphasis here is on the consequence of practices, i.e., 'the focus is on the discourse *itself*: how it is organised and what it is doing' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p. 49) and because as Foucault himself phrased it and I reflected on this earlier in chapter 1:

> People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 187).

O'Leary and Chia in picking up the threads on facilitating sensemaking argue it 'involves the oftentimes unconscious invoking of a governing episteme for ordering the world' (2007, p. 393). This links back to Foucault (1970) for whom epistemes are unspoken 'rules of formation' that determine how authorised (legitimate) forms of knowledge are constituted,

the underpinning codes 'that govern its language, its logic, its schemas of perception, its values, its techniques…' (O'Leary and Chia, 2007, p. 393). In this chapter public work 4, as a published special volume, is re-read as an account of the role of power relationships in the locating and interpretation of its work and explores the dynamics of power and its structuring effects (Foucault, 1980). This chapter explores central themes including editorial responsibility and authority, the function and purpose of peer review and its epistemic implications with a reminder that in producing this public work, my co-guest editor and I were responsible for producing a text that had a mark of quality, status, and credibility in the scholarly community and brought forward experiential 'truths' formulated within the disciplinary constraints and conventions of academic discourse (Bourdieu, 1988). I was particularly mindful that, unlike my co-collaborator, I did not identify (or even qualify) as an *academic* but what I could lay claim to was, a broader aspect of the role, that of contributing. I understood what it meant to be associated with academic work; of intellectual stimulation, promoting research ideas and the notion of 'making a difference' (Rosewell and Ashwin, 2018; Boyd and Smith, 2016; Fanghanel, 2012) and the benefits of academic publishing as a creative process (Acker *et al.*, 2022).

In this regard we were both, equally, 'gatekeepers', if not (perhaps more so), curators in academic discursive production intent on positioning public work 4 within the field of HE as an authoritative source for those interested in higher and degree apprenticeship practice and pedagogy in public sector professional training. As such, I constituted my subjectivity as the expert in all aspects of higher and degree apprenticeship strategic policy and operations and an experienced technical expert on peer reviewing and the scholarly publishing process with the power this signified (Foucault, 1982). Indeed, as 'curator' I had the agency to select an article and bring it into discourse, to allow it to accrue discursive value, qua important by virtue of its inclusion, and be shared between author and audience.

I led and undertook an immense amount of organisational work as guest-editor in the two years from inception to publication of public work 4. Once the overall themes were described in an open call for papers by the publishers it was not the case that authors were forthcoming in large numbers. So, no article submitted was rejected by the editors at the desk stage, and all had a chance to go to peer review. I harnessed my previous experience of

guest editing by adopting in the early phase an intense and personal engagement in terms of leadership and management with the intention that the peer review process would be 'supportive and familial' (Wakeling *et al.*, 2018, p. 131). I directly invited and commissioned two authors (Lester, 2020, pp. 701-714; Garnett, 2020, pp. 715-725) because they were known to me as skilled hypothetical and conceptual writers and could be guaranteed to deliver manuscripts of high quality 'with communicative efficiency based on audience awareness' (Alamargot *et al.*, 2011, p. 505), peer-edited another (Konstantinou and Miller, 2020, pp. 767-781) by 'sensitively assessing and providing feedback' (Crossman and Kite, 2010, p. 2) and peer supported a paper (Taylor and Flaherty, 2020, pp. 751-766) whose authors also needed persuading of the status of the journal's ranking, citation counts and academic standing as a determination of its impact and quality (McKinnon, 2017, p. 433) before agreeing to submit. I peer reviewed four other papers and am now pleased to reflect that it is not the case that issues of power, discoursal constraint and conflict (Foucault, 1980) in the national discourse on higher and degree apprenticeships were under-reported in the public work. Lillis and Varetto (2020, pp. 799-813) explore how and why governmental authority impeded the viability for degree apprenticeships in regulated health and adult social care professions and the possibilities for challenging those bureaucracies who control the policy discourse. By including these perspectives, the public work identifies higher and degree apprenticeships as 'an aspect of organisational capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) *and* academic practice in recognition of:

> The subject who writes and who does lots of other things besides writing is a complex subject engaged in the dynamic and risky process of text production and educational negotiation (McInnes and James, 2006, p. 171).

Having mapped the modes of discursive subjectivity and discovered the rules of discourse in public work 4, **Table 4** takes Foucault's Triangle and the 'triangulated', 'fractal' approach detailed in chapter 3 to recontextualise this public work as an instance of the 'technologies of self'. The k-p-s (knowledge - power - subjectivity) analysis operates to reveal how technologies/techniques of self, inter-relate to order and control the public work discourse.

Knowledge - Power - Subjectivity

Table 4[18]

'Transforming the Perception of Apprenticeships in England: Professional Careers in the Public Sector' (2020)		
Technologies / Techniques of Discourse (k)	***Technologies / Techniques of Government (p)***	***Technologies / Techniques of Self (s)***
k-k internal rules of discourse	***p-p ordering of forces***	***s-s modes of subjectification***
- Publishing rules acting as a filter of 'acceptability' and publishable quality - Absence of the practitioner-researcher "I" – emphasis on institutional and authorial subjectivity - No conflicting discourse – editorial process selective and journal specialised in its coverage	- Guest-editors', publisher, and authors' desire for recognition of the validity of higher and degree apprenticeships and acceptance of claims of new knowledge - The need for a permanent public record of the work that can be found and cited adding to the body of knowledge	- Positioned with authority as practitioner-researcher and expert in editorial controls and in higher and degree apprenticeship policy and strategy - Experiences and reflective learning of author subjectivities turned into form of authoritative academic output
k-p systems of exclusion	***p-k disciplining practices***	***s-p art of governmentality***
- 'Self-exclusion' by authors and writers amongst HE with no interest in engaging with published research - Co-editors framing the journal's themes that would tell overwhelmingly the story of success, development, and innovation and critique	- Acknowledging government policy on Apprenticeship Levy and Levy investment primarily benefitting public sector employers - Government agency's policy position on aligning HE qualification, professional status and apprenticeship	- Creating a discursive space to subject key aspects of HE practice of higher and degree apprenticeship delivery to public, policy and academic scrutiny - Construct higher and degree apprenticeship as HE institutional activity/practice and purposeful activity

[18] Taken from Heikkinen, *et al* (1999)

government constraints on discourse	certification through integrated degrees	
k-s rareification of speaking subjects	***p-s individualising practices***	***s-k will to knowledge***
- Esoteric importance of the journal to the community of WBL practitioners including HE providers delivering higher and degree apprenticeships	- Rethinking the role of higher and degree apprenticeships in public sector occupations in relation to innovation in practice	- Knowing the benefits of showcasing routes to the professions created by higher and degree apprenticeships in key public sector service roles

End word

Public work 4 helps to construct the discursive strategies at play by turning reflections and experiences into an authoritative academic output, to be used as a means to share research and practice and distribute knowledge. At the discursive level it constructs authorial and audience voices via a reconstruction of the subjectivities that create relational and strategic positions in higher and degree apprenticeship provision in HE. It is worth a personal reflection at this point. For generations England has suffered from a perceived/real academic vocational divide. By the time this public work was conceived, through a combination of the apprenticeship reforms and a clearer policy focus that combined with the hard work of policy officials and universities, the skills system had, arguably, in the University of Cambridge, the number one ranked university in the world engaged in apprenticeship delivery in England. I would state that this complemented the engagement of world-class employers and the development of apprenticeships in occupations and professions across the public and private sector that undoubtedly passes the scrutiny and muster of any aspirational parent and represents the fundamental discursive and epistemic shift experienced between the production of public work 1 and public work 4.

CHAPTER 8: REFLECTIONS – Weaving the threads and reflecting on the public works

Introduction

The idiom of 'Gamekeeper turned Poacher' is how I describe my journey to preparing this Context Statement, with the professional doctorate giving me an opportunity to take time to reflect on my personal and professional journey which has, at times, been extremely challenging given not only the duality of researching myself and my field of interest but because the notion of being a reflective practitioner (Schon, 1983) has not always felt applicable to me as a policy maker or observer and influencer of public policy. Idiomatically though it is not quite the extreme case that I now protect the interests of people and organisations I once opposed nor is it true that UVAC, the not-for-profit I now head up, and the HE sector more generally were guilty of wrongdoing (or misdoing) in the field of higher and degree apprenticeship skills policy in England. Rather, my journey, demonstrated by my public works, is represented by opportunities to remain 'in the same world' (Norman, 1995) and considers how my influence as both *gamekeeper* and *poacher*, has been (and remains) of benefit (Sin, 2014). From my taking over as government's national policy lead of higher apprenticeships in 2011, to becoming first director and now chief executive of an organisation created by the HE sector for the HE sector and described as 'the most authoritative voice on all operational and strategic aspects of higher and degree apprenticeships with a strong mission to champion higher-level vocational learning' (Anderson and Crawford-Lee, 2020a, p. 2), I have demonstrated how my personal commitment and professional development has contributed to a co-production and enabling approach to leadership and the creation of the public works; with the reality, discourse and interpretation of each having emerged dialogically (Freise, 2018, p. 29).

Indeed, as public works, the dominant feature of their coming about is co-construction, shared writing, and dual authorship and this approach has been long maintained as a key component of my professional practice (see Anderson *et al.*, 2022; Lester and Crawford-Lee, 2022; Bravenboer and Crawford-Lee, 2020; Anderson and Crawford-Lee, 2020a, 2020b, 2017; Crawford-Lee and Moorwood, 2019; Crawford-Lee and Hunter, 2009). So, it is fair to

surmise that I favour a team effort, where combining collaborative and intellectual engagement can enhance leadership and impact because as collaborators 'we' become a functioning community the form of which is always contingent, shifting, and renegotiated (Himley *et al.,* 1996, p. 168). The 'we' is also, necessarily, Foucauldian as 'we' work in 'the space between' agreed alliances, formed oppositions, and shared purposes (Rabinow, 1984, p. 385).

This is an important chapter. It reflects not just on my personal learning resulting from the recontextualising of my public works (ergo engagement with the doctoral process) but summarises their effect on apprenticeship reform discourse and the likely impact on my future practice and career opportunities in the field. Foucault's 'technologies of truth' have been deployed in the construction of my public works which for all its novelty has meant 'reading' my public works as instances of 'socio-cultural fields of action' (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 32) that are historically contingent and constituted by the strategic formation, maintenance and/or destabilising of oppositions and alliances within the broad field of professional discourse of higher and degree apprenticeship policy. Key to this has been to describe how my public works, as instances of 'socio-cultural fields of action', are operating within the localised and specialised aspect of higher and degree apprenticeship discourse to recontextualise the practices associated with my field of interest. To initiate the process of recontextualising my public works I built on the work of Foucault and subjected each public work discourse to Simola *et al*'s (1998) knowledge, power, subjectivity (k-p-s) 'kaleidoscopic triangle' by taking the three sets of discursive technologies at play, 'technologies of self' concerning the *subject/who*, 'technologies of discourse' concerning *knowledge/what* and 'technologies of government' concerning *power/why* centred by 'technologies of truth' or *how*, to analyse the substantive verbal traces left by their creation. The position of my approach and individual public works as texts, and as instances of social-cultural action in the 'apexes, sides, and edges' of the Foucauldian triangle, has determined the discursive space of higher and degree apprenticeships in England (Heiskala, 1990, p. 311).

The results are summarised in a tabular form to demonstrate how this approach is relevant to and emerged from my practice, determines what it is possible to speak of and who can 'speak' at any time and which statements can be made to provide a 'catalogue of

possibilities'. However, to extend this analysis beyond a simple reproductive approach I adopted Dowling's cross-products (1998, 2009, 2010, 2013, 2020) in analysing public works 1 and 3 by introducing 'modes of recontextualisation' and 'domains of action' (2013, p. 317). Dowling distinguishes between a forensics analysis of texts (2009) and 'constructive description' (1998, 2009) and this method allows for structures, or 'patterns of relations between positions' (2009, p. 46), of oppositions and alliances, to emerge in relation to the reading of each public work. I then take and extend Dowling's approach in chapter 7 and create my own discursive space, I call *modes of discursive subjectivity*, to apply to public work 4 as a cross-product of my own.

Cataloguing Possibilities and Facilitating Change

Reflection has provided insight to the changes made, and commonality of approach, to my professional practice and when combined with a doctoral level of intellectual engagement highlights the impact the public works have had on the character of my practitioner-researcher subjectivity. As a practitioner I have facilitated change at a national level (strategic and positional), at the level of organisations (relational: internal and external) and field of interest level (ideational) and have met the doctoral standards by articulating my 'expertise and position in the field' (Middlesex University, 2016, p. 21) sufficiently to demonstrate I have influenced 'practice and thinking'.

Recontextalising my public works I now see as an instance of discourse in higher and degree apprenticeship development, centred on the 'technologies' employed 'across boundaries' and as an exercise in availing oneself to historical inquiry, where 'to use it [is] to deform it, to make it groan and protest' (Foucault, 1980, p. 54). I can confidently make the claim that the doctorate has given me an opportunity to demonstrate a wholly different level of analysis by creating my own discursive space in which to analyse public work 4, particularly, rather than relying on someone's pre-existing approach. At the doctoral level it demonstrates my subjectivity as a practitioner-researcher illuminating my capacity and capability to construct entirely new knowledge (Middlesex University, 2016, p. 17) and say something that isn't said anywhere else in the literature on higher and degree apprenticeships.

Personal Possibilities

In completing my professional doctorate by public works, it is no surprise I fit the typical profile of those senior managers and leaders undertaking a form of higher-level management education by seeking out an elite HE qualification that will not only give a rocket boost to their practical and professional work skills but 'will also be face valid' – accepted as evidence of high-status credentials (Poole, 2018, p. 212). After all, I operate and am professionally situated within the field of higher education and work alongside those who have already met the standard of 'the academy' (QAA, 2018) on a day-to-day basis. Poole (2018) also draws parallels between the opportunity afforded by a professional doctorate and my own field; 'that what higher and degree apprenticeships provide for young adults (an opportunity to study, develop vocationally and work at the same time…) [the professional doctorate] offers to mid-career professionals' (Poole, 2018, p. 212) or, in my case, an older, late-careerist.

What have I learned? That everything can be questioned, including the invincible truth of self-certainty … 'I think therefore I am'. In this regard Foucault goes far further in exploring the boundaries of self-reflexivity, by reasoning, that ideas of the individual self, impulsion, intention, empiricism and reason, and unwitting motivations are located within the workings of discourse of knowledge and power. In this way Foucault 'historicizes' any assumption of a truly self-conscious or autonomous subject because the 'subject', *me,* 'is essentially wiped clean to be historically written and rewritten anew' (Caldwell, 2007, p. 780). Undoubtedly, my professional practice and self-opinion has changed by undertaking the doctorate. I have learned that reflexivity is crucial if hagiography is to be avoided in subjecting oneself to what Eastman and Maguire describe as 'the unpremeditated use of autobiography to improve criticality and academic writing' by doctoral candidates (2014, p. 3). In truth, I have often told myself (and others) that I am not reflective that I am a pragmatist. That the notion of being a reflective practitioner does not apply to me as a policy maker or observer and influencer of policy. Being reflective has often felt like the equivalent of a modern-day selfie, and therefore easy to dismiss and criticise as a moment of egotism (if not narcissism, and like Narcissus unable to see myself uncritically), a worthless and 'glorified ego trip', a 'look-at-me' moment, a moment of supreme self-indulgence. However, in pursuing my doctorate I have embarked on a journey akin to a

memoir where narcissism, it could be argued, is inscribed, indeed implied, in the very phrase: *me moi* (Blake, 2015). From a personal learning perspective, I will leave the thought about whether everything ***should*** be questioned, and which elements have more transformational power, to my future thinking.

Am I being narcissistic or am I, by analysing each public work, on a noble quest for truth? Here is the thing. Eastman and Maguire also hold the view that as a doctoral candidate I have been encouraged to recount my story as it relates to my current and former workplace experiences and what has informed my leadership ethos, actionable insights, and decision-making processes (2014, p. 3), but discouraged from seeing my story as a history arguing that the latter 'is experienced, recounted and condensed usually chronologically' whereas the autobiography functions more as *language* in which criticality can emerge. While I perhaps don't wholly disagree, I look to a more historically informed, if not pragmatic, approach to connect my scholarship with the nature of 'knowing' and 'acting'. Emile Durkheim's 'The Evolution of Educational Thought' (lectures from 1904-1905) offers a more ubiquitous and enabling way of linking the past with the present when he writes that we are 'a product of history and hence of becoming… that history begins nowhere, and it ends nowhere' and posits that there are myriad ways of accessing the truth. It is, therefore, my view that this context statement can be classed as 'historical-autobiographical' that embodies historiographical *and* personal meaning and, most importantly, constitutes valid history (Aurell, 2015, p. 267) without being at odds with not seeking to establish what might be 'true' and/or 'untrue' from any 'principled' perspective (Bravenboer, 2009, p. 31). Put another way, the context statement by adopting a discourse-historical approach to critical discourse, places 'the historicity of fields, discourses and practices on centre stage' (Forchtner and Schneickert, 2016, p. 294).

Fundamentally, the doctorate has provided an opportunity to reflect, in a scholarly way, on the higher and degree apprenticeships conceptual journey, my role specifically and my intellectual and scholarly trajectory. In revisiting my own history, I have subjected my career experiences and my public works to an unimaginable level of epistemological scrutiny and process, but it has facilitated critical reflection and acted as a reminder of the choices and motivators that have informed my agency, professional practice, and leadership style.

Most gratifying of all, I now make sense of my scholarly past from A level history to history graduate to post-grad in public policy to, after a thirty-year hiatus, doctoral study. This context statement is a fitting tribute to the following: My younger self who, I could only recall *because* of my doctoral research, wrote fluently at age 19 about critical theory, German idealism, existentialism, and French philosophy. To 'Narbonne' (Marc Leopold Benjamin Bloch) and my first 'Aha!' moment where I first recognised and picked up in him my 'golden thread' (Lester and Costley, 2010) and who is one of the most influential historians of the twentieth century. When he died a resistance hero in 1944, he had already brought about a revolution in the way history would be recorded and historians, via the Annales school, encouraged to tackle areas of study long thought to be beyond 'their purview' (Cohen, 2022). Which brings me to the reverberations of Foucault (as historian) and the questioning of objective truth, the understanding of power, and to Dowling who calmed my nerves by asserting '…it is no more necessary to resolve your epistemology or ontology in your empirical research than it is to incorporate a declaration of your religious affiliation…' (Dowling and Brown, 2010, p. 143). To Bourdieu, for emphasising the contextually contingent nature of truth claims and, finally, to Barthes. *Mythologies* (Barthes, 1957/2012), with its uncovering of meaning behind the everyday and the esoteric, was the first text that was thrust into my hand on starting my doctoral journey and helped inform my method of inquiry.

So, it is appropriate to pay homage to Barthes who in 1967 – the year of my birth – predicted significant changes in historical writing with his essay 'The Discourse of History' (1967/1981) with its resistance to the idea that 'history writes itself' or 'the facts speak for themselves'. This Barthes, describes, is because: 'The historical fact is linguistically associated with a privileged ontological status: we recount what has been, not what has not been, or what has been uncertain.' (1981, p. 6). Following on from Barthes, there is, no doubt that the 'I' in my context statement has been unleashed in the positioning of my public works within the discursive technologies that have operated to dynamically constitute 'public policy and legislation' regarding higher and degree apprenticeships in England.

Final word

In conclusion and by my own judgement, admittedly, from my first public works to the last I have helped bring about a revolution in apprenticeship policy. Higher and degree apprenticeships have and continue to be a fast-growing feature of HE and skills in England. The value of degree and higher-level apprenticeships has gained considerable traction in alignment over the past decade evidenced by their bringing together the worlds of work and higher education together under dual policy objectives – productivity and social mobility:

> In an advanced economy such as the UK there will be increasing demand for higher-level skills. The ONS (2009) have found that the largest positive contributor to productivity growth has been workers with higher level qualifications. Research from Universities UK (2019) found that the majority (89%) of employers agreed that degrees make apprentices future ready, equipping them with transferable knowledge and 'soft skills' which are vital to remain agile, adaptable, and competitive in a rapidly transforming economy. Higher and degree apprenticeships also support social mobility by enabling many people who previously missed out on higher education to access it. Progression to university in and through work, on an apprenticeship, where previously it had not been seen as an option for the apprentice (or by their parents/carers) is a strong reflection of social mobility impact, whatever the policy context (Anderson *et al.*, 2022).

It does not mean however that strong opposition to higher and degree apprenticeships has disappeared from public discourse. Fresh challenges in 2022 are emerging on issues of quality in delivery, expansion, affordability, use of the apprenticeship levy and value for money (Bewick, 2022; Evans, 2022; Murphy and Jones, 2021) but I have also been encouraged by a more settled policy and ideological positioning on higher and degree apprenticeships in government with a strong commitment from Westminster to the growth in higher level skills including higher and degree apprenticeships (IfATE, 2021; Whieldon, 2021). The major move towards an integrated approach in 2022 that more effectively aligns the qualification, professional recognition and apprenticeship certification is inherently transformative (Bravenboer and Crawford-Lee, 2020, p. 695; Baldwin, 2022) and demonstrates strong official recognition of the value of the brand of degree apprenticeships overall from decision makers.

I welcome government's 'intention to get universities to offer more degree apprenticeships and higher technical qualifications and to help underserved young people' and adults in work realise their potential (Crawford-Lee, 2020b,). Higher and degree apprenticeships totally meet the objective that higher education focuses on 'getting on rather than just getting in' (Donelan, 2021). Like former Minister of State for Higher and Further Education, Michelle Donelan, MP, I want more higher and degree apprenticeships, more universities and HEIs delivering and more individuals to progress into HE (Crawford-Lee, 2020a).

It now becomes the case that UVAC, with me as its chief executive, will need to state and keep restating the case for higher level technical education and skills including higher and degree apprenticeships. When I took up post as chief executive of UVAC it represented the pinnacle of my career. Since then, I have focused on building its internal capacity and going forward, ever reminded of the importance of networks, am seeking to build new alliances so UVAC can continue to 'punch above its weight', to exert influence over apprenticeship skills policy disproportionate to its size. I am privileged to now lead and represent the body that has contributed so much to the discursive shifts in apprenticeship policy, and it is important that my professional values resonate with the organisation I work for. With the support of UVAC, whose success lies in fusing policy, academic and practitioner perspectives, that has never relied on acquiescence with government policy but has been active, ongoing, in offering solutions, tackling complex problems, and engaging with contentious issues out in the public domain, I am given considerable scope to contribute to the ongoing discourse on my own (Crawford-Lee, 2021, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2002d).

Nevertheless, collaboration and co-production has proven to be my strength as a professional practitioner. Without this style of engagement my public works would not have been possible. Reflecting on my role in writing these public works I continue to initiate new knowledge co-production that fills the space between theory and practice. 'Engaged scholarship' (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 297) is more about overcoming and tackling the complexities of issues than about enjoying convivial social relationships (although it can be an un/intended outcome). Which brings me to my final words. In 2022, I negotiated a central role for UVAC in a successful DfE £7.5m Apprenticeship Workforce Development Programme (AWDP) bid working with the other two main representative bodies in

apprenticeships: the Association of Colleges (AoC) and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP). In both organisations their leadership have fiercely contested the concept of degree apprenticeships (Crawford-Lee, 2020a, p. 4) on the grounds that such programmes are expensive, divert funding from young people who need lower-level entry job programmes, provide 'cost free' access to 'off-the-shelf' and 'rebadged' graduate schemes, are abused by employers (e.g. Dawe, 2019; Gravatt, 2019) and openly supported a level of discourse that they are not proper apprenticeships at all, but 'fake apprenticeships' (Richmond, 2020). This 3–5-year initiative represents a transformative level of earned income for UVAC and a new level of co-collaboration where working and engaging with those who are in opposition to what we do, can no longer be avoided (Van de Ven, 2018, p. 42).

There is no doubt I will be contributing majorly to the ongoing discourse and debate on the success and future of higher and degree apprenticeship policy (Creaton and Anderson, 2021). The professional doctorate will provide me with a launchpad for further engaged scholarship, to continue to analyse the discursive space using my own cross-products, taken from the reading of my own texts, to ensure that this once in a generation opportunity that has been created is not lost.

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