Exploring the role of professional bodies in HE policy development and enactment (1997-2017)

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Contents

Figures

Tables

Abbreviations

Term	Definition
AHE	Advance HE
ALT	Association for Educational Technology
AT/CHAT	Activity theory/cultural historical activity theory
AUA	Association of University Administrators
CATE	Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence
CB	Chartered body
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CEO	Chief Operating Officer
CETL	Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
CIPA	Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys
CIPM	Chartered Institute of Project Management
CMI	Chartered Management Institute
CoC	Code of Conduct
CPD	continuing professional development
CVCP	Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (pre 2000), later UUK
DAP	Degree awarding powers
DBIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
DfE	Department for Education
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
DPER	Doctoral Programme in Educational Research
DWR	Developmental work research
EB	Examination board
EFFECT	European Forum for Enhanced Collaboration in Teaching
EGB	Examination governance board
EUA	European Universities Association
FE	Further education
Guild HE	Representative body for higher education college principals in the UK
HE	higher education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI/HEP	Higher education institution/provider
HEPI	Higher Education Policy Institute
HERA	Higher Education and Research Act
HERB	Higher Education and Research Bill
HoE	Head of Education
IATE	Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education
IFS	Institute for Fiscal Studies
ILTHE	Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education
IT	Information technology

LEO	Longitudinal Educational Outcomes
LSE	London School of Economics
LTSN	Learning and Teaching Support Network
NHS	National Health Service
NTFS	National Teaching Fellowship Scheme
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
OfS	Office for Students
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PARN	Professional Associations Research Network
PB	professional bodies
PCO	Privy Council Office
PSRB	professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
PVC	Pro Vice Chancellor
QA	Quality assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QE	Quality enhancement
REF	Research Excellence Framework
SEDA	Staff and Educational Developers Association
Spad	Special advisor
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, maths
STL	Social Theories of Learning
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
THE	Times Higher Education (specialist weekly publication)
UCL	University College London
UK	United Kingdom
UT	University title
UUK	Universities UK, representative body for Vice Chancellors in the UK (since 2000, previously CVCP)
VC	Vice Chancellor

Abstract

The study explores how professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) collectively, as a 'sector', influence and are influenced by government policies related to higher education (HE), professional learning and workforce development. The research question asks what the comparative histories of the government, HE and PSRBs activity systems tell us about how government HE policies are enacted. Professional bodies appear as muted or invisible players in the education system, with very little written about them, beyond their established role as gatekeepers to the professions, their role in establishing areas of specialism, and the impact of democratised knowledge on the privileged monopoly of the professions. Public confidence in the professions has been undermined by rare but significant scandals, challenged by politicians and populist politics, and championed by those who promote continuing professional development (CPD) and the value of expertise.

The research uses Engeström's Third Generation Activity Theory, comparative histories and oral histories to explore the interconnections between government HE policymaking, the HE sector, and PRSBs. The activities of these three 'activity systems' have been plotted in a timeline, starting with the publication of the Dearing Report in 1997, which heralded significant changes in the landscape of British HE, and concluding with a similarly seismic policy event, the Higher Education and Research Act (HERA) in 2017. Pivotal narratives have been crafted to illustrate factors at play during some of the most critical moments: changes in professional accountability by individual practitioners and the organisations that represent them; attempts by professional bodies collectively to mobilise as a sector; the process by which a new profession or professional body might emerge and how this can be influenced by government policy; and how higher education practices have been fundamentally altered by teaching excellence policies from government and the emergence of a new professional body.

A number of conclusions about the structures, practices and impact of government education policy, higher education practices and the work of professional bodies have been drawn from the research which will be of interest to educational theorists, policy makers, and those working in higher and professional learning.

Chapter 1 Situating the research and navigating the thesis

1.1 Introduction

This study explores an under-researched field of enquiry regarding the role and impact of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). More specifically the study explores the connections between government higher education (HE) policy and activity in both HE and PSRBs. This research considers the collective visibility, impact and influence that the professional bodies 'sector' exhibits, rather than focusing on the activities and practices of individual professional bodies (PBs), cognate clusters of professions, or organisations whose primary focus lies in the professionalisation of HE specifically. This research gap has been recognised elsewhere and although specifically writing about continuing professional development (CPD) the following point is generalizable to other aspects of PB activity.

> [CPD] is a major component of expenditure on education in developed countries, and yet just how much is spent on CPD is unknown and it is hardly ever mentioned in government education policies or plans…research into CPD has not been supported by research councils, at least at anything like the level given to education of undergraduates or those on postgraduate courses. Academics rarely undertake research into it in spite of the vast array of economic, management, social studies or education journals where the subject could appear. Often when articles on CPD do appear, they tend to be specialised journals, limited to particular narrowly defined professions, or most likely they are part of a 'grey literature' comprising limited distribution reports, which soon become even harder to access as they are archived or lost.' (Friedman, 2012, p. 5)

Such a gap in the academic and education literature is surprising when considering the influence collectively and traditionally wielded by PSRBs over society, employment and education (Friedman, 2011, 2012; Millerson, 1964; Susskind, 2015). The general public's reliance on effective, competent and trustworthy professionals is absolute and yet the organisations which determine and safeguard the standards of professional practice are largely invisible in the discourse on education policy and practice, and mostly beyond the scope of government policy and control. This study is important because:

- professional bodies (PBs) influence a significant proportion of the workforce with over 400 PBs in the UK each having more than 1000 members, collectively representing in excess of 6 million professionals[1];

[1] https://www.parnglobal.com/Public/AboutUs/About_the_Professional_Body_Sector. (accessed 26/02/2023)

- although PSRBs are seen as gatekeepers and guardians of professional standards, and accredit or endorse educational qualifications pertaining to their professional practice, there is huge variability in the clarity of educational purpose demonstrated by different PSRBs;
- there is increasing public interest in and heavy reliance on 'trustworthy professionals', which is amplified in political rhetoric about professional standards and safeguarding public interests;
- there is a greater interest in fair access to professional employment and the associated social mobility in the wake of increased participation in Higher Education, increased student/graduate contribution to the costs of education and the rhetoric around the 'graduate premium'; and
- there has been a steady increase in political scepticism about 'experts' in response to the political imperatives of appeasing 'populism'.

The study has been historically contained within a timeline that broadly aligns with the election of 'New Labour' in 1997 and concludes with the ascent of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. The political historical context of this period is significant, encompassing as it does a period of sustained and generous higher education enhancement funding, a significant expansion of higher education participation and providers and the introduction of student fees, followed by a prolonged period of austerity in public funding. During this period a number of significant and influential reports and government policies have been published (Browne, 2010; Browne & Great Britain. Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2010; Burgess, 2012; Dearing, 1997), which stimulated and contributed to debates about professionalisation, employability and fair access to higher education. Professional practice scandals have emerged during the period which have also stimulated a wider parallel debate about fair access to professional employment, fitness to practice and public confidence in the professions, most notably the case of doctor and serial killer Harold Shipman. In the PSRB domain the Professional Associations Research Network (PARN) was founded in 1998. The organisation is a subscription network of PSRBs and conducts research largely in response to, and sponsored by, the subscribing organisations. Thus, PARN can be conceptualised as a barometer of the concerns, preoccupations and priorities of PSRBs. During the period a number of other initiatives have emerged to support the business of PSRBs or raise the profile of the professions and professionalism, which have also informed the study.

The latter period under consideration has been characterised by increasing political scepticism about 'experts' in response to the political imperatives of appeasing 'populism'. PSRBs have been characterised as self-serving defenders of a privileged status quo rather than as champions and guardians of the public good (Millerson, 1964; Susskind, 2015). The

vast majority of professional associations however are either incorporated by Royal Charter or as registered charities or both, and thereby are invested with a 'public benefit' duty. In March 2018 PARN launched 'Promoting Professionalism' and published an eponymous book in 2020 (Friedman, 2020) which is founded on a premise that 'professions and professionalism are visibly under threat from many quarters' (p.3)

Meanwhile there is evidence of parallel concerns emerging in the education domain, for example at a conference aimed at teacher educators at Manchester University in May 2018 where Professors Anna Stetsenko and Anne Edwards called for a concerted and unified academic revolution in response to the neo-liberal, populist performativity of policies being imposed on education systems around the world. Other commentators are also responding to these socio-political and economic drivers from variously optimistic and polemic stances (R. A. Barnett, 2019; Smyth, 2017).

The relationship between PSRBs and HE is generally more mutually respectful, whilst also presenting some practical, ideological and temporal challenges. Millerson (1964) explored this to some extent and interviewees in this research were invited to reflect on the tensions and opportunities inherent in the HE/PSRB relationship.

This research project has the potential to impact a number of topical agendas – workforce development, the future of HE in a deregulated open market, the role of professional bodies (PBs) and even the future of professional expertise in a digitised and populist society. The principal motivation for the study, however, is rooted in my own professional and intellectual curiosity about the sectors I have worked in for over 25 years. My career has spanned academic and professional learning in higher education institutions, enhancement agencies and professional bodies. The study is enquiry driven, motivated by the desire to discover what is not yet known about the topic, rather than by an intention to prove or validate a particular hypothesis or theoretical position. Although undertaken and written in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Doctoral Programme in Educational Research at Lancaster University, this thesis has been written with a broad readership in mind – academics, researchers, policy-makers and practitioners in HE and PSRBs, possibly even in government.

I have approached the three domains of practice – government, HE and PSRBs – as 'Activity Systems' in the tradition of Engeström (2009; 2001). Building on the role of 'historicity' in Engeström's model, I have collated and analysed the histories of the three activity systems

and presented these as comparative histories in a timeline format to elucidate particular themes and pivotal moments for closer consideration through narratives to illuminate the ways in which the activity systems interconnect. Throughout the thesis **words in bold** relate to specific concepts in Engeström's 3rd Generation Activity Theory, for example: **multivoicedness, historicity, contradictions.**

1.2 Origin of the study

Much of my professional life has been lived at the nexus of higher education, government policy and professional bodies. This professional experience has engendered curiosity about the interrelationships between the three domains, and in particular about the role of the professional bodies sector, that is to say the community of organisations which collectively represent specialist, expert elements of the workforce. Each professional body represents the interests of a particular expert community and exercises considerable influence over the practice standards and qualifying curriculum for that community. It is less clear how professional bodies as a sector collectively influence policy as, for example, university or business sectors do through organisations like Universities UK (UUK) or the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). By exploring the sector and its interrelationships with HE and government this study has revealed characteristics and activities associated with professional bodies which help understand what influence is and might be exerted by this unsung sector, and what implications there might be for public confidence in experts and 'trustworthy professionals'.

Between 2013 and 2017 I undertook a series of small-scale projects as part of the Lancaster University doctoral programme in educational research to explore the educational role of professional bodies and professional body influence on validated degree programmes (Robinson-Canham, 2013a, 2013b, 2014; Robinson-Canham, 2015). Key findings from these studies have influenced this research and thesis.

1.2.1 Me reflexively in the research and choice of voice

The deliberate choice of a voice feels like an important question, especially with regard to 'claiming a right to be heard' and adapting to the assumed expectations of the reader (Hyland, 2005; Hyland & Jiang, 2016) or positioning the self reflexively within the work and within the academic community (Gray, 2017). I am unavoidably present in this research, not just as all researchers reflexively influence their research, but because my own professional practice and career intersects with the narrative of HE teaching professionalisation since the

Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997) fundamentally shifted the direction and practices of UK HE[2]. The starting point for the pivotal narratives in sections 6.2.1 and 6.4.1 is my own lived experience of working for the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE), the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA, now Advance HE). In this way I consider myself an 'observer and participant' in the policy and planning environment and acknowledge the opportunity this has afforded me to 'observe the influence of history and politics in reshaping policy' (Grundy et al., 2014). My own experience has been harnessed as data comparable to the oral histories gathered through interviews. Others also position me within the narrative to the point where it would be disingenuous for me to claim complete neutrality – I have been cited as an expert on learning and teaching at a European level (EFFECT, 2019) and as an expert on HE professionalism in the research of others (Lewis, 2012). Equally I have been characterised by the traditional structures of higher education as 'non-academic', 'academic related' or 'professional services' so my choice of an 'academic voice' also serves to reinforce, resist or re-claim my own authentic professional/academic space. This sense of place within the academic community is reflected in my experience as a novice researcher, urged to 'find the conversation I wanted to be part of' and struggling because the conversation I want to engage with has yet to be started or is muted and hidden.

Positionality has heavily influenced my choice of 'voice' for this thesis. The iterative enquiry stimulated by personal professional curiosity, arising out of the lived experience of my professional practice, makes this a highly personal story. I claim ownership of this work and its idiosyncrasies. This is reflected in a conscious choice to write in the first person singular wherever this feels appropriate in the thesis. In some places 'the study', 'the data', and the 'literature' inform findings and offer insights. Elsewhere my work in the field informs the contextualisation of data and the formulation of conclusions. The fluctuating 'voice' in the thesis reflects these dynamics.

1.2.2 Some definitions

For the purposes of this thesis, I have taken:

[2] The Dearing Enquiry was established in "1996 to make recommendations on how the purposes, shape, structure, size and funding of higher education, including support for students, should develop to meet the needs of the United Kingdom over the next 20 years, recognising that higher education embraces teaching, learning, scholarship and research" (Chairman's Foreword) and reported it's findings in 1997.

- ‘Government’ to encompass the elected representatives of the House of Commons, appointed and hereditary members of the House of Lords, the independent Civil Service, and politically appointed Special Advisors (so-called Spads). I have included in this broad purview political and statutory functions of the State and its administration, but unless otherwise indicated have confined my research and commentary to matters relating to policy and practice in the domain of higher education, professional learning and associated workforce development considerations, primarily in England.

- Higher Education (HE) to refer to the collective sector of Universities and Colleges concerned with knowledge advancement and creation through research, and advanced knowledge dissemination through teaching and public engagement. I have included all categories of the teaching, research, management, administration and technical workforce within my conceptualisation of HE. The timeframe of the study largely predates the deregulation of the sector and widespread inclusion of private or alternative providers, so unless otherwise indicated in the text ‘HE’ should be understood as a ‘publicly funded’ sector, albeit this is increasingly through state underwriting of student loans. Again, this has been restricted to the English HE system.

Definition of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) is less clearly understood so PARN and QAA definitions and characterisations are a helpful departure point:

> **Professional body** An organisation that oversees the activities of a particular profession and represents the interests of its members. professional doctorate programmes Programmes leading to a doctorate in a particular professional context, which typically include some taught elements in addition to the research dissertation. Credit practice varies but typically professional doctorates include a minimum of three calendar years' postgraduate study with level 7 study representing less than one third of this.
>
> **Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)** Organisations that set the standards for, and regulate entry into, particular professions and are authorised to accredit, approve or recognise specific programmes leading to the relevant professional qualifications - for which they may have a statutory or regulatory responsibility. (QAA Glossary p.21)[3]

> Professional bodies are dedicated to the advancement of the knowledge and practice of professions through developing, supporting, regulating and promoting professional standards for technical and ethical competence…concerned with the public benefit as well as the reputation of professionalism. (Friedman, 2013, p. 4)

[3] https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/about-us/qaa-glossary.pdf?sfvrsn=5c21a281_10 (accessed 20/05/2023)

Professional Bodies may be incorporated by Royal Charter, registered charities or registered companies, and many carry multiple incorporations to satisfy different elements of their business. The requirement to demonstrate pre-eminence and permanence means that only well-established bodies are likely to petition for or achieve Royal Charter. Ability to award Individual Chartered Designation is subject to a distinct petition by a Chartered Body, so not all qualified members of Chartered Professional Bodies are necessarily 'Chartered' practitioners. There are clear governance distinctions to be made between 'Professional Bodies' and 'Statutory Regulatory' bodies which are largely concerned with the degree of independence from and oversight by the Privy Council Office (see Appendix G for more information).

Unless otherwise indicated in the text, for the purpose of this thesis the terms 'professional body/bodies' and 'PB' are used in the most general sense to indicate organisations, however incorporated, which represent and to some degree regulate the education, qualification and conduct of a specialist community within the workforce. It is important to further differentiate the 'professions' (specialist and expert occupations), the bodies which represent them (the formal entities which represent and control access to those occupations), and professionals (the individuals who practice those expert occupations).

There is a growing cadre of individuals and organisations that cross boundaries and defy traditional categorisation. There are organisations like Advance HE that exhibit some characteristics and fulfil some functions of a professional body but whose history and governance model are more closely comparable to a quango (see 6.4.1). The democratisation of knowledge through digital platforms and the rise of policy 'wonks' and 'blended professionals' have created fertile conditions for independent commentators to flourish (think tanks like HEPI and digital publications like WonkeHE – which are discussed in 6.4.

1.3 The research question and defining the field of enquiry

The principal question addressed by this study is: What do the comparative histories of the government, HE and professional bodies Activity Systems tell us about how government HE policy is enacted in higher education intuitions (HEIs) and professional bodies (PBs)?

Through my own professional practice I was aware of specific initiatives in HE and across the community of PBs which were direct responses to or consequences of particular strands of government policy, for example initiatives to widen access to higher education and professional occupations, and the professionalisation of teaching in higher education. I also

embarked on this project with a belief that the professional bodies sector was under-researched and largely invisible in the discourse on HE policy development and enactment. This led to a question about how professional bodies had mobilised themselves as a 'sector' in response to government HE policy. To answer this required scrutiny of the comparative histories of the three domains of practice – government, HE and PSRBs – to identify what specific episodes in the comparative histories might reveal more generally about the enactment of (HE) policy. I have chosen not to limit the scope of the research to the activities and practices of individual professional bodies (PBs), cognate clusters of professions, or organisations whose primary focus lies in the professionalisation of HE for several reasons:

- to allow for commonalities of structure, governance and function between PSRBs;
- to identify collective action and mobilisation across the PSRB 'sector' without the distraction of disciplinary/specialist campaigns; and
- in the case of HE-related organisations, recognising that few HE-specific organisations exist, and of those that do their status as 'professional bodies' is strongly contested. This is explored in more detail in 6.4.1.

It was difficult to situate these questions within an existing coherent literature. Notwithstanding a plethora of material about specific professions, professionalism and professionalisation, relatively little literature specifically relates to the role of professional bodies as a 'sector'. As Friedman noted, when articles appear:

> they tend to be specialised journals, limited to particular narrowly defined professions, or most likely they are part of a 'grey literature' comprising limited distribution reports, which soon become even harder to access as they are archived or lost (Friedman, 2012, p. 5).

Similarly in the catalogue of academic writing about HE and professional learning little relates specifically to the nexus of government policy, education practice and the role of professional bodies. A series of literature searches (presented in Appendix A) were undertaken to refine the scope of the study to focus on this nexus of policy, practice and professional influence. Interestingly the pattern of publication dates also aligned with elements of the timeline (discussed in Chapter 4). I believe the focus of this thesis and the research informing it represents an original field of enquiry not previously extensively represented in the literature.

1.4 Academic literature and scoping the research

1.4.1 Background Literature

A small number of works significantly influenced the foundations of the research underpinning this thesis. Of particular note and relevance to this thesis and the study which underpins it are: *The Qualifying Associations* (Millerson, 1964), and *The Future of the Professions* (Susskind, 2015). These publications each provide a moment-in-time insight to the standing and influence of professional bodies in the United Kingdom which helpfully 'bookend' the comparative history presented in Chapter 4 . *The System of the Professions* (Abbott, 1988) explores the role and development of professions, comparing professions across England, France and America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Published outside the timeframe of this research, *Promoting Professionalism* (Friedman, 2020) is a direct response to some of the issues arising during the period.

In summary, *The Qualifying Associations* (Millerson, 1964) presents a potted history and comprehensive survey of 136 associations conducting their own examinations, requiring qualification by an approved education provider, or requiring evidence of other qualification, complete with dates of incorporation and Royal Charter (where applicable) and number of members. Based on extensive analysis of these and other bodies, Millerson makes observations highly relevant to my research and this thesis.

Regarding professional bodies and education, Millerson observes two distinct camps, those uninterested in setting entrance examinations and those quick to do so, and further identifies five possible factors which might explain the 'failure to set examinations' (p. 122): a preference for 'pupilage as the most suitable training'; examinations 'not accepted by society as a necessary test of ability'; lack of a 'regular system of primary, secondary and higher education' to prepare potential examinees; that membership of associations was not considered a necessary requirement to practice; and that 'associations were not prepared to undertake teaching themselves'. (p.122). In the conclusion to his book Millerson makes apposite observations about engagement of practitioners with their professions, political influence, educational arrangements and the value of associations to society:

> Unless associations take more trouble to stimulate membership participation in meetings and publications, many organizations may decline even deeper into pure diploma-awarding bodies, the majority of members being solely interested in the designatory letters and unconcerned with corporate life...To the outside world, associations may act as a form of professional 'trades union', selfishly thrusting members' demands forward, or an intense

> political voice in society…In fact, associations are too big, too dignified and unprepared to behave as irresponsible pressure groups; or they are too small and insignificant to succeed. There are few exceptions to the general rejection of direct political action…most associations discard these ideas as being 'unprofessional'…Forgetting the dubious organizations, the uneven standards, the over-concentration on status symbols, the over-lapping and unnecessary associations, the best were founded as sincere attempts to gain self-improvement, reaching a recognized status by means of a long and determined effort. Our society profits by their presence. (Millerson, 1964, p. 218)

More than 50 years since Millerson this characterisation of PBs is still deeply, and sometimes troublingly, recognisable. In their 2015 book *The Future of the Professions* Richard and Daniel Susskind consider the 'grand bargain' society has struck with the professions, whereby society acknowledges the expertise, experience and judgement of professionals in exchange for honest, fair, accessible service, and accord the professions commensurate respect, status and remuneration (Susskind, 2015). The professions are characterised as elitist with 'a collective instinct for self-preservation' (p. 27), and arguably out of touch with the reality of the digital age, reliant on 'increasingly antiquated techniques for creating and sharing knowledge' (p.34). The authors ask four key questions about: more efficient, affordable and accessible ways of organizing professional work; whether all work currently done by professionals needs to be; the extent to which we trust professionals to assess their own necessity; and whether our professions are fit for purpose (p.32). The concluding prediction is that there lies ahead a

> fork in the road with two possible routes stretching out. One leads to a society in which practical expertise is a shared online resource, freely available and maintained in a collaborative sprit. The other route leads to a society in which this knowledge and experience may be available online, but is owned and controlled by providers….and our collective practical experience is enclosed and traded, most likely by new gatekeepers. (p. 307)

Both analyses present clear implications for the interconnection of PBs and professional knowledge/expertise with education, whether that be in relation to the qualification of professionals to practice, the educational role of professional bodies, or the education required to equip society to self-service professional expertise through democratised and market-driven online provision.

The System of the Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labour (Abbott, 1988) adopts a different stance, and analyses the professions principally through comparative histories of different professions and the lens of the 'jurisdiction' of expertise, with significant focus on the interrelationship between different professions. Most interestingly Abbott has sought to develop a 'theory that could reconcile the historical continuity of professional appearances with the day-to-day discontinuities of professional reality' (p. xii). His notion of jurisdiction contends that what distinguishes one profession from another is their control over abstract knowledge – 'abstraction effective enough to compete in a particular historical and social context.' (p.9). Abbott has relatively little to say specifically about PBs or associations, rather discussing themes like the 'bureaucratisation' of professions and the broader terminology of the social structures adopted and developed to advance and protect each profession's distinct knowledge/expertise jurisdiction. It is also worth clarifying that Abbott's use of 'professional development' relates to the development of the profession and its structures, not the continuing professional development (CPD) required of individual practitioners by their professional associations at the time of writing this thesis in 2022/3.

Abbott's book predates Engeström's work on activity systems and cites neither Vygotsky nor Leontiev, and yet adopts a 'systems' approach to the activities within and between professional bodies, is rooted in preoccupations with the 'division of expert labour' and draws on the histories of professions to better understand their social and cultural role and society's dependence on the professions. Abbott establishes a useful precedent for my adoption of comparative (social) history to study the professions whilst also creating a space for further enquiry about how PBs collectively interact with other socially constructed systems of activity and influence, based on a different array of social theories.

In this thesis the concept of the 'trustworthy professional' has derived primarily from *Continuing Professional Development: Lifelong Learning of Millions* (Friedman, 2012) rather than from a wider theoretical treatment and consideration of the concept of 'trustworthiness'. In his introduction Friedman presents the doubts and uncertainties felt by someone in their dealings with a range of practitioners whose 'job title credits them to be experts and she expects they will use their expertise to sort out her issues in a trustworthy manner', reflecting that 'just because someone has a certificate to say they are a professional… does not automatically mean that they are competent and trustworthy… even if they are called professional, can they be truly what in the past would have been expected of professionals; 'trustworthy, ethical, up-to-date and competent' (p.3-4). Later in the book reference is made

to the class-based notion that 'on qualification individuals were also inculcated with relevant professional ethics - they were trustworthy. This was connected to the idea that only gentlemen could be professionals. What distinguished gentlemen was that they could be trusted.' (p. 64-5) From these brief allusions to the notions of trustworthiness, professionalism and class we see the seeds of a socio-political and historical construction of the professions and professionals which chimes with the Susskind charge of elitism within the professions. A more overtly (small 'p') political agenda is heralded by Friedman's comment about the absence of CPD in government education policies or plans, a silence which in part has prompted this research. A more campaigning tone has been adopted by PARN in the project to 'promote professionalism' launched in 2018, and the subject of a recent book *Promoting Professionalism* (Friedman, 2020), both stimulated by PARN's view that "professions should be standing up for the value and social importance of professionalism" with both project materials and subsequent book identifying:

> the challenges to professions, professionals and professionalism: populism; new technologies; appealing to young people; the charge of elitism and embracing disadvantaged groups; market pressures and negative perceptions from cases of misconduct and technical failures. (Friedman, 2020, p. 4)

The book provides numerous examples of how specific PBs have responded to these challenges and concludes with recommendations for promoting professionalism, distinct but derived from promoting professions or professional bodies. The majority of these practical recommendations are directed at individual PBs or highly focused 'alliances and federations' of cognate professions (for example health care, finance) (p.157-160).

Carolin Kreber draws on more philosophical sources for her work on the 'civic-minded professional' and the idea of 'a decent profession' (Kreber, 2016, 2019) which have helped me locate and define the notion of the 'trustworthy professional' as social and political activist for a wider public benefit.

> When professional practice takes on the form of *action*, professionals are motivated by an explicitly public interest, participating, as engaged citizens, with other members of the public in democratic discussion around how best to frame and address issues affecting society's well-being….higher education might help to encourage students to perceive the purpose of their professional practice not mainly as a matter of *work* (the provision of technical services based on specialised knowledge), let alone a matter of *labour* (the incessant execution of tasks aimed at sheer survival with no

> definitive end point in sight), but also, and perhaps principally so, as public deliberation and engagement" (Kreber, 2016, p. 3)

Specifically in relation to the role of higher education and professional education, Kreber asserts that "professional programmes should engage future practitioners in debate on what professional responsibility means in their particular professional context" (Kreber, 2019). In conclusion Kreber acknowledges that these notions are contested and calls for 'further debate and critical engagement' to envisage 'additional possibilities for how professional practices and university-based professional education may better serve the public good' (p.701). The telling silence is once again in not acknowledging the role of professional bodies as legitimate participants in and conduits for such debate.

Based on these sources I have understood Millerson to take a technocratic approach to the specific area of routes to qualification, Susskind and Friedman to draw on a socio-political/economic tradition, and Kreber to work within a philosophical and educational field. All the writers make a call to action that professions, professionals, and the organisations which claim to represent and educate them, rise to the challenge of trustworthiness, relevance, currency and action for the greater good of society. Together all these sources stimulate questions of relevance to this thesis: to what extent is there public, political or intellectual debate in the UK about the role of the professions and professionals in our society, and to what extent are established and emerging professional bodies leading, contributing to or heard in that debate?

1.4.2 The deployment of thematic literature in the thesis

Despite the paucity of a coherent body of work specific to the study of professional bodies – distinct from studies of specific professions, professionalism or professionalisation - the multifaceted nature of this research project and thesis has generated a very diverse literature linked to the themes and episodes emerging from the comparative histories. I have made the decision to address indicative literatures within the discussion of those aspects of the research and thesis to which they most closely relate, rather than include a dedicated literature chapter. Literature informing the research design and process is included within Chapter 2 Research Design and Methods; publications informing the comparative histories are referenced within Chapter 4 The long view Part 1: sources pertaining to the domains of practice as Activity

Systems are included in Chapter 3 The Activity: Discussion of the domains of practice as 'Activity Systems' and literature relating to themes emerging from the analysis of histories, activity systems or pivotal narratives are referenced where they make the most useful contribution to the discussion and analysis. Literature search metadata appears in Appendix A

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The study behind this thesis relates to activity in three distinct sectors – Government, higher education, and professional bodies – over a twenty-year period. A wide range of data sources have been used, including so-called 'grey literature' such as official documents, contemporary commentaries, news items and trade publications. The study is a comparative history of the three sectors, interpreted as activity systems in the tradition of Engeström. (Engestrom, 2009; Engestrom & Sannino, 2010; Engeström, 2001, 2007). Desk research has been validated and augmented by interviews conducted to elicit oral histories. An array of themes and topics emerged from the data collection and analysis which have been cross referenced to their respective literatures. Presenting such a diversity of material in a coherent way has been challenging. The Table 1 below signposts the reader to how different data has been used and where it appears in the thesis.

Table 1 use of data in the research and thesis

Chapter	Purpose of the chapter	Principal data	Supplementary data	Function of the data
Chapter 3	Analysis of the domains as activity systems	Grey literature; oral history interviews	Personal/professional experience. websites	Corresponds to aspects of Engeström 3rd generation activity theory (artefacts, historicity, multi-voicedness etc)
Chapter 4 and 5	Analysis of the comparative histories of three domains of practice, 1997-2017	Grey literature publications from professional bodies, government documents, historical record, desk and internet searches	Interview data	Identify key moments and influencers in the domains' histories

5..4.1 6.2.1 6.4.1 6.5.1	Presentation of narratives	Oral history interviews	Grey literature artefacts; personal/professional experience	Illustrative of change over time/at moments in time

1.5.1 Function of the timeline

Gathering the artefacts to populate the timeline brought to light features of the documents, and thereby what they revealed about the context, that are less apparent in real-time. For example, until the archive of funding letters was collated as a set of physical resources it was not obvious that the letters change over time in form, content, tone, style and purpose. At times the tone is highly directive, at others more collegial (for example the letters sent from 2004 to 2018 carry a first name salutation, sometimes handwritten by the Secretary of State). The final letter heralding the establishment of the Office for Students (OfS) is positioned as 'strategic guidance' but accompanied by an Annex of 'deliverables' indicative of its regulatory function and heavily metrics-driven agenda. In real-time these changes are usually incremental and experienced as gradual, normalised practice, but when reviewed as a chronological suite of data they illuminate shifts in the construction, enactment and imposition of policy on practice. When the funding letters are placed alongside other artefacts in the timeline it becomes apparent that the shift of policy and context evidenced in the letters is also apparent in other artefacts and practices – the shift from enhancement-led funding to performance driven-funding is a fundamental transformation which might be attributed to a changing political philosophy which impacts as closer regulation of both higher education and the professions. This in turn gives rise to questions of who is regulating what and for whose benefit, questions which can also be addressed by looking at the comparative histories of the higher education and professional bodies sectors over time through the timeline.

1.5.2 Function of the pivotal narratives

Whilst the CHAT analysis sheds light on the structures, histories, artefacts, tensions and contradictions within and between the different systems (the 'what' of the study), and the comparative histories illustrate the flow of policy and politics through the higher education and professional learning systems (the 'how' of the study), the pivotal narratives reveal the motivations and drivers that lead individuals or organisations to fundamentally stimulate change (the 'why' of the study). Recurring names and themes emerged from iterative cycles of desk research and interviews, which were reinforced by themes emerging from building the comparative timeline.. 'Pivotal narratives' are understood in the context of this thesis to

be accounts of significant moments or events which might serve to shift our understanding not just of what has occurred but of why and with what impact. Four pivotal narratives emerged from the data which illustrated different aspects of how influence impacted practice during the 1997-2017 period:

- changes in professional accountability by individual practitioners and the organisations that represent them following the Shipman scandal;
- the process by which a new profession or professional body might emerge and how this can be influenced by government policy, in this case particularly in relation to higher education teaching excellence initiatives;
- how higher education practices have been fundamentally altered by teaching excellence policies from government and the emergence of a new professional body; and
- attempts by professional bodies collectively to mobilise as a sector, particularly in response to calls for improved access to professional careers.

Chapter 2 Research Design and Methods

2.1 Summary of research process

Table 2 below summarises the research activity undertaken, how each activity was undertaken, what purpose the activity served in the enquiry and how different elements of the research and writing process have contributed to the final thesis.

Table 2 Summary of research processes adopted for this study and thesis

Research activity	Process	Purpose in the research	Principle contribution to the thesis
Personal and professional reflection	Review of relevant career elements and professional notebooks	Identifying an area for investigation	Origin of the research is in my own professional practice, discussed in 1.1
Theoretical and methodological review	Engaged with University of Manchester Social Theories of Learning(STL) programme (2014,15 and 16) to explore different STL approaches and how they had been used in different research contexts Lancaster DPER Part 1 work explored particular elements of the professional body/HE connection and trialled the use of different types of data and analysis	Influenced the choice of methods and theoretical framework. Explored specific aspects of the relationship between HE and professional body practices (accreditation and validation; fitness to qualify/fitness to practice paradigms)	Consolidated systematic understanding of PSRBs and HE
Ethics approval	Followed Lancaster University ethics approval process; interviewee consent forms; Post submission accuracy check by interviewees	Safeguard the interests of both researcher and research subjects; address power dynamics inherent in the interview process	Provide a defensible and credible basis for data collection
Study visits	Site visits to PARN office in Bristol 3 days in July 2015: Recorded conversations with CEO/Founder (Professor Andy Friedman) and each of his staff; workshop with all staff to construct first draft of PARN timeline; asked PARN staff to identify: key moments in history of PARN; key influencers (supporters and critics); key publications 2 days in July 2017:	Refining the scope of the study Developing preliminary interview targets Identifying significant projects and publications for inclusion/reference in the research	Foundation for the professional bodies sector history timeline Chapter 4 The long view Part 1:

	Informal conversations with CEO and staff new since previous visit; workshop with all staff to validate and augment the draft comparative timeline		
Desk research data collection	Web searches based on already known people, events and resources (Ministers of State, HEFCE funding letters, PARN publications, UUK materials, consultation papers, reviews, reports, White/Green papers and Bills etc)	Populated the timeline to better observe trends, patterns and interconnections, and stimulate	The timeline
Interview data collection	Snowball sample of interview subjects, purposeful selection to represent cross-section of voices from three domains of practice/activity systems	Informed commentary on 'influence' and 'trustworthy professional', also basis of pivotal narratives	Section 3.3 and pivotal narratives
Analysis	Thematic analysis of interviews based on activity theory terms, plotting trends in Royal Charters, oral history interviews	Informed commentary on historical context and activity systems	Pivotal narratives, royal charter appendix C
Synthesis Writing up Corrections		Process of refining shape/structure of the thesis Authoring the thesis	the Thesis as the principal artefact of the research

2.2 Data collection

The early stages of the research were heavily informed by conversations with staff during a study visit to PARN in 2015 which made it possible to access longitudinal data about the PSRB sector and to identify key influencers to target for subsequent interviews. A second study visit was undertaken in 2017 when considerable desk research had been undertaken to draft the preliminary timeline. A number of issues were anticipated from such collaboration with an established organisation. The organisation has its own agenda and expectations of what benefit it will derive from granting access to resources, documents, time and expertise of staff. The project has been dependent upon the openness and goodwill of contributors who are senior and influential in the field under investigation. In this case PARN held the power as gatekeeper to valuable organisational and sector data. Equally government ministers or PSRB CEOs have particular motivations for cooperating and are adept at managing their own narrative to satisfy that agenda.

Parallel challenges emerged accessing citable government and civil service sources who might be understandably constrained by the responsibilities and privileges of their office. Although generous with their time and open with their insights, a number of individuals only offered 'off the record' conversations. Rather than discount such valuable contributions as academically inadmissible I have used them to reflect on what might otherwise have been overlooked and to legitimately signpost to information in the public domain, which becomes data from which research conclusions can be appropriately derived. For example, a senior civil servant observing that 'of course, it all started with Shipman' is not citeable but did inspire a fruitful avenue of enquiry.

I endeavoured to clearly establish the purpose of the conversations and used ethics approval forms for both scoping conversations and interviews. All participants were given opportunity to contribute anonymously or as identified subjects and were offered the opportunity to review pre-publication drafts relevant to their contributions so they could be assured of accuracy. In the event interviewees identified minor points for clarification or nuance but did not challenge my analysis or conclusions. Some offered observations about more recent developments or indicted where additional research might follow.

The notion of researcher neutrality is itself contestable as the researcher will undoubtedly bring their own ontology and epistemology to bear on the research. Although writing specifically about 'user involvement' in research-informed policy development, Boxall and

Warren helpfully capture some of the tensions relating to the preservation of researcher neutrality, among other things:

> methods and practices of user involvement present a number of challenges to conventional social policy research and to researchers who seek to work in this way. In particular, we highlight tensions between conventional expectations of researcher 'neutrality', 'objectivity' and 'professionalism', and ways of working, which welcome and accommodate the personal lives and experiences of service users in the methods and processes of research. (Boxall et al., 2007, p. 156)

Explicitly capturing collaborators' assumptions at the outset has helped manage expectations and present an opportunity to negotiate alternative outcomes. For example, a candid conversation with the PARN Chief Executive has led to an understanding that the thesis could not be a vehicle for the promotion of the organisation and that access could not influence the research findings, but that data gathered and access granted could be the basis of separate publication relating to the history of PARN.

The research methods and theoretical frameworks for data collection and analysis applied to this research are summarised in Appendix C and Appendix D are explored fully at 2.5 and 2.7.

2.3 Analysis

Numerous themes emerged from the theoretical framework of CHAT, conducting the desk research and constructing the timeline which informed the identification of interview subjects and the coding strategy applied to interview transcripts. These are presented in Appendix I . The Activity Theory and Oral History codes derived from review of the cited literature. Thematic codes emerged iteratively from reflecting on the questions I wanted to ask/answer, and from the issues that arose from the desk research and interviews. The process of conducting the interviews, reviewing recordings and checking transcripts created a familiarity with the data that led to intuitive recognition of recurring themes. Thematic codes were validated by applying them to harvested quotes extracted into an excel workbook to support sorting and searching by codes (see Appendix I for analysis codes and sorting mechanism). This identified which codes were more or less prevalent so that subsequent analysis could be prioritised around the most recurrent themes.

2.4 Comparative Histories and timelines

The validity of a historical and narrative treatment is strongly advocated by Abbott who adopts scrutiny of comparative chronologies to explore the structures and trajectories inherent within and common amongst professions/professional associations. His method considers the chronological ordering of eight common events in 130 American and British professions to test the dominant professionalisation theories of his time (Abbott, 1988). In pursuit of overarching themes and principles Abbott describes himself as a 'synthetic writer' who has included a breadth of professions in the comparative study and acknowledges to those who are expert in specific professions that they may find some of his analyses of their individual professions unsophisticated, asserting that in the study of professions 'synthesis will prove more worthwhile than further area work' (p.xiv). It is similarly an underlying premise of this thesis that there is something new and different to be learnt about professional bodies by considering them collectively rather than severally. Abbott also concludes that:

> History is first and foremost a tangled net of events. Each event lies in dozens of stories, determined and overdetermined by the causes flowing through them, yet ever open to new directions and twists…The writer must disentangle the threads of determinants, structures, and intentions, then reweave them into an analysis, and then recount that analysis in some readable form. (p.319)

Untangling and reweaving have certainly been the challenges of this thesis – in pursuit of fresh insights about the inter-relationships between government, higher education and professional bodies I have explored areas both familiar and unfamiliar to me, across a plethora of professional contexts, and drawing on enormously diverse resources, data and literature.

An interesting question arises regarding the point in time when events are considered 'history', rather than politics or sociology. In their review of periodical literature on the history of education Freeman and Kirke assert that "with growing chronological distance, a period becomes more the province of the historian than the sociologist' (Freeman & Kirke, 2017, p. 829). Their data demonstrates a shift over time towards interest in more recent history as well evidencing the accelerated volumes of academic publishing discussed elsewhere – in the 1960s of 445 articles published 38% related to the history of education between 1750 and 1868, whereas in the five years from 2010 to 2014 867 articles were published of which 65.2% related to the period 1911 to 2014, and of 315 articles published in 2016 alone 69.6% related to 1911 to 2016 (39.4% to 1911-1963 and 30.7% to 1964-2016). (p.828). It is fair to say, on this basis, that my research written up 2022-2023 and relating to

the period 1997-2017, has adopted techniques from the discipline of history but the subject matter has not acquired a sufficient separation of chronological distance to be considered 'history'. Interestingly Freeman and Kirke include a section 'Universities and vocational education' bringing together two domains of education not usually considered as entirely integrated, but also provide no indication that the role of professional bodies has been considered in any writing on vocational or professional education.

Turning to the application of comparative history on the study of policy development, Grundy et al use 'comparative observation and analysis… in the context of historical change' (2014, p. 150) and represent their data and analysis through a series of timelines which present the socio political history of Asian countries alongside particular events and features of health care systems in those countries. Grundy acknowledges his status as 'observer and participant in the policy and planning environment' and recognises the opportunity this provided to 'observe the influence of history and politics in reshaping the … policy landscape' and to access the grey and policy literature (p.151), a position which resonates with my own stance in this research and thesis. In conclusion the authors assert that

> analyses need to be informed by a deeper understanding and questioning of the historical trajectory and political stance that sets the stage for the acting out of health policy formation. By recognizing the historical and political foundations of policy and systems change, policy makers and development specialists will be better informed of the feasibility, challenges and boundaries for realistic health policy reform…historically and ecologically informed policy debate should reduce the lag time between the social and political transitions and the required health policy response, enhancing the capability of health and social systems to operate optimally along their own historical pathways. (p.158)

The format of the timeline presented in Chapter 4 The long view Part 1: is inspired by *The Timetables of History: a Horizontal Linkage of People and Events* (Grun & Simpson, 2005) which presents the key moments of human history from 4500BC to the 21st Century organised under the headings of History and Politics; Literature and Theatre; Religion, Philosophy and Learning; Visual Arts: Music; Science, Technology and Growth; and Daily Life.

The timeline presented in this thesis illustrates the vast number and diversity of sources available – government green and white papers, reports and enquiries, funding letters between government and the funding council for higher education (HEFCE at the time), government legislation, contributions to consultations, annual reports and promotional

materials from professional membership organisations, think tank commentaries, organisational and sectoral position papers… The documents used to populate the timeline are essentially **artefacts** of their respective **activity systems**, and as such mediate our understanding of activity within and between systems. Iterations of desk research and interviews continued, and continue, to generate fresh avenues for enquiry and data collection. The timeline presents a collation of resources *sufficient* to address the research questions of this study within a defined timescale, and so should be considered *indicative* rather than complete. Some of the artefacts are illustrative of key moments in the timeline simply by their existence, others by their substance. I concentrated analysis effort on those artefacts most relevant to the themes and key moments identified from the overall shape of the timeline and the flow of initiatives between the different strands. Appendix G describes the rationale for each strand's inclusion in the timeline.

Government or organisation publications reflect the official direction and rationale of policy development and are heavily mediated for public consumption. Interviews with key influencers signposted artefacts relating to policy responses and in some cases identified resources that were in the public domain but not necessarily in the public consciousness, for example Bill Rammell's letter to universities (6 February 2006) which is understood to have heralded the 'deregulation' of the higher education sector. Some WonkeHE and HEPI publications are included in the timeline to provide a barometer of HE sector responses to government policy. By their existence these organisations reveal something about the changing power dynamics of the period and are evidence of the democratisation of knowledge and influence.

Friedman (2012) notes, a fundamental problem of researching PSRBs is that that majority of the relevant material is so-called 'grey literature', in-house publications and reports, resources for their own members, or governance artefacts like annual statements to the Charity Commission. Many of these resources are not freely or easily available to non-members. Furthermore, such material is not necessarily considered sufficiently rigorous for research referencing. The timeline presented below is almost entirely constructed based on grey literature artefacts of PSRBs, government and higher education, but many of these are also cited in the references at the end of this thesis.

There are challenges inherent in identifying and accessing 'grey literature' arising from cataloguing practices in libraries (Hook, 2006). In hydrology the argument has been made

that ignoring ‘grey literature’ has inhibited better understanding of flooding, citing that potentially 80% of available information sits outside the domain controlled by commercial publishing and academic peer review (Uhlemann et al., 2013). Schmid and Price share this concern in the field of terrorism studies which they also identify as a new field of study emerging from particular high-profile events - Tokyo subway attack (1995), the Second Palestinian Intifada (2000), 9/11 Al Qaeda attack on World Trade Centre (2001). The role of ‘grey literature’ is discussed in relation to ‘models of scholarly communication through which the nascent field [of Cultural Studies] established itself’ through works in progress and working papers before a formal peer-reviewed journal could be established. Writing about the establishment and development of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, the authors cite ‘administrative’ writing of Centre reports and ‘intermittent occasional papers’, ‘an ethics of experimentation where publication is concerned’ (p.114), and ‘a densely packed textual ecosystem’ where ‘printed monographs and journal essays sit alongside blogs, social networking sites, peer-to-peer file sharing services, mobile apps, virtual environments’ (p.114) are conscripted to the academic cause (Striphas, 2013). My experience researching and writing this thesis echoes all of these concerns. For this study the ‘grey literature’ items are taken as **artefacts** of **activity systems** (Engeström, 2001)and treated as data rather than literature.

The timeline format enables the reader to compare concurrent events and in doing so to see surprising patterns and tends. This approach is particularly congruent in thinking about the relationships between different activity systems, partly because of the emphasis on **historicity** in Engeström’s theory, and partly to effectively scrutinise the impact each activity system is having on the others over time. (Grundy et al., 2014)

Generally, the data collection was limited to artefacts pertaining to higher and advanced professional education, and excluded artefacts specific to a particular profession or discipline unless the topic appeared generalizable. For the purposes of this thesis it is also important to differentiate the ‘professions’ (specialist and expert occupations), the bodies which represent them (the formal entities which represent and control access to those occupations), and professionals (the individuals who practice those expert occupations).

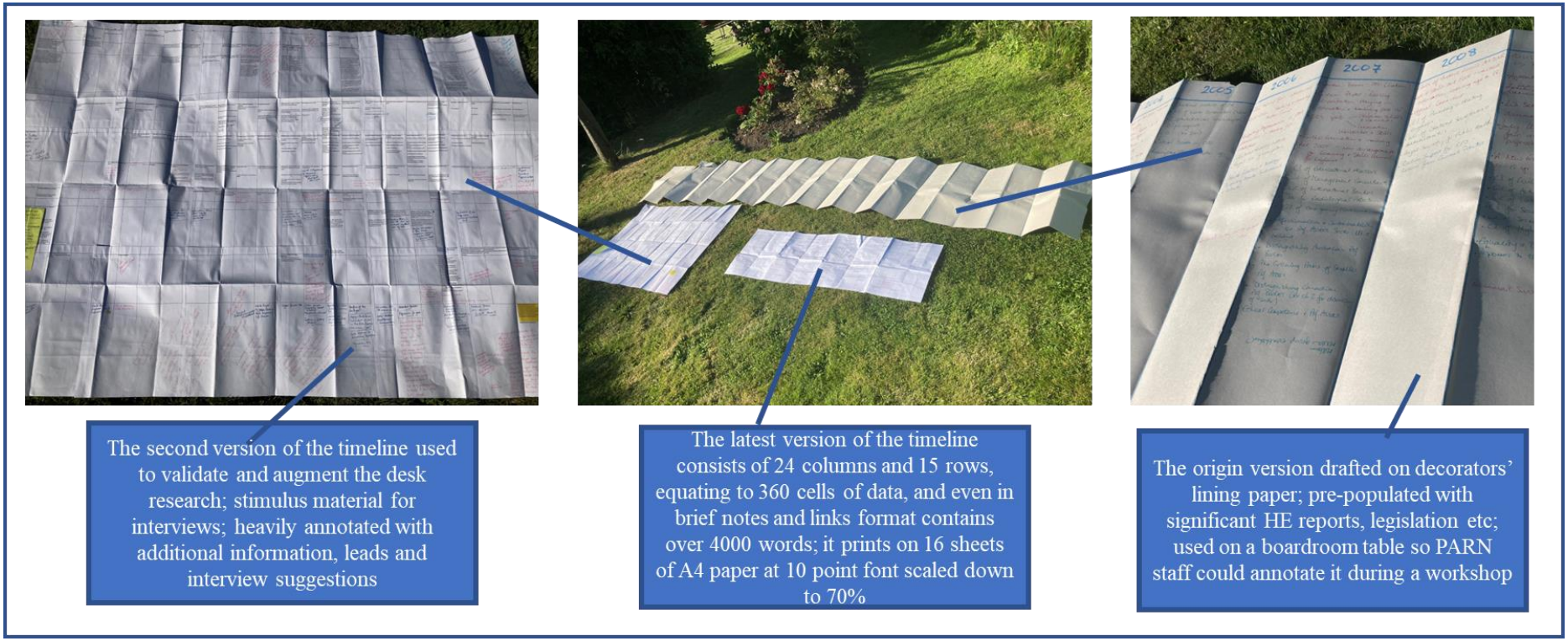
The study was particularly concerned with identifying and analysing the precise evidence of the inter-relationships between the activity systems, and their interdependence. So, for example, the annual government funding letter to the Higher Education Funding Council

(HEFCE) very specifically conveys the government's priority spending areas for higher education. Analysed over a twenty-year period these letters provide good evidence and insight about how government priorities change over time, and how the policy is expected to be enacted year on year; how policy and its enactment change over time.

The timeline offers a framework for gathering, collating and curating a wide range of resources from different sources in a way that enables patterns and inter-dependencies to be easily identified. The study essentially looks at the interplay between three distinct 'activity systems', as defined by Engeström (Engestrom, 2009; Engestrom & Sannino, 2010; Engeström, 2001, 2007). The elements included in the timeline broadly align with the 'nodes' in Engeström's model, as illustrated earlier (section 3.2.2). By mapping activities in the domains of political policy-making, higher education and professional bodies it has been possible to see how activity in one has an impact on the others. The political dimension is most clearly a matter of public record; the academic dimension is well-represented in contemporaneous accounts, analysis and critiques of political initiatives; and for this study the professional body activity has been largely derived from study visits to the Professional Associations Research Network (PARN) and interviews with key influencers and actors.

It is worth noting the scale of the timeline and the data set which has informed it. The timeline for this study spans 20 years and three domains of practice. In the first instance a roll of wallpaper was used in a workshop at the PARN offices in Bristol to capture the longitudinal history of PSRB activity. The working timeline was transferred to an Excel spreadsheet and augmented through desk research. Later iterations of the timeline were used as stimulus material in oral history interviews which both validated the work in progress and suggested additional avenues of enquiry. The latest version of the timeline consists of 24 columns and 15 rows, equating to 360 cells of data, and even in brief notes and links format contains over 4000 words (see Figure 1 Development of the Timeline).

Figure 1 Development of the Timeline

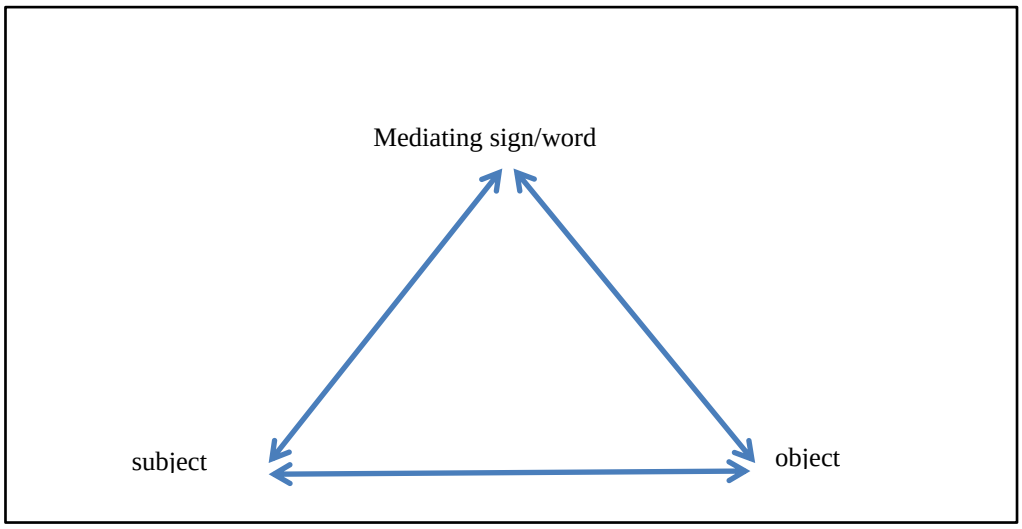


2.5 Activity Theory/Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

A fundamental premise of this study is that the domains of government, higher education and professional associations can be understood as **Activity Systems**, and as such constitute the units of analysis. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 which presents the analysis of these domains through the lenses of 3rd Generation Engeströmian Activity Theory, and considers how they operate on the shared objectives of 'Influence' and 'Trustworthy Professionals' as themes that emerged from the data..

Activity theory grew out of early C20th attempts to theorise the interrelationship between individuals and their societies, and how our response to a stimulus is 'mediated' through culturally significant signs or words. Vygotsky (1962) presented a mediated connection commonly represented in diagrammatic form as presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2 common representation of Vygotsky's model of mediated activity



> The child establishes social interaction with adults through words that have meaning. To a significant extent, objective connections are reflected in these syncretic connections, in this unordered syncretic heap of objects formed with the help of the word. Objective connections are reflected here to the extent that they correspond with the child's own impressions and perceptions. Therefore, the meaning of the child's words will frequently correspond with the meanings established in adult speech. This is particularly true where words are related to the concrete objects that form the reality immediately available to the child (Vygotsky, 1962)[4]

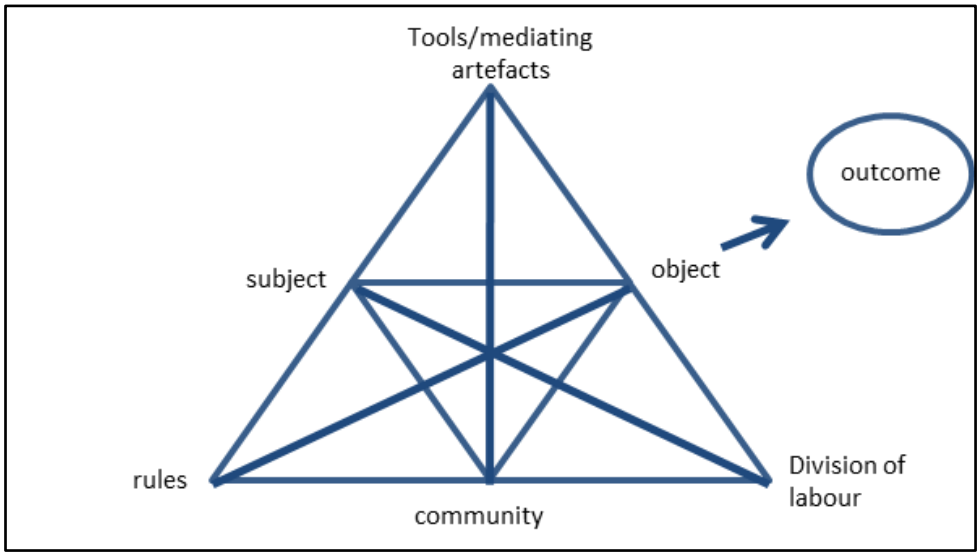
[4] https://www.marxists.org/archive/vygotsky/works/words/ch05.htm chapter 4, paragraph 6 (accessed 23/09/2022)

So, for example, we might think about a fork being a concept, represented by the word, that mediates the connection between a hungry person and their food – there are alternatives to a fork specific to their own cultural context (chopsticks, hands, spoon), and the fork itself is laden with cultural significance and a set of assumptions about how it should be used in specific situations, and through its use the user learns something about, is encultured into their society.

This so called 'First generation' activity theory was further developed by Leontiev (Leontiev, 1947) to encompass a collective dimension. Through the 'primeval collective hunt' Leontiev describes how the shared object of food for the community is achieved through division of labour (different actors contributing their specific roles in different ways), underpinned by rules (who does what, how and when), and mediated by tools and artefacts (spears, knives).

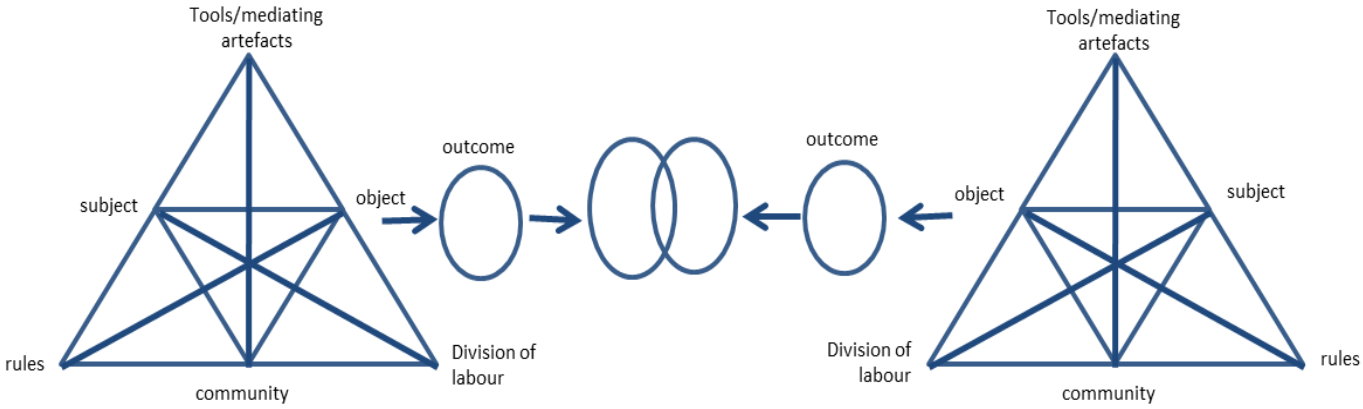
Engeström presents this model of a human activity system diagrammatically (2009; 2001), as presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Common representation of Engeström's model of a human activity system



Engeström further develops this model, 'third generation activity theory' which seeks to make sense of the complex interactions within and between multiple activity systems (Figure 4).

Figure 4: common representation of Engeström's model of the interactions between multiple activity systems



As well as exploring the nodes which Engeström uses to characterise activity systems the model requires that we consider the underlying principles inherent in the model. Engeström writes about five principles underpinning his theory:

- a collective, **artefact-mediated** and **object-oriented** activity system, seen in its network relations to other activity systems, is taken as the prime unit of analysis.
- **multi-voicedness** of activity systems - an activity system is always a community of multiple points of view, traditions and interests. The division of labour in an activity creates different positions for the participants, the participants carry their own diverse histories, and the activity system itself carries multiple layers and strands of history engraved in its artefacts, rules and conventions.
- Activity systems are shaped and get transformed over lengthy periods of time – what he calls **historicity**. Their problems and potentials can only be understood against their own history.
- the central role of **contradictions** within activity systems as sources of change and development. Contradictions are not the same as problems or conflicts. Contradictions are historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems.
- The fifth principle proclaims the possibility of expansive transformations in activity systems. Activity systems move through relatively long cycles of qualitative transformations. **As the contradictions of an activity system are aggravated, some individual participants begin to question and deviate from its established norms. In some cases, this escalates into collaborative envisioning and a deliberate collective change effort.** An expansive transformation is accomplished when the object and motive of the activity are reconceptualized to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activity. (Engestrom, 2009; Engeström, 2001)

2.6 Activity Theory as a theoretical lens for analysis

Before adopting activity theory as a frame of reference and analysis for this study I sought out examples of how CH/AT had been used by researchers from a range of disciplines. My purpose was to select articles that described how and why CH/AT had been deployed, regardless of the researchers' disciplines or research topics. Although a few of the studies

considered were narrowly focused on a single activity system, case study or dimension of CH/AT most adopted a range of data collection and analysis frameworks rooted in a diverse array of theoretical traditions, but broadly encompassed by the collective 'Social Theories of Learning'– the scientific conventions of a museum case study (Star & Griesemer, 1989), environmentalist-ethnography (Roth, 2007), situated practice (Rose-Anderssen et al., 2010; Tan & Meles, 2010), and change agency and DWR (Edwards, 2011, 2012; Edwards & Daniels, 2012; Engeström et al., 2014). Even in narrowly focused studies ethnographic observation was supplemented with analysis of visual materials or Developmental Work Research (DWR) is augmented with interviews. Thus it appeared that CH/AT as a theoretical frame of reference and analysis was neither prescriptive of nor dependent upon standardised conventions of data collection and analysis. The table in Appendix B summarises the key characteristics of the selected studies which have helped shape my research design and analysis framework.

Each of the activity systems considered in this research has a stake in not just the concept of the trustworthy professional, but in the development and regulation of the individuals on whom, and the practices in which, the public routinely place their confidence. By analysing each domain as an activity system we can achieve a more nuanced understanding of the assumptions and expectations encapsulated within the notion of a 'trustworthy professional'; equally by approaching each domain from the perspective of their shared but different interest in the 'trustworthy professional' we can come to a more sophisticated understanding of the domains as activity systems.

Engeström's model of 'expansive learning' is most particularly served by identifying 'contradictions' within and between activity systems and aggravating these tensions in pursuit of transformed practice (items four and five in the list above), for example through the change laboratory approach to organisational change. In this study there is no assumption that the domains/activity systems are consciously or deliberately cooperating to develop or produce a trustworthy professional so there is no assumption of a deliberate change agenda. This analysis is therefore adopting an interpretivist rather than an interventionist perspective – how might the language, actions, rules, artefacts, histories and voices of these activity systems be interpreted to illuminate the concept of the trustworthy professional (predominantly items one to three in the list above).

Activity Theory can be presented as somewhat stark and functionalist, especially when expressed diagrammatically as in Engeström's triangles, but it is the precision of this structure that has been harnessed to find themes and patterns in the data gathered through oral history narratives, by incorporating Engeström's 'principles' of Activity Theory in the interview design and by applying the same principles as filters on the gathered data. A useful distinction can be made between interpretivist (an approach to understanding a situation) and interventionist (a vehicle to stimulate change in a situation) applications of activity theory (Guile, 2011). For the purposes of this study the principles and elements of the theory have been applied from an interpretivist stance.

Just as Engeström's third generation activity theory (Engestrom, 2009; Engestrom & Sannino, 2010; Engeström et al., 2014; Engeström, 2001, 2007) has its origins in the work of Vygotsky (1962), so too does Holland's Figured Worlds (1998). Whereas Engeström adopts the activity system(s) as the unit of analysis, Holland appears more concerned with the agency of individuals or 'collectivities' in shaping and being shaped by themselves in the world.

> "person" and "society" are alike as sites, or moments, of the production and reproduction of social practices…. Forms of personhood and forms of society are historical products, intimate and public, that situate the interactivity of social practices. It is in this doubly historical landscape that we place human identities. We take identity to be a central means by which selves, and the sets of actions they organize, form and re-form over personal lifetimes and in the histories of social collectivities. (p.270)

In discussing identity in practice Holland writes about 'practice identities' in a number of 'contexts of activity: figured world, space of authoring, making worlds.' (p.271). In these Figured World 'contexts' there are common touch points with Engeström's third generation Activity Theory - history, language, practices - and both articulate well with the processes of collectively creating, crafting, negotiating and positioning professional identities. Holland's emphasis on personal agency and identity as vehicles for 'making worlds' offers an additional dimension which appears missing from the highly structured Engeström model. More recently there appears to have been a trend to accommodate 'world-making' into newer manifestations of CHAT (Edwards, 2011, 2012; Edwards & Daniels, 2012; Stetsenko, 2012, 2017, 2018)

The Activity Theory approach seems particularly relevant to this thesis, for example within the professional bodies sector there exists a distinct domain of practice concerned with the

validation of academic qualifications which confer professional status and membership on graduates. Within the higher education sector there is a corresponding community responsible for academic quality assurance within the academic domain. Similarly there is a community of political policy makers influencing education. Applying the AT/CHAT lenses to narratives derived from these different perspectives offers a systematic vehicle for illuminating the shared goals and contradictions inherent in the interplay of professional, academic and political agents in the domain of professional learning.

2.7 Oral History

My research and this thesis have been based in part on narrative oral history accounts of episodes in the 1997-2017 history of policy development, HE and professional bodies, predominantly from those who can be considered architects and influencers of those moments. Interview subjects were identified initially from resources reviewed for the timeline, and then through 'snowball' sampling whereby earlier interviewees identified those they considered influential and significant to the study or to one of the domains under consideration. This process proved highly effective in identifying candidates but also presented a significant challenge in maintaining the focus, scale and scope of the research. As identified earlier the research was conceptualised as an iterative enquiry-based project rather than a proof of hypothesis and was stimulated by my professional curiosity, so the 'snowball' grew! About 30 hours of interviews were undertaken.

Interviewees included former government ministers, CEOs, VCs/PVCs – a list of contributors is included as Appendix H . By virtue of the roles they have fulfilled, the actions evidenced in the desk research and the testimony of others, interview subjects were assumed and proved to be articulate, confident and experienced communicators, adept at conveying a well-managed corporate message in highly politicised and public contexts. In this context the locus of power in the research relationship largely resided with the participants rather than the researcher, in contrast to more obvious concerns with safeguarding vulnerable participants in situations where the researcher is assumed to hold the power. In reality the power relations in research projects are more nuanced, fluctuating between privileging the researcher and the participant at different points in the research cycle (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009).

During its various stages (recruitment, data collection, analysis, validation check, and publishing), qualitative research generates conflicting ethical and methodological dilemmas related to informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, social justice, and practitioner research,

as well as questions about power, reciprocity, and contextual relevance (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009)

In this research interviewees have retained significant control over the interview process, and it has to be assumed have presented a mediated account of events. My background as a performance development coach has been useful in breaking down inhibitions and eliciting rich narratives, with most interviewees surprised at how much they had to contribute once the interviews got going, and at review stage expressing surprise at the relaxed candour they had exhibited during interview. Interview design was influenced by the protocols of oral history combined with an intention to illuminate the workings of activity systems through third generation activity theory (Engeström, 2001), while also encouraging interviewees to explicitly explore how they and their organisations position and are positioned within the landscape of education policy and practice - in this context what Doykos et al describe as 'leveraging identity' in their eponymous article (Doykos et al., 2014)

A number of issues arise from adopting oral histories as a source of data. Firstly, the question arises as to the difference between the historian's use of and understanding of oral history and the social scientist's assumptions of what at first appears to be the same data collection device. There are documented, although apparently contested (Morrissey, 1984), conventions pertaining to the historical factual and perceptual "filling the gaps" function of oral histories which give voice to the un(der)represented in shaping our collective understanding of the past (Freund, 2009, p. 37). This motivation both overlaps and differs from the social science intent to unpack the social constructions which underpin how and why certain events unfolded, as well exploring what happened, and through whose agency. A useful distinction is made within oral history between *researcher generated oral history* and *process generated oral history* (Freund, 2009) which is helpful in clarifying the intended purpose of oral histories to this research relating to PSRBs. For example, this study addresses specific issues, questions and episodes in the interviews, placing them in the researcher generated category; although some material may be retained for a limited period to inform subsequent research it was not the intention to archive the interviews for posterity, thus restricting their subsequent scrutiny as process generated resources. Clarity of purpose in shaping the interviews to address and illuminate specific issues needed to be balanced by the flexibility to capture the story as told – we don't know what we don't know and too tight an interview design inhibits revelations of the unexpected. Freund helpfully writes about oral history with a wider social science audience in mind and acknowledges that "a spoken story's oral traits carry the

subjectivity of the interviewee and as such the most important kind of information an oral history can convey". (Freund, 2009, p. 37)

Subjectivity can be characterised as a spectre in research, compromising the objectivity, neutrality and credibility of findings. In the context of this study a considerable amount of desk research has been undertaken to identify the interview subjects from artefacts in the public domain. These artefacts helped to elicit and trigger the interviewees' recollections of the events, motivations, challenges and ideologies that influenced and informed the developments observable in the public record. Here, therefore, subjectivity can be understood as positioning, and as such is a vital component in understanding the narrativized, world-making policy enactments of PSRBs.

In accepting a helpful and expansive conceptualisation of subjectivity we also need to be mindful of our own subjectivities as researchers. Doykos et al provide useful insights, illustrated through a number of field work case studies, about how 'researchers are often confronted with the question of how to present themselves, leverage their constructed identities to gain access, conduct research, and exit the setting' (Doykos et al., 2014, p. 132), vividly capturing a sense of the research benefits of reflexively acknowledging and exploiting the researcher's own persona. A slightly different angle on this relates to the 'unintended consequences' of 'actively striving to mitigate bias' and the 'unreasonable' goal of maintaining researcher neutrality: 'value neutrality is a myth and attempts to mitigate bias are largely unrealistic and thus doomed to fail' (Lumsden, 2013, p. 21). I discuss my presence in the research in 1.2.1.

I abandoned an early intention to explicitly exclude from the study any organisation with which I had a current or previous relationship as member, employee, trustee or consultant, thereby attempting to avoid unhelpful or misleading assumptions and preconceptions about the data gathered. As the study progressed it became unhelpful and counter-productive to attempt to bracket out the very experiences that inspired the study - the research has been motivated by my professional interest and curiosity about the domain of PSRBs and education developed over many years working in these sectors, and draws upon considerable insights, knowledge and expertise derived from a long-standing engagement with PSRBs. I am positioned by others as knowledgeable in the field and position myself as a (not uncritical) champion of professionalism/professionalization. This positioning undoubtedly helped negotiate access to research participants, but I needed to be reflexively vigilant

throughout in relation to the risk of collaboration morphing into collusion around a shared ideology assumed to exist between researcher and researched. The pivotal narratives at 6.2.1 and 6.4.1 are heavily and explicitly informed by my own lived professional experience.

There are challenges and benefits inherent in such reflexivity. Writing about the experiences of female accountants Haynes states that she uses

> the term oral history to encapsulate in-depth personal narratives, which rely on open-ended questions to probe aspects of the narrative in order to maximise discovery and description. (2010, p. 222)

and is explicit about her own position in the research 'Oral histories of other women were supplemented in the project with auto ethnographical experiences from my own life history.' (Haynes, 2010, p.223). Bott (2010) takes this theme in an interesting direction, reflecting on the 'othering' of the researcher by the research subjects, asking 'what are the effects of the researcher's own biography on the stories she is exploring? How does her story impact on how she tells the stories of others?' (p. 161), and indeed on how the subjects' stories are told to the researcher.

In contrast Gustavson (2012) writes about storytelling and activism in the work of Studs Terkel, an American author and broadcaster, 'Terkel believed telling stories of the past to be a form of social action and he used his texts about the past to comment politically on his present', (p.103) …Terkel chose interviewees he felt were representative individuals, played an active role in his interviews, and then effaced his role from the transcripts when he edited for publication (p.104). Considering oral history in highly politicised contexts, Jessee (2011) reflects that 'the oral historian risks inadvertently becoming part of the machinery of propaganda' (p300) … both the interviewee and interviewer approach the interview space with agendas' (p.293), and acknowledges that the political context for her 'imposed too many limitations on the outcomes' to express all the political, cultural and social complexity. (p.299).

Depending on the shelf life of the research output there could be a further moment in time when the research is read and the accounts reflected upon by later readers. There is a time-travelling element to oral history in that the narrative in collected at one point in time about a previous moment, with the expectation that it will be experienced at a predetermined time of publication, and in the realisation that for as long as the record of the narrative exists it could be interpreted afresh in the context of as yet unknown circumstances or applied to entirely

different research enquiries. Of particular interest to this project is the potential to observe patterns of emergent policy making and enactment, and here too oral history offers a valuable mechanism for capturing change over time. With sufficient flexibility incorporated into the interview design, interviewees naturally speak about situations and circumstances at the time of the interview as well as recalling and re-telling their story in relation to the trigger questions. (Freund, 2009). This becomes evident through numerous examples from my interview data explored later in the thesis.

2.8 Pivotal narratives

There is a modest literature specific to 'pivotal narratives' (distinct from a literature about Literary or Linguistic theories which investigate factors pivotal to narratives). A Onesearch literature search for "pivotal narratives" (2/5/20) returned 51 results, most of which appear to relate to the use of personal pivotal narratives in trauma treatment. Kliger addresses the 'influence of narratives shared about the memories of trauma on shaping the worldview of those who listen' (2017, p. S471). Although not about trauma my interpretation of the histories has been impacted through collection and curation of oral histories directly from influencers.

Socio linguistic theory suggests that 'narratives are created not by storytellers' monologues but by collaboration between storytellers and story-recipients' (Takeda, 2013; Uchida, 2011), and that 'allo-repetition serves as a pivot in co-constructing narratives'. As a researcher researching what is professionally familiar to me my interview recordings capture significant evidence of 'allo-repetition' where I as interviewer repeat or reflect to the interviewee what I have heard or what resonates with my own experience; this is also a technique used in my coaching practice to encourage further reflection by a coachee. The psychotherapeutic realm offers helpful insights to the co-creation of 'pivotal moments' through 'narrative practice':

> "A pivotal moment has the potential to be 'thickened' – collaboratively elaborated into a narrative that offers a preferred alternative to the problem story. Or it may lead to the emergence of other insights that contribute to the co-construction of an alternative story. The new narrative may then enable the development of a preferred personal identity, greater personal agency, and a supportive social context for living out the alternative story."
> (Maclennan, 2015, p. 44)

There are of course risks inherent in the ‘co-creation’ of narratives as research data where a drift into collusion between researcher and participant could compromise the perceived validity of findings. Reflecting on my reflexive presence in the research it is impossible for me, and arguably others, to bracket-out my professional experience which is inextricably entwined with some of the narratives featured later in the thesis.

Writing from a political science perspective, Larsen sets out ‘to pinpoint … the pivotal narratives and demonstrate how beliefs in these help to explain the cross-national difference in acceptance of current income differences’ (Larsen, 2016). She puts the narratives ‘up for discussion’ as a vehicle through which the public can question, in her case societal assumptions about ‘generational mobility, procedural justice and a middle-class society’ (p.108). My purpose is to identify and curate illustrative pivotal narratives about the roles and (inter)relationships of professional bodies with HE and government, which apply to and derive from the 1997-2017 period. The narratives encapsulate significant findings from my research which represent more generalisable themes or provide a contextual ‘back story’ for seminal events.

For this thesis significant moments and influencers were identified through desk research for the timeline and interviews conducted to explore these further. Quotes from interviews were captured and coded in excel so that, among other things, they could be sorted by code. Illustrative quotations were then used as the core material from which to craft illustrative narratives, augmented by data from grey literature artefacts.

Extensive though it is, the timeline is a relatively flat artefact, a repository of information about what happened when, organised around types of activity or community. The interviews were designed to animate the chronology by providing rich insights into motivations for actions throughout the period, providing illustration and evidence to support the findings of the research. Pivotal narratives present a richer analysis of the most significant stories to emerge from the data.

Several narratives emerged from the data collection and analysis processes which appeared to encapsulate major themes emerging from the study and illustrated the spheres of influence and impact exercised variously by the three activity systems. These have been characterised as ‘pivotal narratives’ which are understood in the context of this thesis to be accounts of significant moments or events which might serve to shift our understanding not just of what has occurred but of how, why and with what impact. The narratives selected are ‘pivotal’ by

virtue of the insights they provide about activity at the nexus of activity systems, how they illuminate the enactment of policy, and the extent to which the events described fundamentally changed the focus of subsequent events and practices.

- **Accountability and public confidence in the professions – the legacy of Shipman** (5.4.1) relates to a specific series of events and subsequent enquiries which impacted on public confidence in professional practitioners and the organisations monitoring and representing them, and shaped enduring changes to PSRBs' policies and practices with regard to continuing professional development (CPD) and remaining in good standing as a practitioner.

- **The drive for teaching excellence in higher education** (6.2.1) draws on a range of government funded initiatives to redress the inequality in HE between research and teaching as routes to professional/academic career progression, and in particular to demonstrate to the public the value of higher education in the context of introducing/increasing student fees. The narrative illustrates how government policy is enacted in HE, in this case largely through adopting the mechanisms usually apparent in the forms and function PSRBs – for example, professional affiliations/postnominal letters, professional recognition, programme accreditation, awards, prizes, conferences, publications. The HE sector previously had few mechanisms for recognising HE teaching as a professional activity; at the time of writing there are almost 170,000 practitioners in HE awarded HEA Fellowship, Fellowships are expected as evidence of fitness to teach and often required as a condition of probation.

- **Professionalisation of higher education teaching – the emergence of a profession/professional body** (6.4.1). Whilst the mechanisms for professional recognition typically awarded by PSRBs have been adopted by Advance HE and its predecessor organisations the notion of Advance HE being a professional body continues to be contested within the HE sector. The narrative explores the extent to which an organisation sponsored by government to enact a policy of self-regulating HE enjoys the governance autonomy of established PSRBs or the practitioner buy-in of practitioner-led membership organisations.

- **Mobilising PSRBs as a sector - Fair Access to Professions** (6.5.1) explores how government widening participation policies gained traction in HE, and the extent to which PSRBs embraced the opportunity for collective action to facilitate progression of WP graduates into professional occupations. The narrative also illustrates the significance of personal stories in shaping influencers and what they choose to champion.

The narratives derived from the evidence of the Timeline, the artefacts and activities of the different activity systems, and from the personal testimony of influencers. Some influencers were identifiable from the timeline data as high-profile actors in their activity system; others were identified by early interviewees as being particularly active and influential. Essentially those interviewed as 'influencers' were directly responsible for or associated with events,

policies and activities at pivotal moments which had enduing impact on one or more of the activity systems considered in the research. By designing the interviews around oral history principles deeper insights about personal and organisational motivation were revealed by influencers in the government, HE and PSRB domains.

Chapter 3 The Activity: Discussion of the domains of practice as 'Activity Systems'

3.1 Introduction to the Activity Systems chapter

The evolution and application of Activity Theory relevant to this thesis is discussed in Chapter 2 Research Design and Methods. The analysis of the domains as activity systems is presented through consideration of two themes which emerged from the data: 3.3.2 Influence within and between the systems and 3.3.3 Working towards public confidence in 'trustworthy professionals'.

This chapter draws on a purposive literature review which informed my research design. This literature is fully explored in Chapter 2 Research Design and Methods. By identifying a number of studies that variously utilised the model as either/both interpretivist or/and interventionist I was able to refine my own use of the theory as an interpretivist framework for analysis. Through vignettes and episodes revealed from interviews I explore ways in which the Activity Systems are deliberately or incidentally interconnected around the notion of the trustworthy professional. This use of vignettes is comparable to the use of stimulus or mirror data in Change Laboratories, where experiential accounts and reflections are used to stimulate ongoing discussion to expose contradictions and seek new insights or inform changed practice. (Bligh & Flood, 2017; Engeström et al., 2014; Engeström, 2007)

Key outcomes of the chapter include the systematic understanding of how the three domains work as distinct 'sectors'. This form of analysis enables some observations to be made about potential discrepancy or dissonance between a publicly narrated and curated account of the role, purpose and practice of an activity system and the lived reality of practicing within and between activity systems.

Much of the data used for the analysis of the activity systems derives from material gathered for the timeline, the grey literature effectively being, or acting as a proxy for, evidence of the **tools**, **rules**, **divisions of labour** that are fundamental to the activity system analysis. The artefacts were augmented and validated by interview data, in particular comments which illuminated the cultures and practices of each activity system, and informed the vignettes used to present the analysis. Some insights derive from my own experiences of working within or with the activity systems or from anecdotal observations made by colleagues working in the field. Sources informing the analysis are identified wherever possible. Chapter

2 includes discussion on the power dynamics of interviewing senior policy makers and the value of un-citeable 'off the record' conversations.

3.2 The domains as activity systems

The Appendix E below presents indicative examples, derived from desk research, of how the characteristics and nodes of Activity Theory are manifest in the three domains of practice. The interviews additionally provide rich insights to how these elements are enacted.

It is interesting to note that whilst the three domains of practice considered for this study each have an identifiable interest in the higher order outcome of 'trustworthy professionals' it is not clear that they themselves see this as a shared outcome which could be well served by active collaboration, as the incidental product of collision between three activity systems, or indeed not recognised as a shared objective at all. There is evidence of reciprocal frustration with regard to each domain's understanding of 'fitness to practice' for example, played out in perennial debate about academic fitness to qualify as defined by the HE community compared with professional fitness to practice a defined by the PSRB community, well-illustrated in the interview data, for example;

> there's a strong strand of anti-intellectualism around nursing, and has been for a long time … too posh to wash and all that sort of rubbish. I don't want a nurse administering my drugs who doesn't understand her pharmacy or know what these things mean. I do not want a stupid nurse who's really kind but doesn't understand medical conditions please, I want a properly educated nurse if I'm ill. (anon PVC interview)

3.3 Applying third generation activity theory model

This study is concerned with the interconnections, relationships and contradictions within and between domains of practice which can each be understood as activity systems. In this section I apply the third generation activity theory model firstly to illustrate how two activity systems can operate together within a single organisation, and then how the three domains of government, higher education and PSRBs interact around two of the principle themes emerging from the timeline and interview coding: 1) how influence operates within and between the systems, and 2) how the three domains work towards public confidence in professionals. This analysis is driven by data gathered though interviews and through grey literature – reports, consultation documents, which can be understood as **artefacts** of the systems. Quotes were extracted from interviews, coded and entered into a spreadsheet

enabling sorting by code clusters and easy identification of the data most relevant to a particular theme. The full list of data analysis codes can be seen at Appendix I

For the 'influence' example code 38 ('influence') was combined with codes 1-12 which related to the characteristics of third generation activity theory as presented in (Engeström citation). For the 'trustworthy professional' example codes 1-12 were combined with codes 24 ('specialisation'), 27 ('teaching practice/excellence'), 28 ('professionalisation'), 34 ('experts') and 35 ('public confidence/public good') to capture a range of policy positions, routes to qualification and attitudes towards professionals and professional practice across the three domains of government, higher education and PRSBs.

3.3.1 Professional body as qualification gatekeeper

The following scenario is derived from direct professional experience and observation and is presented to illustrate how Engeström's third generation activity theory can be applied to better understand the dynamics of a two-system context within a single professional body.

Scenario – establishing the Patent Examination Board for the Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys (CIPA)

CIPA as a professional body is regulated by the Privy Council, through its Charter. CIPA is the Approved Regulator for the UK patent attorney profession and a licence to practise is conferred on patent attorneys by the independent regulatory body, the Intellectual Property Regulation Board (IPReg), founded by CIPA and the Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys (CITMA) as the means to delegate regulatory responsibilities as required by the Legal Services Act. CIPA came under the jurisdiction of the LSA in 2007 and established IPReg in 2010.A new examination board (EB) and associated examination governance board (EGB) had been established. For the first time in the organisation's history lay expertise and professional educationalists were introduced into the examination and governance structure. This author was appointed as an independent education consultant, contracted on a freelance basis to support the CIPA's newly appointed Head of Education (HoE), among other things to establish the EB and EGB. The CIPA HoE was recruited from a national examining/awarding body and the freelancer from an HE/professional development background. Three Lay Members were appointed to bring educational expertise to the EGB, respectively from HE, regulatory, and professional body backgrounds. Two practitioners represented the CIPA and provided continuity with the legacy examination system. The EB was constituted to include all examiners and all

members of the EGB, and both EB and EGB were to be accountable to the Regulator and independent of the CIPA but were financially and practically dependent on the CIPA for funding and infrastructure. The transition process was initiated in January and expected to deliver demonstrable improvements in cost and time efficiency, reliability of results, and quality assurance mechanisms without disruption to the established cycle culminating in October examinations.

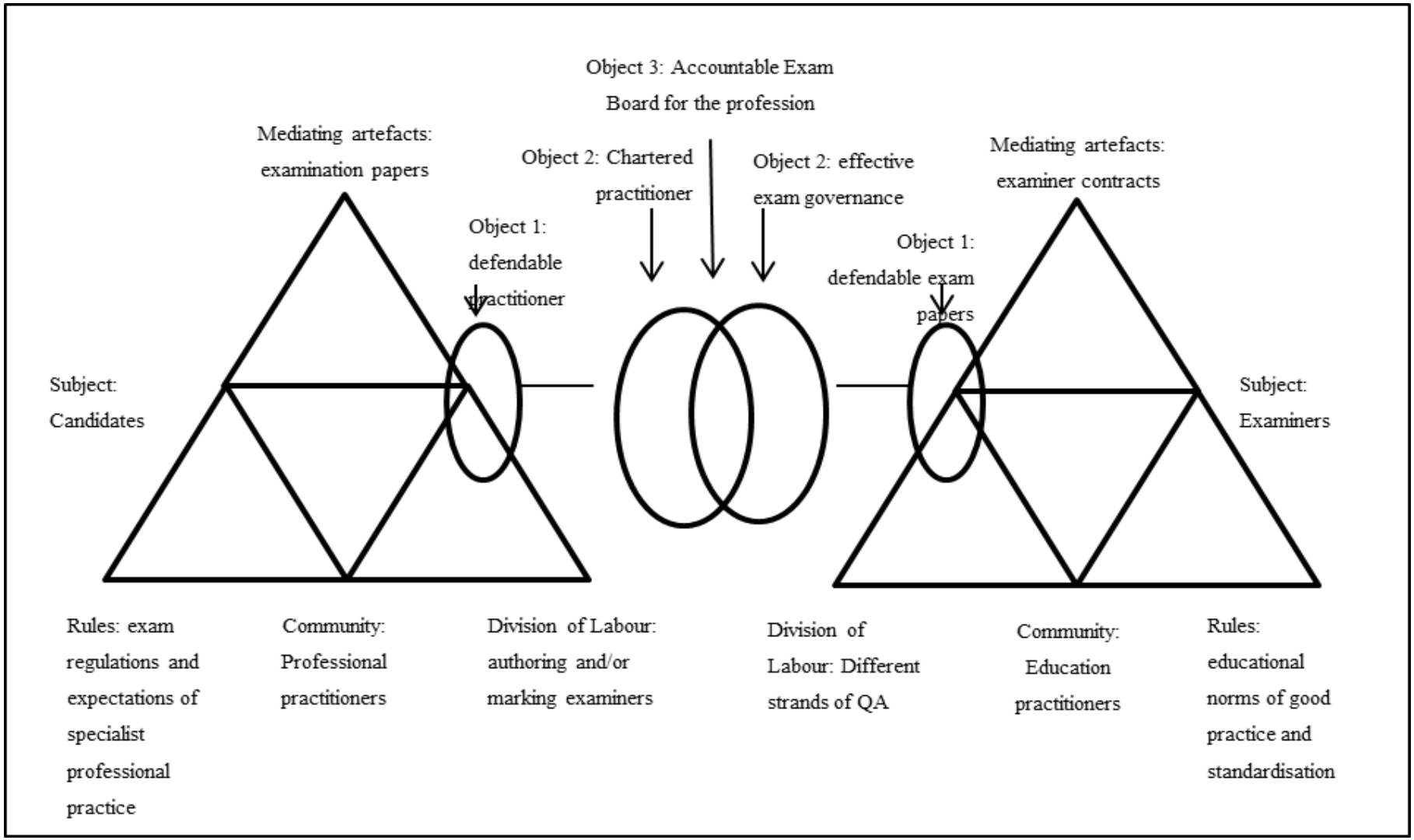
The diagram below (Fig. 1) illustrates the interaction of the practitioner and education systems brought together to deliver the EB and the EGB.

One of the major challenges in the presented change scenario arises from what Engeström characterises as the **'multi-voicedness'** not just arising from different perspectives between the activity systems but also from the diversity within them. Although apparently homogenous the professional practitioner activity system draws individuals from different organisational cultures, old hands and newer entrants, solo practitioners and long-serving employees of major corporate bodies. Each has a different relationship to the professional body, attitudes towards the regulator and enthusiasm for the change initiative. Even the modernisers within the community are imbued with the cultural assumptions of the profession and become unwitting apologists for historic practices and traditions, what Engeström characterises as **'historicity'**. A defensive acceptance of the system which produced them is characterised by a discourse of 'it's worked well so far', 'hasn't done me any harm', and yet is in **contradiction** to the practitioner characteristics of the profession which generate an equally dominant thread of perfectionist attention to detail and desire to learn what is needed to get things right, interestingly illustrated by the CIPA's coat of arms which was adopted in 2000 and carries a Latin motto first published elsewhere in 1473 which translates 'Whatever you do, do cautiously, and look to the end.' Such inherent contradictions have historically generated a self-perpetuating cycle of learning from each other to 'maintain standards' which rather than stimulating **'expansive transformation'** reinforces established practices whilst inhibiting acceptance of new approaches, in this scenario articulated as a resistance to 'trendy educational window-dressing'. In this respect the practitioner system lends itself to a Communities of Practice treatment whereby apprentices are trained and encultured into established practices (Lave, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 2000; Wenger & Snyder, 2000), or less positively perpetuates 'prejudice and groupthink' (Fullan, 1999).

The **multi-voicedness** of the education activity system is more obvious with the participants drawn from many different educational contexts for the explicit purpose of modernising the established examination practices. Tensions and misunderstandings emerged as a result of similar terminology having differently nuanced meaning and usage in different educational domains, and most crucially variations in the interpretations of quality – quality assurance and enhancement, measures and indicators – derived from the different customs practices and assumptions in compulsory, post compulsory, academic and vocational educational traditions. For lay participants in the activity (here the educationalists) to have credibility with the specialists (professional practitioners) they are recruited for their experience and expertise, essentially assumed to be unconsciously competent.

The model provides a useful device for identifying the real shared object (in this scenario counterintuitively the creation of the examination board emerges as the shared object, rather than the examinations themselves which can be understood more helpfully as mediating **artefacts** of the activity) and prompts a range of reflections about what is going on at and between the nodes of the activity system(s).

Figure 5 Engströmian representation of the Patent Examination Board activity system in the scenario at 3.3.1



3.3.2 Influence within and between the systems

Through the analysis is becomes clear that an issue or theme can be common to all the activity systems without necessarily being shared by them. In this scenario personal testimony is used to explore the theme of influence, which is common to but not a shared outcome of the activity systems.

Those with influence and those seeking to influence from across the gamut of government, HE and PSRB activity have interesting perspectives to share about how influence is exerted, illustrated by the following quotes:

> I realised that it is better to ignore the seniority of civil servants and instead seek out the best official you can find on any particular issue, irrespective of their grade. This can mean the most effective officials have yet another job to do, but it is more efficient. (Hillman, 2014)[5]

> Universities work all the time with employers, with professional bodies, to adapt and reform curriculum and course content to meet the needs of the outside world. One of the challenges is, in my experience, businesses and professional bodies don't speak with a coherent voice and a coherent understanding of what they actually want. (Bill Rammell, VC, University of Bedfordshire, former Education Minister)

> Professional bodies need to persuade employers and practitioners that there is value in engaging in what they do. (Maddalaine Ansell, CEO University Alliance, former Civil Servant)

> I would like to think that there is value and purpose in [PSRB] chief executives coming together, regardless of whether there's any political need to influence because actually we have a sector to influence, and that sector is the professional body sector. (Lee Davies, CEO, CIPA)

These quotes offer striking illustrations of how influence is differently understood in the three 'sectors', and also highlights how **multi voicedness** plays out. For example, Rammell makes an observation about what universities do 'all the time' in respect of programme design and whilst he may be in a particularly privileged position this is nevertheless a helicopter view of programme design. It is often influenced at the level of individual course and programme

[5] Hillman's personal refection on his experience as a Spad, published by the Institute for Government, has been used in lieu of interview data.

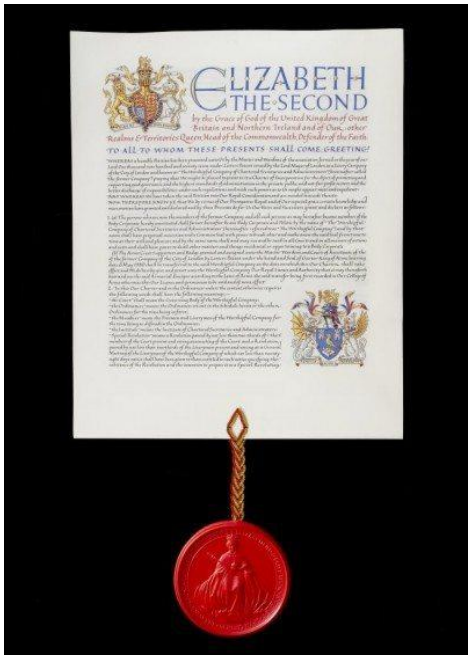
teams, not all of whom will be concerned directly with the requirements of a professional body or a particular business sector – there is a **division of labour** within the HE system based on academic disciplines and areas of professional services like quality assurance, planning and registry. There are also tensions within the HE **activity system** which can manifest in response to externally stimulated changes in focus, like the introduction of teacher accreditation in universities, the emphasis on 'employability' in programme design, and the introduction of the TEF. These initiatives are captured in the Timeline presented at 4.2 and are topics that emerged in the interviews.

Although their discourse on influence is differently expressed, Rammell, Ansell and Davies all reinforce a conclusion that professional bodies are not sufficiently coordinated between themselves to influence as a 'sector'. Davies was included in the interviews because he has been associated with initiatives to coordinate PSRBs. What becomes clear from all three quotes is that whether speaking on behalf of distinct professions or as a collective professional body 'voice', professional bodies' capacity to influence is hugely inhibited – the Ansell comment about persuading others that there is 'value in engaging in what they do' resonates strongly with the Millerson (1967) and Susskind (2015) premise that professional bodies are perceived as self-interested and removed from society's expectations. Indeed, this is a strong theme in other interview comments:

> I think they [professional bodies] are a much more difficult nut to crack than universities in that they are by their very nature self-interested and protective bodies because they want to protect the status and the profile of the professionals within that grouping, so it is more challenging to bring out coherent change within the bodies than I think it is amongst universities (Bill Rammell, VC, University of Bedfordshire, former Education Minister)

> I suppose for professional bodies some of them I think still buy into a kind of history and tradition, and stewardship through the ages of a certain set of values, and I think that's quite attractive, which of course is challenging because some historical values are not ok. (Maddalaine Ansell, CEO University Alliance, former Civil Servant)

My experience of working in and with professional bodies is of huge variability in the extent to which the 'public benefit' enshrined in Charters and Charitable Objects is central to their strategies and activities. On one level we can assume that the public benefit expectation or **rule** is enshrined in the **artefacts** of Royal Charters, impressive, illuminated manuscripts drawn on vellum carrying a Royal seal in a tradition that goes back 800 years.



https://memberwise.org.uk/gaining-a-royal-charter/ (accessed 19 January 2022)

Most of these chartered bodies and registered charities are also constituted of **communities** of members who have been admitted according to the **rules** of entry and eligibility administered through the **tools/artefacts** of examination. Concern for members is frequently at the forefront of the organisation's activities because of reliance on membership subscriptions for survival, so a parallel set of **rules** associated with member expectations emerges, expectations that can be difficult to reconcile with the public benefit expectations of incorporation by Royal Charter or as a registered charity. Such structural **contradictions** are key to Engeström's model of activity systems and begs the question about whether such a structural contradiction fundamentally inhibits PSRBs in their ambitions to influence government policymakers. There are signs that this 'self-preservation' **rule** is being challenged, with some professional bodies attempting to reconcile this contradiction around professional membership as a societal benefit:

> we've done a huge amount of work articulating the membership value proposition - I hate it, I call it our special purpose ...And I think that's why we've retained or avoided questions about the value of membership because any of my members now will tell you it's about their status as a chartered patent attorney. It's about their ability to influence collectively governments at home and abroad. It's about the way this organisation supports them in their learning, both when they're forming as a professional, but also in their post qualification careers. And it's about giving them a sense of community in some way to come and meet with other likeminded people outside of the work environment, which can be difficult for patent attorneys, because when

> they are at work they are competing with their peers in courts… So, it gives them a safe place to come as a community of practitioners and have those conversations that they can't have in their professional lives because they're opponents. (Interview - Lee Davies, CEO, CIPA)

This is a powerful and compelling narrative that appears to reimagine the role and purpose of professional bodies for the benefit of society and professionals. It is interesting to note that this 'special purpose' approach is seen as fostering an ability to 'influence collectively governments at home and abroad'. It is also interesting to note the pre-eminence of **community** in this rendering of the professional body role, a core tenet of the Engeström model, and the way in which the PB can transcend the inherent competition, loyalties and **rules** of a specific professional occupation/employment.

Despite the scepticism articulated by Millerson (1964), Susskind (2015) and some interviewees a narrative persists that ascribes real or assumed influence to professional bodies in some situations.

> I actively and strongly encourage staff to play a significant policy role in the relevant, professional body. I think it's good for them. I think it's good for the university and good for students. I've got one of our senior members of staff [who] chairs, the Health Professions Council … that helps us in terms of health professionals work, but also in terms of our understanding of regulation and how we respond (Professor Chris Husbands, VC at Sheffield Hallam and Chair of the TEF Panel)

This insight suggests that there is perceived value for one activity system to encourage members of its **community** to also be part of another system's **community** as a way of better understanding each other's **rules**. A significant example of this relating to qualifications and trustworthy professionals is covered in more detail below.

Interviewees reflected on the flawed assumptions made by PBs about how to exert influence and misunderstanding of the unwritten **rules**. My own experience is that PSRBs put a lot of time and effort into responding to formal government consultations, so Rammell's insight is very interesting:

> formal consultations... no, it's not the way it's done….It is more often than not ministers who will say to groups within a sector, "Look, we're in the market for advice, views and information," and I would periodically do that with sector groups within higher education. I remember when I was at the Foreign Office actually going out to the world of academia – I think it was

> about human rights within foreign policy – and saying, "Just give us your views and ideas." So, I think you will know when you're being asked... I think [the formal statutory process] it's a good thing and, you know, officials spend hours and hours going through the submissions, but I think you can overstate the impact that they have. (Rammell)

Rammell also speaks about sectors being blown off course by "very astute self-promoters" who spend disproportionate time and energy trying to influence government, often through personal contact with the minister. Ansell also speaks about being distracted by political uncertainty:

> the political situation is very volatile at the moment and you don't want to be knocked too far off course because you're chasing this political neophyte or that political neophyte, so we have been talking about how do we keep the direction we have ahead of us, and if we have to keep going round the odd obstacle you have to know what it is that you're getting at, but that needs to not keep changing. (Ansell)

Clarity of purpose in lobbying and influencing emerged as a recurrent theme, not just in relation to a specific initiative but with respect to more general self-awareness by PSRBs. In activity theory terms this can be understood as uncertainty around the collective **object** of the activity system, be that the system of an individual PB or that of the PSRB system as a 'sector'. Interestingly similar questions are raised about universities:

> do we have a higher education sector? So, the sector is becoming more diverse. The appearance of the large numbers of AP [alternative providers], the conventionally regulated sector is fracturing in a number of ways. You can observe sort of competing for influence between Universities UK and Russell Group…. so you've then got tensions between the clarity with which government policy is developed, the relationship between that and formal consultation, and the relationship between both of those and informal discussions and influence. (Husbands)

> Oxbridge and the Russell Group generally tend to have a lot more influence because there is that belief from people who have had a smooth path through the system, that they're the real universities. And I think they don't discourage that belief. So, it's hard work for most mainstream universities, I think, (Anon, PVC Learning and Teaching, post-92 university)

The notion of higher education being a sector is something of a given, however, it is worth noting the range of mission groups and thinktanks active across HE – UUK, Guild HE, the

Russell Group, University Alliance, Million +, HEPI, Wonke. In mission groups we might expect to see some commonality between the members of each with regard to **artefacts, communities, object** and **divisions of labour**, at the same time as seeing considerable evidence of **multivoicedness**. This begs the question of when the distinct voices are actually a different activity system. The characteristics of higher education institutions more generally would vary considerably so an analysis of the 'sector' must focus on those elements common across all institutions. The mission group organisations and thinktanks would exhibit quite different types of **artefacts** (estate, documents etc), **object** (mission, purpose etc), **divisions of labour** (staffing specialisms), than the universities and **communities** they work with.

Beyond specialism and and whether or not they are regulators there is potentially more similarity and fewer distinctions between PSRBs – most have membership, education and training, and networking/events . Both Rammell and Davies make comments which raise questions about PSRBs collectively being identified as a sector:

> I'm a great champion for this, an unsung sector, industry in its own right. But we haven't described it well enough as an industry, as a sector. So I'm quite passionate about how we create a sense of professionalism, professional identity for those who work in membership or associations. (Davies, CEO PSRB)

Earlier I suggested that business and HE were more recognisable as 'sectors', partly because they had organisations that spoke for them with a collective voice (CBI, UUK, for example), which the PSRB 'sector' appeared to lack despite apparent similarities in their form and functions. Questions arise, particularly in relation to exerting influence, around what we might understand as a sector and the potential **contradictions** between different **communities** within a single **activity system**.

> given a choice between the well being of the sector, and the well being of individual institutions, individual vice chancellors have put what they think is their own institution, above the needs of the sector. And then you start of see some of that in the tussling between UUK and the Russell group. ...Do we still have a single sector? (Chris Husbands, VC)

Notwithstanding their similarities, the weight of tradition and the assumed certainty that might come with that, there were several observations about PSRBs not mobilising as a coherent sector. In addition to Rammell's comments about not speaking with a 'coherent voice', Davies draws comparison with trade associations:

> trade associations have got a good collective voice, but you'd expect them to because they know what a trade association is and does. And they've got their own trade association for it. But we don't have a trade association for professional bodies because we all go off and do our own thing in our own special professional area (Davies, CEO PSRB)

This notion of 'our own thing in our own special professional area' (Davies interview, CEO PSRB) is fascinating and resonates with both the PSRB and HE domains. Universities are made up of numerous specialist academic and professional departments and yet are bound together within a single entity dedicated to, in varying proportions, the creation, application and dissemination of higher knowledge and learning; these separate organisations notwithstanding their considerable differences, are generally perceived as having sufficient commonality to be understood as a 'sector'. Professional bodies appear to have more in common with one another but struggle to be perceived as or mobilise themselves as a 'sector'. Perhaps it is linked to clarity of purpose and **object**, and what Ansell described as 'chasing political neophytes' and Davies attributes to losing 'critical mass'. The lack of a coherent voice, of course, is also evidence of the **multivoicedness** that characterises activity systems.

Reconciling **multivoicedness** with the need to speak with a 'coherent voice' is a perennial challenge it seems for both the HE and PSRB sectors and raises questions about representation. HE 'mission groups' and PSRBs have in common obligations about working on behalf of a subscribing **community** of members, but as Davies observes it is harder to represent a diverse membership:

> FE teaching is quite militant, quite unionised and it's used to lots of disagreement, but maybe never having an agreement… I think the bigger you are as a membership organisation, the more difficult it is to have that clear and authentic voice. (Davies)

> once they [a group of PSRBs] thought that job [career advice and guidance to young people] was done, they move on to the next thing that's important to them. ... So, in that sense, that was access to the professions, trying to build up a head of steam around information, advice and guidance for young people. And it was like, well, we've done it, we've invested a bit of resource in that we can move on to something else. And the initiative falls because it loses that critical mass (Davies)

The specific example of advice and guidance for young people grew out of a key episode captured for the timeline and featuring in one of the later pivotal narratives (6.5.1), and that is

the significance of senior political interest at a specific moment in time, in this case the advocacy of Alan Milburn in relation to social mobility and fair access to professional occupations. Rammell's comments above also cite the importance of ministerial interest compared to formal consultation – these points in time can be understood as **historicity** in Engeström's model, not necessarily as the past history that defines the current activity system, but as the present which becomes the history of the future, and shapes what the organisation might become or do.

Ansell advocates 'having a chat' with the relevant, not necessarily senior person, but 'somebody who knows what's going on about where it's all at and then find where are the things they're worrying about and then help them to understand' – in other words someone who understands the **rules** and **objects** of their own activity system. This observation was born out and amplified by Rammell's reflection on the role of department officials, and by Davies reflecting on influencing advice given to him separately by Rammell.

> interestingly, in all the time that I was Higher Education Minister officials, I sometimes felt, were spokespeople for universities within the department, and I don't necessarily see that as a bad thing. And they were sort of saying, "Minister, you need to understand we've got a world class higher education system, it's got these virtues and strengths and, yes, you want to reform things, but you need to take the sector with you," and I think these days, and particularly since 2015, that has changed. (Rammell)

> one single issue… you can't just go along with a raft of demands and moans. … And it needs to be something that's on that Minister's radar at that moment…. there's no point writing to the Minister, you need to do it through a Parliamentary Undersecretary and stuff like that, you need to develop that somewhere else… if you don't have strong relationships with the lead civil servants, it's not gonna happen anyway. Okay. But it's fascinating, even with a minister… it was about how to get your foot in the door... But that shouldn't be a game plan. … our minister changes about every nine months so there isn't a lot of point building [a relationship with the minister]. (Davies)

These comments illuminate the unwritten **rules** of the policy-making activity system which shape **divisions of labour** within the system. Shifts in the professionalisation of professional bodies themselves, the growth of 'association professionals' have led to changes in the **division of labour** within such organisations.

> I've seen the rise of the PR type role now at the expense of things like for example, education and continuing professional development. They're things that we think we've done enough of, so they go into maintenance… at the moment, influence is probably so important to us that you've seen the rise in the PR role. Looking at salary benchmarking… and the biggest rise of around 16-17% has been the salaries paid to PR people in professional bodies in the last two years [speaking in April 2018]…in the past, we used to send our special members, the President or part of the presidential team, important council member, to go and do these conversations with people. .. then it's

> always a bit hit or miss… [now] I have a PR expert on the books. ... We couldn't have achieved anything without him. He's been transformational…it means that you have a professional lobbyist, if you'd like to be kind, 'influencer'. (Davies)

This professionalisation of the associations workforce, not just of the professions they represent, has been a key change over the past 20 years, and significant in (re)shaping how PSRBs see themselves and how others may perceive them. A raft of initiatives like the establishment of PARN, Memberwise and Memcom are indicative of this fundamental shift in the **rules, divisions of labour** and histories (**historicity**), away from the largely volunteer-led grassroots associations of the past towards being professionalised businesses.

The interviewees have not contributed to the research based on their own understanding of activity theory, but their testimony becomes more illuminating when filtered through the lenses of the theory. For example, the almost serendipitous factor of time – right time, right place, right people, how much time – emerged from the interviews and aligns well with the **rules** and **divisions of labour** nodes in the Engeström model, as well as the **historicity** identified by Engeström as fundamental to our understanding of activity systems. Rammell cites the political context of different times - the **historicity** - and openness to being influenced:

> I think there was a continuum across governments of seeing higher education as an essential good, over four Prime Ministerships, so John Major, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Cameron. I think we have hit a brick wall with the current government and particularly the current Prime Minister [speaking in October 2018]; there's just not that belief about the primacy and the importance of higher education and expanding access to it. So grappling that challenge has been important ... So I guess your underlying question is to what extent do Vice Chancellors influence policy and that's why I put it within that context. I think across those four Prime Ministerships there was a genuine partnership in that. (Rammell)

Strenuous efforts to influence are also open to different interpretation, as Husbands expressed it the 'distinction, which is sometimes difficult to maintain, between reasonable criticism to modify a proposal and spoiling tactics', and Rammell referenced as 'being blown of course by astute self-promoters'. Both comments speak to the notions of understanding your role/place in the **division of labour** and understanding the **rules** of engagement.

Understanding the back story (**historicity**) and the ultimate **object** of an initiative or system is key to implementing policy. The consultation process for the Teaching Excellence

Framework (TEF) prompted many responses from HE and professional bodies, most of which were believed by the sector to be largely ignored. There remains significant disquiet in academic circles that metrics – themselves now **artefacts** of both education and policy systems - rather than qualitative evaluation has been given such dominance in the scheme, and that graduate earnings are considered an appropriate measure of teaching quality. There are other drivers – **objects -** at play for government, for example whether the fees underwritten by the State through the student load scheme are likely to be repaid or defaulted, something which might be anticipated to some extent by gathering earnings data.

> So the public subsidy is, of course, completely hidden, and hidden for 30 years, which is … curious. And I think that there is a view strongly articulated by some particularly [Nicholas Barr, LSE], that if you know that 43% is going to be default... you should account for that now... and that would have an enormous impact on government, but it would also have a cultural impact, because it would make the public subsidy obvious in a way that it was until 2012, has not been for the last six years, and it would become again....So government in one sense is in a very fortunate position that it's been able to expand higher education at essentially nil apparent cost to the public purse because we kick it 30 years down the road…, but the problem for them is that they've thrown away or lost all of their leavers for shaping what happens, apart from some fiddling around with little bits of money. (Husbands)

Building on Ansell's advice that those who seek to influence should offer practical timely solutions to government preoccupations, others identified the government's need for clarity. Huxley et al proactively undertook research specifically to address a politically hot topic with a view to influencing the TEF.

> Concerns about performance of higher education institutions are increasingly widespread: for example, 'No actors in the system are primarily interested in undergraduate student academic growth'. In the UK, this has led to legislation that will result in the most fundamental shake-up in the architecture and governance of higher education in a generation. The main policy implication will be the introduction of a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) to complement the existing Research Excellence Framework (REF). In our timely research, we demonstrate the feasibility of collecting data on contact hours and teaching intensity and show how this information can be used to increase transparency and improve the functioning of the higher education market. (Huxley et al., 2018, p. 243)

There are significant touchpoints with Engeström's model in this statement, not least the allusion to or assumption about the **rules** of transparency and the market. Huxley et al are also consciously responding to a moment in time (**historicity**) to influence the **object** of

another activity system, in this case influencing government HE policy. Husbands comments on the Huxley paper:

> There are some problems with the Huxley paper… it's very, very weak on e-learning, digital learning. And it's hopeless, completely hopeless, on placement learning. …. But it had a beautiful clarity for government. And they were very keen that we incorporated [it]. And I think they're onto something. I had no doubt about that, about contact hours and teaching intensity. So, the question is, how can you get teaching intensity in this in a way which reflects clear government intention, it's perfectly reasonable for the government to say, 'We want this in a way that can be delivered, in a way that reflects the complexity and reality of the sector'. (Husbands)

Here we see a strong pragmatic driver on the part of government and from those charged with implementing policy. The whole premise of the Huxley paper speaks to a clear intersection between the HE (research) domain and the government policy domain, where researchers are presenting work with a clear intended impact on an outcome shared with the policy domain. Such pragmatism has extended well into the HE sector as most of those who railed against the metrics of the TEF have fully embraced the marketing and recruitment benefits derived from a Gold award, building TEF into their strategies, operations, and student and staff recruitment – all **artefacts** and **tools** of their own local systems. In this we can see how the **rules** within an activity system (in this case HE) change in response to the activities, **rules** and **objects** of other systems.

The interview design did not specifically seek out evidence of PRSB influence on the development of TEF but rather provided space and opportunity for such evidence to emerge from the testimony of interviewees. The process did not indicate any significant role for PSRBs in the TEF landscape – PSRB relationships and accreditations did not make it into the TEF scheme as a metric, although some institutions with strong employability missions may weave this into their supporting narrative submission, documents now established as **artefacts** of the wider HE system. It might have been reasonable to assume that those organisations identified as the gatekeepers of access to professional occupations would have been visible in the scheme that seeks to visibly quality assure teaching in universities. This silence is telling and although beyond the scope of this thesis it would be interesting to undertake analysis of HEI narrative submissions to the TEF to quantify the scale and scope of PSRB activity within HE curriculum development and quality assurance.

PSRBs also appear marginalised in the modern higher apprenticeships where the standards are set by consortia of businesses which might choose to seek approval of the standard where a relevant professional body or standard already exists.

> The Institute's mission is to enable employers to develop high quality, cost effective apprenticeship standards and technical qualifications, so every employer and individual gets the skills they need to succeed. (IATE Annual Report 2020-21)[6]

This is a significant reversal of the historic role of PSRBs which set and monitored standards and sought assurances from employers that those standards were being met and upheld - we can see that the **rules** of one activity system become subverted or neutralised by a shift in the **division of labour** in another system, and that this in turn becomes part of the **historicity** of the activity system(s). In this example we might consider the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IATE) to be a **tool** of the government activity system, working for a **community** in the wider apprenticeships activity system, and as an organisation being an **activity system** itself. Some professional bodies are preserving their traditional role in this space by becoming training providers and/or end point assessors, but this will require them to operate within the **activity system** of the IATE rather than being entirely autonomous and self-directing.

Much of this leads to a conclusion that the PSRB activity system is being undermined by its own **rules**, for example the preservation of tradition and history cited by Ansell, and the **tools** of other activity systems, for example the TEF and IATE cited by Husbands. A further example of this relates to the structures inherent in PSRB decision-making. One factor cited in interview which impacts on PSRBs capacity to influence arises from the governance **rules** and decision-making timescales within professional bodies. A particularly pertinent example arises from a funded research project investigating standardisation of external examining which sought to reflect PSRB roles in this area. PSRBs were approached to contribute to the study which had time-limited funding – some were unable to participate because their own governance cycles and decision-making processes exceeded the funded timeframe. The interviewee chose not to name the PBs concerned, but it can nonetheless be concluded that they missed a valuable opportunity to interface positively with higher education and to

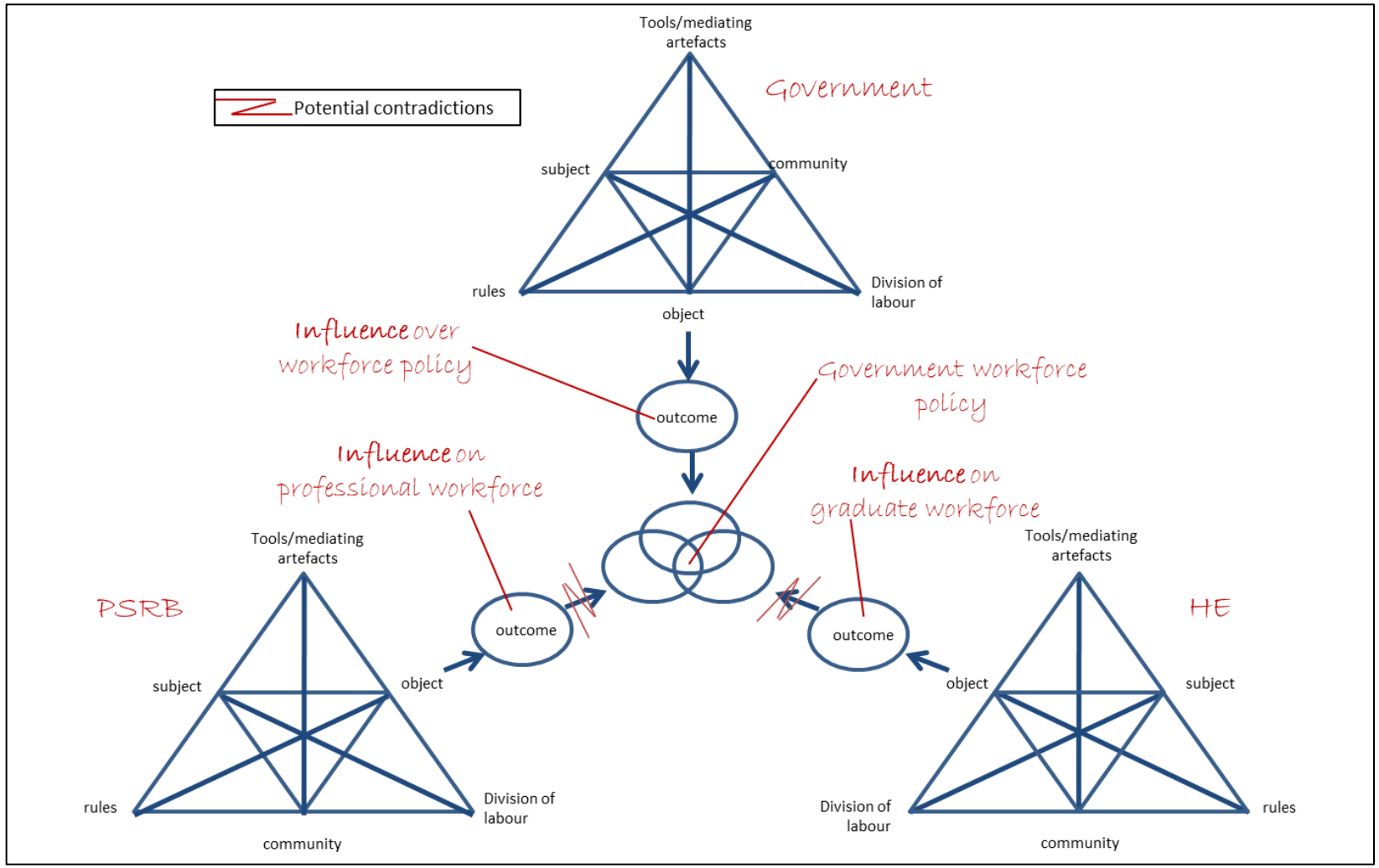
[6]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1000496/Institute_for_Apprenticeships_and_Technical_Education_annual_report_and_accounts_2020_to_2021_web_version.pdf (accessed 18/01/2022)

influence the future of external examining at a time when significant changes were being made in that space.

> some of them may be very small but they're all fiercely independent and they all have, appropriately, their own consultative processes...But all had deliberative processes. And so I met the Learning and Teaching Committee but it had to go to an Accreditation Committee and then the boss had to decide whether it was worth investing in it. We were supplying the funding, so it was quite attractive. But the long and short of it on that particular example is the deliberative processes were too long for the year-long funding we had for that calibration activity (Stoakes)

In summary there are a raft of factors that enable and inhibit the professional bodies sector in being effective influencers. Some of these are particular to PSRBs and others apply across a range of sectors; some may be within their control to change and others may not. Engeström's third generation activity model certainly provides a useful set of lenses for identifying, and potentially changing, the factors that could make a significant difference to PSRBs being able to fulfil their advocacy and representative functions. The model also helps identify that 'influence' is a common objective rather than a shared objective, and illuminates the inherent **contradictions** and **multivoicedness** within and between **activity systems** that enable or inhibit effective influencing – essentially arising from the tensions related to who seeks to influence whom, and for whose benefit. If any of the domains ever chose to collaborate in pursuit of a shared goal the model could also help strategise the endeavour.

Figure 6 Three activity systems with 'influence' as a contradictory objective in common



3.3.3 Working towards public confidence in 'trustworthy professionals'

As mentioned earlier, for the purposes of this thesis the notion of the trustworthiness of professionals derives from Friedman (2012) and as theme emerging from the data, rather than from a theoretical literature on trustworthiness. In contrast to the apparent limitations on PSRB influence explored above, preparing and qualifying trustworthy professionals – professionals trusted by society to act in the best interests of the clients who rely on them for specialist expertise - is at the heart of the PSRB mission, historically and currently. HEIs and government share an interest in the development of trustworthy professionals, characterised through their own first and second order outcomes – graduates and skilled workforce, respectively. That is not to say that there exists a conscious co-operation or explicit recognition of a 'trustworthy professional' as a shared third order outcome of their different activity systems. There are some distinct professional areas where this is the case, for example the connection between government planning of NHS workforce requirements, funding of medical training places in universities, and the role of the medical Royal Colleges in setting curricula.

What becomes clear from the interviews is that a range of interests and stakeholders influence what is understood to be a 'profession', 'professional practice', and what societal contribution is expected from professions, professionals and the organisations which train and represent them. In Engeström terms we might characterise this as **objects** and **shared outcomes** which ultimately lead to a further level of **shared outcome** – practitioners that all concerned might recognise as 'trustworthy professionals'. Finding the common ground that unites the activity systems might be more problematic: Milburn talks of businesses needing to earn 'social credits'; Husbands puts students at the heart of his **object** '…it's in the interests of students, who are the really important ones here…'; Davies observes that he 'had to really learn what professionalism looks like' when he came into his CEO role for a professional body of which he wasn't previously a member; and the anonymous contributor spoke passionately about how professionalism was essentially co-opted for political expediency.

One of the most enduring characterisations of professional bodies is as gatekeepers to the professions. In its most benign form this is positioned as protecting standards but can also be perceived as protectionist cronyism. Both these views emerged from the interview data, along

with other observations about government, HE and PSRB obligations and activity in this area.

This section revolves around data that evidences what is understood to constitute a trustworthy professional from the public, the profession body and the education perspectives, and how this can be better understood by using Engeström's model.

> My involvement was obviously, when it came to revalidation of programmes, to ensure that they not only met the academic requirements, if you like, but they also met the needs of the professional body, so ensuring that the students were fit for practice, effectively, on day one post-graduation, because there was no postgraduate qualification attached to this award. (Geoff Stoakes, Head of Research/Special Projects, HEA/Advance HE, former University Vice Principal)

> the professional body's always been the standard setter. So it may or may not be the regulator, but it's always been seen as the standard setter, and in some respects, accredits universities, even though universities are responsible for building their own qualifications. (Davies)

This goes to the heart of how the **activity systems** of the accrediting professional body and the education provider interact around the **shared outcome** of what might be intuitively perceived to be 'trustworthy professionals'. In those professions also subject to regulation, where a PSRB essentially quality assures practitioners on behalf of the State, there is an additional dimension, vividly captured by another HE senior leader:

> Something like teaching, nursing, social work, where you've got a lot of publicly funded professions, there's been a definite move to take the power away from those professionals to self-determine what jobs should be… sets of regulations and guidelines, which take away the autonomy and mean that you simply carry out somebody else's predetermined set of instructions. (Anon, PVC Learning and Teaching post-92 university)

The same commentator acknowledged that standardisation 'may mean that you remove some of the very worst performances, but also means that you tend towards mediocrity because you've got no scope for innovation or ingenuity.' This suggests that although there is a strong drive towards a **shared outcome** of qualified professionals, there is a **contradiction** in the different constructions of what such a professional should be, which impacts on notions of 'trustworthiness'. The **rules** understood by the different activity systems relate distinctly to academic qualification, professional fitness to practice, and government need for

standardisation. Interestingly these different constructions are all influenced by **historicity**, in this case by a pivotal moment which changed the landscape of professionalism, specifically the changes in regulation that arose from the Shipman case, where failings in regulation allowed a GP to become a serial killer (explored more fully in the pivotal narrative in chapter six).

For some contributors the emphasis on standardisation and populist notions of professionalism has removed a fundamental aspect of being a professional, the ability to apply specialist knowledge in uncertain, changing contexts.

> there's a strong strand of anti-intellectualism around nursing and has been for a long time with people saying [things like] 'too posh to wash' and all that sort of rubbish. Yeah. I don't want a nurse administering my drugs who doesn't understand [their] pharmacy, or what things mean. I do not want a stupid nurse who's really kind but doesn't understand medical conditions. Please, I want a properly educated nurse if I'm ill.(Anon, PVC Learning and Teaching post-92 university)

As Ansell puts it, nursing had to become a graduate profession because 'as modern medicine became more technical you needed people, nurses, who were able to do more diagnostic activity', so we see the **rules** changing as society's needs and knowledge evolve. In fact the graduate requirement did not apply to nursing until 2009 and can be seen as a key indicator in the historic trend towards professionalisation illustrated in the timeline.

The PVC's view, as an educationalist, is borne out by others involved with programme design, especially those within the broader HE system involved with vocational programmes and employability. Speaking from the perspective of the University Alliance, the mission group specifically positioning itself as 'The Voice of Professional and Technical Universities' (website strapline – accessed 20/01/2022)

> it's very important to our universities to make sure that what they were teaching was giving their students the skills that employers wanted, so it was inevitable that they would want to work with professional bodies and get the accreditation. Aside from anything else it's a good kite-mark for the student to know that what they're doing is the right thing, but it's also a good exercise for the university to refresh its curriculum and make sure it's current and up-to-date. (Ansell)

Here we see references to 'kite marks' - elsewhere Ansell spoke about a degree being 'badged' by a professional body - essentially signifiers of endorsement and **artefacts** which

mediate relationships between the HE and PSRB activity systems, as well as signifying adherence to the **rules** of both activity systems. Husbands reflected on the value of having university staff embedded in PSRBs to understand current regulations, suggesting there is strong evidence that **rules** are reciprocally accepted and embedded. This is evident in the efforts made by universities to socialise and prepare students for the **rules** of employment and for admission to specialist **communities**.

> [students are] much more likely to come in, get put in a team, given a real challenge from industry, given a chance to resolve it with a tutor that isn't giving them the answers but listening and giving them pointers... it's great for participation and belonging, but it's also great for developing a certain type of skill (Ansell)

In the previous section about influence I discussed indicators of poor capacity for influence in PSRBs; here the extent of the authority and power of professional bodies is vividly captured.

> My impression is that most University teams are extremely respectful and, and cautious about professional body visits and accreditation, they know how much hangs on them. They're anxious about them. They're worried that they won't be fair. They're worried that they'll have a bee in their bonnet, okay, they're worried that they won't understand what you're trying to do. They're worried that they will be imposing impossible standards, etc, etc. They're worried that they, again, may have particular prejudices in favour of particular institutions, or whatever it might be… you may well know somebody well, because of previous visits, but you're always going to be extremely careful. Your professional accreditation is probably the single most valuable thing that your course has got that it could lose, right? ... If you lose your accreditation you've messed up students' lives, you've missed the next round of recruitment. You probably lost jobs. We're terrified at professional accreditation bodies' [visits]. (Anonymous PVC Learning and Teaching, post-92 university)

This is very telling testimony which again can be mapped to the Engeström model: concern that they 'won't understand' us clearly speaks to different **rules;** 'prejudices' and knowing somebody from 'previous visits' could allude to belonging to different **communities** and having shared or different histories**/historicities**; concerns about jobs links to **community**. It can be assumed, however, that those accrediting and those teaching on pathways to professional qualification are part of the same **community**, with their different perspectives on academic and practice fitness manifestations of **multivoicedness** within the activity system of the profession:

> 'when people walk in the room and they hug you realise that the relationships are good and that was extremely collaborative in terms of the design of the

> curriculum… I had no reason at all to think that the product at the end, what was delivered to the student was in any way compromised by that, and certainly beyond the hugging stage the engagement was entirely professional.' (Stoakes)

The following particularly pertinent quotation illustrates the dilemmas and relationships between different activity systems, specifically related to producing trustworthy professionals, and is presented as a table with accompanying analytical commentary. The source is a PVC Learning and Teaching in a vocationally focused university who chose to remain anonymous.

Quotation from interview	Analysis
I think, where there is not necessarily a tension, but an interesting dimension, which is how you define the role of a professional and what you mean by it. And professional bodies don't always necessarily define it in the same way that it might be defined in the literature more broadly around what a professional is. Yeah. So in my own sphere, which is more around teaching and education policy and education, [a] professional's somebody who's able to critique policy, not simply apply it, okay. But clearly, if you're familiar with that, that concept, if you look at the kind of standards that have developed over the years for different kinds of teacher education, they are very much about implementing whatever the current government thinks should be done. Yeah. Not, not about the kind of autonomy, self-determination,etc, that you would associate with a highly educated professional - making the rules up as they go along … making complex	In Engeström terms this can be characterised as a **contradiction**, resolution of which can lead to change in professional practice, definition or knowledge and understanding of purpose. This reflects **rules** of professionalism and argues against becoming **tools** of the policy activity system Evidence of the influence of the government/policy **object** and **rules** on education and professional body systems **Object** - the academically qualified graduate

reflexive critical judgments about what's the right thing to do on the basis of extremely well-defined knowledge, research approaches to thinking, broad theoretical framework, etc. Actually, increasingly, I think professional standards in some areas [can] become very narrow, and they can be like ticking boxes now. And the point is, you need to be able to provide people with the capacity to get into those roles. And then you have a wider responsibility as a university. Which has that wider remit for knowledge, the social good, etc.; to also provide students who can with intellectual framework to be able to take part in the debate, not simply to be instruments for carrying out what can be ill-informed policy sometimes, because it's made on the hoof by a minister or civil servant who's got no background in the subject … you know, he's being moved around from one post to another on a fast track… [an] absolute knows-nothing compared to somebody who's been doing it for 20 or 30 years	**Tools** and **artefacts** of the HE activity system **Object** of the professional body and requirements to become a qualified practitioner, sometimes perceived as narrowly defined; **Object** of the HE system, wider knowledge and ability to apply as circumstances dictate; **shared object** to foster higher order reasoning and problem solving to operate as a highly skilled professional. Participating in debate as part of a **community**; informed discourse and influence as an **object** of the activity system; risk of becoming **tools** of another system Importance of experience and shared history (**historicity**)

Although tensions arise between the HE and PSRB systems around accreditation, academic fitness to qualify and practical fitness to practice, and the curriculum innovation constraints each attributes to the other, contributors from the HE sector were generally positive and respectful of the PSRBs. In contrast there was significant scepticism from and towards the government activity system. Speaking in response to questions about the growth in petitions for Royal Charter during the 1997-2017 period, Rammell observed that there had been a

‘healthy legitimate desire’ on the part of professions to ‘enhance their standing’ by increasing ‘supply of professional training and development’. It is interesting that this is couched in terms of ‘enhanced standing’ and ‘supply’, which sound self-serving rather than as part of an agenda to professionalise in the public interest, especially as Royal Charter carries public benefit obligations and is essentially a mechanism to devolve State regulation to Chartered bodies. The inherent socio economic assumptions about PSRBs as gatekeepers emerged in comments from Alan Milburn, former government minister and champion of social mobility:

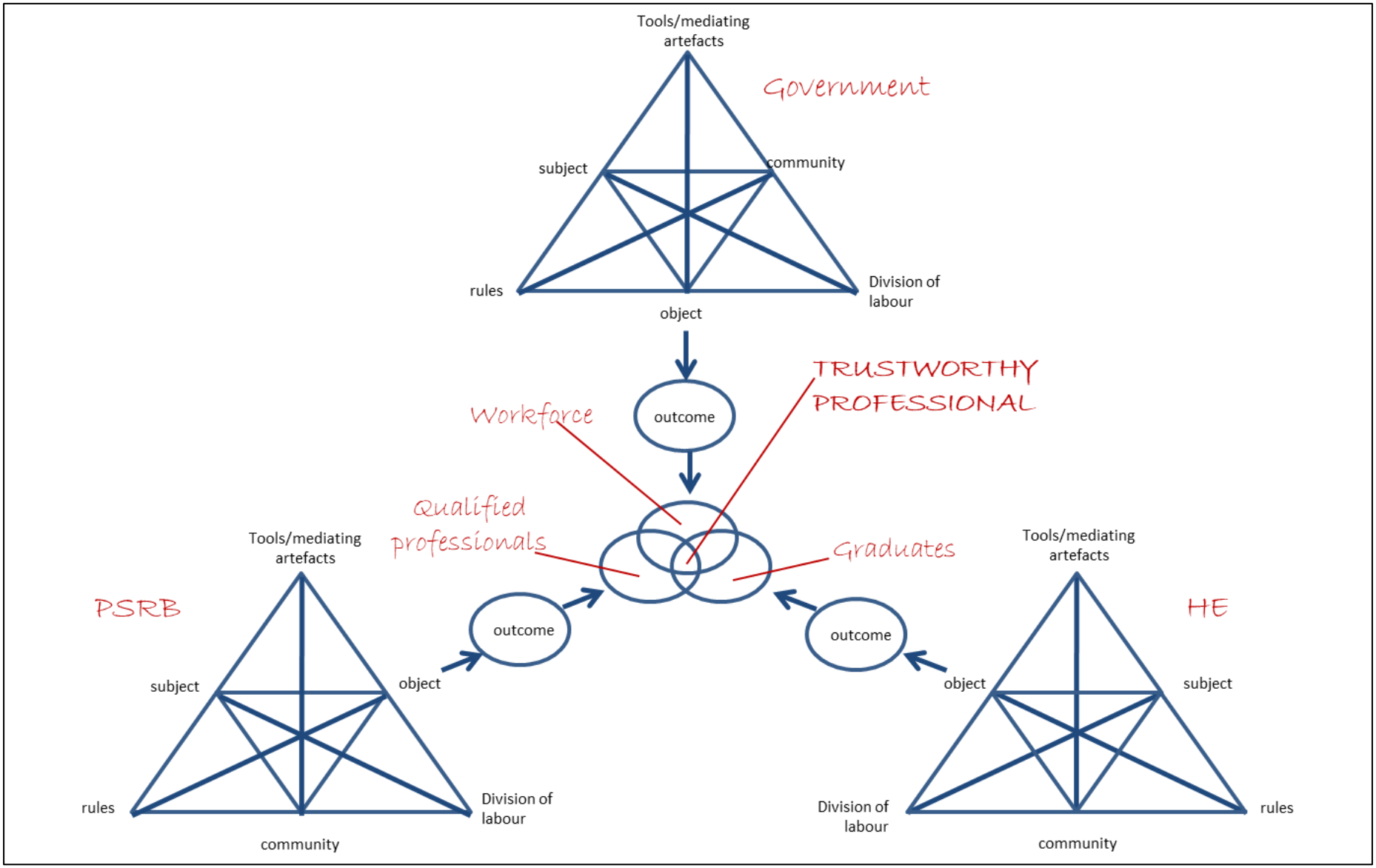
> [PSRBs] can no longer assume that they will earn public trust. They've got to work on their public trust. They've got to earn it. ...one of the things that professional bodies need to be able to demonstrate is that they're part of us and not just them. (Milburn, former government minister and Social Mobility Czar)

This resonates strongly with Susskind and Susskind (2015) and their discourse on the ‘Grand Bargain’ struck between professions and society. Alan Milburn has had significant impact on the PSRB sector and this is discussed in detail in the pivotal narrative at 6.5.1. The theme of trust and trustworthiness is nevertheless critical to this analysis about the shared objective of producing trustworthy professionals.

> I think that the point is that not all, government, not all politicians are motivated by the public good, you would think that they would be, but you can see them making decisions that are about positioning themselves for greater office, or, you know, success in office, or whatever might be, trying to make their mark, etc, rather than thinking what will work in the longer term. There isn't the generosity of spirit from many politicians that you might like to see. And I think that that's an ethical failure in our society, which is disturbing…. And that means that the NHS and the education service… particularly NHS, are just completely mucked about by whoever is busy wanting to show that they're good at their job and would be a good next prime minister. Yeah. There you go. That's what I think. (PVS Learning and Teaching, post-92 university)

This may or may not be the widely held view of this commentator’s peers, but in any event reveals a perception of a parallel set of **rules** operating in the political domain which are in **contradiction** to the assumed purpose of the activity system. There certainly appears to be widening discontent between the political domain and both profession and HE.

Figure 7 Three activity systems with shared objective of the Trustworthy Professional



Chapter 4 The long view Part 1: Historical context and the Timeline

In 2.4 Comparative Histories and timelines I described how oral histories and the timeline model could be used to identify themes and key events in relation to each other. In Chapter 3 The Activity: Discussion of the domains of practice as 'Activity Systems' I explored some of the themes emerging from the data (interviews and timeline) through the very specific lenses of 3rd Generation Activity Theory to better illustrate how the systems work and interconnect. Here in Chapter 4, I present a synthesized overview of the historical context drawing on data gathered in building the timeline and conducting oral history interviews. In Chapter 5 The Long View Part 2: moments in time I consider the impact of significant moments in time on government HE policy enactment in HE and PSRBs, and in Chapter 6 The Long View Part 3: Changes over time I discuss changes over time that impact on the government, HE and PSRB activity systems. In both Chapters 5 and 6 I draw on data from the timeline and interviews and augment the discussion with illustrative pivotal narratives largely derived from interview data.

The question about trustworthy professionals has been explicitly addressed through the lenses of Activity Theory in 3.3.3**.** The remaining questions addressed by this study are: What do the comparative histories of the government, HE and professional bodies Activity Systems tell us about how government HE policy is enacted in higher education intuitions (HEIs) and professional bodies (PBs); and how have professional bodies mobilised themselves as a 'sector' in response to government HE policy between 1997 and 2017.

These history chapters are pivotal in addressing these questions, and central to the chapter is the timeline. It presents a broad comparative overview of activity in the three domains of practice[7] (**activity systems**) – government, HE and PSRBs – represented through **artifacts** (documents, publications, web pages) and events (evidence of the **historicity** which underpins an activity system) cited by interviewees and commentators (themselves representing the **multivoicedness**) of the activity systems being considered. Some of the

[7] Here terms in **bold** are to be understood in the context of 3rd generation activity theory Engestrom, Y. (2009). Expansive Learning: Toward an activity-theoretical reconceptualization. In K. Ilteris (Ed.), *Contemporary Theories of Learning*. Routledge.

themes identified in this comparative history chapter are elaborated as pivotal narratives (5.4.1, 6.2.1, 6.4.1 and 6.5.1).

Comparative histories (Bines & Watson, 1992; Goodlad, 1984; Wright, 1990) of the three domains of practice – government, HE and PSRBs – have been used to identify what specific episodes in the histories might reveal more generally about the enactment of (HE) policy. A timeline format (Grundy et al., 2014) enables distinct strands of history to be considered in relation to each other to illuminate key themes, episodes and influencers relevant to exploration of the respective activities and roles of Government, Higher Education and Professional Bodies in producing 'trustworthy professionals'.

This chapter presents the history of the interactions between three domains of practice over a defined 20-year period from 1997, which saw the publication of the Dearing Report into Higher Education and the election of 'New Labour' after 18 years of Conservative majority government, and 2017 when the higher Education and Research Bill[8] passed into law heralding significant changes to the UK HE landscape, and a precarious majority Conservative administration came to power following seven years of coalition and minority rule. The timeline approach helped to highlight where policy initiatives stall or divert and provided some indication of topics and themes for further consideration, as well as identifying key influencers active at pivotal moments who had interesting personal stories to share.

The literature about this sort of comparative history is relatively sparse. A literature search in Onsesearch using the search parameters: "comparative history" AND "timelines" returned just 28 results only one of which (Smyth, 2017) was closely relevant to my research focus on the interactions of government, HE and PSRBs.

How this approach can shed light on the development and enactment of policy is well illustrated by Grundy et al (2014) in his consideration of the historical foundations of health policy. (See 2.4)

Beyond these sources there is little closely relevant academic literature to draw on. As mentioned elsewhere grey literature is a major source of insight for this study. How the literature has informed my use of 'grey literature' is addressed in Chapter 2 . For the

[8] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/29/contents/enacted (accessed 22/09/2022)

purposes of this research which applies Activity Theory as the analytical lens that 'grey literature' is essentially data, being **artefacts** derived from the activity systems, influencing their activity, or mediating public understanding of policies and practices relating to higher education, professional learning and 'trustworthy professionals'.

The methodological implications of adopting oral and comparative history approaches and regarding the use of 'grey literature' for this study are explored in Chapter 2 .

The data included in and informing the comparative history in this chapter derives from many sources. My own working knowledge of the terrain throughout the period provided a useful starting point, and informal conversations with colleagues frequently reminded me of relevant material. Wikipedia whilst not being considered an acceptable source of academic commentary nevertheless proved an invaluable source of data, for example in identifying key political office holders, and linking to significant reports, resources and artefacts associated with those individuals. Interestingly Wikipedia, now a ubiquitous element of the 21st century knowledge landscape, launched on 15th January 2001 and has played a hugely significant role in the democratisation of knowledge, which features as part of the story arising from this research and thesis - and which is addressed in *The Future of the Professions* (Susskind, 2015) - and has contributed to an anti-expert political narrative and pressure on PSRBs.

In addition to collecting, collating and curating grey literature artefacts to populate the timeline approximately 30 hours of purposive interviews were conducted with key influencers impacting the narratives of the three domains under consideration. Interviewees were identified from their association with key episodes emerging from the timeline desk research, and from snowball recommendations. Although the research design initially envisaged two distinct phases of data collection – desk research followed by deeper narrative oral history interviews – in reality a pattern of iterations emerged where desk research influenced a phase of interviews which themselves stimulated further desk research and interviews.

4.1 Time

One of the key **contradictions** to emerge from the timeline and the broader study is the temporal tension between and within the activity systems. It becomes clear in both timeline and interview data that the different domains work on different timeframes. The professional bodies have always worked on a very long view because their authority is largely based on accumulated credibility and precedent, through which the knowledge base and accepted

forms of practice are perpetuated and protected. In contrast higher education's authority and credibility is based on constantly pushing the bounds of new knowledge and new ways of doing things, on the advancement of knowledge, practice and research. Professional bodies are often characterised and criticised for having a protectionist agenda but this can be reframed as protective of the authority that comes from precedent and expertise. Higher education is often admonished for an unworldly preoccupation with the abstract rather than the practical and applicable, although policy development throughout the 1997-2017 period has recalibrated universities towards employability and vocational activity. Professional Bodies recruit for lifelong membership and career-long practice whereas universities recruit for a 3-5 year programme of study; professional bodies recruit those with an established or aspirational sense of identity whereas universities are recruiting for potential academic growth and development, albeit increasingly also for likely success in a related profession where a programme has been validated by a PSRB. Government has both a short- and long-term horizon, arguably responsible for safeguarding society for the present and the future whilst simultaneously being preoccupied with re-election within 3-5 years. In particular 2010-2017 was a very dynamic and uncertain period where coherent policy was inhibited by minority government and derailed, even eclipsed, by preoccupations with Brexit.

The long consultative timeframes in professional bodies sit in tension with the academic cycles of universities, and both are subject to the vagaries of parliamentary democracy and government preoccupation with re-election. While Bill Rammell pushed back on this interpretation during interview, observing "we were in power for 17 years", I would counter that in real time those in power could not know how long the administration would last and might still be preoccupied with three to five years horizons, even if they harboured longer term ambitions. Also, if government want something quickly or expediently they have the systems, expertise and influence available to make it happen. There are also policies which transcend party political ideology and are serendipitously implemented.

> although it [TEF] was written into the conservative manifesto in 2015, I think the idea had been laying around in government for quite a long while… there are a large number of ideas that sit on shelves in the department that are pulled out when government states right, what do we want to be doing about this? When the moment is right. (Chris Husbands)

There is an inherent tension in these positions which can be well theorised and explored though Engeströmian activity theory. What emerges from interviews and the timeline

illustrates how this tension (**contradiction**) and the systems' respective histories (**historicity**) play out in the enactment of policy.

> But all [the PSRBs] had deliberative processes. And so I met the Learning and Teaching Committee but it had to go to an Accreditation Committee and then the boss had to decide whether it was worth investing in it. We were supplying the funding so it was quite attractive. But the long and short of it on that particular example is the deliberative processes were too long for the year-long funding we had for that calibration activity. (Geoff Stoakes)

The comparative timelines present events of the period in such a way that we can see how policy filters through and between the activity systems. The widening participation story is a particularly pronounced example explored more fully in 6.5.1.

Higher education has a broadly three-to five-year undergraduate curriculum development cycle, shorter for agile vocational programmes, longer for research. This can be perceived as slow for the business sector relying on a graduate workforce, but themselves, in most cases, reactively driven by short term commercial results and annual, sometimes quarterly, planning cycles. Significantly universities tend to work on a forward-facing timescale, advancing the frontiers of knowledge through research and anticipating workplace expectations of graduates and employers – for example the setting of nursing or medicine student numbers is closely aligned with workforce needs in the NHS, which in turn is heavily influenced by government policy and funding. Detailed speculation about the future of workforce planning is not within the scope of this study, beyond the general point that all the activity systems considered here have an interest in producing 'trustworthy professionals' in sufficient quantities and with necessary skills to meet the future needs of society and the economy, but that each of the domains approaches this challenge from different positions.

Professional bodies have a very real temporal challenge. Their authority and credibility is built on usually long histories of maintaining standards in their professional communities. This is born out in my interview data, from direct experience working with professional bodies and from informal conversations. In general conversation (not a formal research interview) somebody from the Law Society suggested that people who enter the legal profession, and are effective within it, are naturally cautious, pay huge attention to minute detail, basing everything on precedent because credibility and authority come from precedent in the field, and that such a mind-set and approach fundamentally speaks against being

innovative and forward looking – "a model of professional work, especially advisory work, that rests on increasingly antiquated techniques for creating and sharing knowledge" (Susskind, 2015). It is argued that the future of the professions depends on being innovative and forward looking

> In an era of increasingly capable systems, the professions, or elements of them, should survive and prosper because they bring value and benefits that no system or tool can; not because we regulate competitors out of the market, nor because we cannot imagine a world without the professions, nor again out of nostalgic impulse for a fading way of life. (Susskind, 2015, p. 45)

These temporal contradictions and tensions arise within the activity systems as well – the caricature of the 'Sir Humphrey' civil servant slowing and inhibiting the delivery of policy objectives to project the public interest is a powerful trope in British culture which has potentially been exacerbated by cynicism towards EU regulation influence, but also impacted by the growth of Spads (Special Advisors - political appointments acting as adjuncts to the neutral Civil Service) (see 6.2.1).

4.2 The Timeline

The timeline has become a sizeable repository for links to many key documents and resources, organised as a spreadsheet with columns for each of the 20 years, 1997-2017. The scope of the timeline evolved iteratively as the enquiry developed and refined, initially based on headline activities and publications like election dates and results, white papers, green papers, government policy statements, reports of national enquiries and similar. The topics of publications by PARN offered useful insights to the preoccupations of the professional bodies. Similarly the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) was established in 2002 and WonkHE in 2011, the publications of both serving as useful barometers at the nexus of policy and higher education. Their resources are too numerous to include in the timeline but have been accessed as evidence of the discourse around key policy moments. Even the establishment of these organisations are significant events in the period so these and other commentators and interest groups have been included in the timeline at Appendix C .

4.3 Historical overview 1997-2017

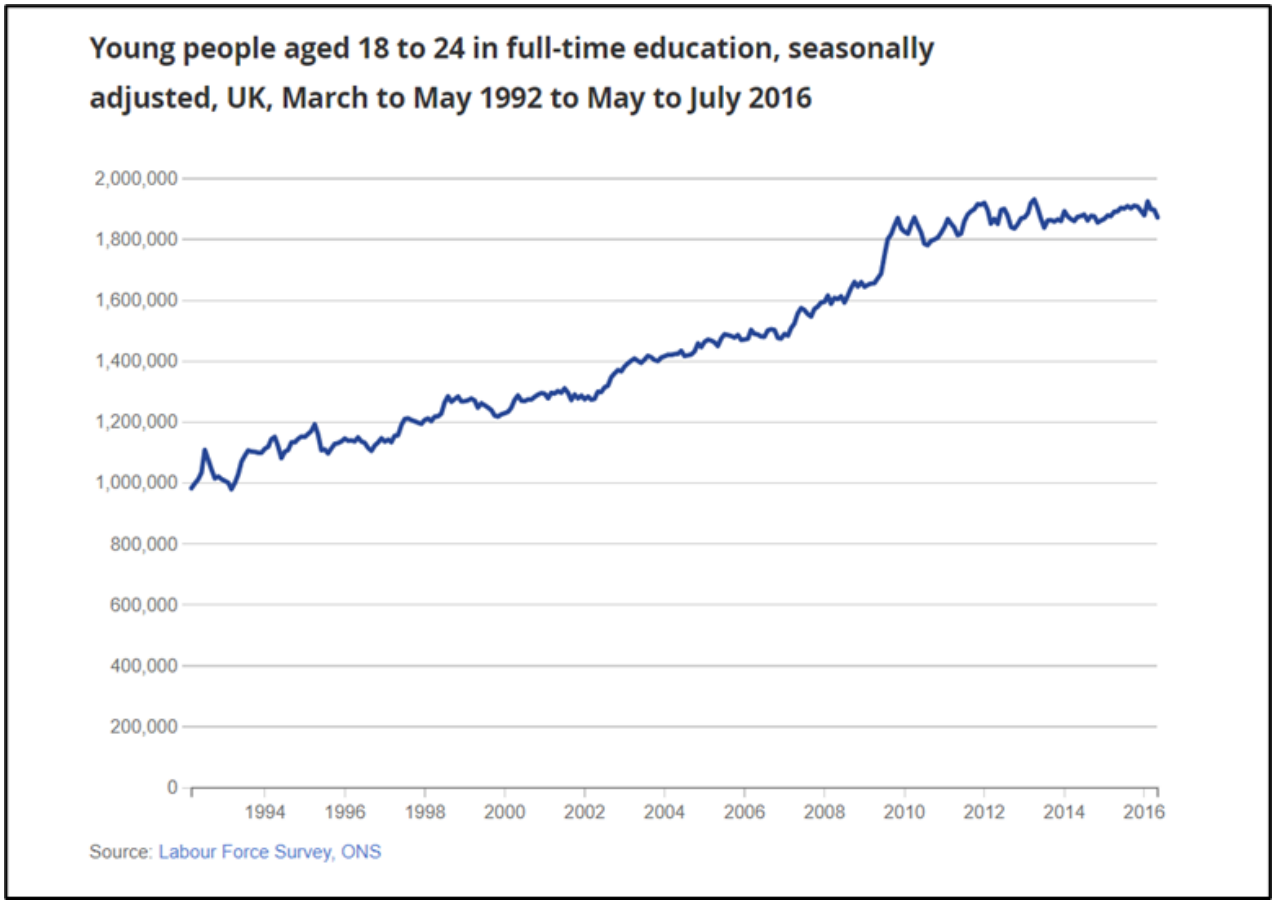
1997 was an interesting moment socially and politically in the UK, and for Higher Education in particular. The election of New Labour after eighteen years of Thatcherite Conservative government marked a significant shift in the political landscape. The publication of the

Dearing Enquiry (Dearing, 1997) around the same time provided the impetus for a raft of spending and enhancement initiatives that impacted higher education in very immediate ways, whilst also aligning with the new political landscape. In the professional bodies domain the Professional Associations' Research Network (PARN) was established in 1998, an initiative which by its very creation marks a significant historical moment for the professional bodies community. A generation later fresh legislation ("The Higher Education and Research Act (HERA)," 2017) provided a comparably momentous landmark in a very different social and political climate. Throughout the period stories emerge in each of the activity systems which illuminate the impact of political policy and ideology on academic and professional practice. Among the most significant are the parallel stories of 'professionalisation', widening/fair access to education and professional employment, and the 'democratisation of knowledge', as well as fundamental shifts in the practice of government policy making. The impact of government policy is illustrated by and

Figure 8 which reflect the impact of a key Blairite policy and election promise of 'education, education, education' combined with a 50% participation target for higher education. The notes provided by IFS in Figure 9 provide some insight to the impact of student fees and anticipated non-repayment, which becomes a factor in the Teaching Excellence narrative in 6.2.1.

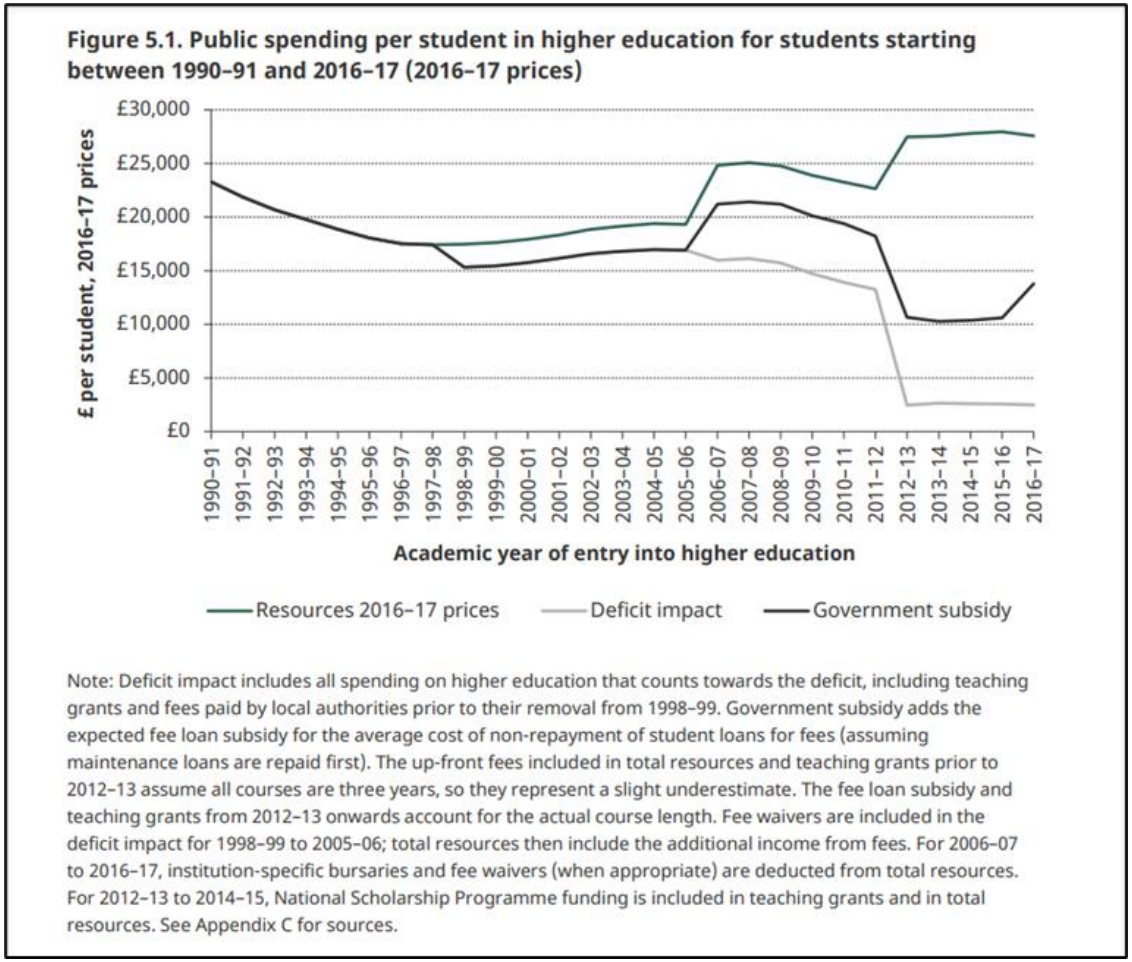
From the timeline data a range of significant moments (moments in time when key events or people effected a lasting impact on the period or the domains of activity (Chapter 5), trends (policy or practice changes over time) and themes (ideas or issues which recur throughout or pervade the period), see Chapter 6 .

Figure 8 Young people aged 18-24 in full-time education, seasonally adjusted, March-May 1992- May-July 2016[9]



[9] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/articles/howhasthestudentpopulationchanged/2016-09-20 (accessed 17/03/2022)

Figure 9 Long-running Comparison of spending per pupil across different stages of education



Chapter 5 The Long View Part 2: moments in time

For the purposes of this work significant moments and influencers have been understood as those events or people who have shaped subsequent events either by specific deliberate acts of policy development or implementation, or through the circumstances and debates they stimulated.

5.1 Nolan

Although the Committee into Standards in Public Life pre-dates the period under consideration – established in 1994 by then Prime Minister John Major following a number of scandals in the early 1990s – the influence of the Committee has been far-reaching, not least because the seven principles[10] apply to the HE sector and have been adopted and adapted into codes of conduct by many professional bodies. The "Seven Principles of Public Life", also known as the "Nolan Principles" are:

- **Selflessness** – Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity** – Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- **Objectivity** – Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- **Accountability** – Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- **Openness** – Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- **Honesty** – Holders of public office should be truthful.
- **Leadership** – Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

In many organisations these principles have been translated into Codes of Conduct or Values Statements which underpin the expectations of staff or member behaviour, and reassure the public of fair dealing and trustworthiness. A good example is offered by the Association of

[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2

University Administrators (a professional body with strong links to higher education). The organisation originally adopted a 12-point Code of Conduct shortly after the Nolan Principles were published, modified the CoC into a Values Statement in 2009 and more recently has offered an article about the process of reviewing and updating the values, including sharing some member views about how the values influence professional practices: "The values influence how we work on a day to day basis, shape attitudes and provide points of reference on how to act in a variety of situations" and "The AUA values are significant guidelines for my professional and personal approach to my work. They are ethical and realistic; they are supportive to me as an HE professional". [11]

5.2 Dearing

Published in 1997 The Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997) paved the way for much that has now become the norm in UK higher education. The report included a vision for UK HE which included:

UK higher education must:

- encourage and enable all students - whether they demonstrate the highest intellectual potential or whether they have struggled to reach the threshold of higher education - to achieve beyond their expectations;
- safeguard the rigour of its awards, ensuring that UK qualifications meet the needs of UK students and have standing throughout the world;
- be at the leading edge of world practice in effective learning and teaching;
- undertake research that matches the best in the world, and make its benefits available to the nation;
- ensure that its support for regional and local communities is at least comparable to that provided by higher education in competitor nations;
- sustain a culture which demands disciplined thinking, encourages curiosity, challenges existing ideas and generates new ones;
- be part of the conscience of a democratic society, founded on respect for the rights of the individual and the responsibilities of the individual to society as a whole;
- be explicit and clear in how it goes about its business, be accountable to students and to society, and seek continuously to improve its own performance. (para 1.4)

An article for WonkHE by Rhiannon Birch captures the Dearing legacy on the 20th anniversary of the report's publication:

[11] https://aua.ac.uk/announcing-the-new-aua-values/

> Dearing promoted widening participation, advocated the use of IT for new styles of learning, and recommended that courses should improve students' employability. The report identified questions which have been reconsidered since, such as student progress files, a post-qualifications admissions system, and the suggestion that teaching staff should be required to hold a teaching qualification. https://wonkhe.com/blogs/what-did-dearing-ever-do-for-us-twenty-years-on/

These themes are clearly manifest in the data gathered for the Appendix F Timeline (Appendix F); some of the probably unintended consequences of these policy recommendations - increasingly transactional attitudes towards education and marketisation, for example - also emerge from the testimony of interviewees featured elsewhere in the thesis.

5.3 New Labour 1997

Tony Blair positioned his 'New Labour' government and its policies 'left-of-centre', rather than at the 'far left' of the more traditional Labour party, a position which embraced a neoliberal approach, marketization, privatisation and regulation. Another key development in the style of government was the rise of Special Advisors (addressed in 6.2.1 below), politically affiliated appointments which acted as an adjunct to the politically neutral Civil Service. Spads were not unheard of prior to 1997 but the significant increase in their numbers and influence has impacted on the development and implementation of government policy (addressed more fully below at 6.2.1).

Tony Blair came to power claiming 'education, education, education' as his top three priorities, and most of the period to 2010 was characterised by a number of high-profile educational initiatives, mostly heralded by the Dearing Report. Particularly relevant to this study the timeline positions a range of initiatives (ILTHE/LTSN/HEA/AHE/NTFS; student fees; widening participation; employability) within the context of the period and inform the pivotal narratives featured at 5.4.1, 6.2.1, 6.4.1 and 6.5.1.

5.4 Shipman

The case of now infamous serial killer Harold Shipman has had a highly significant impact on attitudes to rogue practitioners, the desire to spot mavericks early and the need to demonstrate credibility to a public whose trust could have been seriously compromised by a doctor convicted of 15 murders and suspected of up to 250. The case raised serious questions about how to avoid similar circumstances, but in doing so opened a wider debate about

professional accountability. In *The implications of Harold Shipman for general practice,* Baker writes of being

> struck by the lack of objective evidence about his competence. Despite his history of drug misuse and a number of patient complaints made against him, there appeared to have been no past systematic process in which he had been objectively assessed, and it was impossible to come to any conclusion about his competence…. The failures have raised a question about the profession's commitment to ensuring that patients can have reasonable confidence in their doctors, and it is fundamental to the future of the relationship between doctors and patients in the UK that this question receives an adequate answer… We have been wrong for assuming the right to practise without also accepting the responsibility to demonstrate continued competence. The reasons for the error can be disputed but the conclusion must be clear—we did fail to fulfil the duty of accountability. (Baker, 2004)

This notion of professional accountability goes to the heart of the notion of the trustworthy professional, which in turn contributes to the erosion of PSRB credibility and ultimately fuels the trend towards post-truth politics and public scepticism about 'experts'. Since Shipman appraisal, revalidation to practice and continuing professional development (CPD) have become mainstays of the PRSB landscape and of professional practice well beyond the medical world. Ongoing debate about the value of CPD has begun to shift over time with many schemes moving away from measuring training inputs (for example in hours or points) towards reflective outputs (for example reflective journals) and increasingly towards measures of impact and outcomes (for example, what difference occurred as a result of training/CPD and how do you know it was positive) (Robinson-Canham, 2013b).

5.4.1 Pivotal narrative: Accountability and public confidence in the professions – the legacy of Shipman

> [Shipman] started the separation of the regulatory role in medicine. And that spilled over in 2007 into law…. unless you were there at [the] time [you] can't remember that was why it was ...And he came out as this single point of reference where someone said, 'You can't trust the professional bodies to do this'....or certainly the mistrust on professional bodies to do the right thing rather than to do the right thing for their members (Interview quote: Davies, PRSB CEO)

The extent to which the Shipman scandal became a watershed moment for the public and politicians to review their trust in the professions and the organisations representing them is made clear by the testimony of several interviewees. Alan Milburn was the government

minister who ordered the Shipman Inquiry, the Fifth Report of which made sweeping recommendations for the regulatory landscape and the role of PSRBs safeguarding standards of practice.[12] Milburn also oversaw the project which led to the publication of *Unleashing Aspirations* (Central Office of Information, 2009) which explored the issue of widening access to professional careers to mirror the widening participation initiatives which massively increased access to higher education under the Labour administration. The negative impact of Shipman on public confidence combine with Milburn's lifelong preoccupation with social mobility come together in his observations about populist attitudes to experts:

> we live in a world now which is far more transparent, far more open to scrutiny and subject to greater scepticism and lower levels of deference than ever before. I personally think all of those are good characteristics not bad ones, so deference is not good, scrutiny is. What that means for professional bodies, professions whether they're universities or accountancy firms or a law firm or medicine as a profession, is that they can no longer assume that they will earn public trust. They've got to work on their public trust. They've got to earn it. ...one of the things that professional bodies need to be able to demonstrate is that they're part of us and not just them.

Similar scepticism and mistrust is exhibited towards politicians and policy-makers as well:

> the point is that not all, government, not all politicians are motivated by the public good, you would think that they would be, but you can see them making decisions that are about positioning themselves for the greater office, or, you know, success in office, or whatever … trying to make their mark, rather than thinking what will work in the longer term, there isn't the generosity of spirit from many politicians that you might like to see. And I think that that's an ethical failure in our society, which is disturbing. … And that means that the NHS and the education service, which are the two big things, some extent the social sector, but more for particularly NHS, are just completely mucked about by whoever is busy wanting to show that they're good at their job and would be a good next prime minister. Yeah. There you go. That's what I think. (Anon PVC)

The role of the professional organisations in stimulating professional dialogue and internal critique of practice is highlighted by Lee Davies, who also alludes to the pivotal influence of the Shipman case on the separation of representative and regulatory functions

[12] https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20090809044222/http://www.the-shipman-inquiry.org.uk/5r_page.asp?id=4560 (accessed 26/12/2022)

> in teaching, you saw an erosion of professional standards that probably we're still recovering from now. Okay. Because you don't have in place those infrastructures where that professional discourse can take place. In [other professions] medicine and law, we've seen the separation of the regulatory. So this is post Shipman really, I guess, in a large respect those separations of the regulatory and Representative responsibilities

This preoccupation with regulation might be viewed as 'us' through our elected politicians, reasserting control and oversight of 'them' the experts, although politicians appear to be more derided by the general public than experts, with the public potentially trusting neither to safeguard their interests.[13]

Writing in the fifth report of the Shipman Inquiry, Dame Janet Smith (2004) identified a core challenge for all membership bodies which is particularly sharp-edged when applied to the regulation of medical practice:

> the dominance in a regulatory body of an elected group, with an electorate to serve, inevitably gives rise to conflicts of interests and objectives. Those members elected by the profession must, at least to some extent, have the interests of their electors at heart. At times, the interests of doctors and of the public may lie in different directions. Yet, as I have explained, the main objective of the GMC [as captured in the Charitable Object] should be 'to protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the public'. (para 15.11)

Within HE external examiners have long been viewed

> both as a guardian of national standards but as a critical friend, a person who disseminates good practice either within the institutions they're external examining or from their own or they learn from the institution they're external examining and disseminate that way. It's essentially about where standards come from as well. (Stoakes)

This too has come under increasing scrutiny of the state through the OfS, metrics and moves to formalise training and registration of external examiners.

[13] "In 1944, just one in three British people (35 per cent) saw politicians as merely 'out for themselves', while by 2014 that number was 48 per cent and in new IPPR polling conducted last weekend, 63 per cent said they share this view." https://www.ippr.org/news-and-media/press-releases/revealed-trust-in-politicians-at-lowest-level-on-record/ (accessed 27/12/2022) and https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2019/06/13/have-we-really-had-enough-of-experts-what-evidence-is-there-for-public-attitudes-towards-experts/ (accessed 27)12/20222)

It is interesting to note that Milburn, who is mistrustful of the purportedly self-interested controls of PSRBs on access to professional careers, asking "who is getting access to the top jobs", also cites self-interest as a motivator for social good and accountability businesses in particular,

> they've now got to earn social credits and not just economic ones so there's a self-interest and as soon as it becomes self-interested, then there's a real driver for change. If it's just a little bit of CSR or ESG it's always at the margins, but as soon as it goes to the heart of the reputation of the organisation, the sustainability of the organisation, the public trust that the organisation enjoys, at that point things begin to change. (Milburn)

At the heart of the Shipman scandal and the Inquiry that followed is the notion of public trust in doctors and the organisations which hold them to account. In her conclusions to the Fifth Report, Smith notes that "the public has come to regard the GMC with suspicion and distrust because it perceives that the GMC acts, not in the interests of patients, but in the interests of doctors".

Appraisal became the focus of specific recommendations in the Fifth Report of the Shipman Inquiry

> If appraisal is intended to be a clinical governance tool, it must be 'toughened up'. If that is to be done, the following steps will be necessary. Appraisers should be more thoroughly trained and should be accredited following some form of test or assessment. Appraisers should be trained to evaluate the appraisee's fitness to practise. GPs should be appraised by GPs from another PCT. Standards should be specified, by which a GP 'successfully completes' or 'fails' the appraisal. All appraisals should be based on a nationally agreed core of verifiable information supplied by the PCT to both the appraiser and the appraisee. (Chapter 12 and paragraphs 27.110–27.116)

Perhaps the most visible impact of Shipman on the PSRB domain has been on the regulation of training, CPD and ongoing appraisal as mechanisms for demonstrating that a professional body has a clear sight-lines and control over the benchmarks of fitness to practice. The general domain of profession practices has followed where medicine led.

Shipman was a "serial murderer who happened to be a doctor"[14] so whether appraisal and revalidation alone would prevent another 'Shipman' continues to be a moot point. What is

[14] https://www.gponline.com/harold-shipman-caught-todays-nhs-says-sir-keith-pearson/article/1420762 (accessed 27/12/2022)

beyond doubt is that PSRBs and government have become more preoccupied with visibly demonstrating their vigilance with regard to standards of professional practice across all disciplines.

5.5 Milburn

As well as being the Minister of State for Health who initiated the Shipman Inquiry Milburn has been possibly the only senior politician to explore the role of professional bodies as conduits - possibly gatekeepers – to professional occupations. Milburn convened a panel to explore Fair Access to the Professions (Central Office of Information, 2009). The focus on professional occupations was in many ways a natural progression from the widening participation HE agenda promoted by Blair. The publication of the panel's final report became a significant moment and catalyst for PSRBs to mobilise around a social mobility agenda. This is addressed as a pivotal narrative in 6.5.1

5.6 Rammell 2006 letter

Deregulation and marketisation of UK HE appears to have been initiated by Rammell's 2006 letter, later enshrined in legislation (*Higher Education and Research Act (HERA)*, 2017). In the white paper *The Future of Higher Education* (DFES, 2003) states 'we have also considered whether the current structure of university regulation through the Privy Council represents an unnecessary burden' in relation to degree awarding powers (DAP) and university title (UT) and 'as long as the important Nolan and Dearing reforms are safeguarded we do not believe that the Privy Council needs to approve minor changes in the way universities go about their business' (paragraph 7.10). Rammell's 2006 letter observes that 'Higher education institutions do, of course, own their own governance arrangements' and goes on to report on the findings from a commissioned report which considered 'the feasibility of deregulating' and removing Privy Council control over areas where there was 'no public interest'. By the assent of HERA in 2017 this light-touch consideration of limited deregulation had evolved through successive administrations into the wholesale 'deregulation' and marketisation of the HE sector under the scrutiny of the Office for Students (OfS). In her resignation letter in November 2021 founding CEO of the OfS, Nicola Dandridge said

> We have established ourselves as a new regulator for students in a sector that has never been regulated in this way before. We have developed a robust and innovative approach to regulating quality and equality of opportunity, taken decisive action in a number of cases where quality and governance were inadequate, and overseen demonstrable progress on social mobility.[15]

Although careful to describe the organisation as 'regulator for students' it is clear both from this statement and the role of the OfS as described in the HERA2017 that the OfS has been established to regulate a marketized HE sector, and that it does so under the terms of an 'annual guidance letter' from government.[16]

> Now as a sector we are rolling over and taking intervention, particularly through the new Office for Students, that is unprecedented...it's an office for competition and bringing private providers into the system; I really don't think it's an office for students. (Rammell interview)

5.7 Coalition and Conservative minority government 2010-2019

Although general elections are clear moments in time which may later be seen as pivotal to the socio-political climate, it is less clear if in this instance the change of political administration changed the direction of travel or simply accelerated it by leveraging a different social and economic ideology. Student fees, concern with teaching quality, and increasing marketisation are features of the histories which can be traced through new Labour, the Coalition and the Conservative administrations of the period 1997-2017. It can also be argued that the PSRB sector was no more or less visible at any point as a result of the political climate, with the exception of Milburn's influence on the social mobility agenda introduced above and explored further in 6.5.1.

'New Labour' consciously occupied a relatively centrist political space so the shift to a LibDem/Conservative coalition might not be seen as seismic. It is apparent from media resources however that the political ideology of individual players is not so easily categorised. David 'two brains' Willetts has been characterised as the intellectual of the Conservative party, and after a meteoric early career and a fall from grace, been repositioned

[15] https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/nicola-dandridge-to-leave-ofs-in-april-2022/ , accessed June 2022
[16] https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/how-we-are-run/ , accessed June 2022

as the approachable family man with a social mobility mission[17]. In contrast formerly Labour, latterly LibDem, Vince Cable has been positioned as the corporate/capitalist economist

> on Cable's watch, the Lib Dems have lurched to the right, dropping their plans for a 50p-in-the-pound tax rate on high earners and committing, at their party conference in 2008, to combined tax and spending cuts - presumably in order to chase Tory votes at the next election and perhaps even prepare the ground for a coalition with the Conservatives in the event of a hung parliament. [18]

This view is further supported by performance in government - in the negotiations to form a coalition the LibDems were forced to abandon their pre-election pledge not to increase student fees, and humiliatingly front the increase announcement in the House of Commons.[19] In an off the record conversation with a former advisor to the DfE I was told that Willetts was perceived as far more-left-of-centre than Cable.

It is tempting to interpret all political decisions as ideologically and party-politically motivated – the truth may be much closer to the interpretation posited by Chris Husbands in interview about TEF that 'although it was written into the conservative manifesto in 2015, I think the idea had been lying around in government for quite a long while'.

5.8 Higher Education and Research Act (HERA) 2017

The enactment of the HERA (*Higher Education and Research Act (HERA)*, 2017) represents the culmination of significant higher education reforms in the UK. Particularly relevant to this thesis, the Act formalises the establishment of the OfS as the sector regulator on behalf of students, including that agency's responsibility for 'Section 25: Rating the quality of, and the standards applied to, higher education', also known as TEF. The OfS also carries responsibility for creating and maintaining a register of approved HE providers, partly intended to replace the DAP and UT responsibilities previously undertaken by the Privy Council, and partly to oversee the deregulation and expansion of the HE market through registration of alternative or private providers (sections 3-22). The Dearing principles of widening participation, teaching quality, attention to standards have been absorbed into the

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[17] https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2000/jun/05/features11.g22 accessed June 2022

[18] https://web.archive.org/web/20170714022224/http://www.newstatesman.com/uk-politics/2009/09/mehdi-hasan accessed June 2022)

[19] https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/vince-cable-bears-brunt-of-tuition-fee-anger-2104207.html; https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/vince-cable-tuition-fees-cave-in-253707; https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/libdems-tuition-fees/ (accessed June 2022).

regulator's purview, including conduct of TEF and replacing for example the functions of the disbanded Office for Fair Access (OFFA).

At the time of writing there are a flurry of commentaries[20] appearing reflecting on Dearing 20th/25th anniversaries and HERA at five, which demonstrate that much has been done, undone, re-done and is still to do, all of which is enticing but beyond the scope of this thesis.

Chapter 6 The Long View Part 3: Changes over time

Here I discuss some of the changes over time that impact on the government, HE and PSRB activity systems, those trends and themes that evolve, recur or pervade the period. Data is drawn from the timeline and interviews and discussion is augmented with illustrative pivotal narratives largely derived from interview data.

6.1 Technology and the democratisation of knowledge

The period between 1997 and 2017 has been characterised by significant advances in technology and virtual/digital interaction, the so-called 'Fourth Industrial Revolution', which builds on the technological advances of the Third Industrial Revolution of the late twentieth century, and is characterised by greater connectivity, on-demand access to online learning and entertainment, digitised working practices and reliance on artificial intelligence.

> Futurists predict that a third of jobs that exist today could be replaced by smart technology, artificial intelligence, robotics and algorithms (STARA). Robots will handle 52% of current work tasks by 2025, almost twice as much as in 2019. (Ai, 2022)

Such developments have had, and continue to have, profound consequences for the world of professional/expert work, and public and government perceptions of experts. Wikipedia, WiFi and smart phones are all innovations of the period which have already become ubiquitous elements of daily life and work - Figure 10 and Figure 11[21] illustrate how UK household ownership of mobile phones and access to the internet have increased during the period. The resultant 'democratisation of knowledge', fuelled by access to information and feeding the notion that we can all be our own experts thanks to Wikipedia and Google,

[20] (https://wonkhe.com/blogs/tefs-latest-assessment/ related to 2021 review of TEF; https://wonkhe.com/blogs/reviewing-the-higher-education-and-research-act-five-years-on/ HERA 2017+5years) (accessed 06/11/2022)

[21] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/bulletins/internetaccesshouseholdsandindividuals/2019 (accessed 06/11/2022)

challenges the pre-eminence of experts and the notion that the public must rely on trusted professionals.

Figure 10 UK households with mobile phones 1996-2018

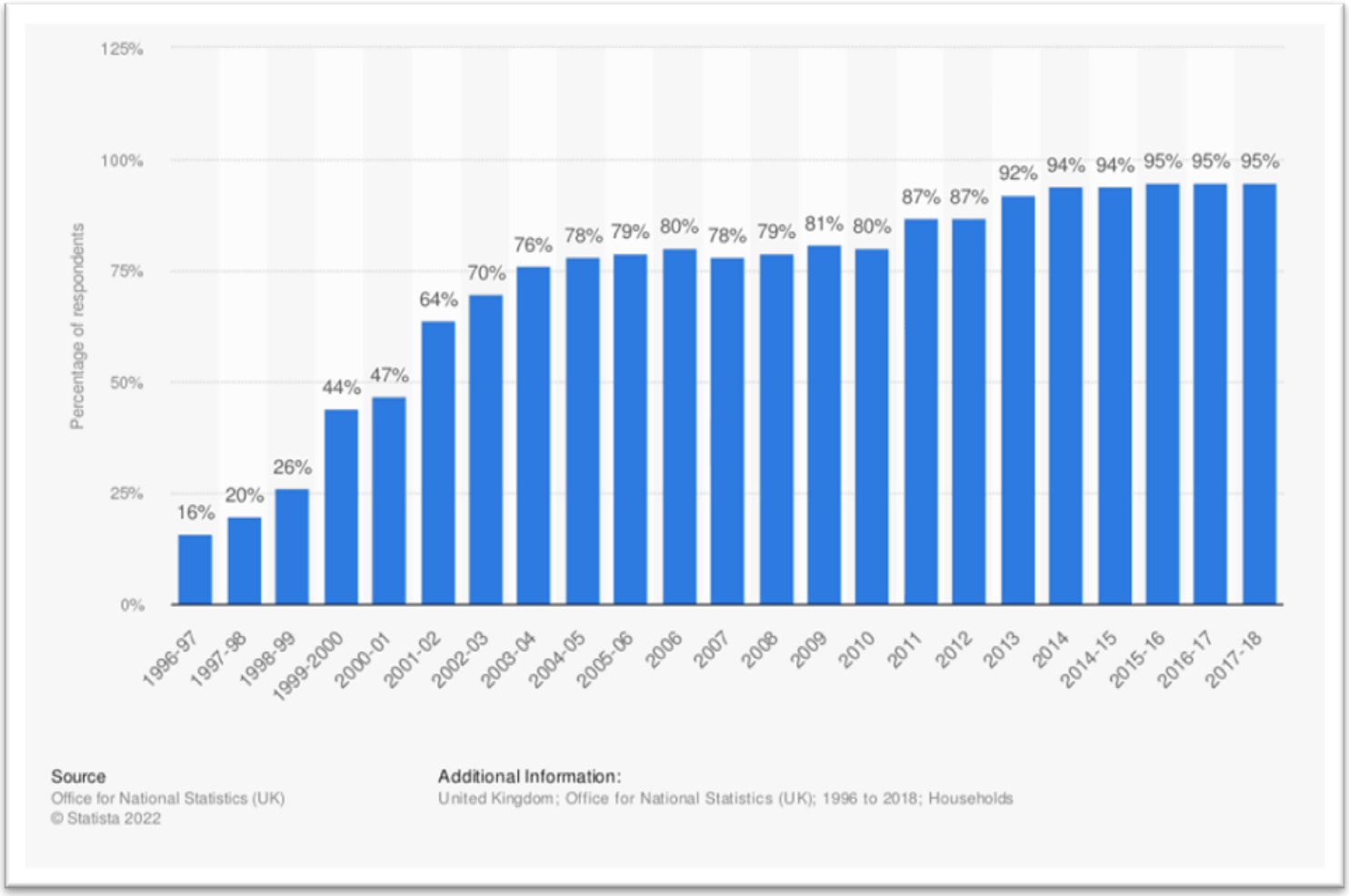
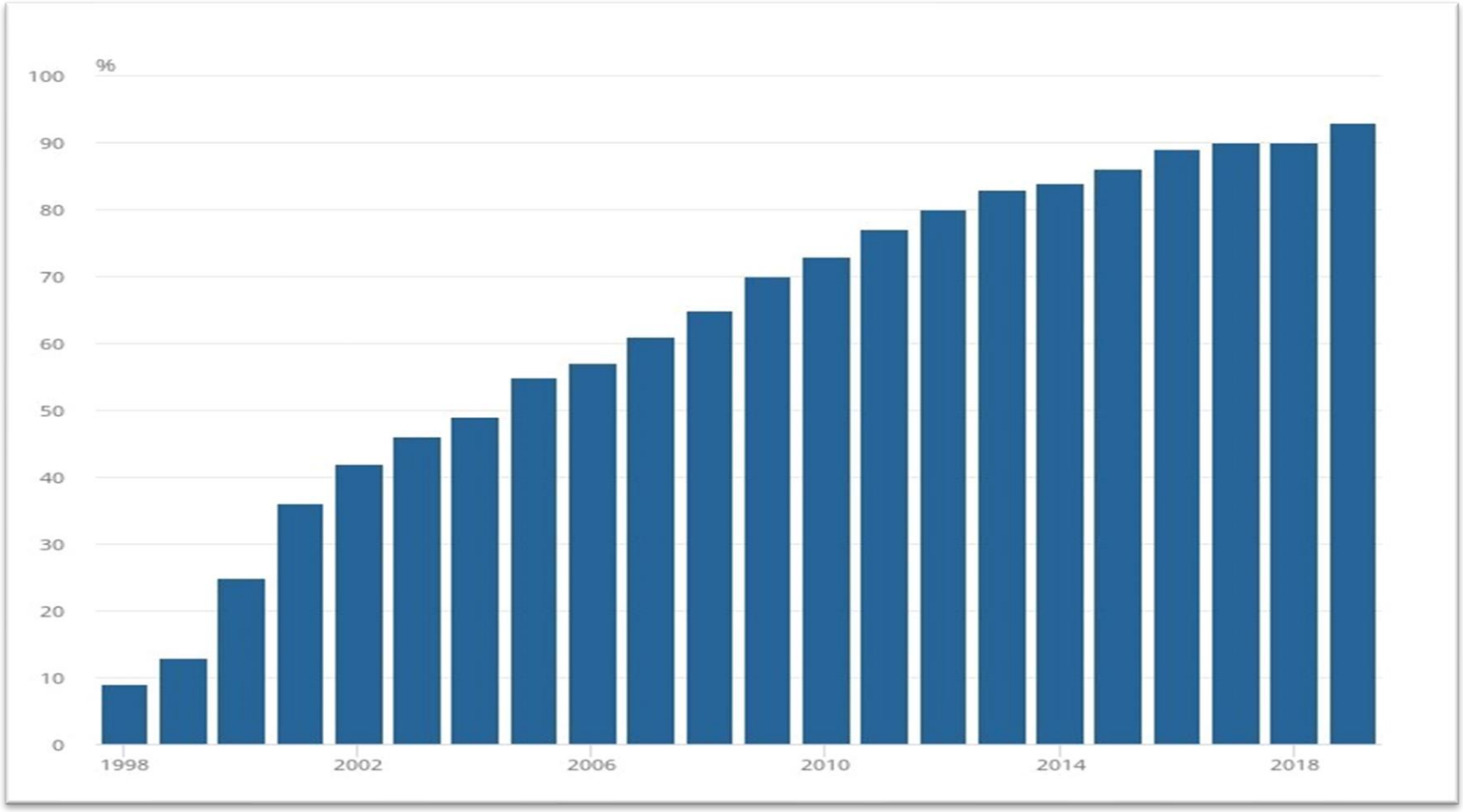


Figure 11 Household internet access 1998-2018 (Source ONS)



Society has historically struck a ‘grand bargain’ (Susskind, 2015) with professions:

> Life is complex and demanding, and people often need reassuring and trustworthy guidance when their general, everyday knowledge and experience is insufficient to sort out their problems (p.22) …the grand bargain, in practice, positions the professions as the gatekeepers of huge swathes of knowledge, experience, and expertise that are fundamental to the social and economic lives of us all (p.23)

This premise is potentially undermined by the impact of technology and the democratisation of knowledge.

> Might there be entirely new ways of organising professional work, ways that are more affordable, more accessible, and perhaps more conducive to an increase in quality than the traditional approach? … In a technology-based Internet society, there must be scope for making at least some of the knowledge, and experience of experts available on a different basis. (p.32)

Writing more specifically about education, Susskind and Susskind (2015) go on to suggest that:

> There is less need for the ‘sage on the stage’ and more a job for the ‘guide on the side’…. There are new roles and new disciplines, like education software designers who build the ‘adaptive’ learning systems, the content curators who compile and manage online content, and the data scientists who collect large data sets and develop ‘learning analytics. (p.60)

Ultimately the Susskind message to the professions is that they must adapt or die: ‘they must seize this opportunity to encourage the better service that technology can provide.’ (p.117)

There is a less benign aspect to our Internet society which also impacts the professions and the bodies which represent them, as captured by John Harris writing in the New Statesman explaining populist scepticism towards experts:

> Part of any credible explanation has to lie in the dire social state of large parts of England and Wales and the long tail of deindustrialisation. Another element is bound up with the internet and the ever-growing culture of mistrust and nastiness, in which fiction can easily be transformed into what some people construe as fact. (Harris, 2016, p. 48)

6.2 Post-truth politics, public confidence in the professions and changing political priorities

The New Labour era of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown gave way to a more unsettled political climate. Starting in 2010 a Conservative-led coalition with the Liberal Democrats was followed by a brief Conservative majority government during which the UK voted to leave the European Union. This was followed by a Conservative-led minority government supported by a 'confidence and supply' agreement with the Northern Irish DUP. A majority Conservative administration oversaw a swift departure from the EU amidst a general political shift to the 'right' following the 2019 general election. The global financial crisis of 2008 was a pivotal moment which heralded a period of public spending constraint and 'austerity' which continued beyond 2018. The 2019 election campaign promised an end to austerity, largely through as yet untested promises of low taxation and renewed public spending.

The fragility of both the Prime Minister's (Theresa May) and the Opposition Leader's (Jeremy Corbyn) positions within their own parties created a relative power and credibility vacuum which fed a cynical populism amongst an electorate disillusioned with those in authority, which has in turn affected attitudes to professional experts as well. Such cynicism and political disaffection have been amplified by continuing turmoil in government – Boris Johnson ousted by his own party in summer 2022 in the wake of recurrent controversies surrounding him as Prime Minister, briefly succeeded by Liz Truss for just six weeks, before Rishi Sunak acceded to the role in October 2022.

Throughout 2020-22 the political landscape has been dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Ironically the far right leaning conservative administration was bounced into unprecedented high levels of public spending and social control as it responded to the economic and health challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite claims that policy had been led by science during the pandemic the popular mistrust of 'experts' does not appear to have been alleviated, indeed, during his leadership campaign Rishi Sunak claimed it had been a mistake to 'empower scientists' during the pandemic[22]. Well before covid it could be said that politicians had successfully harnessed populism to deflect political scepticism by mounting a sustained assault on experts. Possibly the most notorious and visible example of this came from Michael Gove claiming "I think the people of this country have had enough of experts from organisations with acronyms saying that they know what is best and getting it consistently wrong" during a Sky News interview by Faisal Islam in June 2016, during which the interviewer also suggested this was "proper Trump politics… Oxbridge Trump". Gove sought to clarify his claim in a Chatham House interview:

> people have had enough of experts from organizations with acronyms that have got things so wrong in the past…[*interviewer: If experts are a problem where should people go for trustworthy information*?] I'd say always look for the dissenting voice. I think the most important thing is to, when you've

[22] https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/aug/24/sunak-says-it-was-a-mistake-to-empower-scientists-during-covid-pandemic (accessed 10/11/2022)

> got a settled consensus, look at the people who are challenging it. And if you think their arguments are well constructed, then pay close attention; if you think it's just bogus nonsense then fine, but always test every proposition. The idea that things should be taken simply on trust because of someone's position I think is an invitation to intellectual conformity and what we need is a vigorous, debating, dissenting culture.(Farrar, 2017)[23]

This privileging of the 'dissenting voice' goes to the heart of what has come to be called 'post truth politics' and has significant implications for the formulation of public policy, for the professions and the bodies which represent them.

> More generally, distrust has been encouraged by those who have vested interests in discrediting experts because they want to advance a particular agenda – be that in the field of economics, climate change, health or whatever – which may conflict with what expert opinion would be.
>
> In too many cases, politicians and representatives of interest groups say they're looking for evidence-based policy, when in truth they're looking for policy-based evidence. If the evidence that comes from experts doesn't accord with their view of the world, they're prepared simply to shelve it. Many reports by government departments, for example, have met that fate: they get buried. (Portes, 2017) [24]

This might seem like a very cynical rebuttal of populism, and such vested interest should not be seen as the only factor fostering popular disengagement and scepticism, as discussed by Harris (Harris, 2016) in his commentary on "the dire social state of large parts of England and Wales and the long tail of deindustrialisation". (p.48)

Whatever the underlying causes of populist rejection of expertise, it is clear from many sources (Millerson, 1964; O'Day, 2014; Susskind, 2015) that scepticism about the professions and professional bodies is nothing new, but it appears to have been Gove's anti-expert assertions that galvanised a response from the PSRB community, specifically demonstrated in the PARN promoting professionalism project and subsequent book (Friedman, 2020).

> A deluge of populist rancour has been washing over common discourse for some time now. It seemed to have reached a high water mark with the election of Donald Trump and the Brexit referendum, but the events of 2016

[23] https://www.chathamhouse.org/2017/03/michael-gove-trouble-experts (accessed 11/11/2022)
[24] https://www.london.edu/think/who-needs-experts (accessed 11/11/2022)

> are still with us. This has included serious challenges to the professions and professionalism, as prominent populists have come to focus their version of negativity on the authority of experts and the validity of evidence-based knowledge; arguably the foundation of professionalism. … Populism at its core is based on an opposition between the People and the Other, with the Other commonly identified as the elite. This is cast as a struggle between good and evil. The elite generally includes professionals as well as others who are rich and powerful in society. (p.6)

The HE sector is not immune from this denigration of experts and a similar pattern of increasing mistrust has been directed towards universities by the government during the 1997-2017 period.

> universities and their members and their graduates are positioned as part of the 'elites' controlling public and political decision-making, with the term 'elites' becoming a term of abuse. We have before us, therefore, a situation in which universities find themselves being placed in multiple jeopardy. Firstly, for most of their history, universities held a position on the fringe of society and were peripheral to the public interest. Now, in a situation in which more or less half of a population enjoys a higher education experience, the result is a fundamental and new social cleavage in which higher education supersedes social class or gender or ethnicity as the major determinant of social division. Secondly, universities are being positioned—in many countries—as part of the 'other', to be distrusted and critiqued or even directly attacked. Thirdly, the public sphere is riven, with universities speaking just to certain portions of it and seen as irrelevant or, worse still, working in their own sectional interests. (R. Barnett, 2019, p. 284)

By analysing Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) grant letters from government we can see a detailed thread of how shifting government priorities are captured in their expectations of the HE sector (captured in the relevant strand of the timeline). What is revealed is a golden thread running from the Dearing Report in 1997 to later preoccupations with alternative routes to qualification to meet the changing demands of the workforce in a knowledge economy (Dearing, 1997; Sutherland, 2008). Particular themes emerging from Dearing include professionalisation, including of the HE workforce; employability; widening participation and fair access; and funding a massified HE system. It is interesting to see how these themes spawned a number of subsequent reports and policies and manifested in well-funded enhancement initiatives in HE, before austerity and accelerated deregulation again shifted the landscape. The story of 'teaching excellence' emerges as a strong narrative throughout the period, illustrating many of the factors at play in the intersection of activity between Government, HE and a profession.

The annual funding letters sent by government to the HEFCE convey the spending priorities for each year. A textual analysis of the documents reveals an increasingly politicised narrative in the grant letters to HEFCE and a shift from an assumption of collaboration towards a largely directive tone. This is particularly notable in the documents issued immediately following the 2010 general election when 'austerity' was a key feature of all government policy and student fee increase to £9,000/year had already been announced.[25] Whilst there is a tacit acknowledgement of the tradition of university autonomy there is an underlying theme of expected compliance: your choice but we expect.

> We are providing these indicative future figures in order to assist the sector with forward planning, and to show how increased tuition income routed through students will substitute for reduced HEFCE grant funding over the period. *Allocations are made subject to the financial delegations and information requirements that will be set out in a Management Letter* to the Council in early 2011, and the Secretary of State's approval of HEFCE's Key Performance Targets by spring 2011. (letter dated 20 December 2010, para 1, my emphasis in *italic*)

> We are setting some new directions for higher education, signalled in the Comprehensive Spending Review, and our response to Lord Browne's report on Higher Education Funding and Student Finance. We will set out our overall thinking and plans for HE in more detail in a White Paper, and will value your advice in preparing it. Taken together, *this grant letter and the White Paper will supersede all previous directions to the Council about policy objectives.* In particular, the White Paper will set out our intentions for the future powers and functions of the Council. For 2011-12 and 2012-13 though, we expect the Council will continue to perform its current role on its existing statutory basis. (letter dated 20 December 2010, para 3, my emphasis in *italic*)

As well as drawing a distinct line under policies of the previous administration this letter clearly heralds the demise of the HEFCE - which had a clear enhancement mission and worked collaboratively with universities and other partners - and marks a fundamental shift in the funding models for both 'regulator' (OfS) and regulated (HE providers). The rhetoric of benchmarks and performance indicators was already well established in earlier funding letters to HEFCE but at this tipping point takes on a sharper edge: 'Your work with the sector on improving the Performance Indicators and the institutional benchmarks takes on even greater

[25] Letter to HEFCE dated December 2010 covering period 2011-12 and beyond https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32406/10-1359-hefce-grant-letter-20-dec-2010.pdf

importance' (para 6). The appointment of Michael Barber, famous for ‘deliverology’ (Barber et al., 2011) as the founding Chair of OfS can also be seen as a clear statement of intent and direction, and heralded an era of metrics-driven evaluation, scrutiny and heightened threat of sanction, ostensibly in the interests of students and informed student choice. The impact of this approach on the personal and professional identity of teachers is explored by Ball (2003) through the lens of ‘performativity’:

> What do I mean by performativity? Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of ‘quality’, or ‘moments’ of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement. The issue of who controls the field of judgement is crucial. One key aspect of the current educational reform movement may be seen as struggles over the control of the field of judgement and its values … Who is it that determines what is to count as a valuable, effective or satisfactory performance and what measures or indicators are considered valid? Typically, at least in the UK, these struggles are currently highly individualized as teachers, as ethical subjects, find their values challenged or displaced by the terrors of performativity. (p.216)

The HEFCE funding letters demonstrate an increasing theme of performativity, ostensibly linked to student choice as part of a free market imperative and contain a clear warning about the consequences of failure in that market: ‘Institutions which are chosen by students because they offer better quality, responsiveness and value for money should be able to grow if they wish and - if necessary - at the expense of those that perform less well’ (para 16).

During the New Labour years there was a marked emphasis on projects which funded system-wide teaching quality enhancement and promoted the professionalisation of teaching in HE; post-2010 the shift towards marketisation of the HE sector and metrics-based regulation accelerated, a story which is captured in the pivotal narrative at 6.2.1.

6.2.1 Pivotal narrative: The drive for teaching excellence in higher education

I was one of the founding staff of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) from April 1999, working for the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and its predecessor organisations until 2006, returning between 2016 and 2018 as Assistant Director: Professional Learning. At different times I was responsible for Membership Services, Accreditation, Fellowships, Excellence Prizes and the 24 subject centres of the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN). On this basis I have treated my own reflections and testimony in a comparable way to the testimony of oral history interview participants. My Principal Fellowship was awarded, among other things, for my contribution to the leadership of the professionalisation of learning and teaching in HE. I am a 'blended professional', working across management and academic functions, and have been acknowledged as an expert on professionalism, and learning and teaching. At the time of writing I am Dean of Learning and Teaching charged with preparation of my university's TEF submission.

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According to the final evaluation of the CETL initiative between 2006 and 2009 "a total of £525 million was provided to the sector under the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF)" (para 1.12)[26], with the £315 million spent funding 69 CETLs perceived as a poor return on taxpayer investment (Ramsden, 2012). If nothing else the scale of investment speaks to a powerful political agenda, which under the Labour administration focused on quality enhancement and under the Conservatives has morphed into metrics-driven regulation.

Table 3: Summary of teaching enhancement initiatives

1997	Dearing Report	Student fees, WP, professionalise HE teaching
	QAA established	
1999	ILTHE established	Professional body for lecturers - individual membership and programme accreditation
2000	NTFS launched	20 individual teaching excellence prizes
	LTSN established	24 subject centres, one generic centre,
2003	Cook Review	Recommended merger of ILTHE, LTSN and FDTL NCT
2004	HEA established	As per Cook review
	Leadership Foundation established	As per Cook review (based on HESDA) leadership programme
	NTFS expanded	50 individual teaching excellence prizes
2005	NSS launched	National Student Survey, more recently adopted as a key metric in the TEF
	CETL initiative launched	Estimated £315m spent on 69 CETLs, 2006-10
2006	UKPSF launched	Owned and developed by the sector, but largely controlled by HEA

[26] Summative evaluation of the CETL programme, Final report by SQW to HEFCE and DEL https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/13215/1/rd11_11.pdf (accessed 31/12/2022)

2009	PTES launched	Postgraduate equivalent of the NSS
2010	CETL funding ends	
2011	UK PSF revised	Increasing contention about 'ownership' of the Framework
2015	TEF Consultation	
2016	CATE launched	Teaching excellence team prizes
	Bell review	Recommended merger of HEA. Leadership Foundation and Equality Challenge Unit
	TEF technical consultation and launch	
2017	1st TEF assessments	

In interview for this research, Professor Chris Husbands, Chair of the TEF Panel, said he thought:

> government is more confused about this, to be honest. I don't think that government has entirely made its mind up between two competing priorities, between the TEF as a driver of market differentiation….or the TEF as a driver of enhancement/improvement. …since about 1993 Government has been really interested in measuring teaching quality of higher education. And it's done a number of things to try to do that…TEF is the latest manifestation.

Husbands also speaks about the 'intellectual roots' of the TEF, the 'latest manifestation' of the political preoccupation with teaching quality, which appears to have followed three factors: 1) the massification of HE, which has required increasingly diverse approaches to teaching and learning to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population; 2) an increasingly transactional relationship between students and universities in the context of high student fees, and 3) a re-balancing of teaching in relation to the historical dominance of research across the sector.

During the 1997-2017 period there has arisen a debate about the purposes of higher education, the roles of educators, academics and professional services staff, about what is taught by whom, for whom and for what purpose, about a balance between education for self-actualisation, self-improvement, the advancement of society, and workforce development for a post-industrial age. This is well captured in the European Principles for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (EFFECT, 2018), although it is unclear how much traction this European model might have in a post-Brexit UK. Throughout the period 1997-2017 and beyond these things impact on the narrative of professionalising teaching.

Over time the HE sector has seen a shift which is paralleled across other professional groups – the normalised recognition that teachers and third space professionals are hybrid

practitioners and boundary-crossers. The research/teaching dichotomy in the HE academic workforce and in the institutional missions of universities presented challenges for HE and for the ILTHE, with many academics reporting informally that "I want to be a member of the ILT but don't tell my university, it will be career death - it's only research that gets you promotion." HE teaching is inherently multi-voiced - a common theme of resistance to professional recognition for university teachers was articulated through statements like 'I'm not a professional, I'm an academic', and 'I'm not a teacher, I'm a historian/ chemist/….'. By 2017 most universities were requiring evidence of qualification to teach, usually through completion of an HEA/AHE accredited programme and/or through award of Fellowship, the criteria for which are increasingly expected to support 'academic related' staff to achieve equitable recognition. This resonates with Davies who, as CEO of the Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys (CIPA), identifies as an 'associations professional' and leads a professional body outside his own earlier spheres of practice (plumbing and teaching):

> I had to really learn what professionalism looks like and actually discovered, in this instance, the professional identity of patent attorneys isn't that different than professional identity of FE teachers, because they are scientists, technologists, engineers first, yes, and then they come to the law later… so they have, if you like, two very easily defined identities that overlap to make them the complete patent attorney.

Such blending of professional identities over time spawns new specialisms – learning technologists, association professionals, project managers etc – which eventually lead to distinct professional communities and organisations creating their own membership associations. These in turn acquire the structures and functions of professional bodies, like the Association for Learning Technology (ALT), support networks like Memcom, information sharing networks like PARN, and in some cases eventually acquire chartered status like the Association of Project Managers. In the HE domain this manifests as a dual professionalism which connects disciplinarity with teaching capability.

Core to the initiatives listed above (Table 3) is the shifting emphasis on: the responsibilities of the individual to be and be recognised as a competent professional, either for their own self-actualisation and identity or to safeguard the interests of students and the public; the role of the universities as providers of services to paying customers; the role of the HE sector in creating a market and delivering a return on government investment in the future workforce. The creation of the ILTHE firmly focused on individual practitioners, as did the

NTFS, whilst the LTSN also focused on individual practice through the lenses of disciplinary differences. The focus of the HEA/AHE was/is supporting institutional agendas with individual Fellowship being approached as institutional strategy and increasingly the by-product of accredited programmes rather than direct application by the individual – institutional subscriptions and consultations with senior university leaders replaced personal membership subscriptions and developmental networks. The introduction of the CATEs alongside individual NTFs further emphasised the celebration of collective rather than individual practice. The TEF is primarily concerned with regulating a market to ensure government and society agendas are satisfied, with individual and collective commitment to enhancement becoming a means to that end rather than an end in itself.

Throughout the period students have ostensibly been put at the 'heart of the system', but have been conceptualised differently, the construct evolving from relatively passive recipients of education dependent on the disciplinary knowledge of experts, to engaged learners dependent on skilled teachers, to customers expecting value for money from providers, to partners who co-create their learning in preparation for complex problem solving in their future work lives. The focus on students, although shifting, is manifest in the introduction of the NSS and PTES, and by the replacement of the HEFCE with the OfS – Office for Students. The extent to which the OfS is focused on students or on the HE market is contested by some:

> Now as a sector we are rolling over and taking intervention, particularly through the new Office for Students, that is unprecedented...it's an office for competition and bringing private providers into the system; I really don't think it's an office for students. (Rammell)

This brings us to what Husbands describes as the 'latest manifestation' of the teaching enhancement trajectory, the TEF. Perceptions of the TEF are very varied, as demonstrated by a range of extracts from research interviews conducted for this study. One interviewee, a PVC in a post-92 university who chose to remain anonymous, reflected the more personal motivations of those drawn to a teaching career in HE and the unintended impact of the TEF:

> universities like other educational organisations are, you know, very much driven, certainly in terms of the individual members of staff - why people do things - by a desire for social good. I decided to do a useful job in the world through a passion for the quest for knowledge, and sharing

> that with others. ... we care about students. But we spend our time looking at league tables, spend our time looking at what the TEF metrics are. … we must be the most measured country in the world by miles I've even talked to colleagues in Canada and the States - they cannot believe how we're inspected and measured and held to account. And how little autonomy we have, relatively speaking.

During the TEF consultations there was considerable scepticism about the measures proposed as proxies for teaching quality, especially the validity of graduate salaries as an indicator of teaching quality. In an off-the-record conversation a civil servant suggested it could be understood by 'following the money' and using salary information to assess the likelihood of student loans being repaid, or how great the liability would be for student loans the government has underwritten. Early in the TEF development there had been discussion of allowing the highest performing institutions to raise fees. Husband's reflection on this speaks to political pragmatism and the marketisation of UK HE:

> It seems to me that increasing fees is politically toxic for anybody, so that's not gonna happen. So you then have to say that you can only do it by cutting the fee. But then you're saying the TEF is punitive… far better for government to say, this is a market. But it's not a price market. It's a quality market. It's an experience market. It's a cost market.

In the 2022 revisions to the TEF assessment process the prospect of receiving a newly introduced 'requires improvement' outcome comes with the prospect of closer scrutiny by OfS and potential deregistration as a university.

A further challenge arises with regard to lagging data used in TEF assessment. If as Husbands asserts TEF has 'galvanised' institutional focus on enhancement those institutions will already be taking remedial action where necessary, and yet some of the data sets will be significantly out of date. In 2018, for example, 2017 LEO data was data captured which related to 2012 graduates who had mostly made their HE choices in 2008, leaving institutional leaders in 2018 accountable for policies and practice from a decade earlier over which they most likely had no influence – in the words of one contributor 'rear-view mirror stuff'.

Given the focus on teaching quality and preparing graduates for the world of work PSRB engagement might have been considered a useful indicator, however:

> the number of PSRBs was never going to be relevant because obviously there are institutions without any or with only a few and why is the number necessarily that important. But the way it's been retained is that people do in their institutional submissions – you know, this is the data related to those criteria – can and indeed have referred to comments from the PSRBs about particular provision (Stoakes)

The extent to which the HEA/AHE is a professional body is highly contested (see 6.4.1) but the status of HEA Fellowships as indicators of teaching competence is well established across the UK HE sector, and yet is not a metric used in the TEF process.

> teaching excellence is about student outcomes. So a big issue for us was [HEA], you know, wasn't it relevant whether the tutors were trained to be teachers or not. We lost that argument. (Stoakes)

It is clear that attempts to measure and promote teaching quality in UK HE continue to evolve and arguably always will as technology, curriculum, workforce needs and political ideology ebb and flow. Despite the metrics focus of the TEF the Chair of the Panel appears wedded to and convinced of the enhancement potential of the scheme at an institutional level.

> There is absolutely no doubt that right across the sector, [TEF] has been galvanising in terms of institutional efforts… to focus potential outcomes in a way that was not there previously. I think that's good. It has engaged senior teams. (Husbands)

This pivotal narrative illustrates how a politically driven set of initiatives have shifted over time as political ideology has changed. It also demonstrates how such initiatives become normalised over time. The position of AHE as government sponsored organisation which fulfils the professional recognition functions of a professional body provides insight about where the locus of agency sits – with individuals, employers, a professional association or government.

6.3 Transactional education, workforce development, and apprenticeships

Returning to the analysis of trends over time, the period 1997-2010 was characterised by a plethora of enquiries and reports, and consequent policy and legislation, included in the timeline. Possibly most contentious and high profile was the introduction of student fees and the abolition of maintenance grants. Some consider this to have cemented neoliberalism in

HE policy by fundamentally marketising the sector and positioning students as consumers of goods and services rather than scholars within an intellectual community

> Students who pay significant fees can be expected to have different expectations and attitudes towards their higher education experience – more conscious of their rights and expected service standards, less tolerant of shortcomings, more demanding, more litigious. The introduction of the National Student Survey reinforces the idea that students are buyers in a higher education market. The creation of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator adds a regulator with a remit to strengthen the student voice. In this changing environment, a university or any other provider that does not treat students as customers jeopardises its relationship with students. (Cuthbert, 2010, p. 4)

> neoliberalism has come to represent a positive conception of the state's role in creating the appropriate market by providing the conditions, laws and institutions necessary for its operation… This means that for neoliberal perspectives, the end goals of freedom, choice, consumer sovereignty, competition and individual initiative, as well as those of compliance and obedience, must be constructions of the state acting now in its positive role through the development of the techniques of auditing, accounting and management. (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 315)

> Now as a sector we are rolling over and taking intervention, particularly through the new Office for Students, that is unprecedented...it's an office for competition and bringing private providers into the system. (Rammell interview)

The Coalition famously increased student fees to £9000, and by using a Liberal Democrat member of the Cabinet to make the announcement dealt a body-blow to the Liberal Democrat Party which had campaigned on the abolition/freezing of student fees in the run-up to the election. Marketization was also characterised by the progressive deregulation of the sector, started by the Labour administration[27] and enthusiastically accelerated first by the 2010-2015 Coalition, and subsequently under the Conservative minority government, culminating in the 2017 Higher Education and Research Act, which disbanded HEFCE and replaced it with the Office for Students (in interview Rammell asserted "I really don't think it's an office for students"), introduced the TEF (some would say is not about teaching excellence), and deregulated higher education to open the 'market'.

[27] https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/vo060207/wmstext/60207m01.htm (accessed 11/11/2022)

The evidence gathered about the period suggests there has been a shift in assumptions about the fundamental purpose of higher education, and the nature of the debate/discussion through which policy is developed and implemented. The renewed emphasis on widening participation, the push to the 50% target, accompanied a more explicit workforce development agenda around higher education.

In recent history, HE was not associated with a 'skills agenda', but rather was understood to be an intellectual pursuit through which transferable skills could be developed and which could lead to, and may be prerequisite for, advanced academic pursuits or progression into a profession. Since 1997 there appears to be a much stronger transactional and procedural culture associated with fulfilling the requirements of courses that lead students and graduates to pre-specified positions within the workforce. Anecdotally, long-serving colleagues in universities will talk about a time when higher education was about self-actualisation and discovering yourself; what had been studied mattered less than the process and experience of studying - the degree was a signifier of a particular type of learning and the development of an analytical mind set. In reality there has probably always been a continuum from pure self-actualisation to skills acquisition for the workforce, and at different moments in history the focus for universities, and for different types of universities, will have reflected the dominant challenges and economic and cultural needs of the age: preparation for statecraft and the church were the principle foci of the ancient universities; advancement of science, technology and natural philosophy was undertaken through independent endeavour, for example through the Lunar Society, during the 18th Century when only a few Oxbridge Colleges were established; the increasing need for technically educated professionals in the workforce to power the industrial revolution resulted in the 'red brick' and civic university expansion of the 19th Century; the 20th Century saw increased collaboration between PSRBs and universities to support the expansion of occupational education as discussed in *The Qualifying Associations* (Millerson, 1964).

During the 1997-2017 period there was a strong government emphasis on STEM and a workforce for the knowledge economy. With the growth of vocational and occupational degrees and professionally accredited courses a more transactional rather than transformational model of higher education emerges, and over time there are changes in the nature of the letters written from government to the higher education funders, in terms of how they expect the money to be spent.

The involvement of universities in occupational education is well documented throughout the *Qualifying Associations* (Millerson, 1964) and a specific example is cited by Welsh

> In the UK, the Library Association tried a variety of approaches, ranging from correspondence courses to lectures held at the London School of Economics (LSE) (Welsh, 2016, p. 48)

It is interesting to note how the widening participation, vocational institution of one era becomes the proudly global research-intensive institution of another:

> Welcome to the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), one of the foremost social science universities in the world (LSE homepage, accessed 11/11/2022)

This trend has impacted the behaviour and focus of professional bodies as well. Historically they played their part in post graduate learning as graduates decided to pursue a specialist professional pathway, usually after completing an academic rather than vocational degree. In this context the professional body acted as gatekeeper and arbiter of standards by controlling access by individual practitioners to the profession; with the growth of vocational qualifying degree programmes the professional body validates or accredits institutions and their degree provision, raising a slew of questions about who owns and controls the curriculum and who is accountable to whom for the quality assurance of courses, qualifying graduates and professional practice.

> Notwithstanding the expectations and scrutiny placed upon education and training providers by PSRBs, it is unclear… the extent to which the PSRBs are themselves engaging with the pedagogy of their professional disciplines. It is clearer from the limited discipline-specific literature available… that the educational community is relatively silent regarding the influence and impact PSRBs have on their conceptualisation of their disciplines, despite the HE sector's reliance on professional accreditations to validate, and thereby make viable, their programmes. (Robinson-Canham, 2015)

Questions also arise about the purpose of higher education for the individual student and for society/the workforce, and the nature of professionalism. What does it mean for professional identity if academic choices have to be made as early as 13 or 14 to satisfy the entry requirements to a professionally validated qualifying degree, compared to pursuing professional qualification after a period of intellectual and social self-discovery as an undergraduate? Of course, it could be argued that this is a very modern dilemma:

- The Education Act 1907 introduced the free place scholarship system to give promising children from elementary schools the opportunity to go to secondary school.
- The provision of secondary education became compulsory under the Education Act 1918.
- Secondary education was fee-paying until 1944. Fees for secondary schools were abolished by the Education Act 1944 (Butler Act).
- The 1944 Education Act created the tri-partite education system in which children were streamed into Grammar Schools, Technical Schools and Secondary Modern Schools.[28]

Essentially the education system separated the academic from the vocational through grammar, technical and secondary modern schooling, with school-leavers directed towards university and the 'white collar' professions on one hand and practical apprenticeships and 'blue collar' occupations on the other. Educational and professional changes throughout the 20th century have reflected the changing social, economic and technological demands of the age as demonstrated by the attempts to future-proof education for the 'knowledge economy' during the 1997-2017 period. Although largely presented as a social mobility initiative the 50% HE participation target also speaks to the need for a workforce equipped for higher order problem-solving capabilities in a technologically advanced and automated economy, as observed in the anonymous PVC interviewee. In Activity theory terms these considerations play out as **contradictions** and tensions within and between the domains of public policy, higher education and the professional bodies.

Sector Skills Councils were introduced in 2002 by the Adult Skills Minister. Intended to be employer-led and industry specific, these bodies sat at the nexus of government policy, industry and FE. Andy Friedman observed in private correspondence that:

> 'They [the SSCs] ignored professional bodies but gradually many of them established links with professional bodies, in belated recognition that professional bodies were already carrying out this sort of work.'

The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in April 2015 was indicative of a renewed enthusiasm for vocational education. Around this time higher and degree apprenticeship also brought 'learn while you earn' opportunities, traditionally associated with FE and workplace

[28] https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/secondary-schools/ (accessed 11/11/2022)

learning, into sharper focus for the HE domain, not least because universities as large employers are themselves required to pay the levy – equating to 0.5% of total payroll over £3million. This led to a number of universities exploring mechanisms for offsetting their levy burden against development programmes for early-career staff, for example treating candidates on Post Graduate Certificates in Teaching and Learning, accredited by Advance HE, as apprentices. Anecdotally many universities, especially those not already active in the apprenticeship space, appear to have chosen to write off the levy because of the associated administrative burden. In a any event there appears to be a disconnect between the different activity systems in relation to HE-owned vocational and workforce learning:

> I think the idea of a levy for apprenticeships is brilliant. Yes, there is a great idea that everyone should have to invest in training. But it seems to be crazily disproportionately cumbersome to do…. Nobody understands why the rules are the other way they are, because they don't seem to either lead to good quality training or education. They just seem to be there to make it almost impossible to design a decent course for people that people would like to do. (Annon PVC)

It becomes clear from scrutinising the history of the period 1997-2017 that HE has become more transactional in response to student fees, and that students and employers adopt the characteristics of customers expecting something tangible and exchangeable in return for their investment in HE. Who is included or excluded from the discourse about vocational education - HE or FE, employers or professional bodies – appears to follow trends in political ideology as manifest through government policy, rather than recognising the sustained impact of professional bodies on specialist segments of the workforce. As in other areas of potential influence and expertise, PSRBs appear muted and fragmented in their response and contribution to key areas of workforce development and education.

6.4 Spads, Wonks and Blended Professionals,

At the interface of government policy and HE is a growing community of commentators and interest groups, most notably the university ‘mission groups’, think tanks, ‘Spads’ (Special Advisers – politically affiliated appointments acting as adjuncts to the politically neutral Civil Service) and policy ‘Wonks’ (policy specialists working in a variety of settings including businesses, charities, think tanks, universities and NGOs). The extent to which these do or are intended to influence policy (government) or practice (HE) is hard to discern, although their growing influence is clear to see throughout the period.

Of this cadre of commentators, lobbyists and policy experts Spads are perhaps the most prevalent in the public consciousness with high profile individuals like Dominic Cummings (controversial former Special Adviser to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson[29]) making the news for their apparently maverick behaviour. The potential benefits of such appointments are captured in the Ministerial Code which also attempts to delimit their power and influence.

> The employment of Special Advisers on the one hand adds a political dimension to the advice available to Ministers, and on the other provides Ministers with the direct advice of distinguished `experts' in their professional field, while reinforcing the political impartiality of the permanent Civil Service by distinguishing the source of political advice and support (Ministerial Code, 1997, para 48 quoted in the Committee on Standards in Public Life review in 2000)[30]

The increasing influence of Spads emerged in interview data gathered for this study.

> my impression of what I saw is that the materials produced by the civil servants with whom I was working went to the Spad and then went to the minister and appeared then to come back through the Spad and back to the civil servants. That was the word I was looking for, 'gatekeepers'. And what came back didn't often look like what had gone up and certainly, not knowing the process and the thought processes that had gone into changing what had gone up into what came back down, was a frustration. I mean, that's a personal observation based on comments from civil servants who I was working with, who will remain anonymous. (Geoff Stoakes interview)

This perspective is borne out by Hillman, a former Spad and later CEO of HEPI, who describes this process as 'reshaping a document' (Hillman, 2014)

> The role is primarily defined by what it is not: special advisers are not subject to the general requirement for civil servants to be selected on merit via fair and open competition; neither are they subject to civil service requirements on impartiality and objectivity. (p.7)
>
> Without special advisers, there would be a slight rebalancing towards the permanent Civil Service and away from democratically elected politicians (p.9)
>
> part of the reason for the problems that have occurred is the loose oversight of special advisers which ensures they are not fully embedded in any part of the system: they are immune from the managerialism of the mainstream

[29] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominic_Cummings#:~:text=Dominic%20Mckenzie%20Cummings%20(born%2025,resigned%20on%2013%20November%202020. (accessed 23/09/2022)

[30] Accessed from the https://www.civilservant.org.uk/library/2000-cspl_sixth_report_spads_chapter.pdf (July 2002)

> Civil Service; exempted from the parliamentary duties of ministers; and unaccountable to party headquarters. That has advantages and disadvantages. Much of the time, it offers a liberating freedom that enables each special adviser to focus on their minister's priorities. But, at other times, it can mean 'spadville' is a lonely place that lacks mentors. (p. 11)

'Wonk' was originally a disparaging term akin to swot or geek but which has now been adopted and reclaimed by policy enthusiasts, perhaps most notably for this study through the WonkHE platform which provides a useful example.

> Founded in 2011, Wonkhe (pronounced wonky) is the home of higher education wonks: those who work in and around universities and anyone interested and engaged in higher education policy, people and politics. Our mission is to improve policymaking in higher education and provide a platform for the new or previously unheard voices and perspectives in the sector. '[31]

It is interesting to note here another example of giving voice to 'previously unheard voices' which resonates with Gove's comments about experts, although ironically in this instance new voices have become a new breed of specialists with enormous influence over policy and practice. The WonkHE service is timely, often irreverent, and focused on what those in HE need to know: 'A daily email briefing service about UK HE – sent directly to your inbox at 8.00AM every weekday'[32] This reflects a number of trends seen across the timeline – increased interest in HE policy as well as practice, the use of technology to access information and insight, and a more democratised mode of information creation by 'previously unheard voices' commissioned by WonkHE to augment their small inhouse analysis and writing team.

The more established, primarily print media Times Higher Education Supplement (THE) is a weekly publication which has moved towards more international coverage and focused on developing a suite of international university rankings, also illustrating the metrics and marketisation themes emerging from the timeline, and which evidence the deregulation and marketisation also seen in the HEFCE funding letters discussed above.

Influencing Higher Education Policy: a professional guide to making an impact (Bagshaw, 2019) is both a useful how-to guide and an artefact of its time:

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[31] https://www.linkedin.com/company/wonkhe/ July 2022
[32] https://wonkhe.com/subscriptions/wonkhe-daily/ accessed July 2022

> the genesis for [the] book was a realisation that while there has been a proliferation of roles within universities focussing on policy and public affairs…there is relatively little literature to support the development of this profession within higher education (p. xvii) … this book provides ideas and recommendations for *how* to influence policy and an exploration of *why* that should happen (p. xx).

This speaks to a number of themes emerging from my study of how policy is influenced and influences the HE and PSRB sectors, including the emergence of new specialised professions at the nexus of activity systems, and the need for professionals to be supported and developed to fulfil those new roles effectively.

WonkHE's target audience of those 'working in and around universities' speaks to the growth or growing influence of enhancement agencies, mission groups, and professional associations with an HE remit, as well as the cohort of university managers and administrators with policy and project focused roles, many of which roles may have evolved as a response to initiatives with their origins in government policy. Many of these individuals can be described as 'blended professionals' a term coined by Celia Whitchurch, a boundary-crossing career university administrator turned researcher.

> Contemporary universities, serving mass higher education markets, find themselves delivering complex, broadly based projects such as student support and welfare, human resource development, and business enterprise. Established concepts of academic administration and devolved management have been overlaid by more fluid institutional structures and cultures, with a softening of internal and external boundaries … These developments have caused major shifts in the identities of professional administrators and managers as they adopt more project-oriented roles crossing functional and organisational boundaries. (Whitchurch, 2006, p. 159)

> a further category of blended professionals, who have mixed backgrounds and portfolios, comprising elements of both professional and academic activity (Whitchurch, 2008, p. 377)

Writing in 2021 and marking the 60th Anniversary of the AUA, Whitchurch reflects on how the professional services workforce has adapted over a 25-year period

> the concept of 'the administrator' has been squeezed … replaced by digital records of, and online communications with, students over the last 25 years. Record keepers have thereby been replaced by policymakers and interpreters of increasingly complex regulations, to take account of a diversifying student population and a broader range of individual needs. The old binary of 'specialists' and 'generalists', the former focused on areas such as human resources, estates and finance, the latter moving around

> different ‘registry’ functions, is an increasingly false one in the sense that each group should have some cognisance of the other's business.(Whitchurch, 2021, p. 113)

To some extent this speaks against a general trend towards increased specialisation across professions more generally (illustrated by the award of Royal Charters) but does align with the Susskind analysis of how technology has changed the nature of expert work, and certainly illustrates the impact of specific government policies on roles in HE, and in this case, the fundamental preoccupations of a specific professional body and its community.

The following extract relating to a 2018 book about professional services staff in Higher Education identifies challenges for emergent, relatively invisible and hybrid roles in changing sectors and reflects a number of the themes emerging form the timeline about professionalisation, professional invisibility in the academic literature and the tension between hybridisation and increasing specialisation.

> the boundaries between some professional and academic roles have blurred, creating a sub-category; the para-academic staff. Given the contribution professional and support staff make, and the increasing importance of the roles they perform within their institutions and to the society as a whole, it is surprising that their work, impact, careers, and aspirations remain largely unexplored in the literature and research to date. We hope readers find this book useful and insightful, that it enables greater and deeper insight among and between professional staff and their institutions, and that it contributes meaningfully to the growing body of knowledge and scholarship regarding professional and support staff in higher education globally. We also hope that the book assists in raising awareness about the professions that are part of our educational institutions, and the contributions that they make not only to their organisations, but to society as a whole. (Bossu & Brown, 2018)[33]

It is a moot point whether Spads, Wonks and blended professionals, with their mediating and hybrid roles, enhance or undermine political due process and effective leadership in HE and PSRBs, but there can be little doubt that their place and influence at the nexus of activity systems has developed during the period 1997-2017 and beyond.

The emergence of ‘blended professionals’ and other boundary-crossers illustrates a fundamental **contradiction** across the period 1997-2017. At the very time when

[33] https://link-springer-com.ezproxy.lancs.ac.uk/referencework/10.1007/978-981-10-6858-4#about-this-book

technological and practise developments have required greater specialisation there emerges a cadre of specialists whose expertise in in boundary crossing and pan-professional synthesis.

This analysis reveals a further contradiction with regard to the assumed or reported expectations employers might have of graduates. There appears to be mismatched rhetoric about generic employability skills and the readiness of graduates for the world of work which in the popular press often crystalises around numeracy, literacy and IT. The skills identified by the CBI throughout the period actually speak to a more sophisticated understanding of the workforce needs of a technologically advanced economy. The joint CBI/UUK publication *Future fit: Preparing graduates for the world of work*, lists graduate attributes:

> **Self-management** – readiness to accept responsibility, flexibility, resilience, self-starting, appropriate assertiveness, time management, readiness to improve own performance based on feedback/ reflective learning.
> **Teamworking** – respecting others, co-operating, negotiating/ persuading, contributing to discussions, and awareness of interdependence with others.
> **Business and customer awareness** – basic understanding of the key drivers for business success – including the importance of innovation and taking calculated risks – and the need to provide customer satisfaction and build customer loyalty.
> **Problem solving** – analysing facts and situations and applying creative thinking to develop appropriate solutions.
> **Communication and literacy** – application of literacy, ability to produce clear, structured written work and oral literacy – including listening and questioning.
> **Application of numeracy** – manipulation of numbers, general mathematical awareness and its application in practical contexts (e.g. measuring, weighing, estimating and applying formulae).
> **Application of information technology** – basic IT skills, including familiarity with word processing, spreadsheets, file management and use of internet search engines.
>
> Underpinning all these attributes, the key foundation, must be a positive attitude: a 'can-do' approach, a readiness to take part and contribute, openness to new ideas and a drive to make these happen. Frequently mentioned by both employers and universities is entrepreneurship/ enterprise: broadly, an ability to demonstrate an innovative approach, creativity, collaboration and risk taking. An individual with these attributes can make a huge difference to any business. (CBI/UUK, 2009, p. 8)

Another CBI publication in 2018 indicates that:

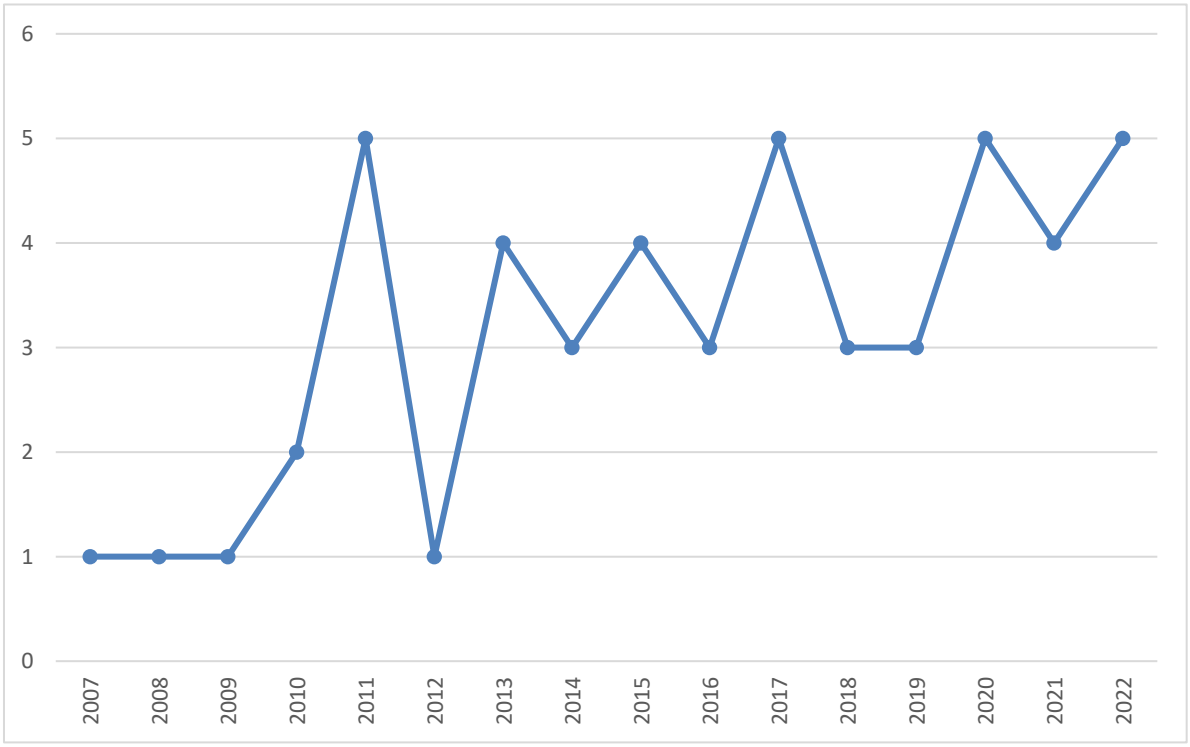
> Qualifications are valued by employers as indicators of achievement and ability but developing the right attitudes and behaviours for success in all aspects of life is vital. The evidence for this is clear in the survey findings,

> over half of employers (60%) value broader skills, such as listening and problem-solving, as one of their three most important considerations when recruiting school and college leavers. (Confederation of British Industry, 2018, p. 9)

In this context the tendency towards ever more specialist degrees sits uncomfortably with the need for a highly agile workforce able to adapt to emerging technology and the associated working practices. To put this in context, smart phones feel as though they have been around for forever, but the first iPhone was launched in the UK in 2007. At the time of writing there have been 50 new models released, five of which have been launched between March and September 2022 (see Figure 12) based on data from apple fandom[34], indicating that the pace of change is rapid and increasing. With the availability and ubiquitous adoption of smartphone technology the world of work has fundamentally changed: 24/7 connectivity and with it the expectation that professionals will be connected. Even before the Covid 19 pandemic which changed assumptions and experiences of remote working, I had conducted a conference call for a professional body by Zoom on a mobile phone at 2am to accommodate the time difference with professional members in Australasia. Diverse though my education has been none of it prepared me for the social changes to the world of work brought about by technological advancement.

[34] https://apple.fandom.com/wiki/List_of_iPhone_models (accessed 12/11/2022)

Figure 12 iPhone launches by year



6.4.1 Pivotal narrative: Professionalisation of higher education teaching – the emergence of a profession/professional body

I was one of the founding staff of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) from April 1999, working for the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and its predecessor organisations until 2006, returning between 2016 and 2018 as Assistant Director: Professional Learning. At different times I was responsible for Membership Services, Accreditation, Fellowships, Excellence Prizes and the 24 subject centres of the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN). On this basis I have treated my own reflections and testimony in a comparable way to the testimony of oral history interview participants. A presentation I used in 2017 to promote the HEA and explain its work and history appears at Appendix K .

We recommend to institutions that, over the medium term, it should become the normal requirement that all new full-time academic staff with teaching responsibilities are required to achieve at least associate membership of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, for the successful completion of probation. (Dearing, 1997, Recommendation 48)

This recommendation was made despite the existence of SEDA, the self-styled "professional organisation for staff and educational development in the UK"[35]

> formed in 1993 by the merger of the Standing Conference on Educational Development (SCED) and the Staff Development Group of the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE). The Association for Education and Training Technology merged with SEDA in 1996.

SEDA was characterised by activities typical of a professional body, including events and publications, and most significantly a "Teacher Accreditation scheme for the training and certification of HE teachers". SEDA worked closely with the Booth Committee (established under the auspices of the Dearing Enquiry) to develop the model enacted by the ILTHE.

The ILTHE was established with start-up funding in the expectation that it would become self-sustaining within five years. The onus was on individual practitioners to seek and pay for the professional recognition that derived from being accepted into 'Membership', the criteria for which emerged from a consultation with the practice community and validated their professional development and identity. Institutions could pay an accreditation fee to have their internal teaching qualifications recognised by the Institute. The consultation process by which the criteria for membership were established, whittling 24 competencies down to five areas of professional practice (Fanghanel, 2004) is significant to the story presented here, and to the subsequent debate about the status of the ILTHE and its successor organisations as a 'professional body'

> The ILTHE's professionalizing mission was not interpreted by its founders as a gatekeeping activity aiming to regulate entry to the profession, but rather as a crusade to 'redress the balance between teaching and research' (ILTHE, 1998, para. 5). This was to become a beacon statement and is commonplace in much of the literature referring to the rationale behind the foundation of the ILTHE. The Institute's main mission is to 'provide professional standing for teachers in Higher Education' (ILTHE, 1998, para. 4). Its statutes clearly set the ILTHE as an organization independent of other organizations and of funding bodies, with no formal links to the higher education funding councils or the QAA. (Fanghanel, 2004, p. 577)

[35] https://www.seda.ac.uk/resources/files/SEDA%20Short%20History_WEB%20v2.pdf (accessed 02/01/2023)

It the context of SEDA and ILTHE, both committed to self-regulation of professional practice by academic practitioners, it is interesting to note the view expressed by Eric Lybeck, writing in the THE in 2018:

> recall the origins of the university: maintaining teaching quality is supposed to be a task for academics – indeed, their vocation! Further, the self-governing structure of the university existed to ensure academics could perform their professional responsibilities without external interference. How have we strayed so far as to allow such silliness as the teaching excellence framework? [36]

Regardless of whether we perceive the TEF to be 'silliness' the question must be asked, what happened to self-regulation in the intervening 20 years between Dearing, Booth, SEDA, ILTHE and 2018? The answer largely lies in Cook, Bell and mergers.

Unlike SEDA which was founded and funded by individual membership fees from grass-roots activists who I was told informally "huddled together for warmth", ILTHE had been given start-up funding through HEFCE with UUK and Guild HE (previously the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals and the Standing Conference of Principals respectively) having a controlling influence at inception. Professor Ron Cook (then VC of The University of York) Chaired a review of the ILTHE, LTSN and the FDTL NCT which fed into the 2003 Government White Paper on Higher Education and led to merger and the creation of the Higher Education Academy (HEA)[37]. Although the merged entity accepted the 15,000 Members of the ILTHE onto a newly created Register of Practitioners the focus and direction of HEA was no longer shaped by practitioner members, but rather by institutional subscribers, largely represented by PVCs Leaning and Teaching. Initially the 24 Subject Centres of the LTSN were maintained, although these eventually disappeared as funding subsidy was replaced entirely by institutional subscription and commercial activities, around 2017.

Meanwhile, SEDA had refocused attention towards "developing the professional body of educational developers, the leaders of the professional qualifications courses" and revised

[36] https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/academics-need-guild-their-own (accessed 02/01/2023)

[37] https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20100303211916/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/heacademy/tqec/final.htm (accessed 01/01/2023)

its strap line to "supporting and leading Educational Change". In its 2012 Short History of SEDA the authors noted the irony

> That the ILTHE – which SEDA had worked to create – should trigger an existential crisis in the Association…. whereas SEDA has always been a financially independent membership association, agencies like the ILTHE and the LTSN now had public funding and a mission to serve the needs of these mainstream lecturers.

Under the leadership of the first HEA CEO, Paul Ramsden, institutional agendas were prioritised over practitioner concerns, and the previously cordial and collaborative relationship between ILTHE and SEDA deteriorated. Tension between the HEA and SEDA increased specifically in relation to 'ownership' and control of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)[38], first launched in 2006 through sector-wide collaboration, later revised and branded as an HEA artefact in 2011. In a Short History of SEDA published in 2012 the authors pointedly claim SEDA's contribution:

> Perhaps SEDA's most significant contribution was to contribute its experience to the creation of the professional Standards Framework, now serving, and being owned by, the whole HE sector.

At risk of losing all grant funding from HEFCE in 2016, HEA increasingly sought alternative income streams, massively increasing institutional subscriptions, developing more consultancy in the UK and internationally, and attempting to revive an individual membership model underpinned by aspirations of Chartered status. With a Board heavily dominated by institutional senior leaders, and under the controlling influence of UUK, the Charter initiative was quashed, with some influential VCs citing concern over institutional autonomy and control if individual practitioners were essentially regulated through Chartered body – an ironic position for institutions which largely derive their own autonomy from the Charters conferred on their universities, and bemusing in comparison to industries like accountancy where Chartered practitioners are actively recruited because of their expertise and the credibility they bring to the businesses recruiting them. History repeated itself and the Bell Review[39] considered the respective contributions of HEA, the Leadership Foundation and the Equality Challenge Unit, ostensibly to contain the

[38] https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/uk-professional-standards-framework-ukpsf (accessed 31/12/2022)
[39] https://wonkhe.com/blogs/higher-education-agencies-for-whom-the-bell-tolls/ (accessed 01/01/2023)

subscription burden on institutions, leading to merger and the creation of Advance HE in 2017/18.

We can conclude from this that some professional associations grow from grass roots enthusiasm, driven towards mutual support and development, and a collective desire for recognition by others. Such organisations can draw on a reservoir of goodwill and communality to grow their numbers and promote their activities, often established by volunteer effort until growth funds professional organisational infrastructure. Most crucially their financial and governance independence gives them complete control over their strategy and future. The ILTHE in contrast was funded to establish the infrastructure first and then to recruit members by leveraging the ideological commitment of practitioners, but within the penumbra of a government and sector agenda which attracted some practitioner scepticism. Following merger financial and governance control was vested in quasi-governmental policy-makers and sector influencers, leaving most individual practitioners with little or no influence over their profession.

Despite all this work and resource to professionalise teaching in higher education there are commentators who bemoan the absence of a professional body for academia, like the Civic Sociologist Eric Lybeck:

> we must recall that the academic profession and university is well over 1,000 years old. Founded as a guild to preserve the quality of degrees, the social value of universities has waxed and waned over the centuries. What is most interesting about the present is the paradox of both centrality, due to the expansion of mass higher education and technological innovation, and the criticism of academics as being out-of-touch elitists. As I have argued in the past, perhaps a return to the idea of universities as self-governing guilds could provide abasis upon which we can reconnect with wider populations (2021, p. 167)

A question remains of when a professional body is not a professional body, with one answer being when the practitioner membership does not control the organisation's finance and governance.

This is one example of how a professional specialism has emerged from a business or activity sector. In this case the professionalism of HE teaching was stimulated and initiated by both grass-roots (SEDA) and through government funding/incentives (ILTHE/LTSN/HEA/AHE). This is helpful in understanding the recent history of HE but also provides a template or formulation for understanding the routes by which any emerging specialist workforce might be regulated, represented, formalised and developed.

6.5 Charters, charities and change

The timeline includes a strand that identifies which professional bodies have been awarded Royal Charter between 1997 and 2017 and reveals a potential pattern in pursuit of the accolade. In interview one PSRB CEO observed that

> there have been more charters awarded to professional bodies in the 21st century - which is what? 18 years old? - than there were awarded in the entire history before that. (Davies).

The Royal Charter strand on the timeline appears to validate this assertion and suggests that new Charters awarded during the period reflect the emergence of new professions and increasing workforce specialisation indicative of the technological, scientific and workforce imperatives at play. Those with a longer view, such as Privy Council officers, might suggest that the most recent 20 years is too short a timeframe to confidently identify trends in a system which dates back to 1155. Analysis derived from data available on the Privy Council Office website[40] is presented in Appendix G illustrate trends over time mapped against major socio-political and economic eras to demonstrate how social trends and political priorities have been reflected in the granting of Royal Charter. As there is no public record of the number of petitions submitted for Royal Charter it is impossible to say with certainty whether there is increased interest or what the success rate might be. Alternative mechanisms for legal incorporation have largely superseded the role of Royal Charter for businesses (through Companies House established under the Joint Stock Companies Act (1844)), charities (the Charity Commission established under the Charitable Trusts Act (1853)), and most recently Universities (through the Office for Students established under the Higher Education and Research Bill (2017)). It is clear from the data about recent Incorporations by Royal Charter that there is significant and possibly increasing interest in the status conferred by royal 'gift'. This is usually associated with assumptions that Charter will carry greater prestige, gives

[40] https://privycouncil.independent.gov.uk/royal-charters/list-of-charters-granted/ (accessed 05/11/2022)

enhanced access to government to influence policy, and is an indicator of pre-eminence, as described by Hunt and Scott (2009) and on the Privy Council Office website

> Incorporation by Charter is a prestigious way of acquiring legal personality and reflects the high status of that body. The authority for the grant of a Charter comes from the Royal Prerogative, that is to say, the grant is made by the Sovereign (on the advice of the Privy Council)[41].

The data presented in Appendix G and summarised in Figure 13 also derived from PCO data as part of this research project, presents categories of Royal Charter awarded over time and raises some interesting questions about how these Incorporations by Royal gift might be seen to reflect dominant socio-economic and geopolitical priorities. As O'Day suggests

> to understand the role of the professions and the ethos that underpinned it, it is necessary to examine the structure of society and the nature of contemporary social thought." (p.18).

Suffice to say for the purposes of this study that those awarded between 1997 and 2017 are indicative of increased specialisation and professionalisation of the workforce.

Some benefits of Chartered status are less tangible but valued by Chartered practitioners:

> So we've done a huge amount of work articulating the value the membership value proposition. I hate it! I call it our special purpose ...And I think that's why we've … avoided questions about the value of membership, because any of my members now will tell you it's about their status as a chartered patent attorney. It's about their ability to influence collectively governments at home and abroad. It's about the way this organisation supports them in their learning, both when they're forming as a professional, but also in their post qualification careers. And it's about giving them a sense of community in some way to come and meet with other like-minded people outside of the work environment, which can be difficult for patent attorneys, because when they are at work, they are competing with their peers in courts, litigation. Yeah. So, it gives them a safe place to come as a community of practitioners and have those conversations that they can't have in their professional lives because they're opponents. (Davies interview)

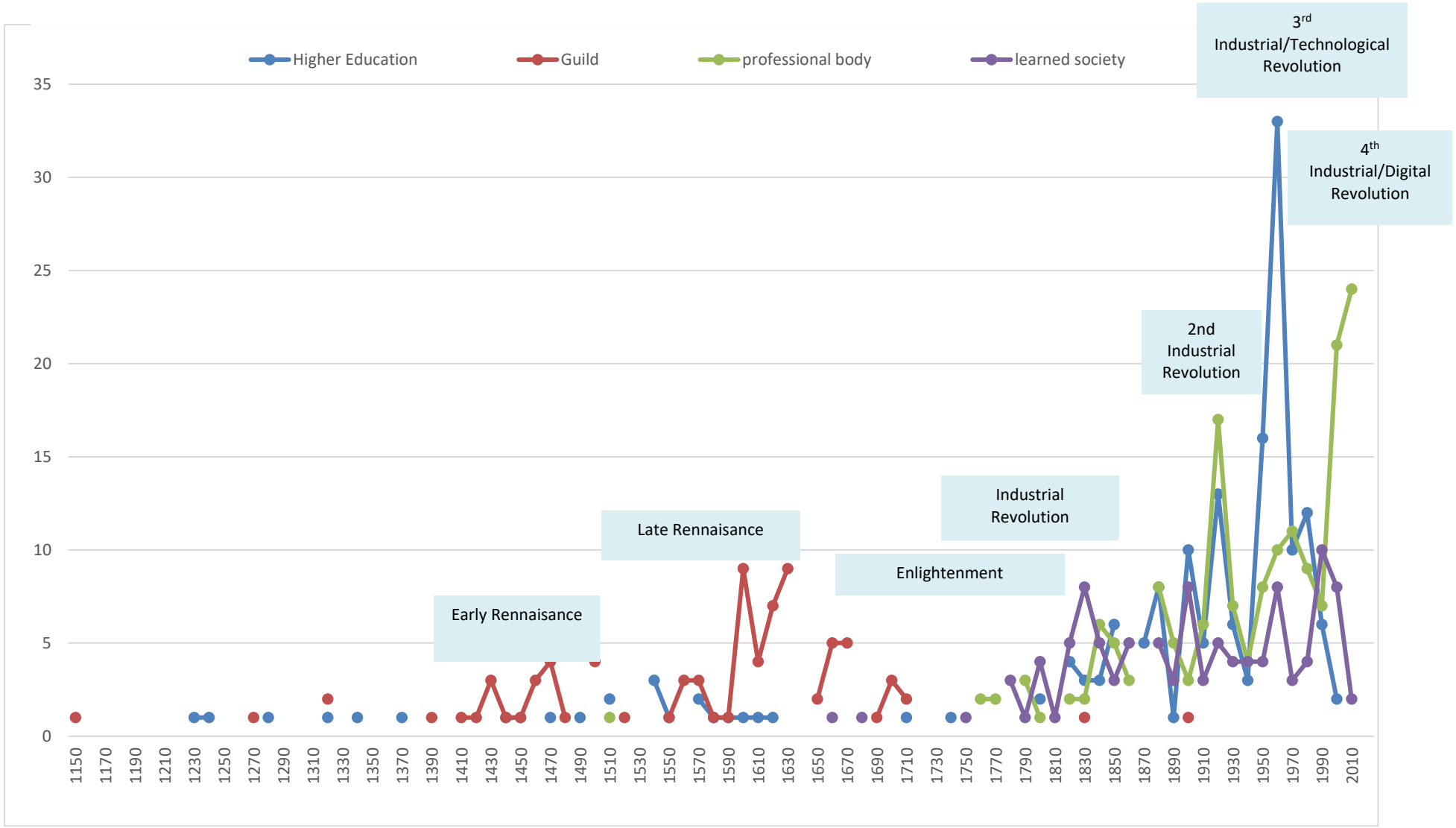
Royal Charter brings expectations of pre-eminence in a field and, in common with charitable status, public benefit obligations. In the context of political and populist scepticism about the value of experts, pursuit of Royal Charter through an organ of government is ironic so it has been interesting to explore what Royal Charter is presumed to signify. Few organisations

[41] https://privycouncil.independent.gov.uk/royal-charters/ (accessed 12/11/202

publish their reflections on the process of achieving Royal Charter - the Society of Radiological Protection has, and in doing so succinctly reflects the perceived value of Incorporation by Charter:

> The Society for Radiological Protection (the Society) was, after due process, granted a Royal Charter at the end of 2007. This has the following advantages for the Society:
> • The Society is now incorporated as a body in its own right rather than being an association of individual persons.
> • The Society has the full status of a professional society alongside other chartered bodies.
> • Radiation protection is a fully recognised professional activity in the UK.
> • The Society is able to confer a professional title on those suitable to be recognised; the title used is Chartered Radiation Protection Professional with post-nominal letters 'CRadP'.
> • There is a stronger relationship with Government in terms of overview and responsibility to respond to consultation.
> • The Society has a stronger responsibility to regulate the professional conduct of its members. (Hunt & Scott, 2009)

Figure 13 Higher Education, Guild, Professional Body, Learned Societies Royal Charters by Decade 1150--2020



f the approximately 400 professional bodies and associations identified by PARN[42], relatively few are Chartered. The public benefit aspects of both charters and charities are often overlooked in the more pragmatic assumptions about status, financial and commercial considerations, but there is a strong case for arguing that even, or especially, in a neoliberal marketised economy, the public craves the safeguards and confidence that come from professional regulation. Royal Charter is essentially a government conferred mandate to self-regulate, it captures parameters agreed with government by which that organisation will safeguard the public interest in the professional practice of its members, the 'trustworthy professionals' on whom we all rely. This is captured well by Friedman (Friedman, 2020) in his book *Promoting Professionalism:*

> Gaining a Royal Charter is a sought-after achievement among British based professional bodies, with the rate of professional bodies achieving Chartered status having risen markedly since 2000…. Clearly something changed during the 21st century. The steady rise in number of professional bodies gaining Chartered status during the 20th century accelerated: why?
>
> 1. There seems to have been a reduction in disposition of recent governments to grant statutory protection to professional bodies as part of the generally heightened enthusiasm for market competition. This has included regarding professions as barriers to competition (Office of Fair Trading, 2001). Charter may be seen by authorities as a market-oriented method of gaining competitive advantage.
> 2. The rise of new professions, such as in the environment sector, and the development of others which had been considered as ancillary occupations. Both groups have wanted to raise the profile of their members in the broad sectors in which they operate (see Burleigh, 2014).
> 3. Burleigh (CEO of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives at the time of their bid for Chartership) suggested that the relative ease with which the traditional title indicating high quality, 'Institute', has become easier to obtain through the special register in Company's House for Learned Societies and Institutes.
> 4. The increasingly international outlook of UK based professional bodies. The Chartered label is widely recognised internationally, especially in Commonwealth countries. (p. 118-9)

One of the most cited benefits of Charter is the status and assumed access to government decision-makers, but as we saw in 3.3.2, that is "not the way it's done" (Rammell), there is a risk of being distracted by following "political neophytes" (Ansell), and there is perceived

[42] https://www.parnglobal.com/Public/AboutUs/About_the_Professional_Body_Sector (accessed 26/02/2023)

value in “informal discussions and influence” (Husbands), none of which are markedly affected by Chartered status.

The ‘public benefit’ enshrined in all charitable objects and Royal Charters presents a fundamental contradiction for organisations seeking to represent the interests of their members and usually reliant on those members for their financial security. Charitable income cannot be used for member benefits, but rather is expected to be re-invested for charitable activity *in the public interest*. Some examples of Charter and Charitable Object wording (*emphasis is mine*):

> The objects of the Institution shall be to secure the advancement and facilitate the acquisition of that knowledge which constitutes the profession of a surveyor, namely, the arts, sciences and practice of:
> (a) determining the value of all descriptions of landed and house property and of the various interests therein and advising on direct and indirect investment therein;
> (b) managing and developing estates and other business concerned with the management of landed property;
> (c) securing the optimal use of land and its associated resources to meet social and economic needs;
> (d) surveying the fabric of buildings and their services and advising on their condition, maintenance, alteration, improvement and design;
> (e) measuring and delineating the physical features of the Earth;
> (f) managing, developing and surveying mineral property;
> (g) determining the economic use of resources of the construction industry, and the financial appraisal, management and measurement of construction work;
> (h) selling (whether by auction or otherwise) buying or letting, as an agent, real or personal property or any interest therein and to maintain and promote the usefulness of the profession *for the public advantage* in the United Kingdom and in any other part of the world. (RICS website)[43]

> The objects for which the company [Advance HE] is established are:
> (a) to promote higher education *for the public benefit,*
> (b) to further promote higher education *for the public benefit* by further developing the professionalism and profile of leadership, management and governance within the higher education sector,
> (c)to promote equality and diversity f*or the public benefit*, including the education sector and any other sectors that the board deems appropriate. (Charity Commission website)[44]

[43] https://www.rics.org/globalassets/rics-website/media/governance/royal-charter (accessed 13/11/2022)
[44] https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/4004291/governing-document (accessed 13/11/2022)

> [SEDA's charitable object is] The advancement of education *for the benefit of the public* particularly through the improvement of all aspects of learning teaching and training in higher education through staff and educational development (Charity Commission Website)[45]

The dilemma presented by member versus public interest is further manifest in the governance arrangements of professional and membership bodies. Trustees' fiduciary obligations make them responsible for all aspects of the charity's business conduct and financial sustainability. They are required to work in the interests of the organisation and its charitable beneficiaries, not represent or privilege the interests of members. From my extensive work with professional and membership organisations I have observed that this is particularly challenging where Boards are predominantly populated by Trustees elected by and from the membership, rather than being recruited from a wider professional field. There is an increasing trend towards combining member and lay or independent trustees on boards, with some organisations even moving towards lay Chairs. Advance HE, in contrast, makes very clear in its statement of purpose on the Charity Commission website, that it has been "created to be 'of and for the sector' and is jointly owned by GuildHE and Universities UK." This in large part can be attributed to the genesis of the organisation and its predecessor organisations (ILTHE, LTSN and HEA) in the government sponsored enactment of Dearing recommendations. This position is reinforced by the current membership of Advance HE Board, populated by senior leaders from subscribing institutions and sector representatives.[46] In contrast SEDA, established from grass roots activism has a n Executive Committee populated by experienced sector practitioners rather than employers[47].

It must also be acknowledged that the pro- and anti-professional debate significantly pre-dates the period of this study. In the monograph *The Professions in Early Modern England,1450-1800* O'Day makes a number of observations that resonate with the present thesis, for example

> If there was such a thing as 'a profession' then it was purely and simply the sum of the individuals who followed it. (p.14)…the criticism levelled by [contemporary 17th century critics] were not necessarily true, but they were an accurate enough description of the motivation and behaviour of some

[45] https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/3986663/governing-document (accessed 12/11/2022)
[46] https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/about-us/advance-he-board (accessed 26/02/2023)
[47] https://www.seda.ac.uk/about-seda/how-is-seda-governed/seda-executive-committee/ (accessed 26/02/2023)

> professionals. Such attacks do allow us to see how some sections of society viewed the professions – as bodies of corrupt, self-seeking individuals who used education, social superiority and contrived mumbo-jumbo and moralising to cloak their grasping motivation and persuade the laity to use their services and submit to exploitation' (p.16)

The role of PSRBs between 1997 and 2017 is interesting. PSRBs have always been concerned with workforce development and the qualifications necessary to practice (Abbott, 1988; Millerson, 1964; O'Day, 2014; Susskind, 2015). O'Day observed that "what we see as the learned professions…grew out of the more general socio-political, religious and intellectual context", and it has become clear through constructing the Timeline (Appendix F) that the emergence and evolution of professional groups and activities continues to reflect contemporary socio-political and economic imperatives. The relative invisibility in government and HE discourse on the formation, practices and development of PSRBs is fascinating. The Timeline enables us to track how PSRBs have also articulated or enacted the themes dominant in political and higher education activity during the period. Some of the markers of 'professionalism' that emerge are pursuit of Royal Charter, and formalisation of qualifications and CPD. The broad definitions of a professional body captured earlier (1.2.2) are helpful in understanding that such organisations come in many different shapes and sizes and derive from many different histories.

Throughout the period 1997-2017, both established and emerging professions appear to be adopting or formalising qualifications and CPD as vehicles for improving the visibility and public credibility of occupational groups, as well as in response to the Shipman case described above 5.4. In a review of 34 professional body websites (Robinson-Canham, 2013b) "it became apparent that there were several distinct, although frequently co-existing, axes of organisational focus evident across the sample" (presented in Table 4: Axes of organisational focus for PSRB education activity). The extensive range of activities mapped for the 2013 study illustrates the evolution of an educational function of PSRBs which moves beyond the 'qualifying professions' (Millerson, 1964), owes much to the recommendations that emerged from the Shipman Enquiry and the Nolan principles and, arguably at the time of writing, is something of a defence against populist derision of expertise.

Table 4: Axes of organisational focus for PSRB education activity

Dominant purpose	public good economic/business benefit reputation of the profession reputation of practitioners registration/recognition competence upholding/espousing beliefs/values/ethics
Agency/locus of responsibility	Individual Employer/organisational Professional body
CPD focus	Skills Knowledge Competence/capability Reflection Impact Community/organisational
CPD driver	Self-directed Expert driven Professional Body requirements driven Regulatory compliance

Education functions of PSRBs are fundamental to their public benefit purpose and underpin public confidence in the professions and their practitioners. It is possibly this fostering of such public confidence that bridges the preoccupations of separate PSRBs with PSRBS' collective concern with general professional credibility. It is also clear that the widening participation and social mobility discourse of the 1997-2017 period has filtered through from government rhetoric to higher education policy and extended a challenge to PSRBs to promote fair access' to professional occupations (6.5.1 explores the history of PSRB collaboration between 1997 and 2017, galvanised largely through fair access initiatives).

6.5.1 Pivotal narrative: Mobilising PSRBs as a sector - Fair Access to the Professions

There have been a number of attempts to organise, serve or mobilise professional bodies as a sector of broadly similar entities. Most, if not all have membership, events and education functions, are usually funded by individual members of the profession, offer some kind of professional recognition in the form of post nominal letters, even where qualification and membership are not mandatory to practise, and have broadly similar governance requirements, not least because of their incorporation as Chartered bodies, charities and/or businesses. It is these practical business similarities which are most often the focus of activities by umbrella organisations. The principal players in this space during the period under consideration are PARN, Memcom and Memberwise, although of these only PARN has a unique focus on professional bodies as distinct from membership bodies more generally. The founders of these organisations were interviewed for the research and their testimony offers interesting insights to the concerns and preoccupations of PSRBs and organisations with similar characterisitics

.

This narrative focuses on the extent to which PSRBs galvanise and collaborate as a sector in response to particular government policy themes. Widening participation in HE and fair access to the professions, and specifically the publication of Unleashing Aspirations (Central Office of Information, 2009), provide a useful departure point.

> I chaired something called the Access to the Professions Working Group in Whitehall … And I think that was driven in part by a belief that, "Okay, we're widening access to universities but there's then the next barrier you've got to overcome and these professions are still self-selecting and restrictive… when [Unleashing Aspirations] was published I think it created quite an impact because it was probably the first time that there had been both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of what was happening at the top of British society, not in terms of wealth but in terms of opportunity. It got quite a hearing and I think was like a lot of these things, people sort of have an assumption about the shape of society but when confronted with facts about it, that can be quite profoundly shocking… I think it was extremely uncomfortable for many actors, agencies, institutions in society, and most certainly the professions themselves because suddenly they were sort of under the spotlight where it probably hadn't been the case previously. (Milburn interview)

Milburn's intervention in the PSRB space appears to have stimulated some attempts at collaboration amongst professional bodies, whilst also being perceived as coming from the persistent 'protectionist gatekeepers' narrative that has dogged PSRBs since the 18th century. Milburn is positive about how HE has risen to the challenge of widening access to

university education, whilst recognising that it has been driven by conditions for charging fees. However, others are less convinced about widening participation in HE:

> As long as the hierarchical structure of higher educational institutions remains the case, any efforts to widen participation within elite universities will fail to improve the condition of the majority of students from non-traditional backgrounds, who will be enrolled at less than top-tiered universities (Lybeck, 2021, p. 166)

Here I am most concerned with fair access as a catalyst for PSRB collaboration. PARN has positioned itself as the professional body for professional bodies and is possibly the most active pan-professional network, as well as being the most research and publication focused. Established in 1998 its very existence is evidence of the trends at play during this period. Tracking PARN publications illustrates how the professional bodies collectively, through the agency of PARN, have responded to and reflected the political priorities of the period. The research focus has been directly linked to the availability of funds to conduct research, rarely from government or research councils, more often reflecting the PARN community's willingness to fund the research. This reliance on funding by the network has fostered a very pragmatic and often operational focus on practical benchmarking rather than ideological research about PSRBs' missions and purposes. Scoping conversations conducted with PARN staff, including founder and CEO Professor Andy Friedman, raised some questions as to whether this funding model led to conformity. A number of conversations alluded to the popular positioning of professional bodies as self-serving and mysterious, even being referred to as 'Hogwarts type organisations', with PARN itself potentially being influenced by the 'isomorphic pressure' of the network it serves. The 2020 PARN publication 'Promoting Professionalism'(Friedman) marked a departure from pragmatic and operational concerns in the wake of what has been seen across the PSRB community as a sustained attack on experts and professionals, most notoriously in Michael Gove's comments about people having had enough of experts (see 6.2).

There are now several organisations representing and supporting the PSRB sector, most notably Memcom and Memberwise, established in 2000 and 2008 respectively, as well as several short-lived initiatives cited in the The Timeline. Despite many practical attempts to widen their reach (training courses, special interest groups, conferences, etc), a persistent criticism of PARN has been that it largely focuses communication and networking through a small cohort of one or two, usually senior, colleagues in each member organisation,

leaving PARN vulnerable to membership attrition when key stakeholders move organisations, and limited visibility with the wider associations professionals workforce. PARN's focus and organisational demeanour reflects the academic and research background of its founder, Professor Andy Friedman, who established the Network originally to provide a research agenda for a nascent Business School at Bristol University. Although subsequently independent of the University PARN's primary focus has been on research and benchmarking of the PSRB sector. Memcom and Memberwise similarly reflect their origins – the awards list for Memcom demonstrates a dominant focus on PR, communications and events management which reflects the professional background of founder Duncan Grant. In contrast Richard Gott, founder and Chair of Memberwise, established the network to fill a gap he wanted for himself as an 'association or membership professional' and manager for 'practitioner focused learning, networking… and [opportunity to be] matched up with or to meet providers' that could meet his needs. He identified five drivers for establishing Memberwise: 'new member acquisition … member retention, … increase member value … improve member engagement and participation … and enable long term sustainable growth' (Gott interview). Both Memcom and Memberwise have clearly focused on a broad community of membership organisations and associations, some not all of which are PSRBs. My research indicated that whilst Memcom has at times collaborated with PARN, for example on the Total Professions website initiative which followed Unleashing Aspirations in 2009, Memberwise has not. There appear to be fundamental differences of focus between personal development for association professionals (Memberwise) and organisational research (PARN). Gott certainly cited a commitment to 'providing enhanced status to people working in membership' as a motivator for Memberwise, an agenda that would not counter the allegations of self-interest levelled at PRSBs and does not lend itself to addressing the grand challenge of social mobility championed by Milburn. Memcom, under Duncan Grant's leadership, was actively involved in establishing Professions Week and the Total Professions website, which followed Unleashing Aspirations, although according to Grant were motivated by career awareness perspectives rather than fair access as such. Milburn himself cites poor careers advice as an inhibitor to social mobility. Both initiatives have subsequently foundered for lack of sustained interest from PSRBs in maintaining such shared resources – possibly a consequence of 'pockets of good practice' which PSRBs find 'difficult to replicate consistently' (Grant interview). Memcom increasingly focuses on

celebrating marketing and communications achievements at their annual awards ceremony, 'glitziest event of the Memcom calendar'[48]

What becomes clear is that the origin stories and personal interests of founders and influencers are key to the evolution of both government policy and the PSRB sector in a way that is not so evident in higher education. Alan Milburn told me in interview:

> I think I just got lucky in my life to be perfectly honest. I was born at the right time, and as you know '58 is supposed to be the peak year of social mobility…. I guess the conclusion I reached is life and progress shouldn't really rely on luck. It's no bad thing if you've been fortunate in life to want for others what you've had for yourself … there seems to be scant evidence of the relationship between educational attainment and vocational performance, so in the professions a large part of the recruitment process focuses on education attainment … so it focuses on past achievement rather than future potential.

Gott tells of filling the gap he wanted to fill with regard to personal status and identity for association professionals; Friedman identified a research gap and pragmatically fostered a community of PSRB leaders to sponsor research; and Grant reports that moving into associations consultancy suited the work life balance he was seeking at the time. Grant also identifies that 'there are a small number of visionaries' in the professional bodies community, citing Andy Friedman at PARN and Lee Davies at CIPA, people that are 'prepared to stir it up a bit'.

This seems key to understanding the extent to which PRSBs constitute a sector. Reliant on visionary individuals, drawing on a range of personal and professional perspectives and motivations, representing separate organisations that largely exist to celebrate longevity and precedent, navigating the tensions between member benefit and public interest in an ever-changing socio-political context. Grant agrees to some extent with Lee Davies and his 'castigation of his fellow professional body leaders, for not collaborating to work together …to show that they a force in society… that they are relevant to government' (Grant interview).

[48] https://www.memcom.org.uk/awards.html (accessed 26/02/2023)

Davies is possibly the most vocal of the PSRB disrupters, described by PARN as at the critical end of being a critical friend, and identified by Grant as one of those prepared to 'stir it up'. He describes Milburn as 'championing from a perspective of bias' that professional bodies are self-interested and self-serving; that PARN has no influence because its business model is based on conducting the research members are prepared to pay for; that PSRB 'chief execs don't get out often enough and when they do get out they don't work together to change the world'. For all that he has potentially hit the nail on the head with regard to what the value might be of a PSRB 'sector':

> I would like to think that there is value and purpose in those chief executives coming together, regardless of whether there's any political need to influence, because actually we have a sector to influence, and that sector is the professional body sector. (Davies)

This narrative illuminates the mechanisms through which individuals and organisations have sought to harness, direct and mobilise professional bodies as a collective. It is clear from the accounts collected in interviews and synthesised here that although professional bodies and other membership organisations have characteristics and activities in common there is currently insufficient common purpose to generate or sustain a coherent agenda for change or influence with regard to government policy or higher education. This situation reinforces and perpetuates the risks of PSRBs and professions being misunderstood and misrepresented as self-serving and out of touch, and inhibits their collective ability to influence aspects of policy and practice on which they rely for their existence and success.

Chapter 7 Conclusions

This study has explored how professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) collectively, as a 'sector', influence and are influenced by government policies related to higher education (HE), professional learning and workforce development. The research questions asked what the comparative histories of the government, HE and PSRBs activity systems tell us about how government HE policies are enacted, and about how professional bodies had mobilised themselves as a 'sector' in response to government HE policy. The research has been conducted as an iterative enquiry-based study rather than seeking to prove a hypothesis. My own observations from many years of professional experience working at the nexus of policy and practice, and substantiated by the research, suggested that professional bodies appear as muted or invisible players in the education system, with very little written about them. What had previously been written and published about professional bodies focused on their established role as gatekeepers to the professions, their role in establishing areas of specialism, and the impact of democratised knowledge on what has historically been perceived as the privileged monopoly of the professions. Public confidence in the professions, and by extension faith in the trustworthiness of professionals, has been undermined by rare but significant scandals, challenged by politicians and populist politics, and championed by those who promote continuing professional development (CPD) and the value of expertise.

A novel mix of methods were adopted to undertake the research: the treatment of the practice domains as 'activity systems', combined with a comparative historical treatment of the systems' activities and artefacts over a specified period, and the use of oral histories to unearth the motivations behind particular activities. This approach has revealed layers of understanding the 'what' (the timeline), the 'how' (the activity systems analysis), and the 'why' (the narratives) of the enactment and flow of policy through the different domains of practice.

As well as applying established research methods in new ways, one of the primary motivations for this research was to open up a previously under-explored field of enquiry, which itself assumes that further work will be stimulated by findings from this project., and as indicated in the Introduction, to write for a mixed audience which might include policy makers in government, HE and PSRBs. This research project and future work inspired by it has the potential to impact a number of topical agendas – workforce development, the future

of HE in a deregulated open market, the role of professional bodies and even the future of professional expertise in a digitised and populist society – with potential work falling into a number of categories including but not limited to:

- **Applications of the methodological approach**, either to explore topics which were beyond the thematic scope and time limitations of this project, or to entirely new areas of enquiry. Many more themes emerged from the timeline and interview data than could be accommodated within this study, and the methodology could be applied to different activity systems, or to sub systems in any large complex sector, and as suggested earlier, can illuminate the features of origin stories and organisational design to better understand how emerging professions might be formalised and brought into being;
- **Expanding and updating the timeline and pivotal narratives**, especially the evolving history of Advance HE as a quasi professional body and of PSRBs as a coherent and collaborative sector. It is hard to imagine a point in time when the Timeline produced for this research will ever be 'complete', not least because time itself keeps moving on. During the writing up phase of this project there was always a temptation to keep adding interesting new developments to the timeline and to follow fresh leads for interviews and pivotal narrative. The selection for this thesis was constrained by time and scale, so for example analysis of apprenticeship activity at the nexus of Further Education, and government policy relating to the skills agenda and workforce development was deemed out of scope but of potential interest for later consideration;
- **Intentional change initiatives** within the PSRB sector and at the interface between HE, PSRB and government policy. As noted earlier, an unexpected insight that an objective might occur in common coincidentally between different activity systems opens up potential for conscious and intentional policy making that leverages the common ground between the different domains of practice. For the purposes of this study Engeström's model, augmented by comparative history and oral history, was applied as an interpretivist tool. A logical next step would be to adopt, possibly adapt, the Developmental Work Research model to support collaborative policymaking and action to advance and modernise professional bodies to be more influential, to stimulate innovations in higher education and professional learning curricula, and to foster research informed policy and practice in HE, PSRBs and government.

The writers and commentators considered for this research make a call to action that professions, professionals, and the organisations which claim to represent and educate them, rise to the challenge of trustworthiness, relevance, currency and action for the greater good of society. A fresh question arises from the research conducted so far: to what extent is there public, political or intellectual debate in the UK about the role of the professions and professionals in our society, and to what extent are established and emerging professional bodies leading, contributing to or heard in that debate? Those within professional body worlds, as well as those working in the political and educational spheres, have contributed pertinent observations about the role of PSRBs in different contexts. The answers are a mixed

bag of respect and deference, frustration and scepticism. The political debate about experts has derided professionals and despite the efforts of key activists, the professional bodies have as yet failed to respond with the unified voice of a 'sector'.

> So I'll be quite blunt here and say that I think the reason why we don't have influence to things such as Milburn's initiative, but generally have these conversations with government, comes back to where we started this conversation. And that's that most of the people leading professional bodies are not leaders of professional bodies...They're there to be head honcho lawyer or head honcho engineer. Yes. So their conversations are very parochial... they think they're having a professional conversation? Yeah. But I think they're having a narrow technical conversation, because their lens of professionalism is only their Institute, their body. Yeah. And that, and that's the bit I would like to change over time, that's a hard job because that would challenge your professional bodies to start to look at those that they have at the top and say we need different skills. (Davies interview – PRSB domain)

> I think they [PRSBs] are a much more difficult nut to crack than universities in that they are by their very nature self-interested and protective bodies, because they want to protect the status and the profile of the professionals within that grouping, so it is more challenging to bring about coherent change within the bodies than I think it is amongst universities.... [PRSBs are] protectionist rackets at one level (Rammell interview – HE and government domains)

> I actively and strongly encourage staff to play a significant policy role in the relevant, professional body, right. I think it's good for them, I think it's good for the university and good for the students. (Husbands interview – HE domain)

> where a sector has really got its act together… the best example of that with all of its pitfalls and shortcomings is higher education. Back to your point, that happened for a reason and the reason was there was an obligation on the part of the universities as a consequence of the whole fees introduction, to demonstrate that they were widening participation and there was regulatory effort put behind that to ensure that it did take place. This is where the interaction between politics, public policy and the locus of professional bodies is so critically important. The engine really hums when all three are working in sync. Right now, it would be hard to say that that is the case. (Milburn interview – government domain)

All of this leads to a number of conclusions:

Regarding the notion of a 'sector'. Although a widely used term, the notion of a "sector" is problematic. There are segments and distinctions within the HE community that challenge the notion of a unified HE sector, even though it is commonly understood as such. Despite several attempts by influencers within the PSRB community there is still no compelling

evidence that professional bodies can mobilise as a unified sector in any sustained way. Significant evidence emerged from the data that professional bodies have largely been the architects of their own marginalisation. Activity theory analysis and oral histories have illuminated the extent to which the histories, structures and rules of traditional professional bodies inhibit their ability to influence government policy and government-sponsored activity. That said, professional bodies retain a high degree of influence in relation to gatekeeping access to the professions - variously seen positively as protecting standards and negatively as elitist protectionism. There are clearly some influencers within the PSRB community that recognise the limitations of current structures, systems and overreliance on too few activists. Tensions are evident within and between the activity systems. In Engeströmian terms these might be understood as contradictions. The model adopted for this research provides a comprehensive template for understanding what goes on within an activity system, how the activity system functions, and how different activity systems can work together in a shared space towards a shared outcome. It also becomes clear that an outcome can be common to several activity systems without necessarily being a deliberately shared outcome of or between the activity systems. This research could provide the evidence required to stimulate greater collaboration and thereby leverage greater influence over policy and its enactment.

Regarding governance and organisational autonomy. There are distinctions to be drawn between organisations founded through external agency and those that emerge from grassroots activism and collaboration. These distinctions are most clearly seen through governance structures and levels of autonomy, and are manifest through culture and leadership, for example as illustrated in the pivotal narrative featuring HEA (now Advance HE) and SEDA. The extent to which rank-and-file practitioners or sector employers are the dominant constituency in the governance of organisations which fulfil some or all the functions of PSRBs appears to be fundamental to understanding the power dynamics and self-determination of some of these organisations. Whether Advance HE is or is not, or indeed should be, a professional body is a moot point across the HE sector. Without doubt it fulfils many of the functions associated with professional bodies – professional recognition, programme accreditation, for example – but is largely HE employer led rather than practitioner-led, and heavily steered by government agendas. My consultancy work with professional bodies indicates that for many ‘governance’ is a matter of tedious compliance,

but what this research demonstrates is that governance and organisational autonomy define and delimit the potential for professionals to exert independent influence.

Regarding individual influencers and the power of origin stories. The role of individual influencers is highly significant in all three domains explored for this research. It also becomes clear from interview data that the personal stories of influencers are highly pivotal in shaping the initiatives they champion, initiate and embed. The evidence gathered for this study suggests that personal and organisational origin stories and experiences can have great influence on government policy priorities, illustrated by Alan Milburn's commitment to social mobility, and on how individuals and organisations respond in practice. Furthermore, the 'blended' world, in the hinterland of professional, statutory, regulatory and commentator entities, challenges established definitions of PSRBs and provides legitimised spaces for alternative voices to emerge and exert influence. One of the most significant changes during the period under consideration is how policy and practice is understood and interpreted by a growing cadre of policy specialists so-called "Spads", "Wonks" and "blended professionals". In some ways these roles can be seen as evidence of boundary-crossing between specialisms but also serve to illustrate fundamental changes in how different branches of government operate and professionals practise. In developing specialist hybrid expertise at the nexus of established specialisms new specialisms evolve, specialisms which require new models to unpack and make sense of the emerging (professional) world - the methodology adopted for this research could be usefully deployed to frame new ways of being for both emerging and established professional communities.

Regarding the democratisation of knowledge and public confidence in the professions. The democratisation of knowledge can be seen as a significant factor in fundamentally changing public engagement with and attitudes towards specialist knowledge, the professionals who serve society through their specialist knowledge and skills, and the professional bodies who act as guardians and gatekeepers of specialist knowledge and skills. Self-service access to expertise has been greatly facilitated and accelerated by unprecedented advances in information technology. At the time of writing the global media is exercised by fears arising from advances in generative AI, automated tools by which computers can search the internet to produce apparently credible narrative answers to highly specialised questions. Without the intellectual training to recognise false news or artificially generated material the general public are tempted to turn away from 'experts' they consider to be elitist, protectionist and expensive. Levels of public confidence in professionals and by extension

the professions, are heavily influenced by high profile, rare and anomalous events, like the Shipman scandal. Such events also act as catalysts for change within a single profession and across the spectrum of professions, as has been demonstrated, for example, through rising expectations of standards in public life and for professionals to remain in good standing through prescribed and monitored CPD. Whether through scandal or technology, CPD is a powerful vehicle for ensuring professionals remain credible. Over recent years there has been a shift from recognising CPD effort through time spent, to CPD outputs based on artifacts and evidence of engagement (portfolios, reflective logs, etc), to attempts to evaluate the impact of CPD on performance, measured through student, client, customer, outcomes. The combination of timeline (to capture the pace of change and identity trends), activity system (to understand the dynamics of how a specialist community operates), and narrative (to understand motivations and intent) present a powerful framework for re-evaluating of what challenges can be most effectively met by what kinds of professional knowledge and expertise, to re-define CPD to safeguard the public interest and future-proof professional practice.

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Appendix A Publication data used to refine the scope of the research.

Lancaster University Library Onesearch, signed in as 'student', June 2021

Search term (oldest search result)	Last year	Last 5 years	Last 10 years	Last 20 years	Any date
"comparative history" AND "timelines" (1986)	2	26	57	81	91
"comparative history" AND "timelines" PEER REVIEWED ONLY	0	7	17	19	22
"comparative history" AND "timelines" AND "UK" (1997)	0	13	13	13	13
"comparative history" AND "timelines" AND "UK" "professional bodies" (2017)	0	1	1	1	1
"comparative history" AND "timelines" AND "UK" AND "policy development" (none peer reviewed) (2007)	0	0	0	2	2
"comparative history" AND "timelines" AND "UK" AND "policy enactment" (none peer reviewed) (2010)	0	0	1	0	1
"comparative history" AND "timelines" AND "policy enactment" (none peer reviewed) (2010)	0	0	1	0	1
"comparative history" AND "timelines" AND "policy" (1986)	2	21	47	67	75
"comparative history" AND "timelines" AND "policy" PEER REVIEWED ONLY)	0	4	12	14	15
"comparative history" AND "UK" AND "policy" (1940)	50	347	789	1663	1894
"comparative history" AND "UK" AND "policy" PEER REVIEWED ONLY	23	176	395	976	1078
"comparative history" AND "higher education" AND "UK" AND "policy" (1965)	15	83	173	350	405
"comparative history" AND "higher education" AND "UK" AND "policy" PEER REVIEW ONLY	3	31	69	169	185
"comparative history" AND "public policy" (1800)	27	161	476	1170	1628
"comparative history" AND "public policy" PEER REVIEW ONLY	15	84	263	709	936
"comparative history" AND "public policy" AND "UK" (1970)	15	72	188	460	556
"comparative history" AND "public policy" AND "UK" PEER REVIEW ONLY	8	34	92	271	316
"comparative history" AND "public policy" AND" higher education" (1963)	6	44	97	294	397
"comparative history" AND "public policy" AND" higher education" PEER REVIEWED ONLY	3	19	32	149	184

“comparative history” AND “public policy” AND“ higher education” AND “UK” (1975)	3	20	52	138	161
“comparative history” AND “public policy” AND“ higher education” AND “UK” PEER REVIEWED ONLY	1	7	18	78	86
“comparative history” AND “public policy” AND“ higher education” AND professional learning” AND“UK”	0	0	0	0	0
“history of higher education” AND “UK” (1988)	0	1	5	9	10
“history of higher education” AND “UK”	0	0	3	6	7
“higher education” AND “policy” AND “UK” (1800)	11,788	51,112	92,714	129,717	143,576
“higher education” AND “policy” AND “UK” PEER REVIEWED ONLY	5,104	21,738	39,579	56,438	61,291
“higher education” AND “policy” AND “UK” AND “professional” (1910)	7,440	33,201	60,804	85,588	94,784
“higher education” AND “policy” AND “UK” AND “professional” PEER REVIEWED ONLY	2,802	11,927	22,173	32,488	35,378
“higher education” AND “policy” AND “UK” AND “professional bodies” (1940)	245	1050	2101	3070	3518
“higher education” AND “policy” AND “UK” AND “professional bodies” PEER REVIEWED ONY	110	507	1022	1614	1779
“higher education policy” AND "UK" (1970)	720	3221	5475	7309	7646
“higher education policy” AND "UK" PEER REVIEWED ONLY	340	1443	2648	3568	3769
“higher education policy” AND"UK" AND “professional learning” (1981)	282	141	220	252	254
“higher education policy” AND"UK" AND “professional learning” PEER REVIEWED ONLY	9	35	66	76	77
“higher education policy” AND "UK" AND “professional learning” AND “activity theory” (2009)	1	8	17	21	21
“higher education policy” AND "UK" AND “professional learning” AND “activity theory” PEER REVIEWED ONLY	0	1	6	7	7
“higher education policy” AND"UK" AND "Dearing" (1996)	13	74	169	311	337
“higher education policy” AND"UK" AND "Dearing" PEER REVIEWED ONLY	10	48	111	206	229
“higher education policy” AND "UK" AND "Dearing" AND “professional learning” (2009)	0	2	7	12	12

“higher education policy” AND "UK" AND "Dearing" AND “professional learning” PEER REVIEWED ONLY	0	1	4	7	7
"higher education" AND "UK" AND "deregulation" (1990)	17	141	279	439	460
"higher education" AND "UK" AND "deregulation" PEER REVIEWED ONLY	9	67	129	208	219
"higher education" AND "UK" AND "marketisation" (1998)	46	183	328	428	439
"higher education" AND "UK" AND "marketisation" PEER REVIEWED ONLY	41	140	257	322	330
“reflexive” AND “academic voice” (1971)	14	131	265	464	522
“reflexive” AND “academic voice” PR ONLY	4	31	65	97	106
“reflexive” AND “academic voice” AND “professional learning” (2000)	1	13	17	20	20
“reflexive” AND “academic voice” AND “professional learning” PR ONLY	0	2	2	2	2
“PhD” AND “thesis voice” (1995)	4	10	24	50	53
“PhD” AND “thesis voice” PR ONLY	1	2	4	7	7
"epistemology" AND "ontology" AND “academic voice” (1990)	10	52	90	140	155
"epistemology" AND "ontology" AND “academic voice” PR ONLY	3	7	12	16	16
"pivotal narratives" (1997)	2	18	32	49	52
"pivotal narratives" PR ONLY	0	10	14	19	19
“trustworthy professional” (1940)	60	218	345	478	529
“trustworthy professional” PR ONLY	22	70	100	131	144
“trustworthy professional” AND "UK" (1992)	11	45	65	88	91
“trustworthy professional” AND "UK" PR ONLY	5	19	22	30	31
“trustworthy professionalS” AND "UK" (1991)	1	10	18	30	36
“trustworthy professionalS” AND "UK" PR ONLY	0	3	5	9	12
“trustworthy professionals” AND "professional bodies" AND "UK" (1994)	0	1	1	3	4
“trustworthy professionals” AND "professional bodies" AND "UK" PR ONLY	0	0	0	1	2
“trustworthy professionals” and "UK" AND "Shipman"	0	0	0	0	0
“trustworthy professionals” and "UK" AND Shipman PR ONLY	0	0	0	0	0
"Shipman enquiry" (2003)	1	5	23	45	45

"Shipman enquiry" PR ONLY	0	3	16	23	23
"Shipman enquiry" AND "professionalism" AND "UK" NOT Author "Shipman" (2009)	0	0	7	8	8
"Shipman enquiry" AND "professionalism" AND "UK" NOT Author "Shipman" PR ONLY	0	0	5	5	5
"Shipman enquiry" AND "professionalisation" AND "UK" NOT Author "Shipman" (2012)	0	0	2	2	2
"Shipman enquiry" AND "professionalisation" AND "UK" NOT Author "Shipman" PR ONLY	0	0	1	1	1
"Shipman enquiry" AND "professional bodies" AND "UK" NOT Author "Shipman" (2010)	0	0	5	5	5
"Shipman enquiry" AND "professional bodies" AND "UK" NOT Author "Shipman" PR ONLY	0	0	4	4	4
"Performativity" AND "professionalism" AND "UK" (1988)	111	570	1117	1607	1631
"Performativity" AND "professionalism" AND "UK" PR ONLY	63	281	585	887	899
"Performativity" AND “trustworthy professionals” AND "UK" (2019)	1	1	1	1	1
"Performativity" AND “trustworthy professionals” AND "UK" PR ONLY	0	0	0	0	0
"performativity" AND "higher education" AND "UK" (1988)	269	1224	2129	2874	2922
"performativity" AND "higher education" AND "UK" PR ONLY	159	647	1151	1622	1646
"Deliverology" (2008)	14	87	135	145	145
"Deliverology" PR ONLY	12	50	79	87	87
"Deliverology" AND "professionalism" (2008)	1	15	30	32	32
"Deliverology" AND "professionalism" PR ONLY	1	10	21	23	23
"Deliverology" AND "professionalism" AND "UK" (2008)	1	5	13	15	15
"Deliverology" AND "professionalism" AND "UK" PR ONLY	1	5	10	12	12
"Deliverology" AND "higher education" AND "UK" (2008)	1	12	24	28	28
"Deliverology" AND "higher education" AND "UK" PR ONLY	0	7	13	17	17
"professional bodies" AND "UK" (1940)	1235	5319	10303	115901585454	18,189
"professional bodies" AND "UK" PR ONLY	663	2943	5519	8452	9418
“professional bodies” AND “qualifying associations” AND UK (1970)	1	6	15	32	44
“professional bodies” AND “qualifying associations” AND UK PR ONLY	1	5	11	21	28
"higher education" AND "policy enactment" AND "autonomy" AND "UK" (1975)	24	67	103	129	134

"higher education" AND "policy enactment" AND "autonomy" AND "UK" PR ONLY	15	35	43	50	49
"professional bodies" AND "policy enactment" AND "autonomy" AND "UK" (2001)	0	1	5	7	7
"professional bodies" AND "policy enactment" AND "autonomy" AND "UK" PR ONLY	0	0	1	1	1
"higher education" AND "self regulation" AND "UK" (1963)	1050	4685	8065	10437	10921
"higher education" AND "self regulation" AND "UK" PR ONLY	322	1241	2153	2847	3010
"professional bodies" AND "governance" AND "UK" (1963)	416	1994	3846	5279	5537
"professional bodies" AND "governance" AND "UK" PR ONLY	207	950	1776	2581	2693
"professional bodies" AND "governance" AND "autonomy" AND "UK" (1963)	76	503	1079	1640	1756
"professional bodies" AND "governance" AND "autonomy" AND "UK" PR ONLY	49	229	460	703	727
"professional bodies" AND "self regulation" AND "UK" (1976)	45	309	681	1197	1395
"professionla bodies" AND " self regulation" AND "UK" PR ONLY	29	173	359	622	700
"professional bodies sector" AND " self regulation" AND "UK" (1997)	0	0	2	2	4
"professional bodies sector" AND " self regulation" AND "UK" PR ONLY	0	0	2	2	3
"ILTHE" AND "LTSN" AND "Higher Education Academy" AND "UK" (2003)	0	2	5	31	31
"ILTHE" AND "LTSN" AND "Higher Education Academy" AND "UK" PR ONLY	0	0	1	16	16
"ILTHE" AND "LTSN" AND "Higher Education Academy" AND "UK" AND "merger" (2004)	0	1	2	4	4
"ILTHE" AND "LTSN" AND "Higher Education Academy" AND "UK" AND "merger" PR ONLY	0	0	0	1	1
"LFHE" AND "Equality Challenge Unit" AND "Higher Education Academy" (2011)	0	4	8	8	8
"LFHE" AND "Equality Challenge Unit" AND "Higher Education Academy" PR ONLY	0	2	2	2	2
"LFHE" AND "Equality Challenge Unit" AND "Higher Education Academy" AND "merger" (2013)	0	1	2	2	2
"LFHE" AND "Equality Challenge Unit" AND "Higher Education Academy" AND "merger" PR ONLY	0	1	1	1	1
“widening participation” AND "fair access" AND "higher education" AND "UK" (1997)	28	221	429	518	519
“widening participation” AND "fair access" AND "higher education" AND "UK" PR ONLY	22	110	214	268	268

“widening participation” AND "fair access" AND "higher education" ND "professional bodies" AND "UK" (2002)	0	16	35	43	43
“widening participation” AND "fair access" AND "higher education" ND "professional bodies" AND "UK" PR ONLY	0	5	12	15	15
"educational development" AND "higher education" AND "UK" (1800)	522	2340	4491	6758	7973
"educational development" AND "higher education" AND "UK" PR ONLY	168	740	1472	2250	2529
"educational development" AND "higher education" AND "professional bodies" AND "UK" (1940)	6	49	136	236	295
"educational development" AND "higher education" AND "professional bodies" AND "UK" PR ONLY	2	19	59	102	113
"educational development" AND "professional bodies" AND "UK" (1940)	7	69	167	290	364
"educational development" AND "professional bodies" AND "UK" PR ONLY	3	30	74	127	143
"democratisation of knowledge" OR "democratization of knowledge" (1984)	12	46	83	100	107
"democratisation of knowledge" OR "democratization of knowledge" PR ONLY	12	39	66	81	86
"democratisation of knowledge" OR "democratization of knowledge" AND "professionl bodies" (1986)	5	17	25	31	33
"democratisation of knowledge" OR "democratization of knowledge" AND "professional bodies" PR ONLY	5	14	20	26	27
"civic professionals" (1970)	4	24	49	104	110
"civic professionals" PR ONLY	2	11	19	50	52
"civic professionals" AND "policy influence" (no PR and both US) (2001)	1	0	0	2	2
"changing higher education" AND "UK" (1979)	60	248	391	538	563
"changing higher education" AND "UK" PR ONLY	25	108	178	249	260
"changing nature of work" AND "professional bodies" AND "UK"	0	0	0	0	0
"changing world of work" AND "professional bodies" AND "UK"	0	0	0	0	0

"employability" AND "professional bodies" AND "UK" (1976)	87	411	754	1001	1041
"employability" AND "professional bodies" AND "UK" PR ONLY	49	212	371	526	538
"higher education" AND "think tanks" AND "UK" (1977)	200	946	1812	2549	2677
"higher education" AND "think tanks" AND "UK" PR ONLY	86	374	684	1008	1056
"professional bodies" AND "think tanks" AND "UK" (1984)	21	108	188	250	263
"professional bodies" AND "think tanks" AND "UK" PR ONLY	15	61	95	125	127
"higher education" AND "professional bodies" AND "think tanks" AND "UK" (1993)	5	33	57	79	83
"higher education" AND "professional bodies" AND "think tanks" AND "UK" PR ONLY	3	16	25	37	37

Appendix B Uses of CHAT in different research projects

Source	Aspect of AT/CHAT	Unit of analysis	Methods	Data types	Interpretivist Interventionist
(Star & Griesemer, 1989)	Whole activity system	The activity system, division of labour and boundary objects	ecological	Historical archive of documents, field notes, correspondence etc	Interpretivist
(Roth, 2007)	Identity Ethico-moral activity	Actions	Ethnographic	Field notes Interviews	interpretivist
(Tan & Meles, 2010)	Tools Decision-making	The practitioner The outcome The tools	Ethnographic	Observation Researcher position Visual materials	Interpretivist
(Rose-Anderssen et al., 2010)	Contradiction Multi-voicedness	Shared language	Communicative interaction	Focus groups	Interpretivist
(Kerosuo & Toiviainen, 2011)	Socio-spatial boundary (context) Instrumental-development boundary (tools)	Transitional learning episodes ('networkshops')	DWR	DWR outputs	Interventionist
(Edwards, 2011, 2012; Edwards & Daniels, 2012)	Shared object Boundaries Multi-voicedness	DWR meetings ('boundary zones')	DWR	DWR outputs Interviews Individuals' narratives	Interpretivist Interventionist
(Engeström et al., 2014)	Expansive learning 'partnership'	Critical events	DWR	DWR outputs	Interpretivist interventionist
(Williams et al., 2007)	Whole activity system Multi-voicedness	Language Historicity	CHAT Discourse analysis Functional linguistics	Interviews Critical incident logs Observation notes Video and audio recordings	interpretivist

Appendix C Oral History approaches as applied to the study

Oral history can:	Application/relevance to the current study
be a vehicle for discovery of complex historical, cultural and political themes	This is a key motivation for adopting the method
give voice to otherwise un/under-represented players	The area of study is under-represented but the anticipated interviewees are influencers rather than 'voiceless'
be descriptive or a platform for activism	There is no activist intent in the proposed study, although a raised profile for the issues might be a desirable by-product of the research, and might encourage participation by some interviewees.
be significantly influenced by the researcher and the researcher's own story	The research is motivated from my own professional experience and involvement in the agenda throughout the period under consideration.
render the researcher visible or not as the researcher chooses	My own story cannot be bracketed out (see above) so I have included some of my own lived work experience in a way comparable to the oral history testimony of interviewees.
be relevant to both the period described in the narrative and the period in which the narrative is captured, analysed and published	A key reason for adopting the method is to discover the motivation and 'back story' behind artefacts and events emerging from the timeline, and from looking back derive context for current and future policy and practice.
become a vehicle for propaganda	Interviewing senior influencers risks the research being hijacked for others' agendas (explored in c2.1).
be limited by the political context	Although there is a political policy-making dimension to the study it is not expected to inhibit publication of the research.
(Doykos et al., 2014; Freund, 2009; Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009; Lumsden, 2013; Morrissey, 1984)	

Appendix D Summary of activity theory principles as applied to the study

	Application to	
Activity Theory principles	**data gathering**	**Data analysis**
Artefact mediated, object-oriented and networked to other systems	• Inform interview format and questions, topic prompts; • Identify pertinent artefacts to stimulate recall by interviewees	• Identifying relevant activity system(s) and their (un)intended objects and outcomes
Multi-voiced – different points of view, traditions and interests	• Inform interviewee selection ensuring breadth of representation	• Identifying different perspectives, traditions in the gathered data; • Identify the language, customs and practices which have influenced or been influenced relevant to the study
Historicity – shaped over time and rooted in its own history	• Inform interview format and questions, topic prompts	• Inform revision to the initial timeline and deeper understanding of historical context; • Detailed understanding of the relevant communities and associated 'division of labour'
Assumes contradictions a source of change – contradictions historically accumulated structural tensions	• Help interpret the timeline data and inform interview design	• Identify challenges in the past and current landscape of professional learning and education policy
Aggravation of contradictions leads to transformation.	• Help interpret the timeline data and identify change trends challenges in the past and current landscape of professional learning and education policy	• Help understand the process of change evidenced through timeline events and illuminated in narrative accounts
Identity on practice contexts	• inform interview design	• look for evidence of personal stories
Figured world – place ourselves in relation to others	• access nuanced accounts of the actors in the key events	• personal agendas and sense of 'self' as an actor

Positionality – status, power etc, accorded by society	• access nuanced accounts of the relationships and positioning between the actors in the key events	• power relations and perceived/actual (professional)legitimacy and credibility
Space of authoring – rafting responses defined by others' standpoints	• elicit accounts of practices and responses to others/context	• specific discourses and responses to context
Making worlds – developing new social competencies in newly imagined communities	• Access accounts of experimentation and risk-taking	• Change and transformation of professional communities or practices
(Engestrom, 2009; 2001; Holland, 1998)		

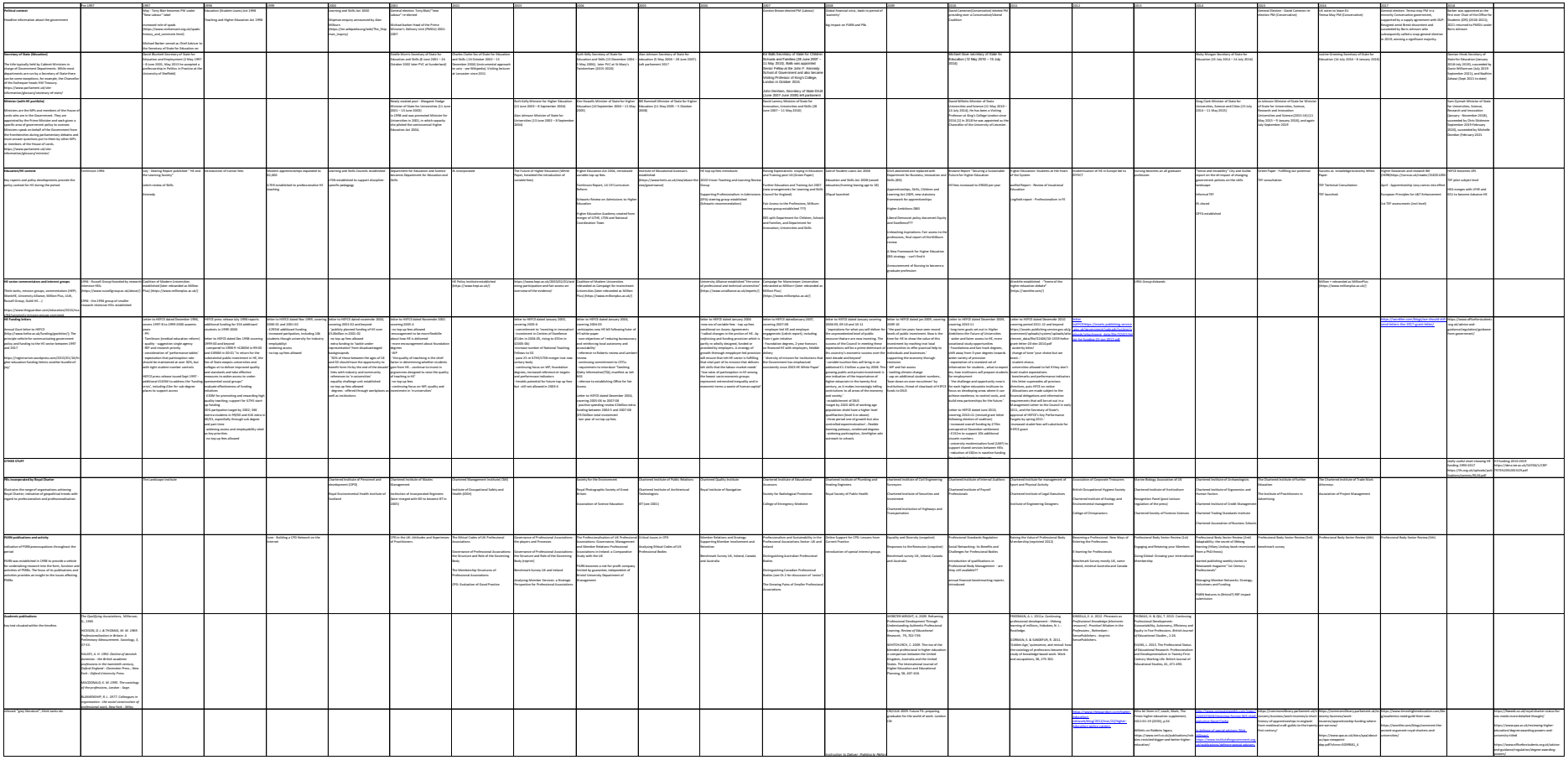
Appendix E Summary of Activity Theory characteristics represented in the government, HE and PB domains

	Government	HE	PSRBs
Subject			
Object	• Legislation • Re-election	• Education • Knowledge creation • Knowledge dissemination/teaching	• Reputation and confidence • Preservation • Advancement (individual and collective of the profession)
Rules	• Laws • Conventions • Custom and practice • timescales	• Academic conventions • Research standards • Academic regulations • External laws • timescales	• Entry requirements • Qualification requirements • CPD requirements • Volunteer expertise • timescales
Tools/mediating artefacts	• Power/authority • Green/white papers • Laws • Estate/buildings	• Publications • Estate/buildings • Technology • Learning materials	• Membership 'goody bag' • Censure/discipline • Status/post-nominals • Charter
Community	• Civil service • Cabinet • Commons • Lords • Groups and Committees • Support staff • Special Advisors	• Students • Academics • Professional services • Student Association	• Aspiring • Novice • Competent • Expert • Different PSRBs or SIGS for different specialisms • Staff • Members

			• Officers
Division of labour	• Research • Advice-giving • Policy development • Legislation drafting	• Learning • Teaching • Researching • Supporting specific functions (quality, registry, academic resources, IT etc) • Representing • Leading	• Learning • Guiding • Gatekeeping • Supporting specific functions (events, membership admin, policy development, communications etc) • Advocacy • Registration • Monitoring
Outcome	• Public order, protection and control	• Qualifications • Knowledge	• Qualification to practice • Expertise
Shared Outcome	• Public good – control and protect	• Public good – advancement of knowledge • Workforce development	• Public good – preservation of standards • Safe/reliable practice
Higher order shared outcome	Trustworthy professionals		

Appendix F Timeline

The Timeline can be viewed by increasing to 350% or accessing the accompanying Excel spreadsheet.



Appendix G Rationale for including elements of the timeline

Strands of the timeline	Rationale for inclusion
Political context	Headline information about the government
Secretary of State (Education)	The title typically held by Cabinet Ministers in charge of Government Departments. While most departments are run by a Secretary of State there can be some exceptions, for example, the Chancellor of the Exchequer heads HM Treasury. (https://www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/secretary-of-state/)
Minister (with HE portfolio)	Ministers are the MPs and members of the House of Lords who are in the Government. They are appointed by the Prime Minister and each given a specific area of government policy to oversee. Ministers speak on behalf of the Government from the frontbenches during parliamentary debates and must answer questions put to them by other MPs or members of the House of Lords. (https://www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/minister/)
Education/HE context	Key reports and policy developments provide the policy context for HE during the period
HE sector commentators and interest groups	Think tanks, mission groups, commentators (HEPI, WonkHE, University Alliance, Million Plus, UUK, Russell Group, Guild HE….); a useful barometer at the nexus of policy and higher education. Their resources are too numerous to include in the timeline but have been accessed as evidence of the discourse around key policy moments
HE Funding letters	Annual Government grant letter to HEFCE, the principal vehicle for communicating government policy and funding to the HE sector between 1997 and 2017 (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/funding/govletter/)
PBs incorporated by Royal Charter	Illustrates the range of organisations achieving Royal Charter; indicative of geopolitical trends with regard to professionalism and professionalisation. (Supplementary data about Royal Charters presented in Appendix U)
PARN publications and activity	PARN was established in 1998 to provide a vehicle for undertaking research into the form, function and activities of PSRBs. The focus of its publications and activities provides an insight to the issues affecting PSRBs at the time of publication; indicative of PSRB preoccupations throughout the period.
Academic publications	key text situated within the timeline. (Supplementary publications metadata in **Appendix M**)
non-PARN PSRB sector developments	capturing these reflects the moments when PSRBs attempted to act collectively and helps probe the motivation for doing so
Technology	the period has seen a rapid increase in communications technology which has fuelled the digital economy and learning. The so-called 'fourth industrial revolution' has potential to significantly impact public access to 'expertise' and attitudes towards professions and stimulated fundamental changes in the delivery and access to knowledge, learning, teaching and assessment.

Appendix H Interviewees

Interviewee	Role at time of interview	Reason for inclusion
Bill Rammell	VC University of Bedfordshire	Education and political policy
xxxx	XXX Civil Service	Education and political policy
Chris Husbands	VC Sheffield Hallam University/TEF Chair	Education and political policy
xxxx	PVC L&T University xxxxx	Education and professional learning
Stan Lester	Founder Stan Lester Developments	Education and professional learning
Geoff Stoakes	Head of Special Projects HEA/AHE	HE policy and civil service
Maddalaine Ansell	CEO University Alliance	HE policy and civil service
Alan Milburn	Chancellor Lancaster University	Political policy and fair access to the professions
Lee Davies	CEO CIPA	Professional body initiatives
Richard Gott	Founder Memberwise	Professional body initiatives
Duncan Grant	Founder Memcom	Professional body initiatives
Andy Friedman	Founder and CEO PARN	Professional body initiatives
PARN team	Project officers and Researchers	Professional body initiatives
xxxx	XXX Civil Service	Royal Charters, professional bodies, education

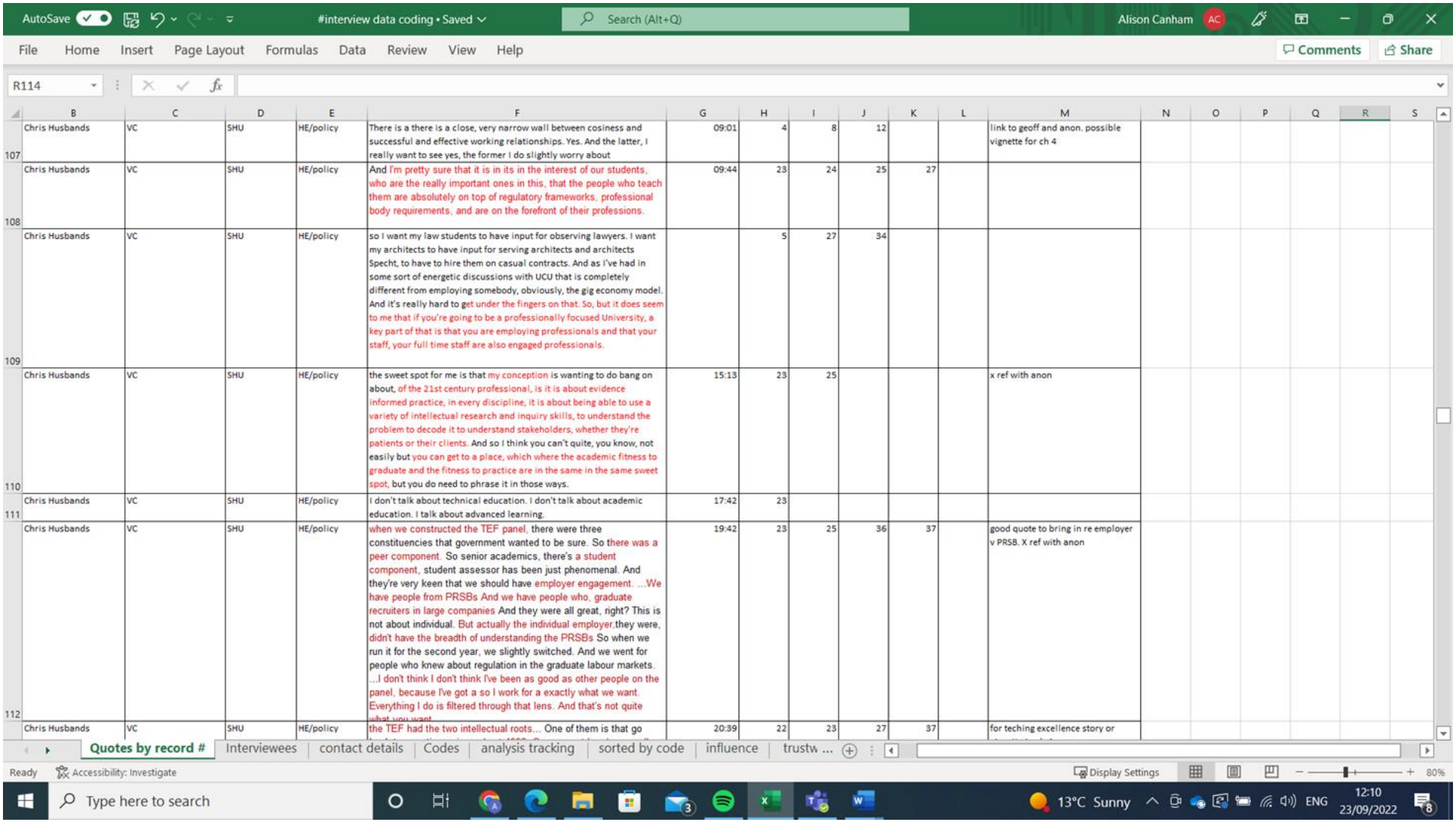
Appendix I Data Analysis - coding

Data analysis codes

Codes – derived from Activity Theory an oral History, and thematic codes emerging from timeline data					
Activity theory codes	1	outcome	thematic codes	22	(changing) nature of policy/practice
	2	object		23	transactional ed and workforce dev
	3	tools/artefacts		24	specialisation [2]
	4	rules		25	(changing) nature of professional bodies
	5	division of labour		26	time
	6	subject		27	teaching practice/excellence [2]
	7	object		28	professionalisation [2]
	8	community		29	standards in public life [3]
	9	artefact mediated/object oriented		30	technology
	10	multi voicedness		31	WP/fair access
	11	historicity		32	social mobility
	12	contradictions		33	governance
	13	expansive transformation		34	experts [3]
	14	interpretivist		35	public confidence/public good [3]
	15	interventionist		36	complexity
oral history codes [1]	16	discovery		37	policy enactment
	17	representation		38	influence
	18	activism		39	competition
	19	reflexivity			
	20	process generated			
	21	researcher generated			

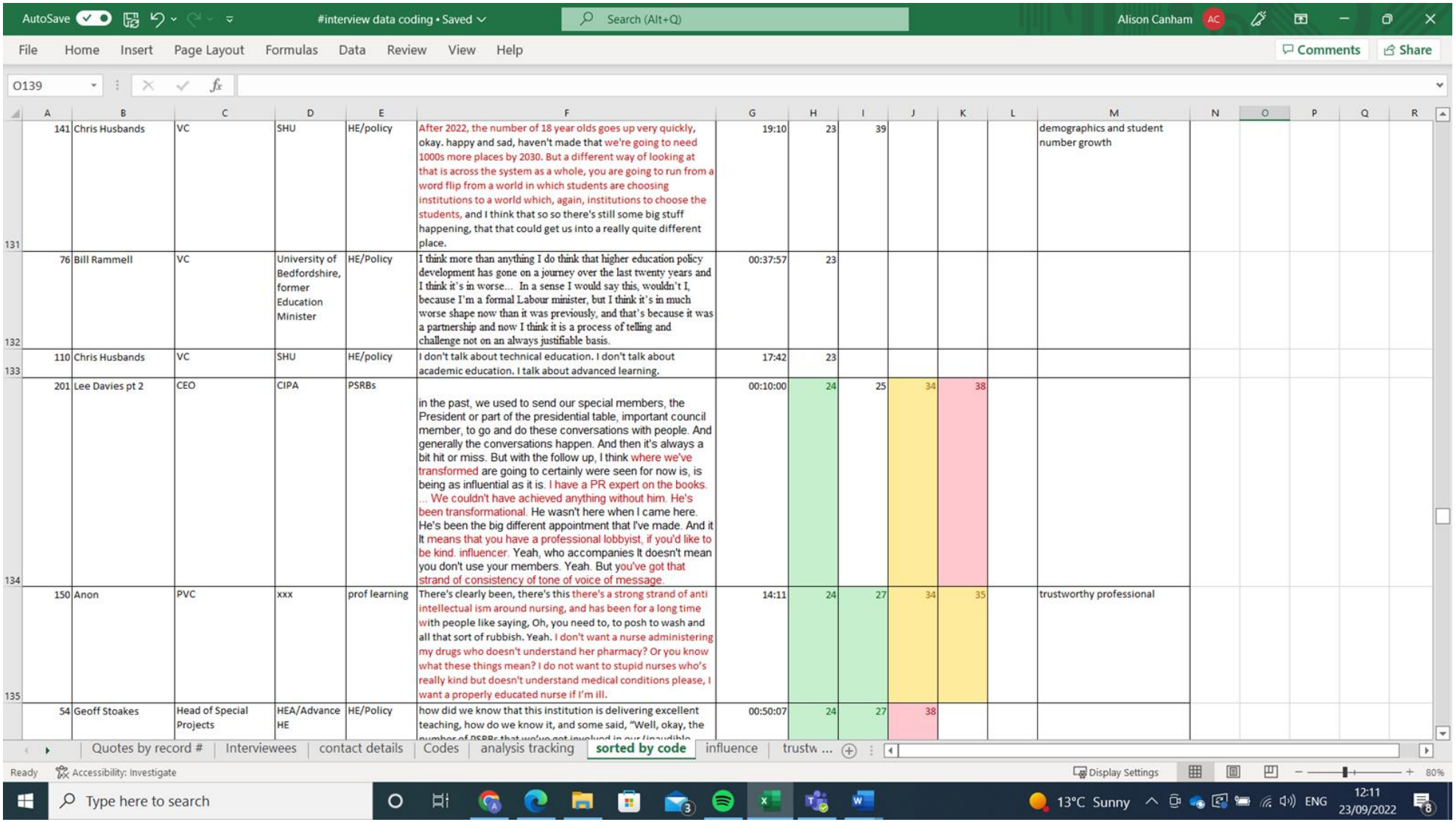
[1] data collection mechanism, not relevant to coding data
[2] related to qualification to practice
[3] related to experts and 'trustworthy professional

Screen shot of coding workbook (by interviewee)



	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
107	Chris Husbands	VC	SHU	HE/policy	There is a there is a close, very narrow wall between cosiness and successful and effective working relationships. Yes. And the latter, I really want to see yes, the former I do slightly worry about	09:01	4	8	12			link to geoff and anon. possible vignette for ch 4
108	Chris Husbands	VC	SHU	HE/policy	And I'm pretty sure that it is in its in the interest of our students, who are the really important ones in this, that the people who teach them are absolutely on top of regulatory frameworks, professional body requirements, and are on the forefront of their professions.	09:44	23	24	25	27		
109	Chris Husbands	VC	SHU	HE/policy	so I want my law students to have input for observing lawyers. I want my architects to have input for serving architects and architects Specht, to have to hire them on casual contracts. And as I've had in some sort of energetic discussions with UCU that is completely different from employing somebody, obviously, the gig economy model. And it's really hard to get under the fingers on that. So, but it does seem to me that if you're going to be a professionally focused University, a key part of that is that you are employing professionals and that your staff, your full time staff are also engaged professionals.		5	27	34			
110	Chris Husbands	VC	SHU	HE/policy	the sweet spot for me is that my conception is wanting to do bang on about, of the 21st century professional, is it is about evidence informed practice, in every discipline, it is about being able to use a variety of intellectual research and inquiry skills, to understand the problem to decode it to understand stakeholders, whether they're patients or their clients. And so I think you can't quite, you know, not easily but you can get to a place, which where the academic fitness to graduate and the fitness to practice are in the same in the same sweet spot, but you do need to phrase it in those ways.	15:13	23	25				x ref with anon
111	Chris Husbands	VC	SHU	HE/policy	I don't talk about technical education. I don't talk about academic education. I talk about advanced learning.	17:42	23					
112	Chris Husbands	VC	SHU	HE/policy	when we constructed the TEF panel, there were three constituencies that government wanted to be sure. So there was a peer component. So senior academics, there's a student component, student assessor has been just phenomenal. And they're very keen that we should have employer engagement. ...We have people from PRSBs And we have people who, graduate recruiters in large companies And they were all great, right? This is not about individual. But actually the individual employer,they were, didn't have the breadth of understanding the PRSBs So when we run it for the second year, we slightly switched. And we went for people who knew about regulation in the graduate labour markets. ...I don't think I don't think I've been as good as other people on the panel, because I've got a so I work for a exactly what we want. Everything I do is filtered through that lens. And that's not quite what you want.	19:42	23	25	36	37		good quote to bring in re employer v PRSB. X ref with anon
	Chris Husbands	VC	SHU	HE/policy	the TEF had the two intellectual roots... One of them is that go	20:39	22	23	27	37		for teching excellence story or

Screen shot of coding workbook (by code with colour-coding for clustering)



131	141	Chris Husbands	VC	SHU	HE/policy	After 2022, the number of 18 year olds goes up very quickly, okay. happy and sad, haven't made that we're going to need 1000s more places by 2030. But a different way of looking at that is across the system as a whole, you are going to run from a word flip from a world in which students are choosing institutions to a world which, again, institutions to choose the students, and I think that so so there's still some big stuff happening, that that could get us into a really quite different place.	19:10	23	39				demographics and student number growth				
132	76	Bill Rammell	VC	University of Bedfordshire, former Education Minister	HE/Policy	I think more than anything I do think that higher education policy development has gone on a journey over the last twenty years and I think it's in worse... In a sense I would say this, wouldn't I, because I'm a formal Labour minister, but I think it's in much worse shape now than it was previously, and that's because it was a partnership and now I think it is a process of telling and challenge not on an always justifiable basis.	00:37:57	23									
133	110	Chris Husbands	VC	SHU	HE/policy	I don't talk about technical education. I don't talk about academic education. I talk about advanced learning.	17:42	23									
134	201	Lee Davies pt 2	CEO	CIPA	PSRBs	in the past, we used to send our special members, the President or part of the presidential table, important council member, to go and do these conversations with people. And generally the conversations happen. And then it's always a bit hit or miss. But with the follow up, I think where we've transformed are going to certainly were seen for now is, is being as influential as it is. I have a PR expert on the books. ... We couldn't have achieved anything without him. He's been transformational. He wasn't here when I came here. He's been the big different appointment that I've made. And it It means that you have a professional lobbyist, if you'd like to be kind. influencer. Yeah, who accompanies It doesn't mean you don't use your members. Yeah. But you've got that strand of consistency of tone of voice of message.	00:10:00	24	25	34	38					
135	150	Anon	PVC	xxx	prof learning	There's clearly been, there's this there's a strong strand of anti intellectual ism around nursing, and has been for a long time with people like saying, Oh, you need to, to posh to wash and all that sort of rubbish. Yeah. I don't want a nurse administering my drugs who doesn't understand her pharmacy? Or you know what these things mean? I do not want to stupid nurses who's really kind but doesn't understand medical conditions please, I want a properly educated nurse if I'm ill.	14:11	24	27	34	35		trustworthy professional				
	54	Geoff Stoakes	Head of Special Projects	HEA/Advance HE	HE/Policy	how did we know that this institution is delivering excellent teaching, how do we know it, and some said, "Well, okay, the	00:50:07	24	27	38							

Appendix J Royal Charters awarded 1155-2020

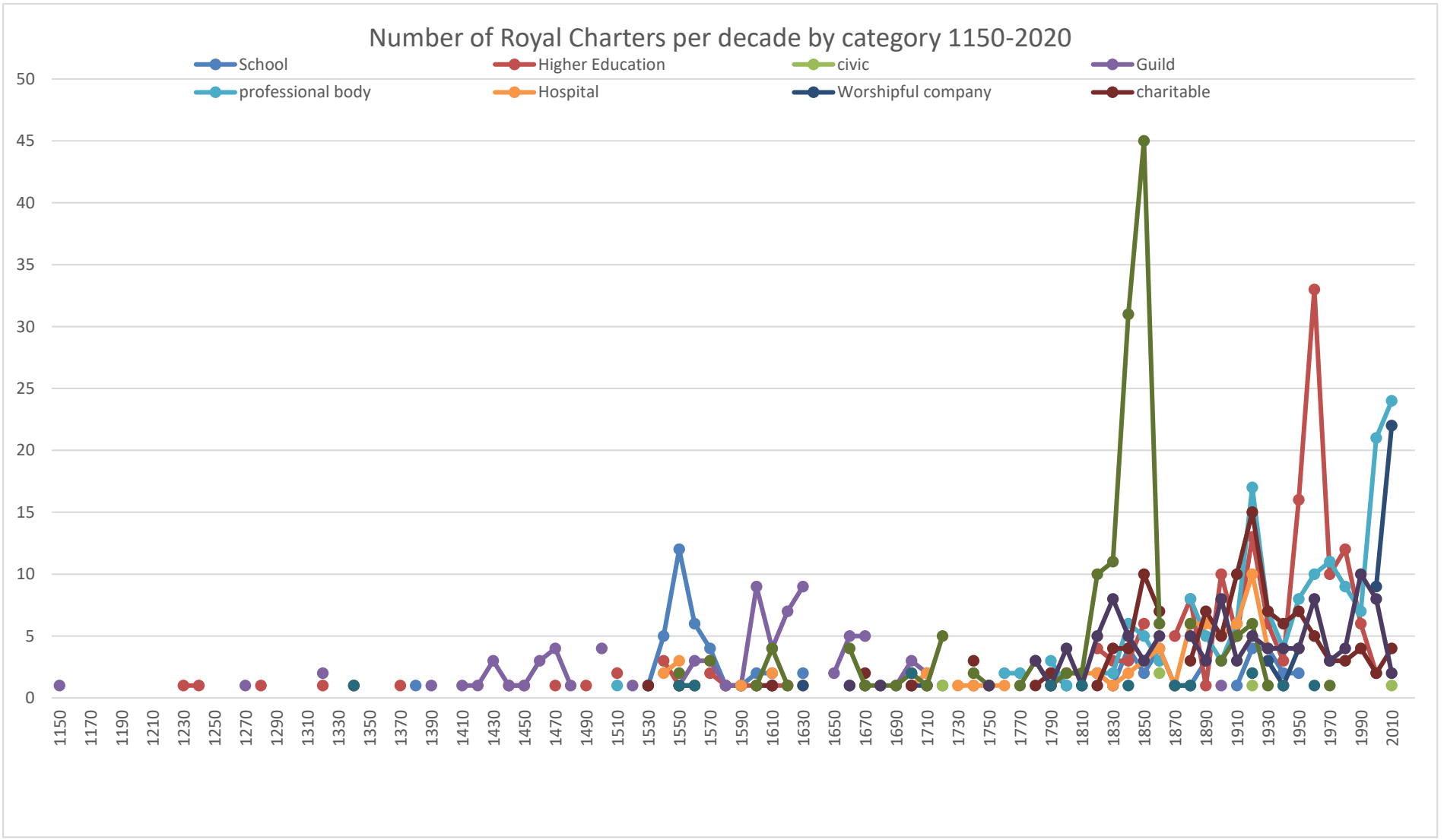
Professional Bodies may be incorporated by Royal Charter, registered charities or registered companies, and many carry multiple incorporations to satisfy different elements of their business. The requirement to demonstrate pre-eminence and permanence means that only well-established bodies are likely to petition for or achieve Royal Charter. Ability to award Individual Chartered Designation is subject to a distinct petition by a Chartered Body, so not all qualified members of Chartered Professional Bodies are necessarily 'Chartered' practitioners. There are clear governance distinctions to be made between 'Professional Bodies' and 'Statutory Regulatory' bodies which are largely concerned with the degree of independence from and oversight by the Privy Council Office:

> "PCO substantive business includes a major role in regulating the professions, both through statutory bodies such as the General Medical Council, General Dental Council etc, and through the Chartered Institutions, such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors etc. The PCO is responsible for managing the process for appointments to a number of statutory bodies and for arranging for the approval of rules and qualifications giving entry to the professions. There are some 1,000 Chartered bodies, and any changes to their governing instruments (their Royal Charters and the Bye-laws made under them) require Privy Council approval. This in turn amounts to a form of government regulation of the professions, and in the case of some sectors (such as health, finance and engineering) Government policy can be taken forward through Charter and Bye-law amendments."
> (https://privycouncil.independent.gov.uk/privy-council-office/ accessed 05/06/2020)
>
> The Privy Council is responsible for some of the affairs of the following statutory regulatory bodies:
> - The General Medical Council
> - The General Dental Council
> - The General Osteopathic Council
> - The General Optical Council
> - The General Chiropractic Council
> - The Architects Registration Board
> - The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
> - General Pharmaceutical Council
> - The Health Professions Council
> - The Nursing and Midwifery Council
>
> The role of the Privy Council involves such matters as the appointment of lay members to these bodies and the approval of rules. The Judicial Committee also has a role in relation to certain appeals against disciplinary

> procedures. The allocation of responsibility for these matters to the Privy Council rather than to the Secretary of State with the major policy interest builds in wider cross-Government participation. In this, as in other ways, the Privy Council is an important part of "joined-up Government". (https://privycouncil.independent.gov.uk/privy-council-office/professional-bodies/ accessed 05/06/2020)

Alternative mechanisms for legal incorporation have largely superseded the role of Royal Charter for businesses (through Companies House established under the Joint Stock Companies Act (1844)), charities (the Charity Commission established under the Charitable Trusts Act (1853)), and most recently Universities (through the Office for Students established under the Higher Education and Research Bill (2017)), although it is clear from the data about recent Incorporations by Royal Charter that there is significant and possibly increasing interest in the status conferred by royal 'gift'.

The following charts have been generated by the author based on data available from the PCO website: https://privycouncil.independent.gov.uk/royal-charters/list-of-charters-granted/ (last accessed 13/11/2022).


Number of Royal Charters per decade by category 1150-2020
School
Higher Education
civic
Guild
professional body
Hospital
Worshipful company
charitable
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
1150
1170
1190
1210
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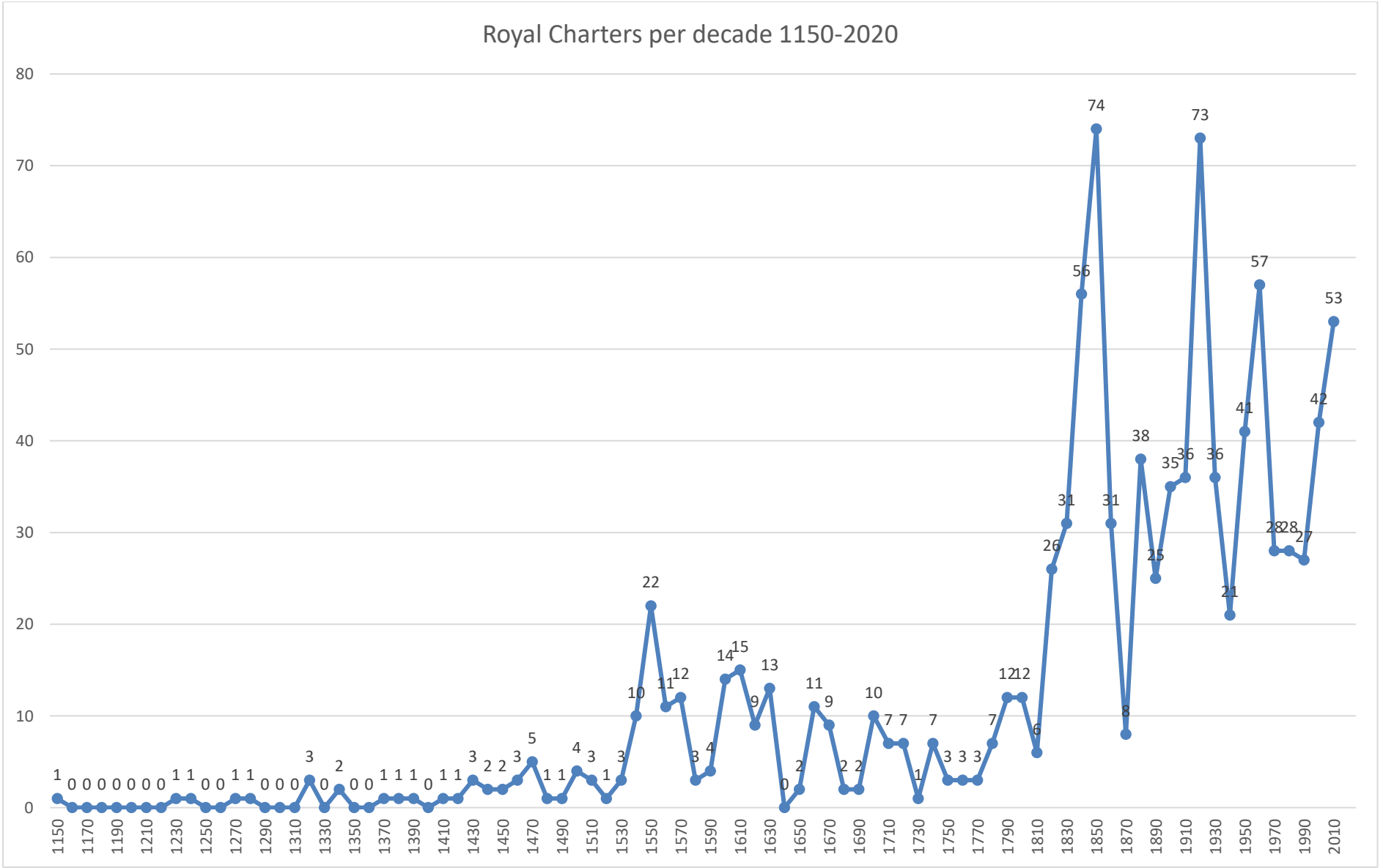
1870
1890
1910
1930
1950
1970
1990
2010


Royal Charters per decade 1150-2020
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
1150
1170
1190
1210
1230
1250
1270
1290
1310
1330
1350
1370
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1950
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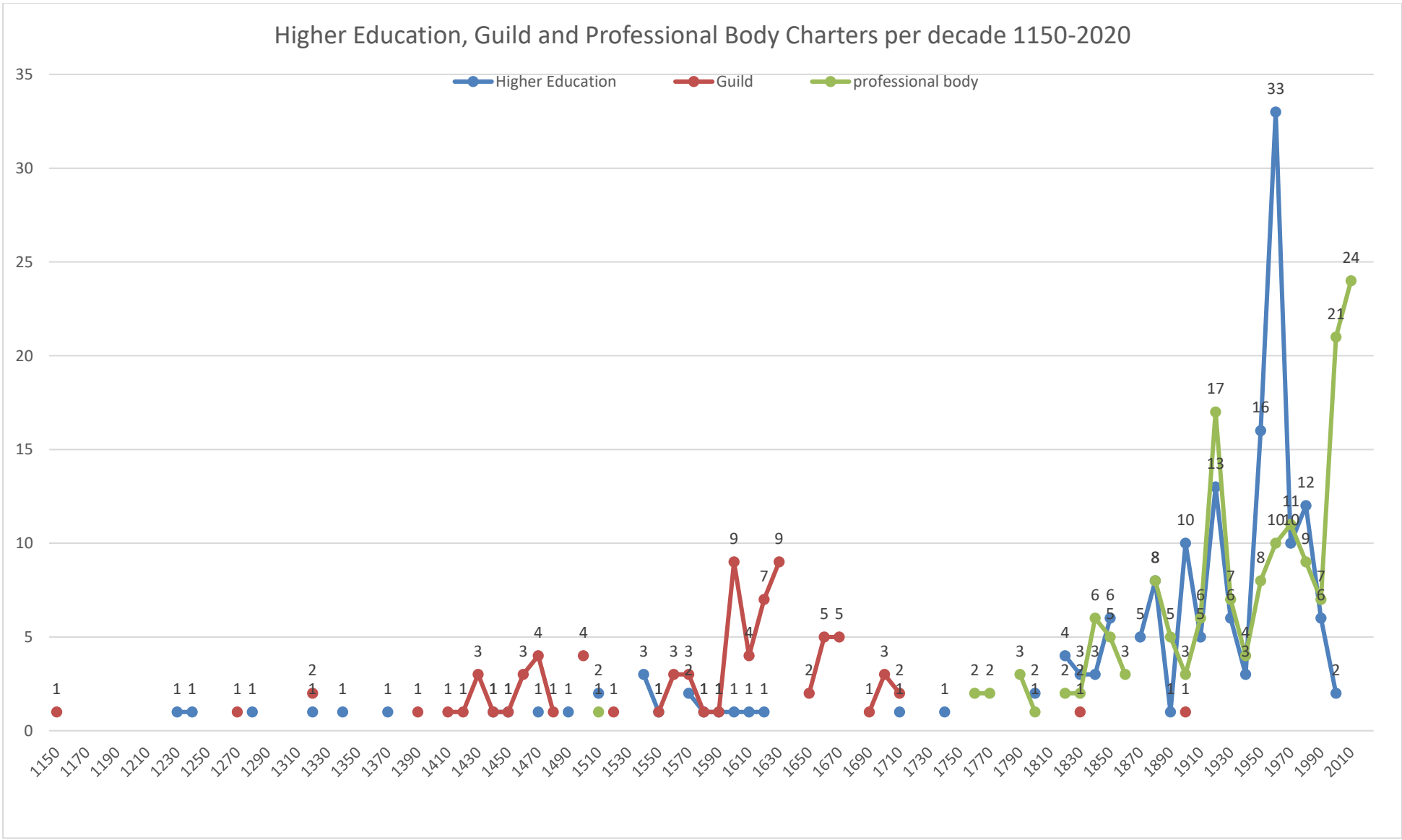
2010


Higher Education, Guild and Professional Body Charters per decade 1150-2020
Higher Education
Guild
professional body
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
1150
1170
1190
1210
1230
1250
1270
1290
1310
1330
1350
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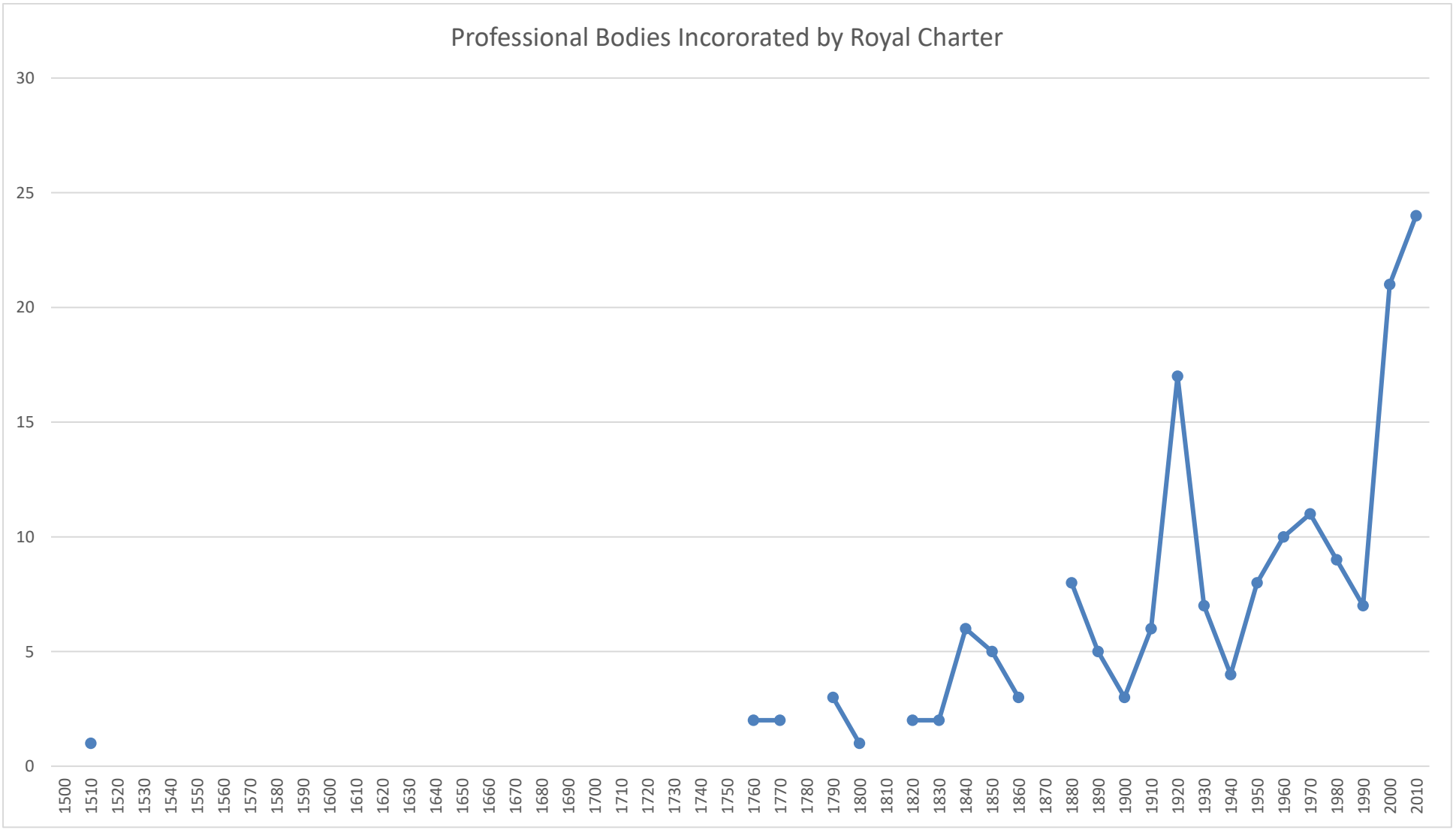
Professional Bodies Incororated by Royal Charter
30
25
20
15
10
5
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1500
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1570
1580
1590
1600
1610
1620
1630
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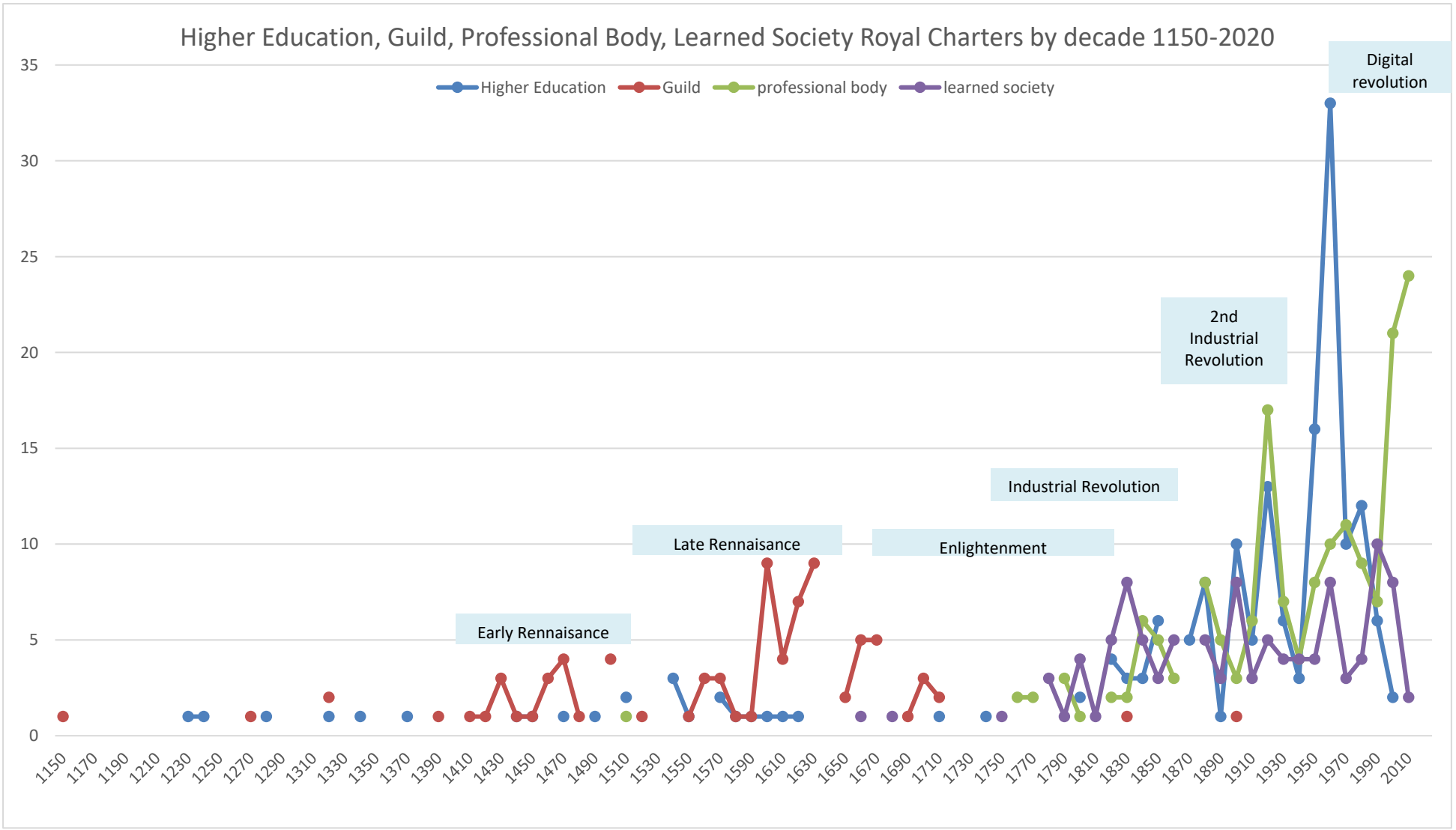
Higher Education, Guild, Professional Body, Learned Society Royal Charters by decade 1150-2020
Higher Education
Guild
professional body
learned society
Early Rennaisance
Late Rennaisance
Enlightenment
Industrial Revolution
2nd Industrial Revolution
Digital revolution
0
5
10
15
20
25
30
35
1150
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1210
1230
1250
1270
1290
1310
1330
1350
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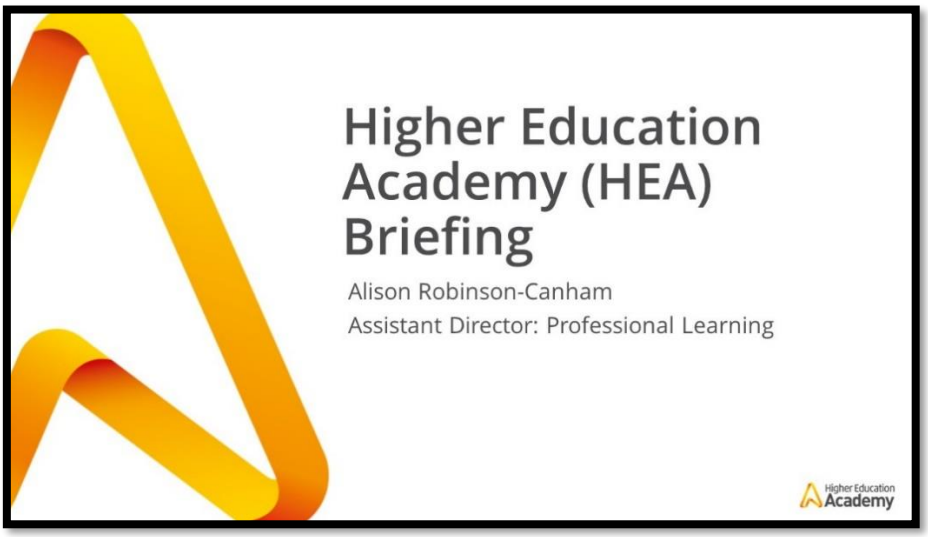
1990
2010

Appendix K Sample HEA briefing (June 2017)



HEA Fellowship and Subscription across the world

Fellowship

- Over 88,000 Fellows of the HEA across the world
- Of these 88,000, over 2,000 are based outside of the United Kingdom, and this number continues to grow
- There are Fellows in over 85 different countries
- The HEA has 22 subscribers outside of the UK in 14 different countries.

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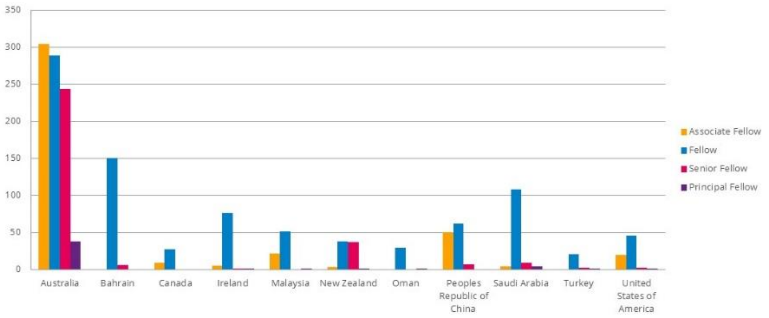
HEA Fellows outside of the UK by Country and Category



This graph shows those countries outside of the UK with over 20 Fellows as of February 2017

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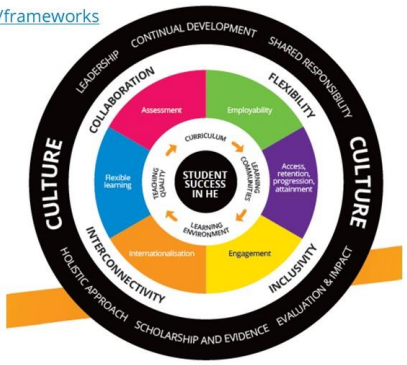
HEA Research and Resources

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/institutions/consultancy/frameworks

- HEA has a variety of research papers, toolkits and resources available on its website: www.heacademy.ac.uk
- Including our six Frameworks for student success:
  - Assessment
  - Employability
  - Access, Retention, Progression and Attainment
  - Student Engagement
  - Internationalisation
  - Flexible Learning



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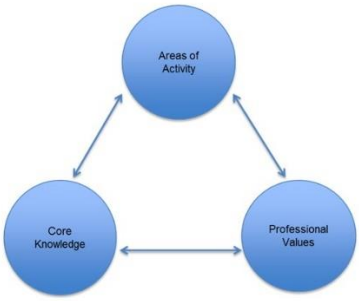
The Professional Standards Framework

- Supports initial and continuing professional development
- Fosters dynamic approaches to learning and learning in diverse academic and professional settings
- Demonstrates to students and stakeholders the professionalism of staff and institutions
- Acknowledges the variety and quality of teaching, learning and assessment practices
- Facilitates individuals and institutions in gaining formal recognition



Globally valued - locally relevant

8

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Professional Values

1. **Respect** for individual learners and diverse learning communities
2. **Promote participation** in HE and equality of opportunity for learners
3. **Use evidence-informed approaches** & outcomes from research, scholarship & CPD
4. **Acknowledge the wider context in which HE operates**, recognising the implications for professional practice.

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Framework not prescription

- Adaptable to local context
- Accommodates the diversity of roles which support learning
- Aligns with disciplinary and professional specialisms
- Fosters new ways of discussing teaching, learning and education
- Respects diverse constructions of knowledge and learning
- Career-long relevance

http://akoaronui.org/framework/

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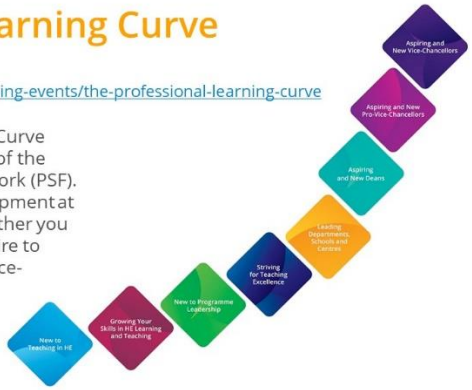
Professional Learning Curve

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/training-events/the-professional-learning-curve

The HEA Professional Learning Curve incorporates the requirements of the Professional Standards Framework (PSF). It is designed to support development at every stage of your career; whether you are new to teaching, or you aspire to lead teaching and learning at Vice-Chancellor level



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"Fellowship"

- Access to a professional community - over 88,500 in 85 countries
- Indicates an ongoing commitment to 'good standing' and a code of practice
- More than a qualification
- Globally recognised

12

Higher Education Academy

The HEA charitable purpose

The object for which the Academy is established is to promote higher education for the **public benefit** by:

- Providing **strategic advice** and co-ordination to the higher education sector, government, funding bodies and others on policies and practices that will impact upon and enhance the student experience;
- Supporting and **advancing curriculum and pedagogic development** across the whole spectrum of higher education activity, and;
- Facilitating the **professional development** and increasing the **professional standing** of all staff in higher education.

13

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Business models

- ILTHE founded with modest start-up funding and requirement to be self-funding in 5 years
- LTSN established and maintained with high value grant
- NTFS established and still maintained with grant funding (uncertain for 2018)
- Newly merged HEA inherited both business models and then experienced gradual reduction in funding over 7 years
- Ad hoc grant funding for specific projects
- All grant funding removed over a three year period 2012/13 - 2015/16
- 2016/17 first fully self-funded year

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Questions? Discussion?

Thank you!

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