

**A comparative exploration of the meanings of
apprenticeship:**

- **Convergence or divergence in apprenticeship
in England, Finland and France?**

Anna Mazenod

Institute of Education, University of London

Doctor in Education Thesis

2013

ABSTRACT

This EdD thesis compares and contrasts apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds as an element of the vocational education and training system in England, Finland and France. It is an exploratory study that contributes to the debate on the convergence and divergence of education and training systems in Europe in terms of policy, practice and research. The motivation for the study has arisen from the researcher's experience as a policy practitioner with significant experience and exposure to a number of different education systems. England, Finland and France are chosen as the cases for the study based on a typology of European education and training systems. Whilst apprenticeship is not a mainstream pathway for young people in these countries, the respective governments nevertheless continue to renew their commitment to promoting apprenticeships as a mode of initial vocational education and training, as well as a mode of continuing vocational education and training. The thesis draws on published academic research identified through systematic reviews of literature in English, Finnish and French, complemented by interviews with expert researchers on the subject in each of the countries. The research literatures and the interview transcripts are analysed using thematic analysis. The thesis shows that the role and meaning of apprenticeship as a form of initial vocational education and training is different in the three countries. This divergence arises from the differing contexts in which apprenticeship occurs and its place within the wider education systems in the three countries. The differing institutional frameworks for apprenticeship, and variation in the wider societal values placed on education and training also have a role to play. There is some evidence of convergence in terms of the policy rhetoric of apprenticeship, but there are significant differences in the conceptualisation of apprenticeship research in the three countries. The study offers a number of recommendations for policy and practice emphasising that understanding the original context is crucial to successful apprenticeship policy and practice. The thesis also suggests that further research on apprenticeship should seek to extend the boundaries of the field by broadening the choice of countries studied and expanding the concepts of validity that are used in comparative research.

DECLARATION AND WORD LENGTH

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Word count (exclusive of appendices and the list of references, but including diagrams and tables): 45,528 words.

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THE 2,000-WORD STATEMENT

Introduction

In my five years of doctoral studies, I have explored a number of overlapping research topics through the thesis, the Institution Focused Study (IFS) and the assignments for the taught modules. The variation in the topics might not have resulted in the most efficient of doctoral journeys, but they have reflected the changes in my professional role and have helped me in satisfying my curiosity about different research areas in education, whilst at each stage revealing how much more there is to learn. For my thesis, I have conducted a comparative study of the meaning of apprenticeship as a form of initial vocational education in England, Finland and France. The topic of the thesis is what I've been itching to do all along, but couldn't because I felt that I needed to first learn more about how to undertake research and to have some practice through smaller pieces of research. This 2,000-word statement explains what I think I learnt before the thesis research itself and describes how the five pieces of research before the thesis stage and the thesis itself make sense as a whole in my professional development.

The assignments for the taught modules and life at the LSC

When I started my doctoral studies, I worked as a Partnership Manager for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), a now defunct non-departmental public body that was responsible for the planning and funding of post-16 education in England with the exclusion of higher education. My role involved working with one local authority and managing the vocational education and training contracts with the Further Education (FE) Colleges and the private and voluntary training providers in my area. I'd recently completed a post-graduate level Diploma in Management, which had helped me to develop my management skills, but also reminded me of how much I'd enjoyed learning and learning about theories in particular, even though the final grades for my undergraduate and MA level studies had been far from spectacular. I was fortunate enough to be supported in my desire to learn more by my place of work for the first years of my Doctoral studies. This was probably because at the time I was the only one keen on Doctoral level study, and there was an interest to demonstrate that employees were being supported in their professional development at all levels of studies.

The taught module assignment topics arose from reflections on my day-to-day work as a Partnership Manager at the LSC, always centring on vocational education and

training in one way or another, as this is the area of education that I have the most experience of in terms of policy and the structures within which it is delivered. For the Foundations of Professionalism module I wrote about managerialist discourse in the funding of the FE sector. As part of the Methods of Enquiry courses 1 and 2, I researched the role of employers in vocational education and training policy, whilst for the optional Post-Compulsory Education, Training and Lifelong Learning (PCETL) course assignment I analysed the aims of vocational education and training for 14-19 year olds.

My undergraduate and MA level studies were in economics and sociology, and whilst I sought to expand my disciplinary horizons in my taught module assignments, I always found myself coming back to sociology in particular. For example, for the Methods of Enquiry 1 and 2 assignments, I read extensively on discourse analysis, also from the perspective of linguistics. It took me a very long time to feel that I understood in any way what I was reading on in linguistics, and my application of the method of discourse analysis in the assignments ended up being a purely sociological approach to studying policy. Nevertheless I had learnt a new method of analysis and explored how it was being applied in different disciplines, even though I ended coming back to the disciplinary foundations of sociology within which I feel most comfortable.

The method of discourse analysis is, in fact the connecting thread in my taught module assignments. This is in terms of how I became interested in discourse analysis and where it took me next. For the first module on Professionalism, which in my view was the ideal place to start a professional doctorate, I reflected on my role as a professional in the education sector, and concluded that this was challenging, because the prevailing discourse of managerialism doesn't allow sufficient room for managers to display the professional judgements they are capable of and ideally placed to make. Examining the discourse of managerialism aroused my interest in the importance of language and rhetoric, which lead me to discover (critical) discourse analysis that I then used as the proposed method for the research proposal I developed for Methods of Enquiry 1 course. I then developed one part of the research proposal and carried this out for Methods of Enquiry 2 course. As the original research proposal I developed for Methods of Enquiry 1 had been a comparative study of England, Finland and France, I did a lot of background reading on the differences between the vocational education systems in the three countries that aroused my interest in the philosophy of education and the purposes of

education and training. This is where the idea for my Post-Compulsory Education, Training and Lifelong Learning assignment came from, an idea that was commended for its ambition, but not well executed based on the feedback.

The IFS and transition from the LSC to a local authority setting

Whilst from the research proposal I had developed for the Methods of Enquiry 1 course, I had the basis of the comparative study of vocational education and training systems that I wanted to pursue for my thesis, I couldn't envisage using this idea for an insider-research study. The beginning of the long transition process from the LSC to its demise and split into the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Young People's Learning Agency had just started and presented itself as an opportune moment to research the transition as an insider. With guidance from my supervisor, I chose to interview a paired sample of five managers from FE College or private training providers and their contract managers from the LSC to gather their views on the transition from the LSC to the shadow SFA structures. In my interviews I focused on the delivery of a vocational education and training programme for employed adults, which was called Train to Gain. Given my role as an insider, it was easy to gain access to interviewees and I felt that this insider role also contributed to the richness of the interview data. Looking back, the experience of conducting the study for my IFS was the most enjoyable experience of researching I have had to date. Then again, by the time of the fieldwork, I was pregnant with my first child so it is also possible that the positive pregnancy hormones spreading calm and a sense of inner peace had a role to play in this good experience.

Whilst my IFS focused on the transition from the LSC to the SFA, in my own professional role, I was transferring to a local authority setting. As a result of a promotion, I was transferring to head up a small team in a local area where I had not previously worked. Undergoing the transition was an uncertain and challenging time, but the IFS helped me in maintaining a perspective, as I felt at least in control of my own research. After the formal demise of the LSC and my transfer to a local authority setting, I was soon on maternity leave, and found myself relieved to have an intellectual challenge in the completion of the IFS to balance out the new daily routine of looking after a baby.

The completion of the IFS was followed by a short period of procrastination on my own part. Then there were changes to my supervisory team, and I became very frustrated as I felt that my thesis proposal was going nowhere fast. I was still working

on the idea of a comparative study of the vocational education and training systems in England, Finland and France. This was an area that I felt I could contribute to given my background of having been schooled in four different European countries (Finland, Portugal, Austria and the UK), worked in two (the UK and Finland) and France having more recently become my 'third' home country due to family connections. However, I was not sure how this potential contribution could work in an EdD thesis, particularly as my thinking kept leading me to more theoretically rather than practically framed thesis ideas.

The thesis researcher and the parent

The thesis research finally started to make some sense after I was made redundant from my local authority post and had an opportunity to recover from the cloud of negativity that tends to permeate all organisations where large numbers of people are being made redundant. I was, however, no longer a professional, but now had a dual identity as a carer for my young son and a part-time student. Not having professional work consume my energy enabled me to put more hours into my thesis research, but it has also made this last year as an EdD student problematic in terms of my status of 'not currently working'. The EdD programme is rightly framed as a doctoral programme that is constantly tipping in and out of the learner's professional experience. Given that I'm not living that professional experience right now, I have been finding myself feeling the need to justify why I'm on an EdD programme. This has been compounded by my decision to try to change direction once I have completed my thesis, and to try to look for academic research work rather than trying to look for jobs that would be the more logical next steps on the basis of my CV. Furthermore, I feel a little uncomfortable with my sole two identities as a carer and a student. It is almost as if I had hung up my one coat of a professional, before of being confident of finding another coat of professionalism to replace it, whilst still having to allude to the previous one for credibility. It has nevertheless been an amazing opportunity to have the flexibility to attend some optional doctoral level courses on, for example research project formulation and comparative education research, and to have the time and energy to partake in the available opportunities such as presenting at the IoE poster conference and the student conference. My intended change of direction is largely due to the fact that I have simply enjoyed doing research so much that I would like to try to do it as a job. I think that I have something to contribute to research even if I haven't yet quite managed to distil the meaning of that contribution in a way that would easily make sense to others.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This is an exploratory study comparing and contrasting apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds as a specific element of the vocational education and training systems in England, Finland and France. Whilst apprenticeship is not a mainstream pathway for young people in England, Finland or France, the governments in these countries nevertheless continue to renew their commitment to promoting apprenticeship as a mode of initial vocational education and training, as well as a mode of continuing vocational education and training. This study examines the role and meaning of apprenticeship and explores the context for the relatively low take-up of the apprenticeship pathway as a form of initial vocational education by drawing on published academic research and interviews with expert researchers on the subject in each of the countries. The study is qualitative in nature and undertakes comparative analysis of apprenticeship in three European countries. My ability as a researcher to interrogate relevant academic literature only published in Finnish or French, and to overcome the difficulties posed by concepts and terminology that do not always translate easily, enable a synthesis of research findings from the three apprenticeship research cultures.

The motivation and rationale for this study has arisen from my experience as a policy practitioner in England with significant previous experience and exposure to a number of different education and training systems. This experience suggests that an understanding of the wider contexts within which education and training systems operate is crucial for being able to learn lessons from other countries' systems and policies. Education policy-makers, the research community and the media continue to express interest in cross-national comparisons as exemplified by the success of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and there is considerable interest in policy borrowing in an attempt to improve a country's standing in these assessments. Understanding the impact of contextual factors is, however, key to effective policy borrowing, but this often gets forgotten in the haste to implement seemingly successful education policies from elsewhere.

The research questions that this thesis examines are:

- 1. What are the unique features of the apprenticeship systems for 16-18 year olds in England, Finland and France?**
- 2. Do the research literatures and the expert interviews suggest convergence or divergence in apprenticeship policy and research between 1996 and 2011 in these three countries?**
- 3. What are the implications that arise from this thesis, first for apprenticeship policy and practice in the context of three different countries, and second for further research on apprenticeships?**

The research methods used to gather evidence to address these questions are systematic literature reviews, supported by in-depth interviews with expert researchers in the field in each of the countries. The systematic reviews cover recent literature on apprenticeship, defined as published in the period 1996 to 2011. Limiting the time period to the last sixteen years enables a comparative review of research to be undertaken within the constraints of this Doctorate in Education (EdD) thesis.

This introductory chapter begins by justifying the rationale for the study and the sample of countries. It then describes how apprenticeship is defined for the purposes of this study. This is followed by summary descriptions of the current apprenticeship programmes in the three countries and a comparison of the scale of the programmes. The chapter concludes with a note on the use of language and an outline for the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Rationale for the study

This study contributes to an improved understanding of the similarities and differences in contemporary apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds in different European countries. There is significant interest in promoting apprenticeship across Europe, and most countries are trying to expand the number of learners engaging in vocational education and training through the apprenticeship route. There is some evidence that apprenticeship improves young people's labour market outcomes (McIntosh, 2004, 2007; also see Ryan, 1998 for a review of research in England and

France) and benefits employers engaging in apprenticeship (Hasluck, Hogarth, Baldauf and Briscoe, 2008; Hogarth, Gambin, Winterbotham, Baldauf, Briscoe, Gunstone, Hasluck, Koerbitz and Taylor, 2012). Furthermore, in England in particular, there are concerns that the shortage of intermediate vocational skills is compromising the long-term competitiveness of the economy, and apprenticeships are seen as a solution to this shortage. Nevertheless, the apprenticeship pathway remains a choice of only the minority in the 16-18 cohorts in most European countries. It is not evident that the underlying reasons for this relative unpopularity are the same in the different countries. Consequently, uniform apprenticeship policies across Europe are unlikely to offer effective solutions to what is perceived to be a problem of a lack of apprentices.

The study examines the differing context for apprenticeship in three European countries, explores the similarities and differences in research and policy rhetoric, and highlights implications for apprenticeship policy, practice and further research. The context for apprenticeship is conceptualised as consisting of three key dimensions: 1) the institutional frameworks, 2) the societal values and 3) the wider education and training systems. These three contextual dimensions have emerged from the theoretical framework for this study and the findings from the systematic literature reviews and the expert interviews. Chapter 2 explains how these three dimensions of the context for apprenticeship are conceptualised in this thesis.

The study provides recommendations and can be useful for professionals in reflecting on apprenticeship policy and practice. It provides practitioners with some theoretical frameworks to explore the appropriateness or applicability of comparative best practice lessons or policy imports that may be introduced in their area of work. By exploring the uniqueness of each country case, the study identifies how the contextual dimensions are significant for apprenticeship in these three countries, and provides a comparative perspective to debate around apprenticeship and its low take-up in England.

The intended audiences for this study are the academic community and also, importantly, professionals primarily active in the field of apprenticeship and initial vocational education and training. It will also be relevant to professionals in the field of education more widely as it highlights the role of the education and training system in defining and re-enforcing particular meanings of apprenticeship in the different countries. The intended audience of professionals active in the field includes

politicians and policy-makers, teachers, lecturers, mentors, assessors and verifiers involved in apprenticeship, but also state employees involved in the management and operation of the respective apprenticeship systems. This is consistent with the view that policy is made at different levels within the education system, and that government policy is diluted, re-interpreted or re-engineered, as it cascades through the system (Ball, 1994; Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry, 1997; Coffield, Edward, Finlay, Hodgson, Spours, Steer and Gregson, 2007). Furthermore, central, regional and local government policy-makers are also actively incorporated within the definition of professionals and practitioners here, rather than viewing them as faceless bureaucrats, reinforcing a mentality of 'them and us' between research and policy. In order to reach the intended audience of professionals in the field, an article for publication in relevant journals in Finland, France and England will be written and findings of the research circulated to European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training CEDEFOP (Fr. *Centre européen pour le développement de la formation professionnelle*,) and the respective apprenticeship sponsoring departments in the three countries.

Whilst a significant volume of research undertaken by researchers across the European Union is published in academic research journals in English, there is much education research that remains linguistically inaccessible to many researchers, but can provide insight to policy practitioners and researchers alike. My ability as a researcher to draw on the academic literature and debate in the native languages of each of the study countries, and to reflect on these literatures, as a policy practitioner with educational and professional experience of the three countries, is a strength in this thesis.

1.3 Rationale for the sample of countries

Green (1999) outlines four typologies of Western and Northern European education and training systems in his study of convergence and divergence in Europe and East Asia. The primary models for these four typologies are Germany, France, Sweden, and England and Wales. Germany exemplifies the model found in German speaking countries and to some extent in the Netherlands, with a history of a strong developmental state, largely regional governance of education, high levels of trust underlying economic relations, and selection at secondary school level being a key part of the system. France characterises the 'Latin rim' countries (France and Southern Europe), which have systems with strong central control, organised along universalist principles with comprehensive schools and largely school-based upper

secondary education systems. Sweden exemplifies the model in the Nordic states with comprehensive schools, predominantly school-based upper secondary education systems (with the exception of Denmark) and lack of streaming that arises from the principle of equality and social solidarism. England and Wales characterise a voluntarist system with predominantly school-based upper secondary education systems, a history of limited state control that has been undergoing changes, notably relating to the introduction of markets in education, and more differentiation in the secondary school phase than in the French and Swedish models.

Green, Wolf and Leney (1999) arrive at the same groupings of countries in their extensive study of European education and training systems. Table 1 below combines research by Green (1999) and Green, Wolf and Leney (1999) to identify the primary models for European education and training system typologies, the geographical or linguistic areas they are associated with, and the countries which are selected as cases in this study.

Table 1. European education and training system typologies

Primary models	Associated geographical/linguistic area	Country case in this study
France	'Latin rim' countries	France
Sweden	Northern Europe	Finland
England and Wales	UK and Ireland	England
Germany	German-speaking countries	n/a

Source: Adapted from Green, 1999 and Green, Wolf and Leney, 1999

The table above identifies France as the primary model for the typology of education and training systems in the 'Latin rim' countries extending to Southern Europe, Sweden as the primary model for the Northern European typology, England and Wales as the primary model for the UK and Ireland, and Germany as the primary model for the typology of education and training systems in German-speaking countries.

Of these groups of countries, Germany and the German-speaking countries have been the subject of numerous studies particularly examining the German

apprenticeship system, which is widely recognised as the exemplar European model (inter alia Steedman, 2001; Ryan and Unwin, 2001; Brockmann, Clarke and Winch, 2008; Steedman, 2011b). Furthermore, apprenticeship is a mainstream pathway for young people in Germany with two thirds of a cohort completing an apprenticeship by their 25th birthday (Steedman, 2011b). This study instead focuses on cases from the remaining three groups of countries to examine the 'less celebrated' apprenticeship models and to understand the particular features or the contexts that may explain their relative lack of success. Given the constraints of the thesis, only one country from each group is chosen.

The choice of individual countries from the groups is informed by my linguistic abilities to enable access to research material not available in an English translation, and my familiarity with the respective cultural, historical, political and socio-economic conditions. Thus France is chosen from the 'Latin rim' countries, Finland from the Northern European countries, and England from the UK and Ireland group of countries. England is chosen as there are differences in the way apprenticeship operates between the different countries of the UK. Some of the aspects of government policy and debate clearly relate to the UK more widely, but the study focuses on data and academic literature specifically on the English system with the UK used as a proxy where data for England is not available.

In the three sample countries, more young people engage in full-time vocational education that is school or institution-based rather than engaging in apprenticeships. Nevertheless, the respective governments and policy-makers continue to promote apprenticeships as a pathway for young people. In England, the August 2011 riots prompted some politicians to propose apprenticeships as a way forward to prevent further social unrest (inter alia interview with Mayor Boris Johnson, BBC, 2012), and the National Apprenticeship Service, an arm of the Government Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS), has undertaken extensive marketing campaigns promoting apprenticeships to employers and to young people. In Finland, the apprenticeship pathway is one of the components of the education guarantee, embedded in the Government's education and research development plan for 2011-2016. In France, policy lending from the German apprenticeship model has been frequently proposed as a solution to strengthen the country's economic base, and an increase in the number of apprenticeship places emerged as one of the campaign pledges in the 2012 French Presidential election campaign.

Choosing the countries for the sample on the basis of the researcher's strengths can bring insights to the research process. Language proficiency in particular is not gained overnight and the ability to interrogate all relevant research material, whether available in an English translation or not, is invaluable to a study drawing on research undertaken in countries where different languages are spoken. Furthermore, relying on translated material "results in loss of information and inaccuracy, since it cannot accurately express all the concepts and ideas generated in other cultures and conveyed in other languages" (Hantrais, 2009, p. 89). An understanding of the wider societal context within which the research emerged is also important in being able to undertake robust analysis of the findings, particularly in a comparative context. Crossley (2000) refers to the advantage of being able to 'build bridges' between insiders and outsiders in cross-cultural research. His analogy of bridge building relates to international education research, but is also relevant in the context of European comparative research as difficulties can arise from "belonging to different cultural and intellectual traditions" (Jobert, Marry and Tanguy, 1997, p.1) even where the geographical distances from one country to another are relatively small.

The typologies outlined by Green (1999) and Green, Wolf and Leney (1999) may be criticised for their static nature and for potentially understating the influence of cultural and political diffusion across national boundaries, particularly through labour market and education policy formation at supranational level, by agencies such as the European Union (EU) and OECD. Nevertheless, a growing wealth of evidence suggests that national education systems continue to operate with their own distinct characteristics intact (inter alia Brown, Green and Lauder, 2001; Thelen, 2004; Bosch and Charest, 2010). Furthermore, Green (1999, p.62) suggests that typologies of education and training systems can be useful in developing an understanding of what he calls "the modes of articulation" in the system. The "modes of articulation" (ibid) are the functions of and interaction between, for example the framework of qualifications, the labour market and educational institutions in different countries. This study does not, however, seek to test these typologies or their appropriateness in describing the countries in the sample. Rather the typologies are used in this study to inform the selection of countries for the sample.

The focus on countries as the unit of analysis obviously underestimates potential regional variation. Where the findings refer to regional variation, this is highlighted in the thesis. A focus on countries as the unit of analysis enables a cross-cultural

comparison to be undertaken within the constraints of an EdD thesis. The risk is that the focus is too superficial, but this risk is worth taking given the potential to bridge findings from different research cultures and in the synthesis to produce a different perspective in this area of research.

1.4 Defining apprenticeship

There are a number of possible ways of defining apprenticeship. In each of the three country contexts, there are official definitions of apprenticeship in terms of the eligibility criteria for state funded apprenticeship programmes. The eligibility criteria in terms of, for example, the qualification levels at which apprenticeships can be pursued, are set out for each country in the next section.

Apprenticeship can, however, also be more broadly defined as a particular approach to learning. As Fuller and Unwin (2011b, p. 29) suggest, apprenticeship is “first and foremost a model of learning”, hence its universal appeal. There is significant debate in England around how the official definition of apprenticeship for funding purposes is at odds with this broader notion of apprenticeship as an approach to learning. Ryan and Unwin (2001, p.100) suggest that a contemporary notion of apprenticeship might be:

A structured programme of vocational preparation, sponsored by an employer, juxtaposing part-time education with on-the-job training and work experience, leading to a recognised vocational qualification at craft or higher level, and taking at least two years to complete, after requisite general education

The state funded apprenticeship programme in England only partially fits Ryan and Unwin's (Ibid) understanding of what an apprenticeship is, with differences arising from the level of the qualifications awarded, the length of programme completion and the link with general education. Clarke and Winch (2004) also take a definition of apprenticeship that is different from the official definition of apprenticeship for funding purposes as their starting point, and refer to apprenticeship as learning in the workplace through a system that developed from the nineteenth century. Implications for the systematic literature review arising from the contested definition of apprenticeship in England are identified in Chapter 3 (section 3.3). The debate around the official definition and its appropriateness in England is further explored in Chapter 4.

For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to identify a definition of apprenticeship that can serve as a comparative starting point to the study. The below definition of apprenticeship from the CEDEFOP handbook, 'Terminology of European education and training policy,' serves as this starting point:

Apprenticeship = systematic, long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an educational institution or training centre. The apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance). The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation (CEDEFOP, 2009, p.29)

This definition is useful as an overarching description of apprenticeship in the European context. This definition captures the emphasis on practical work-based or work-linked training, but also distinguishes apprenticeship from other forms of learning incorporating practical work experience through the reference to the contractual nature of the apprenticeship. This differentiation of apprenticeship from other forms of work-based or work-linked learning is important, as the work tasks may be similar and the policy discourses sometimes refer to them as one, whilst the contractual nature of apprenticeship means that the learners are also employees. In Finland, for example, all initial vocational education courses now include a compulsory six-month work experience period, and in France young people can also engage in work-based learning and work towards a qualification through a 'professionalisation contract' (Fr. *Contrat de professionnalisation*), but neither of these examples constitute apprenticeship, and they are consequently out of scope for this study.

The country-specific definitions stating the eligibility criteria for state funding detailed in the next section are also relevant for this thesis, as they by default imply what the respective official policy-makers see as the core of an apprenticeship programme, and the remit of the state in funding it. It should be emphasised that the meaning of apprenticeship in this thesis is explored primarily as part of the state funded initial vocational education systems in the three named countries, rather than the focus being on apprenticeship-type learning from a pedagogical perspective. Furthermore, to enable a more robust comparison of apprenticeship as a mode of initial vocational education, rather than its role in continuing vocational education, the study focuses on apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds.

1.5 The three apprenticeship programmes

The concept of institutional frameworks

Whilst state funded apprenticeship schemes for 16-18 year olds exist in each of the three countries, there are conceptual and operational differences in how the schemes have been designed and how they work. The concept of institutional frameworks is useful in identifying the key similarities and differences in the apprenticeship programmes. An institutional framework is here defined as the structure of educational, financial, governing and legal frameworks within which apprenticeships are delivered. This definition is based on Ryan's (2000) discussion of four institutional attributes of apprenticeship: educational role and content, financing, governance and the regulation of work-based training. This thesis, however, refers to frameworks rather than attributes to emphasise their position as structures that can enable or disallow different meanings of apprenticeship. Table 2 overleaf outlines the respective institutional frameworks for the three countries in terms of the set age range; the principles of funding, compensation and subsidies; the educational content and level of qualifications; the delivery organisations and administrative and legal frameworks; and the status of mandatory employer and employee representation. Educational content is here defined as the general education subject content, such as maths, English, languages, science and social science subjects in contrast with the vocationally specific subjects within apprenticeship frameworks.

Table 2. Institutional framework for apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds

	England	Finland	France
Overall age range	Aged 16+ (minimum school leaving age 16, extended to 17 in 2013)	Aged 15+ (compulsory schooling of 9 years usually completed by 16 th birthday)	Aged 16-25 (minimum school leaving age 16)
Funding for 16-18 year olds	Training and qualifications to achieve framework fully funded by the state	Fully funded by the state	Co-funded by the state and employers through apprenticeship tax
Employer compensation/ Subsidy	Grants available to small employers (less than 1,000 employees) new to employing apprentices (introduced in 2012)	Compensation for costs of workplace training	Regional subsidy, lower rates of apprenticeship tax and social security payments for employers taking on apprentices
Apprentice compensation/ Subsidy	Employer pays the apprentice wages (the government sets minimum hourly wage rate) Limited recourse to benefits e.g. for childcare	Training allowance for theory training days attendance, travel and accommodation expenses	Apprenticeship salary exempt from income tax and social security payments
Vocational/ technical content	Competence-based element (over the study period mainly National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) that have now been replaced or assigned values within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)) and Knowledge-based element as set out in the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE)	Vocational qualification	Vocational qualification

Minimum general education content	Functional skills (practical skills in English and maths)	Finnish, maths, languages, science and social science	French, maths, science and social science
The level of qualifications (UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education 1997 (ISCED levels)	Intermediate (Level 2), Advanced (Level 3) and Higher (Level 4)	Basic (Level 2), Vocational qualification (Level 3) and Specialised vocational qualification (Level 4)	At Level 2: Professional aptitude certificate and Certificate of vocational proficiency; At Level 3: Professional baccalaureate and Professional certificate; At Level 4+: Higher Technician's Certificate and University Diploma in Technology
Training providers	Private and public sector	Private and public sector	Private and public sector
Administrative framework	DBIS, DfE, National Apprenticeships Service	Ministry of Education, regional apprenticeship offices	Ministry of Education, regions, apprenticeship training centres
Mandatory employer representation	Through Sector Skills Councils or Industry Training Boards where responsible for issuing apprenticeship frameworks	Through national education and training committees	Through professional consultative committees
Mandatory employee/Trade Union representation	No	Yes - employee representation on national education and training committees, vocational training issues included in national labour contracts negotiated at national level	Yes- trade unions represented on the professional consultative committees

<p>Legal framework</p>	<p>1964 Industrial Training Act established Industrial Training Boards (ITBs) for each industrial sector, overseeing training and apprenticeships (with the abolition of most ITBs in the 1980s the remit of the legal framework became limited to the construction sector)</p> <p>2009 Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act sets out requirement for specifications for apprenticeship standards and apprenticeship agreements between apprentice and employer in all occupational sectors</p>	<p>1923 Apprenticeship Act founding state vocational schools</p> <p>1958 Vocational Institutions Act founding municipal vocational schools</p> <p>1968 Reform of the Apprenticeship Act makes apprenticeship system complementary to institutional vocational training</p> <p>1993 Reform of the Apprenticeship Act gives equal status to apprenticeship and institutional education</p> <p>1998 Vocational Education Act brings apprenticeship within scope of vocational education legislation. Sets out principles for employer compensation for costs of workplace training and requirement for individualised learning plans based on previous education and work experience</p>	<p>1971 Apprenticeship law introduces apprenticeship tax and sets out conditions for apprenticeship contracts</p> <p>1983 Law gives regions a role</p> <p>1987 'Seguin' law expands scope to higher level qualifications</p> <p>1992 Law extends apprenticeship to public sector</p> <p>1993 Vocational education law increases level of subsidies paid to employers</p> <p>1996 Law reforms funding system</p> <p>2002 and 2004 Laws strengthen regions' role in financing and administering apprenticeship</p> <p>2005 'Borloo' law improves the personal tax status of apprentices</p> <p>2006 Law raises the level of apprenticeship tax</p> <p>2009 Law introduces additional tax for employers not recruiting apprentices</p>
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Adapted from Ryan (2000). Additional sources: Kivinen and Peltomäki (1999); Opetushallitus (2012); Porcher and Malicot, 2007, Portail National de L'Apprentissage et de formation en Alternance (2012)

Table 2 above shows that apprenticeship can in theory be commenced at any age 16 and above in England; at any age 15 and above in Finland, whilst in France apprenticeship is officially defined as a type of training for people aged 16-25. In France 15 year olds can also enrol on a preparatory year leading to apprenticeship. The minimum school leaving age in the three countries is 16.

In England, the state fully funds apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds, whilst part funding of up to 50% is currently provided for older apprentices. Grants to small employers (with less than 1,000 employees) new to employing apprentices were introduced in 2012 in an attempt to increase the number of employers engaging in apprenticeship, whilst apprentices have limited recourse to benefits, such as support for childcare. The apprenticeship frameworks for the different occupational sectors are made up of competence-based elements, which over the study period (1996-2011) tended to be NVQs, knowledge-based elements and functional skills. To fit within the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) that has been introduced in England, NVQs are now being either replaced with new qualifications or assigned values within the QCF depending on the needs of the industrial sector that are set out in the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE). Functional skills are practical skills in English and maths that are relatively narrow in their scope (Fuller and Unwin, 2011b). Some apprenticeship frameworks also include Information and Communications Technology as a mandatory component of functional skills. Apprenticeships can be undertaken at ISCED levels 2 (Intermediate Apprenticeship); 3 (Advanced Apprenticeship); and 4 (Higher Apprenticeship). Apprenticeship training is delivered by a range of private and public sector organisations including Further Education (FE) Colleges, private training providers and a number of large private sector companies, such as Rolls Royce, that are publicly funded to deliver training for their own apprentices.

In Finland, the state fully funds apprenticeships with an annual quota for the number of apprentices trained agreed for each level of apprenticeship. The state provides compensation to employers for the costs of workplace training. It also provides a training allowance for the apprentice to attend theory training and compensation for any travel and accommodation expenses that are incurred. These compensatory payments are made via the training providers who deliver or organise the apprenticeship training. The apprenticeship framework includes a relevant vocational qualification and a minimum general education content of Finnish, maths, languages, science and social science. This is reflective of the national core

curriculum for all 16-18 year olds in both academic and vocational education pathways. Individual learning plans must be drawn up for each apprentice, and these must reflect the apprentices' prior education and work experiences. Adult apprentices (aged 18 and above) can have their skills assessed against the relevant competency framework or undertake training towards a competence-based vocational qualification depending on their prior work experience and education and training. This practice does not, however, apply to younger apprentices. The level of qualifications range from basic education level (equivalent of level 2 in England) to vocational qualification level (equivalent of level 3 in England) and specialised vocational qualification level (equivalent of level 4 in England). Municipalities own the majority of training providers that deliver apprenticeship training, but there are also private sector and charitable organisations delivering apprenticeship training.

In France, apprenticeship is funded partly by the state and partly through the apprenticeship tax. The apprenticeship tax is 0.5% of the total salary bill and it is payable for all businesses with more than 10 employees. Employers who take on apprentices are eligible for lower rates of apprenticeship tax and for lower levels of social security payments. There are also significant regional subsidies to employers that vary from region to region in their level. Apprenticeship contract salaries are exempt from income tax and social security payments to make apprenticeship more attractive to young people. Apprenticeships include a relevant vocational qualification and a minimum general education content of French, maths, science and social science. There is a complex range of different types and levels of qualifications that the apprentices can work towards through day-release from work. These include:

- Professional aptitude certificate (Fr.*Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle (CAP)*) and certificate of vocational proficiency (Fr.*Brevet d'études professionnelles (BEP)*) at level V (equivalent of level 2 in England);
- Professional baccalaureate (Fr.*Baccalauréat professionnelle (Bac Pro)*) and Professional certificate (Fr.*Brevet professionnel*) at level IV (equivalent of level 3 in England); and
- Higher Technician's Certificate (Fr.*Brevet de technicien supérieur (BTS)*) and University Diploma in Technology (Fr.*Diplôme universitaire de technologies (DUT)*) at level III (equivalent of level 4 and higher in England)

All of these qualifications are the same as those that can be pursued through full-time study in school-based settings, or in higher education settings in the case of the

qualifications at level III. The majority of training is delivered in apprenticeship training centres that are jointly funded by the regions and business contributions from the apprenticeship tax. The state employs most teachers in the education sector, including teachers at apprenticeship training centres.

Table 2 also identifies that in Finland and France, Ministries of Education are responsible for apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds, whilst in England the lead Government Department is currently DBIS. There is employer representation in the design and development of vocational curricula in each of the countries. However, there is no mandatory employee or trade union representation in England in contrast with Finland and France, where employees or trade unions have mandated representation in the national committees alongside employers.

Lastly, table 2 shows that the introduction of a legal framework for apprenticeship in England is a more recent development than in Finland and France. Until 2009, there was no comprehensive legal framework for apprenticeship in England. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 sets out a requirement for SASE in all occupational sectors, and introduced a requirement for apprenticeship agreements to be signed between the employer and the apprentice. The origins of the legal frameworks for apprenticeship in Finland and in France date respectively to the 1920s and the 1970s. However, in France apprenticeship is more heavily legislated than in England or Finland. The legal framework for apprenticeship in France has been frequently strengthened with the latest significant change having been introduced in 2009 to effectively create an additional tax payable to employers not recruiting apprentices. The most recent significant legislative change for apprenticeship in Finland dates to 1998 when the Vocational Education Act brought apprenticeship within the scope of broader vocational education legislation.

Comparison of the scale of the programmes

Given the differences in the schemes, it is not surprising that official data collected and published in the three countries is not easily comparable. For example, most of the French statistics on apprentices incorporate all 16-25 year olds, befitting the French definition of apprenticeship as a scheme for 16-25 year olds. Furthermore, whilst the Finnish and French statistics are based on all current apprentices, the English data is reported by apprentice starts and achievements. This makes it difficult to compare the scale and scope of apprenticeship as taken up by 16-18 year olds. Table 3, Chart 1 and Table 4 below nevertheless give an indication of the scale

of apprenticeship as an initial vocational education pathway drawing on data for 2010/11, the latest academic year for which finalised comparable data is available. It should be noted that all of the data on England is based on apprenticeship starts.

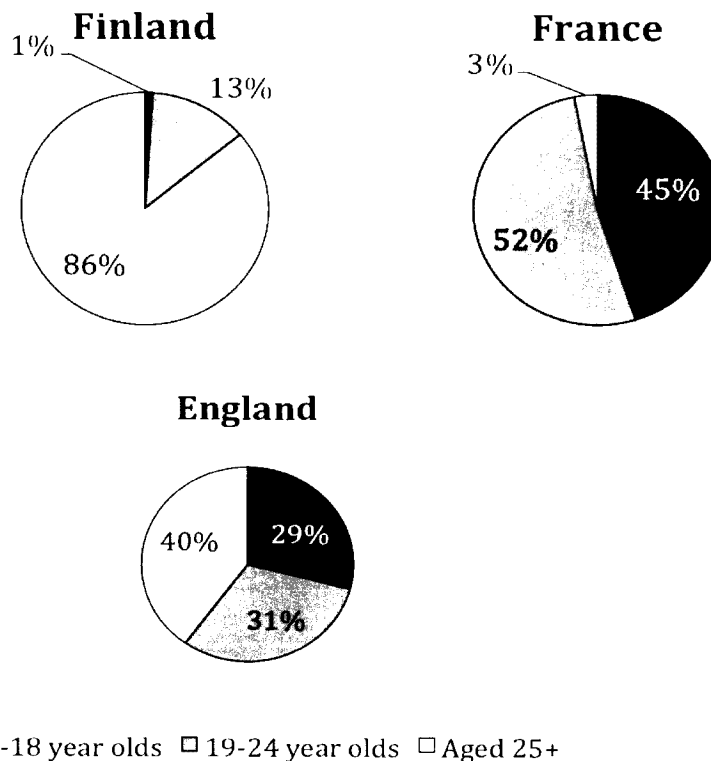
Table 3. Share (%) of apprentices of all 16-18 year olds in 2010/11

England	6.6%
Finland	0.4%
France	8.0%

Sources: The Data Service, Office for National Statistics, Statistics Finland, French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, French Ministry of Education

Table 3 shows that the share of apprentices of all 16-18 year olds is low in England and France and very low in Finland. These figures have been relatively stable in recent years in each of the countries. There are, however clear differences in the share of 16-18 year olds of all apprentices as shown below in chart 1.

Chart 1. Share (%) of all apprentices broken down by age in 2010/11



Sources: The Data Service, Statistics Finland and the French Ministry of Education

Chart 1 above shows that 16-18 year olds made up only 1% of all apprentice learners in Finland in the 2010/11 academic year. This was in comparison with 29% in England and 45% in France. This reflects the different definitions of apprenticeship with France setting an upper age limit of 25 to the scheme, England limiting the availability of funding for learners aged 19-24 and older than 24, and Finland pursuing a scheme with no age limitations that has been particularly popular with learners above the age of 24 (in 2010/11, 86% of all apprentices were aged 25 or older, Statistics Finland, 2012). This has had implications in terms of the positioning of apprenticeship within education policy in Finland so that apprenticeship is in practice predominantly linked with continuing vocational education. In England and France apprenticeship has been predominantly seen as part of initial vocational education policy. Recent growth in apprenticeships in England has, however, been concentrated in the older age groups. For example, in the previous academic year (2009/10), 16-18 year olds still made up 42% of all apprenticeship starts in England, compared to 29% in 2010/11 (Data Service, 2012a). Table 4 presents further comparative apprenticeship data by identifying the breakdown of 16-18 apprentices by level of qualification.

Table 4. Share (%) of 16-18 year old apprentices by level of qualification, 2010/11

Qualification level	England	Finland	France*
ISCED level 2	74%	97%	45%
ISCED level 3	26%	3%	29%
ISCED levels 4 and 5	0%	0%	26%

* Data for France relates to apprentices aged 16-25

Sources: The Data Service, Statistics Finland and the French Ministry of Education

Table 4 above shows that the greatest share of apprenticeships by 16-18 year olds are pursued at the lower levels of qualifications (74% in England, 97% in Finland and 45% in France). Qualifications at ISCED level 3 constitute 26% of apprenticeships in England, 3% in Finland and 29% in France. The remaining 26% of French

apprenticeship enrolments are for qualifications at higher levels (ISCED qualification levels 4 and 5). Whilst the French figures are skewed towards the higher level qualifications by the inclusion of data on 19-25 year old apprentices, the overall figures suggest that in England, and particularly in Finland, apprenticeship education for 16-18 year olds is dominated by study at the lowest level (ISCED level 2), whilst there is more variability in the level of study undertaken by the French apprentices. The number of 16-18 year olds starting a Higher Apprenticeship (ISCED level 4) in England has, however been rising with 200 under 19 year olds commencing an apprenticeship at this level in the 2010/11 academic year (Data Service, 2012a).

1.6 On the use of language and the structure of the thesis

As I have discussed earlier, central to the rationale of this thesis is the need for more robust comparative research to examine the differences between apprenticeship policy and practice in European countries. As a consequence there is a need for more researchers with fluency in a range of languages to contribute to this area of research. In this thesis therefore, I have paid close attention to the interpretation of terminology across the three countries. All translations are my own, and I have highlighted terminology and names of institutions or qualifications that are not in English, in italics and marked these as either Finnish (Fi.) or French (Fr.). I have used Finnish and French terminology, names and words to indicate specific words, concepts, institutions or qualifications where no exact translated match in English exists, but also to aid the reader in referring to publications about the Finnish or French education systems that may use slightly different translations of the words or associated concepts.

The thesis is presented in six chapters. This chapter has introduced the study. Chapter 2 'Theoretical and Methodological Framework' outlines the fields of research within which the thesis is situated, both in terms of theory and method. Chapter 3 'Research Design' describes the methods that have been used in detail. Chapter 4 'Study Findings: Thematic Findings' presents findings from the systematic literature reviews and the expert interviews broken down by themes. Chapter 5 'Study Findings: Comparison of the Country Contexts' explores the findings from contextualised comparative analysis and presents these in relation to the three research questions. Chapter 6 'Conclusion' summarises the study, provides recommendations for policy, practice and research and proposes future research directions to build on the findings and analysis presented in this thesis.

CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the theoretical and the methodological framework for this study by reference to the research literatures that are of importance. The main theoretical lens in this thesis is the continuing importance of the nation-state in education. In order to address the research questions, the theoretical framework is also informed by existing research on European apprenticeship models, emerging cultural research on apprenticeships and the debate on the relationship between research, policy and practice.

The chapter starts with a discussion of the continuing importance of the nation-state in education. This is followed by an overview of existing research on European apprenticeship models, cultural research on apprenticeship and the relationship between research, policy and practice. The chapter then presents the three dimensions that are used in the contextualised analysis of apprenticeship in this thesis; the institutional framework for apprenticeship, societal values and the wider education systems. These three dimensions emerged from the theoretical framework and the findings from the systematic literature reviews and the expert interviews (see Chapter 4). The contextualised analysis of apprenticeship drawing on these three dimensions is presented in Chapter 5.

The chapter then outlines the methodological framework in this thesis from a theoretical perspective (see Chapter 3 for details of the research design). The discussion of the methodological framework starts with reflections on the different uses of comparison in education and social science research and outlines the approach to comparative analysis that is used in this thesis. This is followed by a brief explanation of how countries have been viewed as 'cases' in this research, and a discussion of the methodological approaches in recent comparative vocational education studies. Flyvbjerg's (2001) proposed guidelines for 'reformed social science' that have been influential in the development of the overarching methodological approach in this thesis are then outlined before the chapter concludes with a summary of how the different strands of research literatures have framed the study theory and methodology.

2.2 The theoretical framework

Continuing importance of the nation-state

There have been various theoretical propositions about the impact of globalisation on national systems of education. There is evidence of globalisation having contributed to an increasingly widespread aspiration by governments across the world to have a publicly funded system of education to provide at least a minimum level of education to its young people (Schriewer, 1997). This is partly linked to the much-contested belief that education is closely linked to economic productivity (Brown, Green and Lauder, 2001; Wolf, 2002), but also to the idea that the development of a public education system is a necessary characteristic of a modern state (Schriewer, 1997; Green, 1990). The evidence of convergence due to globalisation more broadly relates to increasing degrees of economic, technological, cultural and political interconnectedness (Croucher, 2004). The economic interconnectedness, for example, is apparent in Western economies becoming characterised by the service sector in terms of employment, experiencing significant changes in the make-up of production processes and the rise of the multinational corporations. There are also some cultural demographic trends that suggest convergence. The transition from a young person to an adult in Western societies is perceived to now take place later (Green, Wolf and Leney, 1999) and the proportions of young people participating in education for longer from each cohort has been increasing (Aho and Koponen, 2001; Béduwé and Germe, 2004). There are also other commonalities in young people's experience of and place in the labour market. In the Finnish context, Järvinen (2003) comments on the increasingly precarious nature of the labour market with short-term or flexible working contracts being often offered to young people making the transition from the education and training system to the labour market. Järvinen (Ibid) suggests that young people entering the labour market now make up the core of the flexible workforce, bearing the brunt of changes to economic conditions. Fondeur and Minni (2004) make similar observations of young people in France as occupying the most vulnerable position in the labour market.

The continuing importance of the nation-state and the nationally specific institutional frameworks in maintaining distinct national education systems is, however in no doubt (inter alia Brown, Green and Lauder, 2001; Thelen, 2004; Bosch and Charest, 2010). Green (1999) suggests that the evidence for convergence is in terms of policy convergence, but that there is less evidence of structural convergence, that is in relation to structures and processes within the education and training systems. A

wealth of recent research has explored the different dimensions of this continuing divergence in the education and training systems in different countries. Ashton and Green (1996) distinguish between high skill and low skill economies categorising the UK and the US economies as having a low skill equilibrium, and the German and Japanese economies as having a high skill equilibrium. Finlay, Niven and Young (1998) explore the development of different vocational education strategies in Scotland, Ireland, Taiwan, Singapore, Germany, Finland, USA and South Africa with a particular interest in examining how consensus on vocational education policy and strategy is arrived at. Crouch, Finegold and Sako (1999) examine the political economy of skills creation in seven countries (France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Sweden, UK and USA). Brown, Green and Lauder's (2001) comprehensive study of skill formation strategies focuses on Germany, Singapore, South Korea, Japan and the UK and explores the underlying factors for a country's overall capacity for high skills with the political economy as their entry point. Adopting a more philosophical and historical approach, Clarke and Winch (2007) focus on the historical lineage of what could be described as the public understanding of the purposes of vocational education and education in different European countries.

This thesis contributes to this debate on convergence and divergence through a specific focus on apprenticeships to explore the role of the nation-state and the nationally specific institutional frameworks in maintaining different meanings of apprenticeship. The thesis takes its focus of comparing nation-states from the above research highlighting the continuing importance of the nation-state in education systems. For the purposes of this thesis, nation-state is explicitly conceptualised as incorporating the regional and local dimensions of the state. For example, as the overview of the institutional frameworks of apprenticeship presented in the previous chapter (Chapter 1) has already suggested, regional government in France has an increasing role in the governance and management of apprenticeship. Furthermore, in this thesis the nation-state and the nationally specific institutional frameworks are seen as being embedded within and operating through nationally specific cultures. The significance of cultural research on apprenticeships is discussed following a presentation of Green, Wolf and Leney's (1999) model of European apprenticeships.

European apprenticeship models

As part of their broader typologies of European education and training systems, Green, Wolf and Leney (1999) propose that there are four different models of

apprenticeship in terms of its status and importance. They identify the four different models as:

1. High status, high participation (e.g. Germany)
2. Moderate to high status, moderate participation (e.g. England)
3. Low status, moderate participation (e.g. France)
4. Very low participation, low status (e.g. Finland)

Green et al (Ibid) suggest that Germany is an example of a European country where high status and high participation characterise apprenticeship education. Of the countries in this study, Green et al (Ibid) place England in the second category, France in the third category and Finland in the fourth category.

Green et al's (Ibid) discussion of apprenticeship is only one part of their extensive comparative study of convergence and divergence in European education systems. Given that the model is not representative of current apprenticeships as initial vocational education in England, Finland and France, it seems that focused exploration of apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds in these countries is merited. Contrary to the categorisation of apprenticeship in the above model as having moderate participation in England and in France, in the discussion in Chapter 1, I have already shown that participation levels in apprenticeship by 16-18 year olds are low in both England and France, and very low in Finland (see Table 3, Chapter 1).

By specifically focusing on apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds in the three countries, this thesis contributes to an improved understanding of the contextual differences in apprenticeship in different European countries. The thesis provides a contextualised analysis by analysing the differences in the context of apprenticeship in terms of the wider education systems, institutional frameworks and societal values. This enables in a more nuanced discussion of the meaning and status of apprenticeship in the three countries. How these three dimensions of the contextualised analysis of apprenticeship are conceptualised is explained in section 2.3 following a discussion of the emerging area of cultural research on apprenticeships.

Cultural research on apprenticeships

Culture permeates everything and as such its importance at the junctures or critical junctures should be recognised (Hall, 1992). It is often sidestepped in favour of explanations based on economic factors, which is symptomatic of a wider societal trend that Habermas refers to as capitalism enforcing "a process of one-sided

(instrumental) rationalisation...via the state and the market overstepping their own functional boundaries and 'colonising' the lifeworld" (Murphy and Fleming, 2010, p.6). Alexander's (2000) study on culture and pedagogy in five countries is an inspirational example of recent comparative education research that demonstrates that it is possible to undertake education research whilst acknowledging and understanding culture and its impact. He argues that "culture both drives and is everywhere manifested in what goes on in classrooms, from what you see on the walls to what you cannot see going on inside children's heads" (Alexander, 2000, p.266). Osborn, Broadfoot, McNess, Planel, Ravn, and Triggs's (2003) research on secondary school students' learning and how the students think they should be learning is also robust in its understanding of culture as shaping educational practices and the educational experience.

In their research, Brockmann, Clarke and Winch (2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2011) have explored the differing meaning of apprenticeship and vocational education across Europe, particularly highlighting differences in the terminology. Their most recent publication (2011) also includes a comprehensive interpretive dictionary of key terminology in English, French, German and Dutch and includes Méhaut's (2011) discussion of the French concept of 'savoir' included in the systematic literature review and referred to in Chapter 4. Deissinger (2008) has also identified differences in cultural patterns underlying apprenticeship in Germany and in the UK that continue to explain divergence in the apprenticeship systems. The impact of language in itself has also been explored by Warhurst, Grugulis and Keep (2004) who examined the concept of skill and its usage in countries in Europe, the US and Australia. Heikkinen (1997) however puts forward a case for undertaking what she calls cultural research on apprenticeships in contrast to 'standard comparative research.' Her call for cultural research on apprenticeship is also about considering the differences in the academic or research cultures in the countries being compared.

Culture is virtually impossible to define, as the rather open-ended definition of culture as "an indispensable, but multi-accented term with a complex and still open history, which in itself expresses the complexity of general human history" (Brooker, 2003, p.58) demonstrates. In this thesis, an element of the notion of culture is included within the contextualised analysis of apprenticeship through the dimension of societal values discussed below in section 2.3, following an explanation of how research, policy and practice has been conceptualised in this thesis.

Conceptualising research, policy and practice

The ideal relationship between research, policy and practice is an area of significant debate in the UK education research and policy community. There are researchers, politicians and policy-makers who feel that research should have a closer relationship with policy and practice, and provide tools for policy-makers and practitioners by aiming for an evidence base that then enables evidence-based policy and evidence-based practice. Hargreaves (1997, p.405) puts forward this position stating that, “educational research should and could have much more relevance for, and impact on, the professional practice of teachers than it now has”. Others feel that there are clear limits and dangers of research being driven by the needs of policy and practice. Atkinson (2000) argues that the ‘what works’ approach to education research is too backward looking, underestimates the influence of theory in teachers’ assessment of their own work and leaves no room for exploring new possibilities and strategies.

Given that this thesis also examines apprenticeship research cultures in different countries, it is important to acknowledge this contested nature of the relationship between research, policy and practice that is particularly manifest in the UK. My position is that research, policy and practice are different activities that sometimes have contradictory aims, but that could be mutually beneficial and not always mutually exclusive. Furthermore, education professionals may at different times during their career take on the roles of researcher, policy-maker or practitioner. Consequently, the boundaries between research, policy and practice are here viewed as more fluid than the established battle stances that are sometimes implied in the descriptions of policy-makers’ and researchers’ views on the appropriate relationship between research, policy and practice.

Nevertheless, the increasingly policy-driven nature of vocational education research and transnational commissioning needs to be recognised. Lauterbach (2008, p.30) identifies CEDEFOP and the European Commission as key transnational commissioners of studies on vocational education and highlights that with most commissioned research, “many parameters like research field, epistemic interest and methods are often already fixed in the call for tenders.” As such the research produced by these commissions is not independent research in the traditional sense. This type of research, which Lauterbach (2008) refers to as policy driven research, is however of increasing importance in the arena of vocational education as “research is no longer exclusively programmed by universities and other academic research

bodies" (Westerhuis, 2008, p.98). Apart from the more traditional university institutes there are now also independent research institutions and private consultancies that win research commissions and consequently engage in vocational education research. Furthermore, there are institutes such as the *Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Qualifications* (CEREQ) in France that are state funded, but also directly engage in research activity, and increasingly commission and co-ordinate research (Lauterbach, 2008). In the international context, this morphed role is played by the OECD, which has significantly more influence in the international research and policy arena also due to its policy lobbying activities, and through its success in positioning itself as the supplier of international benchmarking data on education, as exemplified by the popularity of the PISA assessments. OECD's influence in the field of vocational education has to date been less important, but the recent OECD report *Learning for jobs* (2010) suggests that there is an interest in expanding its sphere of influence to comparative vocational education.

The project type commissioned research activities tend to have very practical aims, evocative of the philosophy of evidence-based research. Whilst being critical of the 'project mentality' that characterises some of the trans-nationally commissioned research work, the contribution of the findings from many of such studies should not be underestimated. They can generate important knowledge on the practical implementation of vocational education policy, best practice and pedagogy, yet their remit and reach can be short-changed by the relatively narrow and short-term research goals that have been set externally. The increasing importance of this policy driven research that does not meet the more traditional criteria of independent research is reflected in the inclusion criteria for the systematic reviews of literature in this thesis. The application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria described in the next chapter (Chapter 3) has resulted in a small number of studies that can be categorised as directly policy driven research being included in the systematic literature reviews.

Following the description of how research, policy and practice is here conceptualised, the discussion now turns to how this thesis contributes to the research field through contextualised analysis of apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds in England, Finland and France.

2.3 Contextualised comparative analysis of apprenticeship

This thesis compares the context for apprenticeship in three European countries with respect to three dimensions: 1) institutional frameworks, 2) societal values and 3) the wider education and training systems. Due to the constraints of this EdD thesis, the contextualised analysis of apprenticeship has been restricted to these three dimensions that have emerged as significant in the respective country contexts for apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds from the systematic literature review and expert interview findings. These three dimensions are briefly discussed below.

1) Institutional frameworks for apprenticeship

The research literature on the continuing importance of the nation-state and the nationally specific institutional frameworks discussed earlier in this chapter (see section 2.2) highlight the significance of institutional frameworks in comparative study of vocational education. As has already been discussed in Chapter 1 (see section 1.5), the concept of the institutional framework in this thesis has been adapted from Ryan's (2000) comprehensive comparative study on apprenticeship education systems. In his study, Ryan (ibid) examines the institutional attributes of apprenticeships in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK, and demonstrates the importance of these attributes to apprenticeship in these countries.

Another key piece of comparative research that demonstrates the significance of differing institutions and structures in producing different societal outcomes is Jobert, Marry, Tanguy and Rainbird's (1997) examination of education and work in Germany, Great Britain and Italy. In their research they characterise the relations between education and work as "the result of a long chain of interconnected relationships that need to be examined" (Jobert, Marry, Tanguy and Rainbird, 1997, p.12) and present vocational education systems as the results of compromises reflecting the power attached to different interest groups. In this thesis, the concept of institutional frameworks is used rather than Ryan's (2000) concept of institutional attributes to emphasise the structural nature of the institutions.

2) Societal values

As has already been discussed above, an increasing number of researchers are exploring the significance of cultural or societal characteristics in explaining differences between vocational education systems (see section 2.2). In their research on convergence and divergence in European education and training systems that has already been discussed in Chapter 1, Green, Wolf and Leney

(1999) present a cultural typology that provides a useful starting point for research exploring these issues. Table 5 overleaf reproduces Green, Wolf and Leney's (1999) cultural typologies using the same groupings of countries as presented in the discussion of typologies in Chapter 1.

Table 5. European cultural typologies

Associated geographical/linguistic area	Cultural typology (Green, 1990; Lauglo, 1990; McLean, 1990 cited in Green, Wolf and Leney, 1999)
'Latin rim' countries (France and Southern Europe)	Universalism
Northern Europe	Communitarian solidarism
UK and Ireland	Liberal individualism
German-speaking countries	Cultural particularism

Source: Adapted from Green, Wolf and Leney (1999)

As Table 5 indicates, Green, Leney and Wolf (1999) suggest that France and Southern Europe is culturally characterised by universalism, Northern Europe by communitarian solidarism, UK and Ireland by liberal individualism, and Germany and German-speaking countries by cultural particularism. Green et al (1999, p.26) preface their discussion of these cultural typologies with the phrase "stereotypically represented," which is not surprising given the complex and slippery nature of the term culture.

Researchers in the field of education and in the social sciences more widely have also explored cultural or societal characteristics in other insightful ways with Green, Preston and Janmaat (2006), for example showing how educational inequalities undermine elements of social cohesion. In his research, Fukuyama (1995) identifies how societies differ in their in-built levels of trust, and convincingly argues that these in-built levels of trust can impact on countries' economic success.

This thesis shares this interest in exploring cultural or societal characteristics, but uses societal values instead as the focal point. Societal values seem to me more helpful in addressing my research questions. For the purposes of this thesis, I have

defined societal values as the overarching norms and ideals shared by the members of a culture bound by a nation-state. Societal values are clearly only a small constituent of what can be described as the culture(s) in any country, but emerge as particularly significant for contextualising apprenticeship in the different country contexts on the basis of the systematic literature reviews and the expert interview accounts. A comparison of societal values thus enables culture to be built into the framework of analysis within the constraints of the thesis. Furthermore, this thesis responds to Heikkinen's (1997) call for cultural research on apprenticeship, by comparing the respective research cultures in the three countries through a systematic literature review of apprenticeship research in English, Finnish and French that is complemented by expert interviews.

3) Wider education systems

Reflecting on Green, Wolf and Leney's (1999) four models of apprenticeships outlined above (see section 2.2), it seems that a discussion of the status and meaning of apprenticeship would benefit from contextualising it within the respective wider education systems. Bosch and Charest (2010, p.2) describe national vocational education and training (VET) systems as "a heterogeneous mix of tracks within and outside of the general education system". They go on to suggest that:

...it is not possible to understand these heterogeneous systems by focusing solely on their links with the general education system. VET systems are also deeply embedded in the various national production, labour market, industrial and status systems (Bosch and Charest, 2010, p.2).

However, Bosch's and Charest's (Ibid) discussion highlights the relevance of the wider education systems for an exploration of the meaning of apprenticeship as a form of initial vocational education. They identify the often rigid boundaries between vocational and general education systems, and how the hierarchy of status between the two systems is reproduced, but also challenged by the changing needs of the economy and societal expectations. The discussion of the respective institutional frameworks for apprenticeship in Chapter 1 has already shown that there is variation in the links between apprenticeship and other education curricula for 16-18 year olds in the three countries as indicated by the general education content of apprenticeship. This suggests that a further examination of the differences and similarities in these links in the three countries is merited as part of the contextualised analysis of apprenticeship. Chapter 3 explains the processes of

analysis that are used in this thesis. The discussion now turns to outlining the methodological framework for this thesis.

2.4 The methodological framework

The uses of comparison in education and social science research

Broadly speaking, in the social sciences comparison is either the 'raison d'être', as in most comparative education research, or it is used as a kind of a foregrounding tool, emphasising, for example the weaknesses of a vocational education policy when discussed in contrast with policies in other countries. Studies falling within the genre of comparative education research tend to place significant emphasis on the ontological and methodological aspects of comparing (Cowen and Kazamias, 2009). From Cowen's (2006) reflections on the use of comparison in education research it seems that whilst many studies that would probably not locate themselves within the genre of comparative education have also approached the issue of comparison with the seriousness it affords, there are also instances where comparison appears to be used as a mere 'gimmick' to strengthen the argument in case without appropriate consideration of the meaning and complexities of comparison. There consequently appear to be variants of comparative studies, and the boundaries of what 'comparative education' is, and what it is not, are blurred (Cowen, 2006).

The wide range of methodological approaches used in comparative research is not significantly different from what is used in non-comparative social research. Hantrais (2009) suggests that research that compares countries, cultures or societies is no different in kind from research that focuses on one country, culture or society, but that the related methodological problems are of a greater magnitude because of the comparative element. This is evident from, for example Cowen and Kazamias' (2009) handbook on comparative education, which explores the cultural, pedagogical and political dimensions involved in undertaking research in the field. Undertaking research within the confines of the European Union seems relatively easier than engaging in research that cuts across continents as in some of the contributions to Cowen and Kazamias' handbook. Key conceptual issues nevertheless remain regardless of whether the comparison is undertaken at an international or a European level. Cowen (2006, p. 565) suggests that, "all persons writing in comparative education struggle with the motifs of context and transfer." The motif of context and its place in the methodological approach to research design remains a live debate in many comparative research domains.

In this study comparative analysis of apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds is undertaken within the context of the three dimensions of the institutional framework for apprenticeship, societal values and the wider education systems presented in the previous section. The discussion now turns to how the three countries examined in this study are viewed as 'cases.'

Countries as 'cases'

Case study research is another approach to comparison in social science and education research. Case study research is generally seen as a type of research focusing at the micro level of research, but the tendency for comparativists in the social sciences to call the subjects of their study 'cases', whether these may be countries or regions, calls into question the equation of case study research with micro-level focus. Ragin (1992, p.3) suggests that "a case may be theoretical or empirical or both; it may be a relatively bounded object or a process; and it may be generic and universal or specific in some way." The aim in case study research is to arrive at holistic understandings of the subject of study. This study does not, however use a case study approach, but the three countries that are the focus of the study are referred to as 'cases' in this thesis in the comparativist meaning of 'cases' that designates the subjects of study that may be countries or regions rather than relating to the case study approach from a methodological perspective.

Comparative vocational education research methodology

Green, Wolf and Leney's (1999) study that has been discussed in Chapter 1, compares European education systems more widely than just looking at vocational education. Their study exemplifies the kind of research that has been undertaken in this area from a methodological point of view. As in the majority of studies in this field, Green, Wolf and Leney (Ibid) focus on countries as the unit of analysis and examine a range of comparative macro-economic indicators to analyse the similarities and differences in the education systems. In Clarke and Winch's edited book (2007), countries are also used as the unit of analysis, but a more philosophical and historical approach is adopted. The research in their book seeks to explain differences in vocational education systems by tracing the development of the systems and exploring the stances on the purpose of education and the delineation between academic and vocational education that give rise to diverging systems.

Ryan's (2000) comparative study specifically focusing on apprenticeship systems, which has already been discussed in Chapter 1 is mainly based on published

secondary sources with some data checking having been undertaken with national experts in the study countries. Ryan's (Ibid) approach of drawing on secondary sources to provide comparative data on the educational and legislative framework and governance arrangements for the apprenticeship systems has guided the choice of methods in this study. Jobert, Marry, Tanguy and Rainbird's (1997) approach to comparative study on the relationship between education and work by reviewing the research literature in Germany, Great Britain and Italy, and Schriewer and Keiner's (1992) study examining the development of education as an academic research area in France and Germany, have in turn been instrumental in legitimating and demonstrating the value of research focusing on the different research communities themselves and comparing published research as the main methodological tool.

Flyvbjerg's proposed guidelines for a 'reformed social science'

A key influence in developing the overall methodological approach to this study has been Flyvbjerg's (2001) proposed guidelines for a 'reformed social science'. It should be noted that whilst Flyvbjerg's (Ibid) stance to, and position in relation to the study of social sciences has informed the development of this thesis (see below for indication of how the guidelines have influenced the methodological choices), these guidelines have not substantively shaped the thesis itself. These guidelines are not specifically aimed at researchers engaged in comparative research, but have been very useful in developing the theoretical and methodological framework for this thesis. In a very summarised form, these guidelines are about a focus on values, placing power at the heart of the analysis, attempting to get as close to reality as possible, an emphasis on details and practices prior to discourses, a preference for cases, contexts and narrative analysis, joining agency and structure, and bringing out rather than drowning out the different voices that may emerge from the reality that is studied. Flyvbjerg (2001) asserts that social science researchers should ground themselves with contextualism rather than becoming locked in either foundationalism or relativism. He describes contextualism as situational ethics whereby the researcher:

...[takes] their point of departure in their attitude to the situation in the society being studied and [seeks] to ensure that such an attitude is not based on idiosyncratic morality or personal preferences, but instead on a common view among a specific reference group to which the [researcher refers] (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.130)

Drawing on Flyvbjerg's guidelines, this study focuses on three cases (England, Finland and France) and their contexts, including cultures and values, seeks to place

power at the centre of the analysis in understanding what knowledge and practices are seen as important in the three countries, prioritises the examination of practices over discourses, seeks to bring forward the multiplicity of voices in the presentation and looks for ways of joining agency and structure in the analysis. The choice of systematic literature reviews as the main method of gathering data has obviously made it difficult to prioritise practices over discourses, but this has been tempered by the methods of analysis that have sought to ground the literature in the reality rather than getting carried away by pure analysis of the discourse. Complementing the systematic literature reviews with interviews with experts representing the different research cultures has also enabled the research to take place closer to reality. However, given the focus of the study at a societal level, it has not been possible to adhere to the guideline for an emphasis on details. The methodological approach to the systematic literature reviews and the interviews in this thesis is presented in the next chapter (Chapter 3) that outlines the research design.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the theoretical and the methodological framework for this thesis. It has outlined the main theoretical lens in this thesis as the continuing importance of the nation-state in education and training systems and discussed the growing wealth of comparative studies of education and training systems (inter alia Brown, Green and Lauder, 2001 and Brockmann, Clarke and Winch, 2011). Ryan's (2000) study is one of the few to focus on contemporary European apprenticeship systems, whilst Green, Wolf and Leney's (1999) model of European apprenticeship does not seem to reflect apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds on the basis of the outline of the systems presented in Chapter 1. This thesis explicitly focuses on apprenticeship as a mode of initial vocational education, and this chapter has explained how the three-fold context for analysis is conceptualised as institutional frameworks, societal values and the wider education systems.

This chapter has also discussed the contested relationship between research, policy and practice, and identified that apart from Jobert, Marry, Tanguy and Rainbird's (1997) insightful study, little analytic attention has been paid to the role of academic research and cultures as co-constructing the convergence or divergence in education and training systems (Heikkinen, 1997). Despite the 'eurocentricity' of many of the studies cited, this thesis positions itself in the wider genre of international comparative education research discussed in this chapter. I do, however acknowledge the limitations of this thesis by only promising increased understanding

of three European country contexts, of which I can offer linguistic and cultural knowledge. This increased understanding is attained through a comparative analysis informed by Flyvbjerg's (2001) proposed guidelines for 'reformed social science' that emphasise contextualism.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the details of the research design that developed on the basis of the theoretical and methodological framework outlined in Chapter 2. This chapter begins with an explanation of the methodological choices made to answer the research questions that relate first to the unique features of the apprenticeship systems, second to divergence and convergence in apprenticeship policy and research, and third to implications arising for apprenticeship policy, practice and research. This is followed by description of the methodology involved in the systematic literature reviews. The fourth section of the chapter describes the methodology for the expert interviews that complement the systematic literature reviews. This is followed by a brief outline of how available statistical data has been used to provide information on the scale of the three apprenticeship programmes presented in Chapter 1. The sixth section of the chapter explains the processes of analysis in this study, followed by a discussion of validity and reliability of the research. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the ethical issues involved and reflections on undertaking comparative research.

3.2 Methodological choices in the study

The research design of systematic literature reviews complemented with a small number of expert interviews was developed in order to respond to the research questions within the time available. The use of a method that is based on secondary sources enables the three research questions that relate to large, societal level issues to be addressed within the constraints of an EdD thesis. The first two research questions relating to the uniqueness of the cases, and evidence for convergence or divergence in apprenticeship education and policy were at first addressed by systematic literature reviews, and then by expert interviews. The third research question was addressed at a later stage in the research as part of the analysis.

The choice of study countries has already been justified in Chapter 1, but it is important to here clarify that the number of countries being compared is also significant. Through an examination of three countries, more rich data can potentially be generated than through a simple binary comparison. Anckar (2007) suggests that by comparing more than two cases the quality of the research findings can improve.

The constraints of an EdD thesis and the researcher's linguistic abilities as already referred to in Chapter 1, however cap the number of cases to three.

3.3 Systematic literature reviews

Defining systematic literature reviews

The use of systematic literature reviews in this study is guided by the principles of systematic reviews as set out by the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre) at the Institute of Education, and discussed by Gough, Oliver and Thomas (2012). The addition of the reference to 'literature' in the terminology used in this study rather than simply referring to systematic reviews highlights the qualitative nature of the vast majority of the data and method of analysis in this thesis. It should also be noted that this study refers to systematic literature reviews in the plural, as three separate systematic literature reviews have been conducted, one for publications in English, one for publications in Finnish and one for publications in French.

Systematic reviews, or meta analyses as referred to by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) are often undertaken in relation to quantitative research, but the processes and principles can also be useful in providing more rigour and structure for reviewing research that is more qualitative in nature, as in this study. A guiding principle for conducting systematic reviews is systematically applying the decided criteria to determine which literature should be included and consistently assessing the quality and relevance of the literature (EPPI-Centre, 2007). A key advantage in the use of systematic reviews is that the data is not provoked by the researcher, and that it can describe the state of published research in the field. This EPPI-Centre guiding principle of systematically applying the pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria when searching and reviewing literature has been adhered in undertaking the systematic literature reviews in this study. Aside from the terminology in referring to systematic *literature* reviews, and specifically referring to systematic literature reviews in the plural, the main difference in how this method is applied in this study arises from the EPPI-Centre's (2007) conceptualisation of synthesis as one distinct stage in the process. In the EPPI-Centre approach, synthesis is summarising the details and results of the studies by other researchers that have been reviewed. In this study, this stage is conceptualised as fitting with the broader stage of analysis of data including analysis of findings from the expert interviews that complement the

systematic literature reviews. The steps to systematic literature reviews followed in this study are now described in detail.

Steps in systematic literature reviews

Broadly following the guidelines for systematic reviews set out by the EPPI-Centre (2007), the systematic literature review process undertaken here can be broken down into the following four steps that are discussed in this section one by one:

- 1) Defining the conceptual framework and the inclusion and exclusion criteria;
- 2) Searching and screening publications;
- 3) Reviewing publications; and
- 4) Analysing findings

Step 1. Defining the conceptual framework and inclusion and exclusion criteria

The theoretical and methodological framework as presented in Chapter 2 is defined as the overarching conceptual framework for the systematic literature reviews. For ease of reference, the inclusion and exclusion criteria are listed below first as bullet points, followed by more detailed explanations of these criteria and how they were applied.

The inclusion criteria for publications

- Article in a peer-reviewed journal, book or chapter in an edited book
- Publication date between 1996-2011
- 'Apprenticeship' as a key word in the publications in English
- 'Apprenticeship' (Fr. *Apprentissage*) as a word in the body of publications in French
- 'Apprenticeship' (Fi. *Oppisopimuskoulutus*) or 'Vocational Education' (Fi. *Ammatillinen koulutus*) as a key word in the publications in Finnish

The exclusion criteria for publications

- Publications that focus on apprenticeship in countries other than at least one of the study countries
- Publications examining a time period clearly outside of the defined study period
- Publications focusing solely on continuing vocational education

- Publications focusing on initial vocational education with minimal reference to apprenticeship
- Publications in French focusing on 'Alternation' (Fr. *Alternance*)

To ensure that the size of the research domain remained manageable only journal articles and books published in the last sixteen years (1996-2011) were selected. Whilst the screening of research literatures started mid-year 2011, further searches were undertaken in early 2012 to ensure that publications in late 2011 were also included.

A pilot search was undertaken using 'apprenticeship' as the key word using Education Resource Information Centre (ERIC) bibliographic database. This indicated that the number of potentially relevant publications using only this key word and the relevant publication period was manageable in terms of screening for relevant literature in English. Pilot searches using more precise criteria, e.g. 'apprenticeship and young people' generated a relatively small number of references and excluded a number of key publications that had already been identified as relevant from the background reading undertaken to define the theoretical framework for the study. The pilot search also indicated that there were far fewer publications in English focusing on apprenticeships or vocational education in Finland or France than in England. This justified my decision to conduct separate systematic literature reviews in English, Finnish and French. My linguistic abilities enabled access to relevant research findings in the three languages, and minimised the potential for concepts being 'lost in translation' when the context for the use of a particular concept may differ from one country to another, partly due to cultural and intellectual traditions (Jobert, Marry and Tanguy, 1997, p.1).

The three systematic literature reviews were conducted in tandem. To focus on systematic literature reviews in the plural meant that the inclusion and exclusion criteria other than the year of publication had to be separately defined in the three languages. For the English literature review the search criteria for inclusion was 'apprenticeship' as a key word in the publication, with exclusion criteria being applied during screening of the literature to exclude literature that focused on examination of apprenticeship systems in countries other than at least one of the study countries, research examining a period of apprenticeship clearly falling outside of the study

period and research solely focusing on continuing vocational education rather than initial vocational education and apprenticeship.

A direct translation of these inclusion and exclusion criteria into Finnish and French was found not to be a robust approach to generating comparable data. In French the direct translation of apprenticeship is '*apprentissage*,' which also means 'the process of learning' resulting in a multitude of education research references that are not directly relevant for research on apprenticeship. For example, a search using the French academic literature online portal '*Portail de Revues Scientifiques en Sciences Humaines et sociales*' (*Persee*) with '*apprentissage*' as a key word within the education and education-related journals contained within the database (with journal titles *Histoire de l'éducation*, *Revue des sciences de l'éducation*, *Revue française de pédagogie*, *Économie et Statistique* and *Revue française de sociologie*) generated over 1200 references, most of which related to '*apprentissage*' as a learning process. The inclusion criteria in French was consequently narrowed to '*apprentissage*' as being referred to within the body of the article, which generated still a large, but a more manageable number of under 700 references. The exclusion criteria applied in the screening of the literature in French were the same as those applied in the screening of research literature in English with an additional exclusion criterion in French for literature specifically focusing on 'alternation' (Fr. *Alternance* – see discussion of this concept in Chapter 4, section 4.2), as this literature relates to work-placement type concept of apprenticeships than the notions of apprenticeships relevant in this study (see Chapter 1, section 1.4 for the definition of apprenticeship).

The inclusion criteria in the systematic literature review in Finnish were in contrast broader than for the literature reviews in English or in French. 'Apprenticeship' in Finnish translates to '*oppisopimuskoulutus*,' which used on its own as a key word in a search through the Finnish online bibliographic database '*ARTO artikkelitietokanta*' produces only a handful of references. A search that also incorporated 'vocational education' (Fi. *ammattillinen koulutus*) as a key word generated more relevant literature in numbers that were still manageable for screening. This suggested that the field of research was much smaller in terms of numbers of publications in Finland than in England or in France, but also that the literature identified was potentially more likely to examine apprenticeship education as only one aspect of vocational education rather than using it as a primary research focus.

Step 2. Searching and screening publications

The first round of the systematic literature searches were run using the three online databases already mentioned (ERIC for literature in English, *Persee* for literature in French and *Arto* for literature in Finnish). Online databases were used for ease of access given the constraints of this study and nature of the study as personally funded by the researcher, which limited the time available for physical access to library facilities in Finland and in France. This aspect of the research strategy is obviously limited by the robustness and consistency in the use of key words in the online databases and the publications they draw on (Oakley, Gough, Oliver and Thomas, 2005). This problem was however at least partially addressed by conducting multiple rounds of searches as described below.

The ERIC database focuses specifically on education research, whilst *Arto* includes academic research in Finnish more broadly. *Persee* contains a selection of academic research from refereed journals, more of which are being progressively made available. As both *Persee* and *Arto* only contain references to academic journal articles, the first round of searching was complemented by a second round of searching using the French national library catalogue (*Bibliothèque nationale de France*), the French higher education and research library catalogue (*Le Catalogue du Système Universitaire de Documentation*) and the Finnish university library catalogue (HELKA) to generate references to other types of relevant publications such as books and chapters in edited books. The Institute of Education library catalogue was also searched for literature in English and in French. The same inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied in the second round as had been respectively used in the different languages in the first round.

A third round of searching was undertaken by drawing on references from bibliographical lists in publications already identified as relevant from the earlier rounds of searches, and by hand-searching journals that were considered to contain potentially relevant articles (e.g. 'Journal of Vocational Education and Training' and '*Formation Emploi*,' a French journal focusing on training and the labour market). This third round of searching was important in ensuring that all relevant publications were screened for relevance, particularly where slightly different terminology or key words may have been used from the inclusion criteria. In this third round of searching, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied less stringently. Consequently a number of published research reports and discussion papers

meeting the inclusion and exclusion criteria were added to the list of publications to be reviewed.

Step 3. Reviewing publications

The titles of publications were often not sufficient to determine whether the inclusion criteria were met, and locating and screening the main content of the publications was time-consuming, yet crucial in this process. Following the multiple rounds of searching and screening, the publications that had been found were then reviewed in more detail, and assessed in terms of their quality and relevance. A number of publications were excluded at this stage as upon closer examination they focused, for example solely on continuing vocational education (see list of exclusion criteria in step 1 above). A number of very short journal articles or research reports were also excluded upon closer examination as they were deemed not to attain the threshold of quality, for example with respect to internal validity, met by the other publications that were reviewed. Publications considered as duplicates, that is, where a journal article was identified to be very similar in content to a chapter in edited book, were excluded with only the edited book publication included in the analysis. A number of French publications focusing on returns to education approaches to apprenticeship research were also excluded at this stage. A selection of this type of quantitative research was considered to suffice for the purposes of this thesis as an indication of the strength of this research culture, given that detailed review and analysis of these studies would necessitate a distinct quantitative focus beyond the scope of this thesis.

Step 4. Analysing findings

The EPPI-Centre guidance (2007) on systematic reviews refers to synthesising findings. In this thesis, synthesising findings is seen as one part of analysing the findings. As the same processes of thematic analysis, synthesis and comparative analysis are in this thesis applied to data generated both from the systematic literature reviews and from the expert interviews, the processes of analysis are presented in the section 3.6 after a description of the final list of publications that were analysed, and a discussion of the expert interviews and the use of statistical data.

The final list of publications

The final list of publications generated from the three systematic literature reviews that was analysed included a total of 36 publications on the English apprenticeship system, 10 on the Finnish apprenticeship system and 18 on the French

apprenticeship system (see section 4.5, Chapter 4 for the publications reviewed by theme). This final list included books, chapters in edited books, articles published in a variety of academic journals in English, French and Finnish and a small number of research report type publications. The publications generated from the systematic literature review in English consistently focused on apprenticeships as an area of research, whilst the Finnish and French publications were more likely to discuss apprenticeships as only one aspect of the research, e.g. as a component element of vocational education.

The final list included 21 journal articles in English, 17 of which had been written by UK-based researchers, three by Finnish researchers and one by a team including a French researcher. There were further 12 journal articles published in French and one in Finnish. Six of the journal articles in English were published in *Journal of Education and Work*, further six in *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, two in *Oxford Review of Education* and one each in *Educational Philosophy & Theory*, *Educational Research*, *Human Resource Management Journal*, *International Journal of Training and Development*, *National Institute Economic Review*, *Swiss Journal of Sociology and Work*, *Employment and Society*. Three of the journal articles in French were published in *Formation Emploi*, further three in *Revue Française de Pédagogie*, a French education research journal and in *Economie et statistique*, a French economics and statistics journal; and one each in *Education Permanente*, a French journal on adult and community education, *L'Année Sociologique*, a French sociology journal and *Education et Sociétés*, a French sociology of education journal. The one journal article in Finnish was published in *Aikuiskasvatus*, a Finnish journal specialising in adult education.

The sample also included three books published in Finnish, two in English and two in French. One further book in English was co-edited by a Finnish researcher. There were also chapters within edited books in English; 12 by UK-based researchers focusing on the UK or England, three by French researchers and further two by Finnish researchers. Finally, the sample included five research reports focused on the English context.

The date range of publications

Over the period reviewed (1996-2011), there were one to four publications by UK-based academics most years, with a peak of eight publications in 2011 related to an edited publication specifically focusing on the English apprenticeship system. The

publications by French researchers peaked in 2000, with three journal articles attributable to a special issue in *Revue Française de Pédagogie*. The publications by Finnish researchers were packed at the beginning of the time period with one to three publications every year from 1997 to 2002, but only one in 2007 after that. These publication patterns can be partly explained by the continued interest in apprenticeships and its presence in policy discourse in England and France, whilst there is relatively less policy discourse around apprenticeships in Finland that would stimulate research interest in this area. The publication period of the vast majority of the publications by Finnish researchers between 1997 and 2002 could be explained by a research interest in the analysis of the 1990s recession and its aftermath in Finland. Research on apprenticeships fits in with this interest in Finland, as it is largely seen as an approach of re-engagement into the education and work pathways for 16-18 year olds.

The foci of publications analysed

Only in the case of publications by UK-based researchers, did the clear majority of publications focus exclusively on apprenticeships. Whilst also discussing apprenticeships, a significant number of the publications by French researchers, and the majority of publications by Finnish researchers examined apprenticeships as part of wider phenomena, e.g. as a mode of vocational education in contrast with other modes of vocational education, or as one possible transition route for young people into the labour market.

Whilst the vast majority of the publications in England focused exclusively in apprenticeship, it should be noted that in the context of the literature on England, the references to 'apprenticeship' denoted a number of different things rather than the relatively homogeneous notion it seemed to have in the publications on Finland and France. The publications on the English context prior to 2004 tended to refer to 'Modern Apprenticeships', which was the name of the government funded apprenticeship scheme from 1994 until its rebranding as 'Apprenticeships' in 2004. Writing after the rebranding, Ryan, Gospel and Lewis (2006, p.362) make a point of distinguishing between 'Apprenticeship' (upper case) as the government funded programme and 'apprenticeship' (lower case), which they define as "training that aims at an intermediate (levels 3-5) skill and combines work-based learning, off-the-job training and technical education, whether publicly funded or not". Ryan et al's (Ibid) definition includes bespoke apprenticeship programmes operated by employers without public funding and excludes level 2 apprenticeships as they that feel this

better captures the essence of apprenticeship programmes run by large employers. The different meanings given to apprenticeship in England are further discussed in the subsequent chapters.

3.4 Expert interviews

Rationale for the expert interviews

Interviews with an academic expert in each of the three countries were undertaken to complement the systematic literature reviews. Methodologically this could be seen as a type a sense checking of the data that had already been generated (Breakwell, 1995). Academic experts were chosen as the interviewees given that the systematic literature reviews focused on academic research, and academic experts as active experienced researchers were best placed to provide a live perspective on the published research, and its context in the three study countries. For the purposes of this study, country-specific academic experts are defined as university academics with strong research interests in training and skills, and more particularly in the area of apprenticeship in one of the study countries. Interviews were chosen over questionnaires, as the interview method is more likely to provide an environment for data generation that enables dialogue rather than a one-way communication between the respondent and the researcher. The researcher can thus clarify any issues with the respondent during the interview to ensure that the messages conveyed by the respondent are captured as accurately as possible by the researcher. One-to-one interviews also afford confidentiality rules to be more securely established and consequently maintained than, for example focus groups. A key limitation of interviews as a method however arises from their nature as a performance with the interviewees potentially attempting to play a particular role or to give a particular impression to the interviewee. The threat to validity of the research arising from this is minimised by the use of interviews as a complementary method in this study rather than relying solely on interviews. Issues of validity are discussed in more detail in section 3.7.

Purposive interview sample

The sample for the interviews was a purposive, information-rich sample (Wengraf, 2001). Potential expert interviewees were identified through the systematic literature reviews, as well from discussions with the supervisory team at the Institute of Education. The potential experts identified were approached requesting an interview with the aim of completing at least one interview in each country, with the final sample depending on the initial interviewees' agreement and availability. Further

interviews were planned should the data generated from these three interviews not reach what Robson (2002) refers to as a saturation point. Two of the three academic experts initially approached were interviewed with one of the academic experts declining. A second potential academic expert for that country was then approached and agreed to be interviewed, completing the small sample of one interview per country.

The choice of study informants can be criticised for what Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to as elite bias. The expert interviewees were identified from the research literature as specialists in this field, and as frequently published authors can be seen to represent the higher-status researchers rather than lower status researchers who may also be researching in this field, but may not have yet amassed a track record of publications.

From the systematic literature reviews, it was already evident that there is surprisingly little research that related to the research topic being published by Finnish and French researchers. Consequently, the potential pool of interviewees in these countries was already very small. Furthermore, given the constraints of an EdD thesis, it was not possible to expand the potential pool of interviewees by identifying, sampling and interviewing academic researchers who may be researching the topic, but not yet published in the theme of apprenticeships or initial vocational education. In England, the potential pool of published academic experts on the subject was significantly wider, but in practice this was also limited by the need to keep the supervisory and advisory panel arrangements at my home university separate from the fieldwork for the thesis, as this would not have been ethically sound.

The three initial interviews generated rich data that complemented the findings from the systematic literature reviews. The expert interview findings were similar to the findings from the respective systematic literature reviews for each country. The one key area in which they differed was that the expert interviews provided more information on the relationship between apprenticeship research and policy in the three countries. This did not contradict any of the findings from the literature reviews, but brought more depth to the data. Consequently, the data generated from the three expert interviews seemed sufficient to addressing my research questions as contributory data in the thesis, and no further interviews were carried out.

The interview process

The list of indicative questions covering the issues and topics to be discussed in the interviews that was sent to the interviewees is included in the appendix as document 1. The theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2, and the emerging findings from the systematic literature reviews informed these indicative questions. Given the relative paucity of publications relating to aspects of apprenticeship research and research cultures, the expert interviews also included specific questions on the characterisation of apprenticeship research in the three countries. The type of the interviews that were conducted is best described as following the interview guide approach, whereby the topics and issues covered are prepared in advance with the interviewer deciding on the sequence and wording of the questions during the interview (Patton 1989 cited in Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2007). As such, the indicative interview schedule contained open-ended questions that could be asked in any sequence depending on the flow of the conversation. The aim was to “allow the [interviews] to develop as a result of the exchange with the respondent” (Breakwell, 1995, p.231). This gave the interviewees the opportunity to decide how much or how little they wanted to say, making the interviewees feel more in control of the interview situation and consequently more at ease. Furthermore, the flow of exchange between the interviewer and the interviewee could bring out pertinent issues and findings that the interviewer could not have predicted in advance (Eskola and Vastamäki, 2001). This format of the interviews enabled rich interview data to be generated. The indicative questions covering the list of topics and issues to be discussed was sent to the interviewees in advance to give them the opportunity for reflection prior to the actual interview. All of the topics and issues that were identified in advance were discussed at length in each of the interviews, with the interviewer also engaging in some probing to ensure complete understanding of the responses, and to follow up on some of the additional points the interviewees raised.

All of the interviews were undertaken face-to-face and lasted from 50 minutes to 105 minutes. The interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. The interviewees were subsequently sent a copy of the transcript of their interview should they wish modify any aspects of it before the transcript was analysed. Transcription of the interviews was a lengthy process, but a necessary stage in rendering the resulting data more easily comparable given that the interview data consisted of transcripts in different languages. Analysis of the interviews was initially done separately in the three languages to ensure that the conceptual frameworks of the languages were kept intact. Only once the interview transcripts had been broken down into the themes

that had emerged were these translated and analysed for comparative elements (see section 3.6).

3.5 Use of statistical data

Drawing on the example of Green, Wolf and Leney's (1999) study, the original research plan for this thesis included a comparison of macro-economic indicators and statistical data on apprenticeships in the three countries. However, it quickly became apparent that European or international sources, such as Eurostats and UNESCO Institute for Statistics do not publish comparable data specifically on apprenticeships for the 16-18 age group. Some comparable data is available on upper secondary vocational education (vocational streams within ISCED level 3), which includes apprenticeship, but is not broken down specifically on apprenticeships. OECD's (2010) review of vocational education commented on the poor availability of data for this sector of education, particularly for data that can be reliably compared across countries, so it seems that the problem is wider than just affecting apprenticeship data. It was consequently not possible to undertake analysis of statistical data within the constraints of this thesis, as this would have necessitated the development and gathering of new comparable data on apprenticeships specifically for the 16-18 age group.

Furthermore, national differences in how the data on apprenticeships is defined and measured mean that the limited data that is available directly from the study countries is not readily comparable. Statistical comparisons on the basis of data from individual countries have to be constructed carefully. As Bainbridge and Murray (2000, p. 107) assert:

...distinction between alternance schemes and other forms of vocational training in which workplace training is involved is by no means clear-cut - differences in the relative scale of the two between countries, as reported in statistics may therefore be the result as much of classification differences as of real differences in the kinds of programme in place

A significant element of interpretation has therefore been necessary to render the available data comparable. Comparison of official statistical data is consequently only used in this thesis to provide an overview of the scale and the scope of apprenticeship programmes for 16-18 year olds in the three countries. This overview is presented in Chapter 1 (see section 1.5).

The main sources of data on apprenticeships in this study are the individual countries' statistical services or education departments: The Data Service and National Statistics for England; Statistics Finland (Fi. *Tilastokeskus*) for Finland; and the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (Fr. *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques*) and the French Ministry of Education (Fr. *Ministère de L'Éducation nationale*) for France. The data that is presented relates to 2010/11, which is the latest academic year for which finalised comparable data is available. Eurostats (2012) data is also used in this thesis to provide information on, for example, comparative education expenditure and participation rates of 18 year olds in education in the three countries that provide insights in the analysis.

3.6 Analysis

Thematic analysis

The original research plan for this study suggested that analysis of the publications and the expert interviews would be undertaken using a software package. Following further investigation, computer-aided analysis seemed to generate more complications than solutions for addressing the research questions in this thesis, given that data in the three different languages would need to be analysed separately. Paper-based methods of analysis were consequently used and analysis of the publications generated from the systematic literature reviews and the interview transcripts was initially undertaken using thematic analysis. The findings from the thematic analysis are presented in Chapter 4.

Thematic analysis is in this study understood as “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was at first undertaken separately in each language. All of the publications written in Finnish related to the Finnish context, and all the publications written in French related to the French context. As such the analysis of the Finnish publications was first undertaken in Finnish, and the analysis of the French publications was then undertaken in French. The small number of publications written in English that related either to the Finnish or the French context were analysed last, and in a sense ‘added’ onto the codes that had already been constructed in Finnish and in French. This was to ensure a more balanced representation of the concepts and terminology that is present in the three languages rather than by instant translation into English that would immediately introduce an

Anglo-Saxon bias to the analysis. The publications written in English that related to the English/UK context were analysed last.

The publications were initially read and re-read to familiarise with their content and the style and 'feel' of the documents. From these multiple rounds of reading, some obvious codes, e.g. 'parity of esteem' began to emerge, which were then noted against the relevant sentences or passages of text. All the publications were then read through again with each passage being identified with at least one code. These codes were then compared and deliberated upon after which categories by theme were constructed. These themes emerged from the codes, and I allowed these themes to emerge rather than attempting to fit them in any predefined categories. The emergent categories that I found would of course have been shaped by my previous reading and other influences.

In coding and categorising of sentences and passages, I was also reflecting on the potential purposes of the authors and the authenticity of the views, facts and perspectives they were offering. This was even more important in the analysis of the interview transcripts, as the interview as a dialogue constructed jointly by the interviewer and the interviewee, is subject to influences of, for example social norms of politeness and conviviality with the interviewees potentially preferring to discuss the issues in the light they perceived the interviewer to wish to approach them. These considerations had an impact on how different sentences, passages and entire publications were weighted in the synthesis of the findings.

The thematic categories that emerged from the publications were then examined for coherence and for interconnectedness. It was to be expected that some key passages would fit into more than one category, and there was some trial and error involved in making the emergent categories coherent. A number of emergent themes were, for example collapsed into one on closer examination. The thematic categories from the publications in the three languages were then jointly examined. An element of trial and error was again involved in producing sufficiently coherent categories in English as the reporting language.

A similar process was followed for the analysis of the interview transcripts. The thematic categories that had emerged from the publications were used as predetermined categories as on the basis of initial readings of the interview transcripts, these categories seemed to represent the data well. As has already

been mentioned, the main differences in the data generated from the two methods related to the interview transcripts placing a stronger emphasis on the role of research, policy and practice.

The three broad thematic categories that are presented in the next chapter (Chapter 4) consequently reflect findings from thematic analysis of both the systematic literature reviews and the expert interviews. Documents 2 and 3 in the appendix provide an illustration of the thematic analysis that has been undertaken in this thesis. Document 1 is a short coded extract from a publication that was reviewed and Document 2 is a brief extract from an interview transcript. The discussion in Chapter 4 identifies where particular themes or strands of themes emerged in only one or two countries, and where the expert interview transcripts differed from the research literature.

Synthesis of thematic findings

In this thesis, synthesis is seen as the stage of analysis at which the findings from the systematic literature reviews and the expert interviews subjected to thematic analysis are brought together to be presented as findings. In presenting the findings from the systematic literature reviews for example, the aim in this thesis is not to attempt to present a critical review of all the publications to the same extent. Instead, systematic criteria have been used in the process of synthesis to reduce the data from the systematic literature reviews and the expert interviews to present findings that are most relevant to addressing the research questions in this thesis.

The EPPI-Centre (2007) suggests that three dimensions; appropriateness of research design, quality of execution of design (e.g. quality of reporting, expertise of researcher, quality of theory or interpretation generated from study including authenticity) and centrality of focus of study to review question should be considered in weighting studies in the synthesis of the findings. In many cases, information on all of these dimensions was not available, and as the researcher I had to make assessments and judgements on the basis of limited information. The logic of systematically considering these dimensions was however rigorously followed through. A number of questions, in particular relating to study quality and authenticity of various types of government or EU-sponsored evaluations and assessments included within the systematic literature review from searches in round three arose from this process. Whilst the presentation of thematic findings in the Chapter 4 is fully representative of the findings from the systematic literature reviews

and the expert interviews, the emphasis in the discussion is on publications that were deemed to be of strong quality and authenticity. Insights and excerpts from the expert interviews are also used to strengthen, or to illustrate particular findings from the publications, and also to demonstrate issues of relevance to active researchers within the three country contexts. It should be emphasised that the presentation of findings from the comparative analysis in Chapter 5 builds on the thematic findings discussed in Chapter 4.

Comparative analysis

Through the processes involved, thematic analysis tends to bring elements of the data together where there are similarities in meaning. The comparative analysis presented in Chapter 5 instead explores the data drawing on the approach to comparison discussed in Chapter 2 (see section 2.4). Comparative analysis in respect of the first research question on uniqueness of the cases identifies the differences in the contexts for apprenticeship in the three countries in terms of the three dimensions discussed in Chapter 2 (the wider education system, the institutional frameworks and societal values). Comparative analysis of the thematic findings presented in Chapter 4 then addresses the second research question by highlighting the areas of convergence and divergence in apprenticeship education research and policy in the three countries. The implications for policy and further research relating to the third research question then emerge from these findings with respect to the first and the second research questions. The comparative analysis is qualitative with some comparable official statistical data on apprenticeships and the wider education systems included to illustrate relevant points. The discussion now turns to aspects of validity and reliability of research in relation to this thesis.

3.7 Validity and reliability of research

Focus on internal validity

Robson (2002, p.176) suggests that, “there is no foolproof way of *guaranteeing* validity”. Rather there are a number of different strategies that can be used to deal with threats to validity and reliability of qualitative research. In this thesis various strategies have been used at different stages of the research in an attempt to improve the validity and reliability of the research. It should be highlighted that the concern here is with internal validity, rather than external validity, defined as generalisability beyond the study, as explicit theory generation is outside the scope of this thesis.

Benefits of combining systematic literature reviews with expert interviews

In choosing the methods for this study, the combination of systematic literature reviews of published research, complimented by a small number of expert interviews was decided upon for a number of reasons. First, using Denzin's (1988) terminology, this is a type of data triangulation, which reduces the threat to validity by helping to minimise the impact of respondent bias and the researcher effects, that is the researcher bias and also the researcher's presence as having an impact on the data that is gathered. The benefit of gathering data by different means is to provide a mechanism built into the research design for questioning initial findings from one research stream on the basis of findings from another stream, as well as helping to contextualise these.

Second, a focus on published research enables a historical perspective to be adopted by enabling access to 'snapshots' of the kind of research that is undertaken in its original form, without any editing with the benefit of hindsight or collective amnesia. This improves the reliability of the research and its validity, as there is no respondent bias that is introduced from undertaking the research. Furthermore, as the majority of the data used in this study already exists in an accessible form, it also provides a kind of an audit trail for others to check the reliability of the study. This links with Miles and Huberman's (1994) criteria of confirmability and auditability of research in their practical list of criteria of good or valid research.

Third, complementing the use of systematic literature reviews with expert interviews brings 'live voices' to the data findings, enabling the researcher to question the validity of the data already gathered in dialogue with researchers currently engaging in research in the field (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Robson (2002, p.175) suggests that triangulation "opens up possibilities of discrepancies and disagreements among the different sources" but in this exploratory research, the disagreements between the different sources rather enriched the findings and made the data more credible. In the analysis of the data, the potential sources for these disagreements were examined and coherent explanations were arrived at, revealing close similarities in the findings from the systematic literature reviews and the expert interviews. These similarities in the findings from triangulated data suggest a degree of authenticity in the findings drawing on another criteria from Miles and Huberman's (1994) list of criteria of good or valid research.

By focusing on published academic research rather than, for example on official policy documents, the study is able to escape confinement within hegemonic discourse. Academic research can contain multiple voices, multiple discourses and more criticality, which potentially generates more rich data than official policy documents that are likely to be dominated by hegemonic discourses. Analysis of academic research can also enable the researcher to get closer to the reality (or the realities) and the practices in different countries, rather than analysis of policy documents, which already in their purposes are more about the rhetoric than the reality. This is not to say that academic research publications are devoid of rhetoric or that they always reflect the reality, but that they can enable the researcher to gather rich, authentic and valid data and in the process also contribute to existing knowledge through a synthesis of research. As such, the chosen methods work well in comparative research. The relevance of examining academic research in comparative studies is justified as follows by Jobert, Marry and Tanguy (1997, p.2):

This work represents a stage in research that involves describing the contours of the research field in a given country, identifying the principal research questions and fields of research, reflecting on the categories and the terminology used. This is, in our opinion, a vital step for the development of comparative research

The focus on published research also gives the researcher a stronger handle for determining comparative criteria for data gathering from a practical and time-efficient perspective, as it is relatively easier to, for example to fine-tune the search criteria by trial and error than it would, for example if a comparative sample of institutional educations was being constructed, where getting consent for interviews or use of documentation would be more difficult to orchestrate and more time-consuming.

Further strategies to minimise the threat to validity were used in later stages of the research. In the expert interviews, the interview guide approach helped to minimise the researcher effects of directing respondents' thinking. The purpose of the interview and what I intended to do with the interview accounts was also explained to the interviewees at length, both in the email requesting an interview and prior to the start of the interview. These practices sought to minimise the researcher effect introducing respondent bias from misunderstandings of the aims of the research or how the data would be handled. I also sought to minimise verbal input and non-verbal cues, but still at a level to maintain good rapport. Furthermore, the three interviews were recorded and fully transcribed to enhance the validity of the

description they provided of the interview account. A full transcript from the interview was also sent to each interviewee for checking, and to ensure that the final account of the interview represented the views they had wanted to express. Robson (2002) refers to this strategy as member checking, which reduces the impact of researcher and respondent bias.

The web of interpretations

In the analysis of the publications and the expert interviews the impact of the subjective point of view that was being presented had to be taken into account. My view is that there is no data 'out there' that is simply waiting to be collected. It is rather the researcher in constructing his/her theoretical framework and in defining the research questions, who plays an active part in the generation of the data from what he/she sees as relevant for their study and in the data analysis. Furthermore, in the case of this study, I am not the only person involved in the generation of data for the study. The reviewed publications are the products of other researchers, who have in their turn generated data they saw as relevant to their study and interpreted it as they saw fit. The expert interviewees are also active researchers in the field, basing their expertise on the data they have in their career generated and interpreted, and constructing their views in the dialogue of the interview. Drawing on Giddens' (1976) concept of the double hermeneutic, some of the analysis of the findings in this study could be described as involving a triple hermeneutic. Where publications included in the thematic analysis are based on primary research, e.g. interviews with employers, the analysis is in fact my interpretation of the author's interpretation of the reality for the employer who was interviewed for the publication. Consequently in the analysis of the study findings, an attempt been made to disentangle this complex web of interpretation and interpretation based on interpretation to minimise the threat to validity.

As I have already indicated, this thesis is not undertaken as a search for an objective reality of the meaning of apprenticeship in the study countries. Rather, the study is aligned within the view that "subjectivity is seen as a crucial and a positive component of research" (Mottier, 2005). Nevertheless, it is important to deconstruct some of the subjectivities contained within the findings (Fontana and Frey, 1994). Miles and Huberman's (1994) notion of an audit trail best describes the strategy used in this thesis to minimise the threat to validity in the analysis of the findings that arises from the complex web of interpretations. Keeping an audit trail of how the various interpretations of the findings were reached, and systematically returning to

this audit trail and modifying it as necessary, has helped to ensure that the findings arrived at logically follow from the data gathered.

Accessibility of research

The plan for the dissemination of the research in academic journals and in summary form to policy-makers in the European arena of apprenticeship and vocational education follows Miles and Huberman's (1994) criteria of good research as considering the application of the research and its transferability or external validity. The wide range of dissemination channels that are envisaged seeks to make the research findings and recommendations accessible to the intended audience. Furthermore, the style and content will be tailored to suit the intended audience in the different instances. 'Thick description' from the findings will be included to aid "readers to assess the potential transferability [and] appropriateness for their own settings" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.279).

3.8 Ethical issues

In undertaking the research, British Educational Research Association's (BERA) 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research' (2004) were followed. No significant ethical concerns were foreseen in the first stages of the research process, as secondary data sources were used for the review of official statistical data and the systematic literature reviews. The main ethical considerations relevant in these stages of the research revolved around ensuring quality of research through appropriate use of research methods, sound analysis and balanced presentation of findings.

The expert interviews involved other people directly as research participants, and as such the ethical concerns were more significant at this stage of the research. Drawing on the BERA guidelines (Ibid), voluntary informed consent from the interviewees was sought and the right of any participant to withdraw from the study at any point was recognised. Participants were explained that that the interviews would be recorded for ease of transcription, but also that each interviewee would be given an opportunity to edit the transcript relating to their interview prior to its use in the study. Only one of the expert interviewees took up this opportunity, making very minor corrections to what I had misheard in the transcription of the interview. Whilst confidentiality was offered to interviewees, it was discussed that as experts in the field they might be indirectly identified from the references made in the study or by inference. Two of the expert interviewees unprompted stated that they were

comfortable with being identified. For the sake of consistency, none of the expert interviewees have not, however, been named in this study. Efforts have also been made to edit out any parts of the interview transcripts that might be easily attributable to any of the expert interviewees. The discussion now turns to reflections on the process of undertaking comparative research.

3.9 The comparative research experience

From the experience of undertaking systematic literature reviews in English, Finnish and French it is evident that literal translations should not be relied upon to produce comparable research results. The most obvious example from the discussion of the methodological processes in this chapter is the multiplicity of meaning of the French word for apprenticeship, which if used in a literature search without reflection could swamp the researcher with studies that would most likely relate to education, but not necessarily to apprenticeships. There are tools, such as the CEDEFOP (2009) European Training Thesaurus that can help with translating key terminology and concepts, but it seems that cross-referencing terminology and concepts against those used in relevant comparative studies, and in relevant studies in the different languages of interest, is also necessary if any degree of comparative validity is to be achieved.

Oakley (2003, p.27) suggests that the “relatively low yield of usable studies” is a common finding in undertaking systematic reviews. This has also been the case in this study, although the painstaking process of searching for relevant publications proved to be much more frustrating in undertaking the systematic literature reviews in Finnish and in French than in English. This was because the systematic literature review in English, whilst very time-consuming, generated more relevant literature and was easier to access. Already from the initial stages of searching in Finnish, it was evident that there were fewer relevant publications, but the process of confirming this, and identifying further relevant publications in related fields was a lengthy process, wrought with complications. Similar difficulties, although of smaller magnitude, and more related to access to library resources, were encountered in the systematic literature review in French. These difficulties generated significant doubts and concerns about the purpose, the usefulness and the validity of the research. Whilst such doubts and concerns are undoubtedly an inevitable part of undertaking any research, perhaps particularly in the case of doctoral research, they highlight the potential of real or virtual networks of researchers interested in comparative research in providing support and advice on, for example, country-specific issues that may go

beyond the expertise area of the researcher's supervisory team and colleagues at their home institution.

Even if comparative validity in terms of terminology, concepts and findings is reached, reporting of the findings can also present dilemmas of validity and representation. In this study, systematic literature reviews and expert interviews have been undertaken, and the findings initially analysed in three different languages, whilst the thesis is written in English. Presenting the findings from the study in English by default results in a more 'Anglo-centric' perspective to this comparative study. For example, in referring to the concept of 'skill,' a concept which does not have a direct equivalent in French, and which has a narrower definition in its use in Finnish, an 'Anglo-centric' conceptual framework is being promoted. Furthermore, in reporting it is difficult to use concepts that do not have direct equivalents in English even though they may be very meaningful and useful in other languages, as their expression in English is likely to lead to more clumsy and wordy language. For example, the Finnish word '*sivistys*' is close in meaning to the German word '*bildung*,' but there is no direct equivalent in English for this word that could be translated as "education, civilisation, culture, cultivation, formation, self-formation, edification or development process" (Siljander, 2007, p.71). However, as Siljander (Ibid) asserts "none of these are sufficient enough to clearly explain the diverse concept of '*sivistys*'". This word is, however very useful in describing a key force in Finnish educational policy through history that has been an attempt to improve the educational and cultural standing of the population as a whole. Bringing together conceptual frameworks from different languages does nevertheless have the potential to generate novel perspectives and richer understanding of the phenomena being examined, but the complexities involved in this process should not be underestimated.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has described the methods used in this thesis and explained the methodological approaches that have been adopted to capture what is sometimes lost in translation in comparing apprenticeship systems. The main methods in this thesis are systematic literature reviews, complemented by an expert interview in each of the countries. The chapter has also explained the analytical tools used in this thesis including thematic analysis, synthesis of thematic findings and comparative analysis. The process of conducting systematic literature reviews and expert interviews in three languages as presented above has been insightful, but

also much more time consuming and lengthy than imagined at the start. This has been mainly due to the different conceptualisations of the terminology and the research fields in the different countries, but also because there isn't a strong base of similar comparative research on vocational education on which to build on as already highlighted in Chapter 2. The next chapter (Chapter 4) presents the thematic findings from this study.

CHAPTER 4 STUDY FINDINGS: THEMATIC FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents thematic findings from the study. These thematic findings provide background for discussion in Chapter 5 and begin to address the first two research questions about the unique features of the systems and the convergence and divergence in apprenticeship research and policy. The third research question about the implications for apprenticeship policy, practice and research arising from this comparative study three country contexts is addressed in Chapter 5.

Three thematic findings are presented in this chapter. These findings emerged from the thematic analysis and synthesis of the publications identified through the systematic literature reviews and the expert interview transcripts. The processes of thematic analysis and synthesis were described in Chapter 3. The three broad themes are:

1. Content and meaning of apprenticeship
2. Models of apprenticeship
3. Apprenticeship research cultures

Exploration of the theme of content and meaning, and the second theme of models of apprenticeship brings out the unique features of the respective apprenticeship systems and areas of divergence and convergence in apprenticeship research and policy. The findings relating to the third theme of apprenticeship research cultures provide further insight for the divergence in apprenticeship research.

These three themes and their sub-themes are discussed in this chapter one after another, highlighting the similarities and the differences in the study countries. This thematic discussion is complemented with country-specific summaries that bring together the key findings for each country at the end of the chapter. The country-specific summaries highlight the main strands of apprenticeship research in the three countries and provide a single point of reference for the sources in the discussion in this chapter. Full bibliographical references for all sources are provided in the list of references at the end of the thesis. Chapter 5 builds on the discussion of thematic findings in this chapter by presenting study findings from contextualised comparative analysis and responding to each of the research questions in turn.

4.2 Theme 1: Content and meaning of apprenticeship

Content and meaning emerged as a significant theme from the systematic literature reviews and the expert interviews in the three countries. Whilst the theme of content and meaning emerged from the publications in each of the study countries, there were differences in the policy and research discourses. The similarities and the differences between the study countries are highlighted in the below discussion presented in five sub-themes: types of apprenticeship learning, policy rhetoric and the reality of apprenticeship, unequal representation of women in apprenticeship, educational content of apprenticeship and school-to-work transitions.

Types of apprenticeship learning

The systematic literature reviews and the expert interviews show that there is academic debate around the definition of apprenticeship-type learning in England, Finland and France. In the Finnish context, Heikkinen, Kuusisto and Vesala (1997) highlight the extent of apprenticeship-type learning that might not be formally defined as an apprenticeship, suggesting that only around 20% of apprenticeship-type learning in Finland takes place within formal apprenticeships. For Heikkinen et al (Ibid), learning could be defined as apprenticeship-type learning on the basis of a number of different characteristics including the nature of the site of learning and the procedures of learning and teaching and financing.

The French expert interviewee suggested that the definitional boundaries of apprenticeship had blurred in France in recent years with terms such as 'alternation' (Fr. *alternance*) being often used interchangeably with 'apprenticeship' (Fr. *apprentissage*) by politicians and policy-makers. The French expert interviewee disagreed with this tendency to blur the boundaries, preferring to distinguish between apprenticeship as a position of formal employment coupled with a programme of education and training leading towards a qualification, and two possible types of alternation; alternation as work-placements for students, who are not employees in the formal sense, and alternation as a type of work trial or work familiarisation period aimed at (re-)integrating individuals back into the world of work.

In the English context, there is considerable debate amongst researchers about the appropriateness and relevance of the English apprenticeship framework that is currently called 'Apprenticeship'. The English expert interviewee suggested that there had been a lot of branding and re-branding of apprenticeships, and that all of what is currently branded as an apprenticeship does not fit with the understanding

that employers have of apprenticeship, or with the concept of apprenticeship as a model of learning. The English expert interviewee suggested that:

There have always been two levels of apprenticeship almost. You've got those Rolls Royces and all those other companies, and not just the big ones, small and medium sized enterprises as well, where the apprenticeship has followed that traditional kind of a model of apprenticeship. And that has always been almost a silent partner; they just keep chugging along and doing well.

This description of the English apprenticeship system as a two-tier system that has been branded as one highlights the contrast between the official policy rhetoric and the reality of apprenticeship as, for example reflected in the make-up of the apprentice population.

Policy rhetoric and the reality of apprenticeship

Tension between stakeholders who understand the meaning and purpose of apprenticeship or apprenticeship-type learning differently underlie this debate about the definition of what is an apprenticeship. There appears to be some disjoint between the official government policy rhetoric about apprenticeship and the reality of apprenticeship in all of the study countries, although the disjoint appears to be more significant in England and in France. In the French literature, this disjoint is explored in research into the make-up of the apprentice population, whilst in the English literature the emphasis is on critically evaluative policy research.

Apprenticeships can be seen to have entered the French arena of political debate following the Paris riots in 2005, when apprenticeships were suggested as one possible solution to preventing future rioting by disengaged young people. The French expert interviewee suggested that subsequently the promotion of apprenticeships has become enmeshed with the discourse that learning at the workplace is better than learning in educational settings, a discourse which in the French political arena has not been associated with either the left or the right, but has rather garnered support from both political spectrums. Tanguy (2005) documents the process of legitimisation of apprenticeship learning in the workplace as part of her discussion of the rise of the discourse of 'training' (*Fr. formation*) to rival the more inclusive discourse of education. The discourse that promotes the inherent merit of learning at the workplace is, however silent on the future of the vocational high schools that would clearly be marginalised should the apprenticeship at the workplace route be prioritised. In the view of the French expert interviewee it would,

however be unrealistic to expect all initial vocational education in France to be undertaken through the apprenticeship route, as there simply aren't enough employers offering apprenticeship places.

In an approach quite unique to the literatures identified through the systematic literature reviews, Moreau's (2000, 2008) research focuses on the apprentices themselves from their own perspective, and the characteristics of the apprentice population in France. Moreau (2000) characterises the contemporary French apprentice population as predominantly white and male with a relatively low share of female apprentices and apprentices from immigrant backgrounds, and finds that the demographics of apprentices have changed with more young people commencing apprenticeship slightly later. He suggests that the policy of opening up of apprenticeship to higher levels of education has been taken up by young people from relatively higher socio-economic groups, and that at the lower qualification levels, apprentices are increasingly young people from relatively more stable working class families, pushing young people from more marginalised backgrounds into other types of education and training. Moreau (2000) concludes that the progression pathways created within the French apprenticeship system do not function as envisaged, and that apprenticeship increasingly follows the logics of mainstream education establishment with hierarchical qualification levels, reinforcing young people's learning trajectories on the basis of their initial attainment levels. This is contrary to the official policy rhetoric of apprenticeship, which suggests that it can provide a pathway even for previously disengaged young people to progress to education and training at higher levels, and to higher levels of attainment. In research focusing on apprenticeship in large businesses, Kergoat (2007, 2011) similarly highlights the inherent inequalities in the operation of the French apprenticeship system.

In a later study exploring apprentices' motivations for becoming an apprentice, Moreau (2005) argues that there are clear patterns establishing, with young people either coming from a family with an enterprising tradition (e.g. entrepreneurs, independent salespeople or shopkeepers), having strong anti-intellectualist views or wanting to continue their studies, but also to earn some money to maintain the living standard of a 'young student' with the apprenticeship providing limited income. The French expert interviewee also commented that young people from families with enterprising traditions tend to do better in apprenticeship, and suggested that this was the result of social capital as conceptualised by Bourdieu, whereby the internalisation of the norms and socialisation into enterprise lead to children from

families with enterprising traditions outperforming their peers. The French expert interviewee also referred to regional variation in the popularity of the apprenticeship pathway suggesting that in some regions the tradition of apprenticeship is more embedded in the regional socio-economic structures than in others. This strand of research on the apprentice population in France highlights the uneven socio-economic and regional take-up of apprenticeship in contrast with the policy rhetoric that remains silent on the inherent and systematic nature of these inequalities.

In the English context, apprenticeships have also been seen as a potential solution to disengaged young people as evident in the political debates following the riots in August 2011. The English expert interviewee suggested that the recurrent cycle of changes in the apprenticeship system originated in different attempts to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment and training (NEET). Nevertheless, the share of young people not participating in education or employment amongst the 16-18 year olds continues to be relatively high. This is indicated by the relatively low share of 18 year olds who participate in education in the UK, which at 57.5% in 2010 compared poorly with the EU average of 79.1% participation in education by this cohort (Eurostats, 2012). Furthermore, given the high ratio of applicants to each apprenticeship vacancy (The Data Service, 2012b), employers are able to 'cherry-pick' the most promising apprentices on the basis of their academic and employment track record. This means that only a small minority of current 16-18 year old apprentices in England are likely to have been NEET prior to their start on the programme. Consequently, it is questionable whether the current apprenticeship programme can provide even a minor solution to the NEET problem.

There is also strong government policy rhetoric around apprenticeships as a solution to the relative lack of intermediate level skills in England that was put forward by the previous Labour Government, and more recently by the Coalition Government. This policy rhetoric is in contrast with the scale of apprenticeships that remains modest to date, particularly in relation to 16-18 year old apprentices (See Table 3, Chapter 1). Furthermore, the conflict of these two different aims of supporting disengaged young people, but also generating intermediate level vocational skills, is well documented in Steedman's (2011a) policy analysis paper. By attempting to simultaneously address both policy aims, it seems that little progress has been made in either.

Another area of potentially conflicting policy in the English context relates to the parity of esteem debate. Whilst this debate is not specific to apprenticeship, but

relates to vocational education more broadly, it is important to understanding the content and meaning of apprenticeship in England. For example, the English expert interviewee questioned the drive to achieve parity of esteem between academic and vocational education that is being promoted in government policy rhetoric. The interviewee suggested that the reality of the education system with its balance of interests reduces the likelihood of vocational education ever becoming a comparably viable route for young people as higher education to close to negligible. Given this reality, it might be more beneficial to treat academic and vocational education as distinct streams of education that should be valued in their own right rather than striving for equal value when they cannot be rendered comparable.

In the Finnish context, the contrast between the policy rhetoric and the reality of apprenticeship seems in comparison less pronounced. Peltomäki and Silvennoinen (1998) find that contrary to the official government policy rhetoric, in practice, the vast majority of apprentices in Finland are adults and that apprenticeship is becoming a mode of educating and training adults rather than young people. Employers interviewed as part of their research were reluctant to take on young people without the equivalent of what is a level 2 qualification in England as apprentices. This is reflected in the statistics referred to in Chapter 1 (see Table 3) showing that only 1% of all apprentices in Finland were 16-18 year olds in the 2010/11 academic year, a very low figure that has remained static over the study period 1996 to 2011. The Finnish expert interviewee however suggested that whilst the apprenticeship route is well regarded in continuing or adult vocational education, vocational high schools are seen as the preferential route in initial vocational education for pedagogical reasons, and that this pedagogical preference for school-based settings for learners under the age of 18 is reflected in government policy rhetoric. Consequently Kivinen and Peltomäki (1999, p.86) argue that apprenticeship “has long served as a type of ‘life belt’, supplementing institutional schooling, for those young people who do poorly in the normal school system”, reflecting its dual role as educational policy on the one hand, and social policy on the other hand. Apprenticeship for young people tends to be seen as constituting one part of a support package in their re-engagement rather than as a mode of education to be pursued purely for its own merits. This understanding of apprenticeship as a ‘life belt’ for young people is evident in Ahola and Kivelä’s (2007) study in the Turku and Salo regions, which focused on researching the re-engagement of disaffected young people in education, and included a number of apprentices in their sample. Apprentices were likely to have been included in the sample because they had either not applied for a place in

school-based post-compulsory secondary education or applied, but not accepted. The inclusion of apprentices in a sample of disaffected young people indirectly reveals the marginal status of apprenticeship for 16-18 year old within an education system that has a very high level of 18-year olds participating in education (93.6% in 2010, Eurostats, 2012) that is almost solely based in educational institutions. Consequently it seems that in the Finnish context, the contrast between the policy rhetoric and the reality of apprenticeship relates to the age of the typical apprentice, whilst in the hierarchy of policies, the rhetoric of apprenticeship as education and training for young people is overshadowed by the rhetoric of a pedagogical preference for more traditional school-based settings in the schooling of young people (Finnish expert interview). There are, however, some clear similarities in the make-up of the typical apprentice in the three countries, which are highlighted next.

Unequal representation of women in apprenticeship

Despite these differences in the policy rhetoric and the make-up of the apprentice population in the three countries, there are, however, some striking similarities in the apprenticeship populations by gender. As has already been identified in Moreau's (2000) research discussed earlier in this chapter, apprenticeship seems to predominantly be a pathway pursued by young men in France. This is also the case in England and in Finland. In England women make up nearly half of all 16-18 year old apprentices at ISCED level 2, but only 34% at level 3 (Data Service, 2012a, data for academic year 2010/11,). There are also sectoral differences with relatively more women undertaking apprenticeships in the service sectors, for example in retail and business and administration, rather than in the more traditional apprenticeship sectors of construction and engineering (Data Service, 2012a). In France only 25% of all apprentices at the lowest qualification level are women, but the share of women increases with the level of qualification up to 46% at ISCED levels 4 and 5 (The French Ministry of Education, 2012, data for academic year 2010/11). In Finland, only 27% of all 16-18 year old apprentices were female in 2010/11 (Statistics Finland, 2012). Within specific occupational sectors, there is also similar evidence of gender concentration in Finland with women in vocational education for example tending to study health and health related sectors (Brunila, Kurki, Lahelma, Lehtonen, Mietola and Palmu, 2011). These similarities in the make-up of the apprenticeship population in different occupational sectors suggests that traditional gender roles are at least to some extent to being reproduced in apprenticeship in the three countries. This corresponds with Fuller and Unwin's (2009) reflection that:

As a social framework within which individuals work and learn, apprenticeship is (and always has been) characterised by the same divisions and prejudices as the society in which it is formed and in which it lives. Hence, apprenticeships reflect the stratified nature (in terms of social class, gender and ethnicity) of occupational sectors, the cultures of their geographical locations, and society more generally (Fuller and Unwin, 2009, p. 406)

The one striking similarity between the apprentice populations in the three countries is this gender imbalance. Whilst this is an important finding, a comprehensive exploration of this similarity is not pursued in this thesis, as it would necessitate a different theoretical framework to what has been outlined in Chapter 2. The discussion now turns to a comparison of the educational content of apprenticeship in the three countries.

Educational content of apprenticeships

As has already been shown in Chapter 1, there are differences in the comparative educational content of apprenticeship (also see Chapter 1 for how educational content has been defined in this thesis). These differences in the educational content were reflected in the discussions in the research literatures reviewed and the expert interviews. Ryan (2000), Steedman (2001), Keep and Payne (2002), Bynner (2011), Fuller and Unwin (2011b) and Keep and James (2011) all refer to the lack of educational content in the English apprenticeship framework relative to its continental counterparts. Bynner (2011, p.24) for example concludes that in contrast with the German apprenticeship system, the English apprenticeship system “sees no links between the preparation for employment and citizenship”. The research undertaken by Brockmann, Clarke and Winch and reported in various publications (2008, 2010a, 2010b and 2011) also adopts a comparative angle, highlighting the differing concepts of learning and skills that underpin the vocational education systems focusing on vocational skills and qualifications in England, Germany, France and the Netherlands. Brockmann et al (2008, p.554) suggest that in England “the NVQ system...has dominated governance, notably funding regulations, and policy debate, including concerning the highly variable quality of apprenticeship training provision in a voluntarist environment and declining employer engagement.” The NVQ system promotes a relatively narrow outcome-focused approach to vocational education that clearly places more general educational content outside of the remit of vocational education. Clarke and Winch (2004) further suggest that the NVQ-dominated model of apprenticeship has disabled deductive learning i.e. an approach to learning that starts with the theory or generalisation, moving to specific examples or activities that

would facilitate the application of underpinning theoretical knowledge in different circumstances, rather than focusing on learning by doing what is relevant in the apprentice's current workplace. Drawing on a study examining the processes involved in apprentices learning to become a chef, James and Hayward (2004) and James (2008) also point to the real tension between the aims of the NVQ qualifications and the notion of competency they promote faced with the more prevalent notion of competency at the workplace as having a certain amount of experience in the industry. The introduction of the QCF might in time result in different research findings, but it is too recent to feature in the research literature reviewed in this thesis.

Mehaut (2011) explores the concept of skill with the French concept of '*savoir*' as the organising principle of French vocational education and training system, distinguishing between knowledge '*savoir*', '*savoir-faire*' and '*savoir-être*'. Mehaut (2011, p.37) suggests that '*savoir-faire*' should be understood as being "based on the implementation in a concrete situation of both knowledge and experience" and '*savoir-être*' as kind of knowledge and competency relating to professional conduct and behaviour. The use of the three different contributory aspects to knowledge in the French language suggests that at conceptual level, learning at work in France is inherently connected with knowledge in contrast with, for example, England, where the underlying concept of training is reflected in the prevalent use of the concept of skills in relation to vocational education instead of knowledge.

On the whole it seems that there is broad educational content in apprenticeship in France (see Table 2, Chapter 1), but that this is being increasingly contested. Brucy and Troger (2000, p.19) suggest that the "the utopia of 'technical humanism' in educating the man (sic), the worker and the citizen, is being succeeded by another utopia; that of the enterprise as trainer/educator" (*translation from original text in French*). There is also an increasing influence of a reductionist (Fr. *adéquationiste*) discourse that reduces discussion about education, to training towards qualification and work. As indicated by Tanguy (2000) and Ropé and Tanguy (2000), this discourse equates a qualification with the value it has in the labour market. Reflecting on this development, the French expert interviewee suggested that the reductionist discourse in France could be summarised in the Presidential Candidate Nicolas Sarkozy's speech in Poitiers in January 2012 when he asked whether a qualification that does not lead to finding a job should still be called a qualification.

The expert interviewee contrasted this comment with the prevailing ethos until the 1960s in France whereby:

There was, vocational training as part of a [professional aptitude certificate] CAP...there was that which [related to] the profession, the worker, the qualification, and there was this social part that was humane, that was that this was someone, this was a citizen, someone who thinks, who critiques... (*translation from original interview transcript in French*)

In Finland, the educational content of apprenticeship seems not to have come under the same degree of questioning. There is significant educational content in apprenticeships for young people, regulated by the national framework curriculum that covers vocational education as well as academic education for the whole cohort of 16-18 year olds. Drawing on a comparative perspective, the Finnish expert interviewee reflected on the relative robustness of the educational content in apprenticeships as follows:

...exactly this differentiation as to what is included and what is excluded from vocational education and training, what is out of bounds, what is not accepted, there are quite large differences. If I think about England, for example, then this contrast between liberal education and vocational training, it is a contrast that hasn't existed in Finnish history even though of course there has been discussion about these, but for a number of reasons we have, nevertheless, I would see that they are quite close together [in Finland], and vocational education has this strong educational content and meaning in the Finnish education system (*translation from original interview transcript in Finnish*)

The Finnish expert interviewee suggested that societal values placing education at a premium, and inherent trust in the merit and value of education were some of the reasons for vocational education's strong educational content even though neo-liberalist policies had been slightly eroding this trust since the 1990s. This increasing influence of neo-liberalism is highlighted in Silvennoinen's account (1999, p.138) suggesting that there has been a movement towards "the stronger directing of education towards occupational skills and serving the needs of the labour market." This development has been coupled with significant socio-economic changes in the 1990s that for Heikkinen (2001, p.242) has shaped vocational education as "in the globalising work of clusters of industry, the reference for vocational education changed into organisation, occupational work became substituted by skills and competencies required for flexible employability, [making the] characteristic features

of Finnish vocational education [where vocational teachers and education establishments were working towards] an occupationally organised working life redundant.” The foundation of educational content in apprenticeship has nevertheless remained strong, but the socio-economic changes are reflected in increasingly complex patterns of young people’s transition into working life.

School-to-work transitions

The last sub-theme within the theme of content and meaning relates to the meaning of apprenticeship as transition from school to work. Whilst a wealth of literature on transition into work exists in the three study countries, the systematic literature reviews undertaken in this thesis identified only a handful of studies from this tradition that were pertinent to the research questions.

As has already been discussed in Chapter 2, the transition from a young person to an adult in Western societies now tends to take place later, through more complex patterns, and over a longer time period (inter alia Aho and Koponen, 2001; Béduwé and Germe, 2004; Green, Wolf and Leney, 1999; Järvinen, 2003). Whilst their primary interest lies in adult education and lifelong learning, Kivinen and Silvennoinen’s (2000) reflections on the specific changes in the transition to work that took place following the significant economic restructure in Finland in the 1990s are also relevant to apprenticeship. They comment that transition to work became problematic even for qualified entrants to the labour market, and suggest that a type of qualification inflation took place with “employers raising the qualification entry level requirements to ever greater number of posts whilst at the same time confessing that the new entrants from educational settings still needed to be separately trained for their jobs” (Kivinen and Silvennoinen, 2000, p.308) (*translation from original text in Finnish*). This perhaps helps to further explain Peltomäki and Silvennoinen’s (1998) finding that employers were reluctant to take on 16-18 year olds as apprentices at the basic apprenticeship qualification level.

In her research on the experiences of apprentices who left school in the period 1945-75 to reflect on contemporary transitions in England, Vickerstaff (2003) questions the notion that transition into work used to be easier. She does, however concede that:

Perhaps the key difference between current cohorts of young people and those interviewed here is the extent to which the respondents as young people largely accepted that they had little choice and few supports for resisting adult authority; whereas in research today

young people regularly assert that they do have choices...They perceive their paths to have been individualised, even if the common reality is of relatively circumscribed possibilities (Vickerstaff, 2003, p.283)

Similarly, challenging the idea that apprenticeship is a pathway that is not actively chosen, Unwin and Wellington (2001) contest the notion of apprenticeship as a last chance option by suggesting that the apprentices interviewed as part of their study had not rejected an academic pathway, but rather sought to enable a better balance between developing their academic and practical abilities that could be afforded by purely academic study.

One of the reasons for the resurgent policy interest in apprenticeships for young people is that they can be seen as a relatively more structured transition to work. There is an increasing body of research suggesting that apprenticeships tend to lead to more positive outcomes in terms of successful transitions into work. The systematic literature reviews in England and France identified a number of studies focusing on the outcomes of transition to work through apprenticeship. The findings from Ryan's (1998) quantitative study comparing apprenticeships to full-time vocational education in the labour market in England suggest that apprenticeship appears to lead to more stable employment for young male adults. McIntosh's (2004) study draws on the UK labour force survey to estimate that the average wage gains from completion of an apprenticeship programme is around 5-7% for men, but that there is no benefit for women, and that wage gains are more likely when an apprenticeship programme is completed at Level 3 or above. In the French context, Sollogoub and Ulrich (1999) find that young people who have been in apprenticeships have generally spent more time in work in the five years following the end of their apprenticeship, but that their wages are lower than those of young people to have completed their education in a vocational high school. Simonnet's and Ulrich's (2000) comparative study of apprentices and young people following vocational high school education in contrast found no significant differences in pay of the two groups once in employment. Bonnal, Favard and Mendès-Clément (2005) further suggest that even at the lower levels of qualifications, being qualified had a positive impact on the transition from any periods of unemployment to employment, and that the apprenticeship route also had a positive impact on the likelihood of finding stable employment.

Summary of Theme 1: Content and meaning of apprenticeship

Content and meaning was the first theme to emerge from the systematic literature reviews and the expert interviews in the three countries. In the French sample of research literature there was evidence of a conscious effort to differentiate 'alternance' (Fr. alternance) type education from apprenticeship against the tendency to merge the two in French policy rhetoric. In the English sample of research literature and in the English expert interview concerns were expressed that the official branding of apprenticeship in England did not reflect the reality of the apprenticeship system, which was effectively a two-tier system. This related to the policy rhetoric of promoting apprenticeships both as a solution to re-engaging disaffected young people, but also as a solution to the lack of intermediate skills. These two policy aims were seen as conflicting in practice. In Finland apprenticeship tended to be seen as only part of wider programmes to re-engaging disaffected young people, whereas in France there was also evidence of potentially conflicting policy aims with apprenticeships being increasingly promoted as a mainstream education pathway. The reality of apprenticeship in France, however, seemed far from constituting a mainstream education pathway, and publications pointed to apparent inequalities in the functioning of the apprenticeship system. Nevertheless, in all three apprenticeship systems there was evidence of inequality in terms of the relative share of female apprentices. Overall, the English systematic literature review highlighted the relative lack of educational content of apprenticeships in England. In France and in Finland the education content of apprenticeships was significantly higher, but the French systematic literature review suggested that this was being increasingly contested in France. The systematic literature reviews also identified research that focused on apprenticeship as a pathway in young people's school-to-work transitions, and English and French research literature that suggested that apprenticeships have a positive impact on these patterns of transition.

4.3 Theme 2: Models of apprenticeship

A key theme across the systematic literature reviews and the expert interviews was assessment and discussion of different models of apprenticeship. The discussion of this theme is presented in three sub-themes: benchmarking type comparisons of apprenticeship systems, exploration of the respective roles of stakeholders and the discourse of apprenticeship as a model of learning. The first two sub-themes emerged from the systematic literature reviews and the expert interviews in the three countries, whilst the last sub-theme on apprenticeship as a model of learning only emerged in England.

Benchmarking apprenticeship systems

Benchmarking against other European countries was an angle from which a number of UK-based commentators critically assessed the state of the English apprenticeship system. Ryan's (2000) insightful study comparing the institutional frameworks for apprenticeships in Austria, Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands with those in the UK and in Germany has already been referred to in chapter 2 as a key comparative study of apprenticeship systems. Steedman's (2001) study compared the UK system with almost the same countries as Ryan with Ireland being replaced by France, and concluded that the 'Modern Apprenticeship' programme did not meet the standards of the equivalent programmes in continental Europe. Whilst Ryan (2000) focused on the differences in the apprenticeship systems in terms of their governance, educational content and financial attributes, he was more optimistic in his conclusions, suggesting that the Irish apprenticeship model might provide some useful lessons for England in developing the institutional framework for apprenticeships in a deregulated market context. Ryan and Unwin (2001) found that in comparison to the German model, the English apprenticeship model performs poorly, and is more like the Youth Training programme that operated in England in the 1990s. Furthermore, Ryan and Unwin (2001, p.112) suggest that the English approach of a quasi-market for training "constitutes an obstacle rather than an asset." Steedman's (2011b) recent report on apprenticeship also benchmarks the English apprenticeship system against a broad selection of countries (Australia, Austria, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden and Switzerland) and finds that the system performs relatively poorly against the comparison countries. Many of the contributors to the recent Institute for Public Policy Research report 'Rethinking Apprenticeships' also adopt a comparative perspective including Bynner (2011), Keep and James (2011) and Steedman (2011c).

Whilst studies comparing the Finnish vocational education systems have been undertaken by Finnish researchers (inter alia Kivinen, Metsä-Tokela, Tulkki and Hyvönen, 1998), the edited book by Heikkinen and Sultana (1997) is the only publication identified from the Finnish systematic literature review as specifically focusing on apprenticeships rather than on vocational education more widely from a comparative angle.

The French systematic literature review and the French expert interview also confirmed that there is little comparative research focusing specifically on apprenticeships in France. A key study from a comparative angle in this area is the

insightful study by Jobert, Marry, Tanguy and Rainbird (1997) comparing France with Germany, Great Britain and Italy, but it frames the discussion more broadly in relation to interaction between education and work. As in the case of Jobert et al (Ibid), the German model is key point of comparison in the French context. Imdorf, Granato, Moreau and Waardenburg (2010) have only slightly expanded the horizon by also including Switzerland in their comparative review of sociological research on vocational education and training in France, Germany and Switzerland. What all of the benchmarking studies reviewed have in common is that they identify differences in the roles and responsibilities of the respective stakeholders in the apprenticeship systems that are compared, and the discussion now turns to this sub- theme.

Stakeholders' roles and responsibilities

Drawing on Finlay's (1998) approach, the key stakeholders within the institutional framework of apprenticeship can be grouped into four. In this thesis, these four groups are defined as:

- 1) (Potential) apprentices or employee representatives, e.g. trade unions
- 2) State; central, regional or local government
- 3) Employers or employer representatives
- 4) Institutions delivering apprenticeships, e.g. private training providers

From the three systematic literature reviews, it seems that there is relatively little discussion around the role of the fourth group of stakeholders; institutions delivering apprenticeships. This was specifically highlighted as a gap in research in the English expert interview. Discussion of the respective roles and responsibilities of stakeholders was, however the focus of a significant number of publications, particularly in the English context. In their examination of the historical development of apprenticeships in England, Fuller and Unwin (2009, p.410) suggest that in there has been continuous tension between "1) the evolution of a responsive model of learning, 2) the model's applicability to the needs of employers and 3) the model's usefulness to the state." Furthermore, Keep (2007) critiques the English education and training system as a whole for being too centrally driven referring to:

...government's pursuit of a 'unipartist' strategy whereby it designs, funds and controls more and more education and training activity' [and leading to a paradox whereby the] 'laissez fare attitude towards governmental responsibility for employer behaviour [has resulted in] the state [having been] forced to act as a substitute for employer effort' (Keep, 2007, p.161).

Senker, Rainbird, Evans, Hodkinson, Keep, Maguire, Raffe and Unwin (1999) specifically refer to the problem of employers' voluntary participation in the English apprenticeship system that is exacerbated by the lack of involvement by other groups of stakeholders such as trade unions. Gospel and Fuller (1998) also suggest that there are likely to be insufficient numbers of employers voluntarily engaging in apprenticeships to make the system work. Further discussion of the role and involvement of employers and industry-representation in the English apprenticeship system include Maguire's (1998) article drawing on data from a Department for Education and Employment commissioned study of employers operating 'Modern Apprenticeship' programmes, which found employers to be fairly positive about the programme, whilst Vickerstaff (1998) concluded that there was a need for improved stakeholder representation, including industry-body representation. Gleeson and Keep (2004) however feel that the key problem with employers' involvement in the vocational education and training system relates to employers having been given a 'voice without accountability.' In Gleeson and Keep's (Ibid) assessment there is need for greater clarity about the respective roles of employers, state and society in vocational education.

Continued discussion of the extent of employers' involvement in English apprenticeship programmes over the study period is reflected in a number of further studies undertaken of the current 'Apprenticeship' branded government programme that is very similar to its predecessor programme of 'Modern Apprenticeship'. Hasluck, Hogarth, Baldauf and Briscoe's (2008) report to the Ambassadors Network concluded that there were net benefits to employers investing in apprenticeship training. Interestingly, their study also found that the employers in their study "often appeared unaware of the source or the extent of public financial support for Apprenticeships, as such funding was often delivered through training providers and not directly to employers" (Hasluck, Hogarth, Baldauf and Briscoe, 2008, p.x). In their study of large employers' participation in apprenticeship programmes, Ryan, Gospel and Lewis (2006) found variable involvement by employers across sectors and occupations that could mostly be explained by the esteem in which the employers' held the technical learning content of the apprenticeship framework. The variability of apprenticeship by sector and by employer was also highlighted by the English expert interviewee, who suggested that the assumption of homogeneity of potential apprentice employers was a significant problem in education and training policy.

Furthermore, Keep and James (2011) highlight that the apprenticeship policy rhetoric of employer leadership is not compatible with the reality of the state funding driving the system rather than being underpinned by a more representative framework of governance and occupational regulation as is in place in many other countries, e.g. in Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Reflecting on all the changes and the rebranding, the English expert interviewee suggested that “the weighting given to each of those players, the state, the employers and the employees, the actual weight of their role hasn’t actually changed, but the role has changed so what they’re doing has changed.” An example of this changing role could be the increased practical involvement of the state in the operation of the system by setting up the National Apprenticeship Service, which matches potential apprentices to employers with appropriate vacancies. Whilst seemingly beneficial for employers and potential apprentices, the service has, however only added to the number of public sector organisations involved in apprenticeships.

The French expert interviewee also felt that it is too simplistic to think of employers as a homogenous group of stakeholders within the French apprenticeship system. Rather than this homogenous group called ‘employers’, it should be viewed as a multitude of occupational sectors that have organised education and training in their sector differently. Occupational sectors of metallurgy and vehicle maintenance and repair, for example have particularly invested in the establishment of industry awarded ‘certificates of professional qualifications’ (Fr. *Certificats de qualification professionnelle - CQP*) that operate outside of the state’s monopoly of qualifications in their sectors. As *CQPs* are often completed under ‘professionalisation contracts’, the occupational sectors that have prioritised *CQPs* over qualifications within the state system tend to provide very limited opportunities for apprenticeships and qualifications that enable further progression outside of narrow confines of the industry specific *CQPs*. Gendron (2010) outlines another industrial sector-specific development in describing how the vocational baccalaureate diploma can be completed as an apprentice in the family house system (Fr. *Maison familiale rurale*), an alternative small-scale education and training system in the agricultural sector that operates with significant input from families in the local area. These examples illustrate variance in the extent to which apprenticeships can be successfully embedded within different occupational sectors.

Gehin (2007, p.38) suggests that historically the state and academic institutions played a key role in creating a vocational education and training (VET) system that

was effectively separate from business and industry and that “this organisation of VET by academic institutions, relatively independent from business, still influences today's French education system”. Bruzy and Troger (2000) identify that this historical development of the school-based and diploma-centred system of vocational education and training in France had taken place with employers' support, but that school-based education is now increasingly in competition with other forms of training and skills acquisition. The French expert interviewee suggested that this sense of increasing competition was reflective of a wider concern about the place of the school-based system of vocational education that had also led successive French governments to give parity to the apprenticeship route rather than continuing to prioritise the school-based route to vocational education. This was also at the heart of the drive re-positioning apprenticeship as the primary domain of the apprenticeship training centres as opposed to vocational high schools as documented in Moreau's (2000) study in the 'Pays de la Loire' region. Nevertheless, increases in the apprenticeship tax and the introduction of greater legal obligations for larger enterprises have not to date resulted in the necessary numbers of apprenticeship places being provided to meet the government targets for apprentices, and to shift the focus in vocational education from being based in educational settings to workplaces. Furthermore, Pasquier (2003) suggests that the model of financing apprenticeships is unsustainable with the apprenticeship tax only representing 33% of the apprenticeship training centres' budgets with the remainder coming from the regions. He points out that whilst in principle the funding of the apprenticeship education centres is supposed to be the primary responsibility of businesses, in practice it is the regions that provide a significant share of the funding. Consequently any desired increase in the number of apprentices would end up having to be financed by the regions. The make-up of the apprenticeship tax in France has subsequently been reformed to reflect the regions' growing role within the apprenticeship system, but the changes are too recent to be reflected in the discussion in the research literatures reviewed in this thesis.

In the Finnish context, Metsä-Tokela, Tulkki and Tuominen (1998) also conclude that the vocational education system is dominated by state organised activity. Furthermore they suggest that employer representatives have not had significant influence, but have been content to leave the responsibility for vocational training of their employees to the state. Silvennoinen (2002) further critiques the Finnish education policy in failing to address the fundamental issue that the desired increase in the number of apprentices is dependent on employers having appropriate

vacancies. This relative absence of interest by employers is echoed in the Finnish expert interviewee's comment that:

Our apprenticeship [models], they don't originate from the trade unions or the employers, it's not a central theme there, they originate from the public sector, and then depending on the socio-economic situation, the public sector has looked for different solutions in apprenticeship (*translation from original interview transcript in Finnish*)

Nevertheless, the majority of employers in Metsä-Tokela, Tulkki and Tuominen's (1998) small interview sample of employers in the Turku region did however feel that employers' influence on the vocational education system had increased in recent years. Furthermore, the Finnish expert interviewee suggested that despite the strong role of the state, the education system overall operated well, because it was relatively stable, commenting that:

I have followed the debate in England a little bit...there are always these big political slogans and something that now we're flying the flag for this and putting apprenticeship forward and that is then discussed and researchers probably also want to engage in the discussion, but here apprenticeship [in initial vocational education] is really not so important and in any case here the political changes are not so dramatic as to suddenly turnaround...so that there are no such sudden changes (*translation from original interview transcript in Finnish*)

The Finnish expert interviewee suggested that this relative stability was indicative of consensus-seeking policy-making more typical of education policy-making in the Nordic countries than, for example in England.

From the Finnish systematic literature review it seems that the majority of researchers working in this field almost take for granted the stability of the education system in Finland. This is in stark contrast with the constant change that researchers working on apprenticeship in England are accustomed to. The constant policy change has, however, perhaps helped to sustain research interest in this area, and to generate a unique strand of research located in the English experience of apprenticeship through the discourse of apprenticeship as a model of learning.

Apprenticeship as a model of learning

Discussion of apprenticeship as a model of learning emerged as a sub-theme from the English systematic literature review and the English expert interview. This strand of research is significant in the English research context as a theoretically driven

challenge to the current model of apprenticeship, and is consequently discussed here as a sub-theme of models to apprenticeship.

Fuller and Unwin (2011a) reflect on the global relevance of the term apprenticeship, and suggest that this is due to the model of learning it encapsulates rather than apprenticeship as a specific system. In their work Guile and Young (1998, p.173) examine the idea of apprenticeship not as a social institution, but as a basis for a more “inclusive social theory of learning” that questions the assumption of learning in an apprenticeship context being significantly different from learning in a school-setting and enables learning to be conceptualised in a way that “does not separate it from the production of knowledge or tie it to particular contexts” (Guile and Young, 1999, p.112). Guile (2006) follows this with a critique of the social institution of apprenticeship as inappropriate for the development of the creative and cultural sector, and suggests that a strategy supporting people in the sector in ‘being apprenticed’ would be a more productive policy direction, enabling more appropriate ways of entering and learning a profession rather than being confined to the narrowly structured apprenticeship system. Fuller and Unwin (2003, 2011b) highlight the variable experiences of learning and integration into work drawing on a continuum of expansive and restrictive learning. They conclude that:

Expansive or restrictive nature of the approach taken to apprenticeship can be related to: the form participation takes in communities of practice; and the ways in which personal development is facilitated and institutional arrangements are configured. Thus, we would argue, an expansive approach to apprenticeship is most likely to create the conditions for ‘deep learning’ (Fuller and Unwin, 2003, p.423)

Fuller and Unwin (2009) suggest that since the relatively short-lived introduction of the Youth Training Schemes in the 1980s, the state-centred approach has diluted apprenticeship as a model of learning and encouraged more restrictive approaches to apprenticeship. Exploring the variable experience of apprenticeships further, Fuller and Unwin (1999, 2011a) suggest that there are four interconnected dimensions to apprenticeship; pedagogical, occupational, locational and social, with the latter two dimensions in particular having been challenged in the last decades. Drawing on these dimensions Fuller and Unwin (2011a) question the sustainability of contemporary models of apprenticeships in England. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, analysis of these interconnected dimensions is extended to explore the sustainability of the contemporary models of Finland and France.

The tension between viewing apprenticeship as a model of learning versus apprenticeship as a vocational education and training funding programme was also reflected in the English expert interview with the interviewee commenting that:

What they're trying to do in the new SASE framework, you know they try to bridge each of the different industries and occupations, but maybe that's the problem, maybe they need to go back to apprenticeship as a model of learning rather than as a theory of learning, imposing so many things on occupations

The aim of SASE in setting out standards for all the apprenticeship frameworks was consequently questioned in its approach. In their discussion of the content of apprenticeship, Fuller and Unwin (2011b) also identify the approach to policy-making and the force of government targets that are pushing state funded English apprenticeship system further away from apprenticeship model of learning.

Summary of Theme 2: Models of apprenticeship

To summarise, the assessment and discussion of apprenticeship models was the second key theme that emerged from the systematic reviews of literature and the expert interviews. This theme was evident in the studies benchmarking apprenticeship systems that featured strongly in the English research literature, and the publications that discussed aspects relating to the respective roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders in the system. Employers' roles and responsibilities with regards to apprenticeship were the most debated in the three countries. The dominant role of the state in apprenticeship in Finland was not contested in the Finnish literature. This was in contrast with a wealth of publications in the English research literature critiquing the role of the state and putting forward proposals for improving the system. In the French research literature the debate centred on the respective roles of the central government and the regions, as well as the efficacy of the apprenticeship tax model. Lastly, the discourse of apprenticeship as a model of learning emerged as a distinct strand of research in England. This research literature has formulated a powerful critique of apprenticeship policy in England through identifying the interconnected dimensions of apprenticeship that define apprenticeship as a successful model of learning, but are often absent in the apprenticeship system as currently operated.

4.4 Theme 3: Apprenticeship research cultures

The theme of apprenticeship research cultures emerged from the expert interviews and the French systematic literature review. The expert interviews included

questions relating to apprenticeship research undertaken in the three study countries (see Document 1 in the Appendix for the list of indicative questions) to contribute to addressing the second research question with respect to convergence and divergence in apprenticeship research. The interview questions led to rich discussions about research cultures in the three countries. The findings under the theme of apprenticeship research cultures are here presented through a discussion of the sub-theme of interest in apprenticeship research and some examples from studies adopting returns to education type approaches. Studies adopting returns to education type approaches that were reviewed as part of the systematic literature review in English and in French are discussed in this section, as they are indirectly indicative of particular research interests in England and France.

Interest in apprenticeship research

In the Finnish context, research on vocational education has tended to focus on polytechnics since these were created in the 1990s. The Finnish expert interviewee estimated that 90% or even more of research on vocational education examines the polytechnics in one way or another, or alternatively looks at the development and work of teachers and managers of educational establishments. There is consequently very little research on initial vocational education, and even less on apprenticeships with a focus on young people. Where young people undertaking apprenticeships feature, the research tends to focus on their transition to work or re-integration into learning with apprenticeship as only one aspect of the package of support. A series of reports and evaluations on apprenticeships funded by the Ministry of Education or part funded by the EU have also been undertaken, but the Finnish expert interviewee questioned the extent to which these could be defined as research as such, and lamented on the lack of available funding and structures for long-term research in vocational education. The Finnish expert interviewee characterised the current situation as too project focused with short-term EU-funded projects providing the typical model whereby a relatively short-term project is assigned to respond to a particular question, and once the project ends, the question and the project report are filed away and forgotten about. The Finnish expert interviewee commented that:

This project-like approach sabotages or takes away the possibility [of research] because it isn't like, everyone inside the university knows that the development of a research tradition or such can take decades or even hundreds of years so that it sort of accumulates and something is created, and this jumping about that some of the funders, they want this so quickly overnight and we should

metamorphose into something else, and that is something that has practical consequences, because we cannot enter into long-term co-operations again with those operational agents like educational establishments (*translation from the original interview transcript in Finnish*)

As is already indicated by the sheer number of publications identified through the systematic literature review, there is significant interest in researching apprenticeship in England in comparison with France and Finland. The relationship between apprenticeship education policy and research is, however complex. Reflecting on the relationship between vocational educational policy and research more broadly, the English expert interviewee suggested that:

Policy looks at research, if it fits great, if not, it's almost put into a 'too hard' basket...there are problems on both sides, a lot of research isn't necessarily accessible to non-academic audiences, and I think non-academic audiences, there's an expectation that it will be simple and so when it's not it becomes too hard...The problem is the government also likes numbers and a lot of research isn't numbers...you can't just say, 92% of apprenticeships don't work, and I think that is the difficulty because of the quick turnaround in government

As already identified earlier in this chapter, there is a significant strand of comparative study and benchmarking in research on apprenticeship in England. In terms of disciplinary approaches, the English expert interviewee reflected that research on apprenticeships is being increasingly undertaken in education departments, and that there could be significant potential for greater cross over with, for example research on skills and work. The disciplinary approaches reflected in the publications on English apprenticeships here reviewed, are nevertheless varied, and include economics-based, historical, philosophical and sociological approaches.

In the French context, Tanguy (2000) traces the historical development of historical and sociological research in what she calls technical and professional education. She suggests that there is now more research interest in technical and professional education and an increased recognition of the importance of looking at education and work together rather than as distinct areas of research. The French expert interviewee suggested that the recent growth in the number of apprentices and the increased political interest in apprenticeships had not resulted in any increased research interest in the area. Based on the French expert interviewee's calculations, between 1960 and 2005, there had been only 8% of doctoral theses undertaken with vocational education as a subject area compared with 27% focusing on higher

education as a subject. Furthermore, out of the 8% on vocational education, a relatively higher proportion had looked at school-based vocational education in vocational high schools rather than apprenticeships. In the French expert interviewee's opinion the reasons for the relative paucity of studies focusing on apprenticeship include a relative decline of the French sociology of the working classes, a tendency to focus on salaried employees rather than artisans and small businesses and 'ethnocentrism' of researchers, defined as "[researchers being more interested] in educational settings they are familiar with; vocational high schools and universities" (*translation from original interview transcript in French*). Consequently there tends to be more research on school-based forms of education rather than work-based forms of education. The French expert interviewee further reflected that:

...to study sociology of apprenticeship, it is also necessary to study sociology of work, one cannot stay enclosed in education, it is simply that the young people are in the workplaces, they work and the questions are there (*translation from original interview transcript in French*)

Whilst the relatively paucity of research seems certainly true in terms of sociological approaches to a study of apprenticeship in France, from the systematic literature review it seems that apprentices in France have been more frequently the focus of studies falling within the discipline of economics. These studies tend to adopt returns to education type approaches to research that are briefly discussed below.

Returns to education type approaches

Returns to education type approaches to research on apprenticeships were a distinct strand of research in the English and French systematic literature reviews. This was evident in the research literature focusing on straightforward returns to apprenticeship or returns to vocational education calculations in England, whilst in the French research literature it was represented by a type of economics-based transition to work studies tracing the trajectories of apprentices in comparison to their peers in vocational high school education. Examples of this research literature have been provided in the discussion of transition into work literature (see section 4.2).

Whilst the returns to education research literature has been influential in policy-making across Europe, this strand of the research literature is not explored further in this thesis. This is because the quantitative nature of the majority of these studies would demand a distinct analytical focus that is beyond the scope of this thesis. In

discussing the respective research cultures on apprenticeship, it is nevertheless important to refer to this distinct strand of research.

Summary of Theme 3: Apprenticeship research cultures

The third theme that emerged from the expert interviews and the French systematic review of literature was the theme of apprenticeship research cultures. In the Finnish context it was felt that since their creation in the 1990s, the polytechnics had captured vocational education researchers' attention to the detriment of apprenticeship research. In the French context, it was suggested that apprenticeship was a relatively under-researched field due to a number of factors including the ethnocentrism of researchers tending to prioritise school-based settings. In the English context, differences in researchers' and policy-makers' expectations of research were highlighted as a key issue.

4.5 Country-specific summaries

Following the thematic presentation of the findings, this section brings these thematic findings together for each study country, to provide a summary of the main strands of apprenticeship research in the three countries. The section includes a single point of reference for the representative sources for the study countries. This section of the chapter consequently serves as a kind of an audit trail that can improve the validity and reliability of research as discussed in Chapter 3 (see section 3.7).

England

Much of the discussion about apprenticeship in England revolved around the respective roles of employers and the state (inter alia Gleeson and Keep, 2004; Ryan, Gospel and Lewis, 2006; Keep, 2007; Keep and James, 2011). Benchmarking was another key feature of the literature (Ryan, 2000; Ryan and Unwin, 2001; Steedman, 2001, 2011b and 2011c), with discussion around the content and meaning of apprenticeship also taking a comparative angle (Keep and Payne, 2002; Brockmann, Clarke and Winch, 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2011; Bynner, 2011) in contrasting the relative lack of educational content in English apprenticeships as opposed to a number of other European apprenticeship models. The strand of transition to work literature (inter alia Vickerstaff, 2003) also incorporated research that uses returns to education approaches (inter alia Ryan, 1998) in a tradition that has been an influential force in education policy in England.

A specific 'apprenticeship as a model of learning' research literature (Guile and Young, 1998, Fuller and Unwin, 2003, Guile, 2006 and Unwin and Fuller, 2011a and

2011b) emerged that was unique to the English context. This research literature draws attention to the nature of learning in apprenticeship, and suggests that there are a number of different situated or contextualised dimensions to successful apprenticeship. The English expert interview suggested that there is much room for improvement in the relationship between research and policy that relates in part to the accessibility of academic research on one side, and the willingness to reflect on research findings that are not necessarily straightforward on the other. The sources for research on English apprenticeships by theme are provided in table 6 below.

Table 6. Sources for research on English apprenticeships by theme

Theme	Sources
Content and meaning of apprenticeship	Brockman, Clarke and Winch (2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2011) Bynner (2011) Clarke and Winch (2004) Fuller and Unwin (2009, 2011b) James and Hayward (2004) James (2008) Keep and Payne (2002) Keep and James (2011) McIntosh (2004) Ryan (1998, 2000) Steedman (2001, 2011a) Unwin and Wellington (2001) Vickerstaff (2003) Expert interview
Models of apprenticeship	Bynner (2011) Fuller and Unwin (1999, 2003, 2009, 2011a, 2011b) Gleeson and Keep (2004) Gospel and Fuller (1998) Guile (2006) Guile and Young (1998, 1999) Hasluck, Hogarth, Baldauf and Briscoe (2008) Keep (2007) Keep and James (2011) Maguire (1998) Ryan (2000) Ryan and Unwin (2001) Ryan, Gospel and Lewis (2006) Senker, Rainbird, Evans, Hodgkinson, Keep, Maguire, Raffae and Unwin (1999) Steedman (2001, 2011b, 2011c) Vickerstaff (1998) Expert interview
Apprenticeship research cultures	Expert interview

Finland

Content and meaning emerged as the key theme from the sample of research literature on Finnish apprenticeships. This was evident in the discussion of the respective needs and expectations of stakeholders (Silvennoinen, 1999), the tendency to see apprenticeships only as a 'life belt' for disaffected young people (Kivinen and Peltomäki, 1999) and the reflections on the nevertheless strong educational content of apprenticeship (Expert interview). On the basis of the systematic literature review, there seems to be relatively little research on initial vocational education, but even less that focuses specifically on apprenticeships. The expert interview confirmed this view, and suggested that most of the studies to focus on apprenticeships in Finland were not 'pure research' as such, but rather relatively narrowly commissioned evaluations or assessments of the system or an aspect of it. The sources for research on Finnish apprenticeships by theme are provided in below table 7.

Table 7. Sources for research on Finnish apprenticeships by theme

Theme	Sources
Content and meaning of apprenticeship	Ahola and Kivelä (2007) Heikkinen (2001) Heikkinen, Kuusisto and Vesala (1997) Kivinen and Peltomäki (1999) Kivinen and Silvennoinen (2000) Peltomäki and Silvennoinen (1998) Silvennoinen (1999) Expert interview
Models of apprenticeship	Heikkinen and Sultana (Eds.) (1997) Metsä-Tokela, Tulkki and Tuominen (1998) Silvennoinen (2002) Expert interview
Apprenticeship research cultures	Expert interview

France

The sample of French research literature on apprenticeship featured discussion of the strong role of the state in legislating apprenticeships within the wider vocational educational system (Brucy and Troger, 2000; Moreau, 2000, 2008; Gehin, 2007). Content and meaning was a key theme with a particular focus on the inherent inequalities in the apprenticeship system (Moreau 2008; Kergoat, 2007, 2011). Returns to education type approaches also featured strongly in the French sample of research literature in exploring young people's transitions to work (inter alia Sollogoub and Ulrich, 1999). The theme of apprenticeship research cultures came across strongly in the expert interview with the expert interviewee suggesting that one of the reasons for the relatively paucity of research in apprenticeships related to ethnocentrism of researchers. A key contribution to the theme of research and policy in the literature was made by Tanguy (2000). The sources for research on French apprenticeships by theme are provided in table 8 below.

Table 8. Sources for research on French apprenticeships by theme

Theme	Sources
Content and meaning of apprenticeship	Bonnal Favard, and Mendès-Clément (2005) Brucy and Troger (2000) Kergoat (2007, 2011) Mehaut (2011) Moreau (2000, 2005, 2008) Ropé and Tanguy (2000) Sollogoub and Ulrich (1999) Simonnet and Ulrich (2000) Tanguy (2000, 2005) Expert interview
Models of apprenticeship	Brucy and Troger (2000) Gehin (2007) Gendron (2010) Imdorf, Granato, Moreau and Waardenburg (2010) Jobert, Marry, Tanguy and Rainbird (1997) Moreau (2000) Pasquier (2003) Expert interview
Apprenticeship research cultures	Tanguy (2000) Expert interview

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has brought together findings from the systematic literature reviews and expert interviews in the three study countries. The chapter has presented the discussion of the findings by the three broad themes of content and meaning, models of apprenticeship and apprenticeship research cultures, followed by a summary of the thematic findings by country. The first theme of content and meaning identified divergence in the educational content of apprenticeship in the three countries with the Finnish and French apprenticeship models adopting more broadly educational subjects to be included within the apprenticeship frameworks. The French research literature suggests that the appropriateness of this approach is, however now being questioned and the French policy rhetoric is converging with the English policy rhetoric in terms of the multiplicity of aims for which apprenticeship is being put forward as a solution. The second theme of models of apprenticeship highlights the differing roles and responsibilities for stakeholders within the respective institutional frameworks. Whilst state organised activity dominates the system in all three countries, the research on apprenticeship in England is most vocal in critiquing the role and responsibilities of the state. The third theme of apprenticeship research cultures has identified divergence in the apprenticeship research cultures in the three countries.

These themes are helpful in identifying similarities and differences in the apprenticeship systems in the three countries. The themes are also useful in beginning to explore how the country contexts, the apprenticeship research cultures differ. The next chapter takes this exploration of the findings one step further by presenting the study findings based on comparative analysis.

CHAPTER 5 STUDY FINDINGS: COMPARISON OF COUNTRY CONTEXTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study findings from contextualised comparative analysis. The discussion in this chapter builds on the thematic findings presented in the previous chapter (Chapter 4) and is informed by Flyvbjerg's (2001) stance to the study of social sciences outlined in his proposed guidelines for a 'reformed social science' (see section 2.4, Chapter 2). This chapter is divided into three parts addressing each of the research questions in turn. The first part of the chapter addresses the first research question about the unique features of the apprenticeship systems. It does this by examining how the context for apprenticeship in the three countries is different in terms of the wider education systems, the respective institutional frameworks and societal values. These three dimensions of the wider education system, institutional framework for apprenticeship and societal values are the dimensions that emerged as significant for contextualising the meaning of apprenticeship from the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2 and the systematic literature reviews and the expert interviews presented in Chapter 4.

The second part of the chapter presents discussion of divergence and convergence in research and policy that addresses the second research question. Divergence and convergence is examined, starting with comparative analysis of the differences in apprenticeship research and policy evident from the findings. This is followed by discussion of the similarities in policy rhetoric around apprenticeships. The third part of the chapter addresses the third research question by discussing the implications for policy and further research on apprenticeships arising from the comparative analysis presented in Parts 1 and 2 of this chapter.

PART 1. UNIQUE FEATURES OF THE APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEMS (RESEARCH QUESTION 1)

5.2 Apprenticeship in the context of the wider education system

Chapter 2 outlined Green, Wolf and Leney's (1999) categorisation of four different European models of apprenticeship in terms of status and importance. On the basis of the statistical data on the scale of apprenticeship programmes in the three countries presented in Chapter 1, it has already been shown that this model does not describe apprenticeship as taken up by 16-18 year olds in England, Finland or

France. This thesis specifically explores apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds in these three countries by comparing the country context of apprenticeship. The first dimension of context that is here considered is that of the wider education system. The wider education system is important to understanding the meaning of apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds within a specific country-context. This is evident from the systematic literature reviews and the expert interviews discussed in Chapter 4 that highlighted issues such as differences in the proportion of young people who are NEET and differences in the educational content of apprenticeship in comparison to other types of education for the same age group. These issues demonstrate that the meaning of apprenticeship is constructed in reference to the wider education system. The discussion of the dimension of the wider education system begins with a comparison of how apprenticeship fits within the post-compulsory phase of education alongside other options or pathways.

Four broad pathways for 16-18 year olds

It is best to begin the contextualisation of apprenticeship within the respective wider education systems by outlining the common elements in the options for 16-18 year olds in the three countries. A myriad of different possible routes exist through the different education systems, but for simplicity's sake only the four broad pathways of academic school-based education, vocational school-based education, apprenticeships and the labour market are highlighted in diagram 1 below. The appendix to this thesis contains more detailed pathway diagrams for each country (see appendix diagrams 1-3), specifying the institution types at which different options can be pursued, and highlighting the age-bound nature of some of the pathways in the three countries.

Diagram 1. The four broad pathway options for 16-18 year olds in England, Finland and France

ACADEMIC SCHOOL-BASED EDUCATION	VOCATIONAL SCHOOL-BASED EDUCATION	APPRENTICESHIPS	LABOUR MARKET
---------------------------------------	---	-----------------	------------------

AGED 18+
HIGHER EDUCATION/FURTHER TRAINING/LABOUR MARKET

Diagram 1 shows the three education focused pathways (academic school-based education, vocational school-based education and apprenticeships) and the labour market option that are available for 16-18 year olds once they have completed compulsory schooling in the three countries. Academic school-based education includes high schools in Finland and France, and secondary schools and sixth form colleges in England. Vocational school-based education includes vocational high schools in Finland and France, and sixth form and sixth form colleges and further education colleges in England. Key features of the apprenticeship programmes in the three countries have been outlined in Chapter 1 (see Table 2). Young people can also choose to enter the labour market at this stage, or may not follow any of these four pathways. In the UK, for example, those who do not follow any of these four pathways are considered to be NEETs. There are significant differences in the higher education systems in the three countries and in their entry criteria, but a common principle is that there is a possibility for young people who follow one of the three education-focused broad options to pursue higher education at the end of their studies in the 16-18 phase.

There are some similarities in the relative popularity of these pathways as has been highlighted in the discussion of the changing transition to work trends in Chapter 2.

In the three countries, the majority of young people in post-compulsory education are in academic school-based education and more young people are choosing to continue their studies at higher education level. These similarities in broad structures and trends however hide some key differences. There are four key differences: variation in the share of 18 year olds in education, differences in movement into the pathways, differences in movement across the pathways and differences in progression from the apprenticeship pathway. These key differences are discussed next, beginning with variation in the share of 18 year olds in education.

Variation in the share of 18 year olds in education

The first key difference is in terms of scale. As has already been indicated, based on Eurostats (2012), the participation rate of 18 year olds in education is low in England (57.5%), average in France (77%) and very high in Finland (93.6%) by EU standards (EU 27-country average is 79.1%). These differences are significant given that over the period of this study, participation in post-16 education or training was not compulsory in any of the three countries. In England a key issue is the relatively high proportion of young people not in any of the four pathways, i.e. NEET. This can be linked to the polarisation of the labour market and an economy that can be characterised by duality in the skills base, formalised as the high skills/low skills equilibrium in Brown, Green and Lauder's (2001) model. By contrast in Finland, non-participation in post-compulsory education is a marginal choice, which reflects the high societal value and esteem that is placed on education, linked to a strong belief in what Lindblad and Popkewitz (2004) refer to as the salvation narrative of education. The salvation narrative of education is discussed below in section 5.4.

Differences in movement into the pathways

The second key difference relates to the direct and indirect constraints in the flexibility of movement into, within and across the pathways illustrated in Diagram 1. The above discussion has been framed in the language of options and choices that young people make, but it is not of course simply a matter of the choices that young people make. The structures of the education system, the society and the economy more widely enable certain choices to be made and sometimes directly or indirectly disable other choices from being selected. For example, from their research with young people, youth workers and other adults in England, Hayward and Williams (2011) conclude that the changed nature of opportunity structures is the more likely reason for the rise in young people not engaging in employment, education or training than lack of aspirations. In this comparative analysis, it also seems that the prior pathways leading up to the pathways at 16-18 are very significant in

determining the kinds of choices that a young person can make. These prior pathways could be characterised as relatively rigid in England, somewhat rigid in France and flexible in Finland. Whilst examination of the education systems prior to the 16-18 stage is outside of the scope of this study, this characterisation of the pathways as ranging from relatively rigid to flexible necessitates a brief explanation.

In Finland the comprehensive school education system is continuous from the age of 7 to 16, and state funded schools provide virtually all of the school provision. There is no streaming by ability, children tend to attend the nearest school to their home and the vast majority of schools are seen as providing education of an equally high level. As such, the pathways leading to the 16-18 stage can be described as structurally flexible.

In England, the education provision prior to, and including the 16-18 stage is much more fragmented and segmented, as there are various different types of educational institutions ranging from private sector fee-paying schools to state funded grammar schools and comprehensive schools. There is streaming by ability for entry to many schools, as well as streaming by ability within schools. The quality of education that is provided by the different educational institutions is variable, and consequently many parents adopt various strategies to create what they deem to be the most beneficial educational pathway for their child, sometimes already in early years education (see Vincent and Ball, 2006). The use of such strategies can be seen to further reinforce segmentation in the education system. As such, the pathways leading to the 16-18 stage in England can be described as structurally rigid.

France can be seen to occupy a position somewhere in the middle of these two extremes. There is less fragmentation in terms of types of educational institutions with state schools providing a larger share of all school provision, but segmentation in the system may be increasing partly due to parents being increasingly concerned about the levels of quality provided by different schools.

Differences in movement across the pathways

Variability in the educational content of the three broad education-focused pathways also introduces constraints in movement across the pathways when young people look to progress in their studies. The variability is highest in England with vocational school-based education and apprenticeships being associated with training, and academic school-based education with education. This distinct separation of the

academic and vocational as discussed by Pring (2007) explains why the wider educational content of apprenticeships in England is minimal, with key skills as the only requirement of the apprenticeship framework that could be classed as not strictly vocationally related. In contrast, the educational content of apprenticeship frameworks is relatively high in Finland and France (see Table 2, Chapter 1). Grubb (2008, p.110) refers to this in his account of increasing vocationalism, suggesting that “the Finnish system, although quite concerned about international competition and the Knowledge Revolution, has nonetheless managed to preserve a great variety of subjects and purposes, as have the other Scandinavian countries and France with its emphasis on preserving its culture.” The idea that education contributes to nation-building activity in Finland and France is discussed later in this chapter (see section 5.4).

In England, the conceptualisation of vocational education as training rather than as education has justified the exclusion of wider educational content and aims. For young people engaged in vocational education in England, this narrowing of the focus to training means that it is more difficult for them to later progress to academic focused study and the number of apprentices progressing to higher education remains low (Smith and Joslin, 2011). In the French and Finnish systems it is relatively easier, at least in theory, to progress to more academic focused study from initial vocational education given the broader educational content base that is included. A successful transition into academic study will obviously depend on the young person’s progress and achievements in terms of the broader educational content of their studies. The narrowing of the focus to exclude broader educational content also contributes to English apprenticeships often being completed faster. The present Coalition Government introduced a statutory minimum for the length of apprenticeship undertaken by 16-18 year olds in 2011, but this statutory minimum of 12 months is still short in comparison to many other apprenticeship models in countries including Finland and France (inter alia Fuller and Unwin, 2011b).

Differences in progression from the apprenticeship pathway

In terms of progression from the apprenticeship pathway, it has already been highlighted that in principle it is possible for young people in the three countries to pursue higher education upon completion of their apprenticeship pathway. This is, however, very rare in England and in Finland. As has already been shown, in both countries the vast majority of apprenticeship enrolments by 16-18 year olds are for qualifications at the lowest level (see Table 4, Chapter 1), which is not sufficient for

entry into higher education. The very high (97%, see Table 4, Chapter 1) Finnish figure of enrolments at the lowest apprenticeship level reflects the nature of apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds as addressing the needs of disengaged young people. To an extent the high (74%, see Table 4, Chapter 1) level of intermediate apprenticeship (the lowest level) enrolments in English apprenticeship system reflects this role of apprenticeship as addressing the needs of disengaged young people, but there is also a significant number (26%, see Table 4, Chapter 1) of 16-18 year olds enrolled in advanced apprenticeship level qualifications. The comparable figures for France with close to half (45%, see Table 4, Chapter 1) of apprentices enrolled at the lowest level (level V in France), are based on a wider age range, and include 16-25 year olds. The limitation in the breakdown of the available statistical data makes it difficult to analyse the comparable situation for French apprentices. From the publications reviewed in the French systematic literature review it is however clear that there is relatively little progression within the apprenticeship pathways from the lower level qualifications to the higher-level qualifications that would enable young people to meet the minimum qualification levels and eligibility criteria for entry into higher education. For example, the young people in France who undertake apprenticeships at the higher levels, including higher education level, tend not to have progressed up through the apprenticeship pathway (Moreau, 2005).

Habitus influencing young people's choices

The above discussion has contextualised apprenticeship in England, Finland and France within the respective wider education systems. The differences that have been identified in the relative numbers of young people following the different pathways, the pathways leading up to the options aged 16-18, and the educational content of vocational education programmes relative to academic programmes resulting in difficulties for progression, mean that the four broad pathways are actually constructed very differently in the three countries.

Whilst the discussion has focused on the country contexts at the macro level, this account of the structural constraints and enablers in the wider education systems should not be seen as arguing for structural determinism. Young people and their families do exercise agency in the choices they make, but they are likely to be limited in their choices at different points. The complex interplay of agency and structure in education systems is best explained using Bourdieu's concept of habitus that is "the cognitive structures which social agents implement in their practical knowledge of the social world [and which] are internalized embodied social structures" (Bourdieu,

1979, p.468 cited in King, 2005, p.222). Bourdieu's concept of habitus is useful here as it helps to explain how choices made by young people and their families are influenced by, for example, culturally constructed expectations of the appropriateness of the different pathways that the young people and their families may have internalised. These internalised values and norms potentially have an impact on the choices that are made, and can have an impact on the young people and their families' perceptions of the meaning of apprenticeship, and consequently influences their actions arising from these perceptions.

Another important dimension of the context of apprenticeship systems are the institutional frameworks, which shape the structures within which apprenticeship systems operate in, and how they are positioned within the wider education system. The discussion now turns to these institutional frameworks for apprenticeship.

5.3 Institutional frameworks for apprenticeship

In this thesis, the concept of institutional frameworks for apprenticeship has been adapted from Ryan's (2000) discussion of the institutional attributes of apprenticeship (see section 1.5, Chapter 1). From the study findings it seems that in all three apprenticeship systems there is underlying conflict with regards to stakeholder roles with different stakeholders assigning varying importance to particular aspects of the apprenticeship system depending on their needs and views of the meaning of apprenticeship. It seems that the approach to mediating these differing needs are, however, different.

Tension between the state and employers

The tension between the state and employers in terms of their respective roles in the apprenticeship system, and how this is, or could be mediated was the most researched and discussed area relating to institutional frameworks in the systematic literature reviews. There is potential for tension between the state and employers in all education systems, as employers tend to push for education solutions that effectively transfer the costs of necessary training to the public sector rather than funding it themselves (Gleeson and Keep, 2004). This potential for tension is particularly evident in apprenticeship systems, as all types of apprenticeships are characterised by the significance of the role of employers in its operation. The apprentices are also employees, and much of the success of their apprenticeship depends on their employer. The employer decides who they want to take on as an apprentice, or which existing employee they want to support through an

apprenticeship. The employers themselves ultimately decide how much of their working time they want their employees to be spending on training and the amount and quality of the support, for example in terms of mentoring and support they are given. The employers themselves assign meaning to apprenticeship within their own organisation, deciding for example whether the completion of an apprenticeship is linked to further opportunities through internal promotion.

Institutional framework in England not working

From the systematic literature reviews on the English and the French apprenticeship education systems it seems that the role of the state in apprenticeship is as much about incentivising, encouraging, cajoling or forcing employers than it is potentially about directing, legislating, regulating or funding the system. Many of the various changes to the English apprenticeship system that were discussed in the research literature can be seen to attempt to arrive at a better institutional framework in terms of employers' involvement, whether this relates to trying to please employers with less regulation, or the state trying to get more involved in the practical aspects. There were also many arguments put forward by researchers for improving the current institutional framework in England by increasing the role of other stakeholders, such as trade unions and other social partners. From the research literature there emerged a kind of consensus that the current institutional framework for English apprenticeship is not working, even though there was no unanimous recipe for improvement.

Role of the state less contested in Finland

In contrast, in the Finnish research literature there appears to be a greater acceptance of the role of the state as the key stakeholder in apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds. This is suggested, for example, by the lack of publications questioning the funding spent on vocational education or apprenticeships. There are also relatively fewer accounts than in the English or French research literature that are highly critical of government policy, with Finnish research tending to state almost as a matter of fact the significance of the role of the public sector, without necessarily critiquing it. Whilst there is employer and trade union representation within the institutional framework of apprenticeship, it seems that in the Finnish context the state does play the key role in apprenticeship, and that this is not contested. The findings relating to the Finnish apprenticeship system also suggest that employers are reluctant to take on 16-18 year old apprentices, and that the state and the trade unions seem not to challenge this reluctance with vocational high schools seen as the clearly preferential pathway for initial vocational education. Consequently there

seems to be a consensus amongst the key stakeholders about the marginality of apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds. Despite this marginality of the apprenticeship pathway, it is nevertheless still very much part of the overall education system for this age group in terms of the educational content of the apprenticeship programmes.

Changing relationship between education and employment in France

In France, the institutional framework is dominated by the legal framework consisting of, for example the 1987 Seguin law, which raised the upper limit of the age eligibility criteria to 25, and expanded the scope of qualifications that could be studied through the apprenticeship route to include higher education level qualifications (see section 1.5, Chapter 1). There is employer and trade union representation, but the research literatures again suggest that the state is the key player. Fukuyama's (1995, p.114) analysis of the French economy and society more widely suggests that the state is constantly intervening because "the French private sector has never been dynamic, innovative, or entrepreneurial." Whilst the private sector may have displayed more dynamism than Fukuyama credits it in recent years, the findings in this study do, however, suggest that French employers have historically been content to play their minor role within the apprenticeship system as guided and directed by the legal framework. The apprenticeship tax aside (see section 1.5, Chapter 1), the relatively minor role assigned to employers in vocational education more broadly is now being increasingly questioned with some employers themselves expressing doubts about the capability and efficiency of the initial vocational education system in educating and training a productive workforce. How these concerns are mediated through the institutional framework for apprenticeship is complicated by imbalance in the regional and local level roles and authority in the operation and funding of apprenticeship and by the significant variation in the different occupational sectors' approaches to educating and training their workforce.

These increasing concerns expressed by French employers about the role of educational settings in vocational education and the development of mechanisms, such as accredited prior learning and the 'Certificates of Professional Qualifications' (Fr.CQPs, see section 4.3, Chapter 4) that sit outside of the traditional framework of centrally controlled qualifications can be partially explained by Béduwé and Germe's (2004) account of structural changes in the French economy. Béduwé and Germe (Ibid) argue that the normative relationship between education and employment that has been stable in the post-war period is beginning to be eroded by the increased quantity effect, and by changes in the organisation of work, which lead more young

people to enter the French labour market at lower levels than expected from the level of their qualifications. The growth of the service sector has, for example, led to an increasing mismatch between jobs in the service sector, and the standard definitions of qualifications. These are undoubtedly issues that will need to be considered through the institutional framework for apprenticeship. This is particularly the case if the current French government adheres to the previous ambitious projections of apprentice numbers, given that apprenticeships in France have traditionally, and still to a large extent in the case of the 16-18 year olds, involved craft industries or small businesses (French expert interview).

Overall, the study findings suggest that the strong role of the state and the current institutional framework for apprenticeship is not significantly contested in Finland. The Finnish case of apprenticeship can be seen as an example of the continuing importance of the nation-state in education. The English and French cases of apprenticeship also illustrate the continuing importance of the nation-state in education, but suggest that whilst the strong role of the state is a reality, it is being contested. The respective roles of the state, employers and other stakeholders are hotly debated in England, and the one consensus amongst researchers centres on the limitations of the current institutional framework. The research literature on French apprenticeship is also increasingly referring to debates around the role of educational settings in vocational education and the respective roles of the state and the regions within the institutional framework.

As has already been identified in Chapter 4, the role of institutions delivering apprenticeship appears under-researched in the three research literatures. Whilst the institutions delivering apprenticeship may not wield significant power in developing apprenticeship policy, they seem well placed to developing apprenticeship in practice, and this is identified as a potential area for further research in the next concluding chapter (Chapter 6). The discussion now turns to the third dimension of the contextualised analysis of apprenticeship, a comparative analysis of societal values.

5.4 Apprenticeship in the context of societal values

Societal values in this thesis are defined as the overarching norms and ideals shared by the members of a culture bounded by a nation-state (see section 2.3 for discussion of this concept). Apprenticeship in the context of societal values is in this section discussed first through the specific values of universalism, equality of

opportunity and liberal individualism that appear significant in explaining some of the features of the apprenticeship systems in the three countries. This is followed by a discussion of education as a nation-building activity and an exploration of the differing levels of trust in the three societies.

Ideal of universalism, liberal individualism, equity and inclusion

The findings from this study suggest that in Finland and France apprenticeships and school-based vocational education as forms of initial vocational training are incorporated within the education system as a whole. In England apprenticeships and vocational education are conceptualised as training. This reflects a number of differences in the societal values that are commonly held in the three countries. Returning to the cultural typology referred to by Green, Wolf and Leney (1999) (see section 2.3, Chapter 2); it seems that the concept of universalism is a key societal value in relation to education in France. However, in terms of societal values this is, in this thesis, described as the ideal of universalism, as in practice the traditional universalist values in education are increasingly at odds with the variance in learners' outcomes from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds (Mattei, 2012). It seems that this ideal of universalism has been, and continues to be, significant in France in the conceptualisation of initial vocational education and apprenticeships. This is because apprenticeships are seen to fit within the fold of the French education system where in theory the different educational pathways illustrated earlier in this chapter (see section 5.2) provide equal opportunities for learners.

In Finland, equality of opportunity has consistently been the guiding principle of education policy (Sahlberg, 2011; Niemi, 2012), but drawing on the language referred to by Green, Wolf and Leney (1999), this arises from communitarian solidarism, rather than the French republican notion of universalism. What Green et al (Ibid) refer to as communitarian solidarism is perhaps here best described as the key societal values of equity and inclusion. Whilst Finnish education policy now tends to refer to equality of opportunities rather than to equity and inclusion in education, there continues to be a strong interest in the educational system as a whole producing relatively little variation in learners' outcomes. This is achieved through the use of a number of different strategies of inclusion, e.g. special education, personalised help and the option to complete an extra tenth year in the comprehensive school for learners not yet sure of their preferred post-compulsory education pathway (Sahlberg, 2011). This drive to produce relatively little variation in learners' outcomes is coupled with what Lindblad and Popkewitz (2004) have

insightfully described as the salvation narrative of education that is embodied in the discourses of education. They suggest that:

The [salvation] narratives embody a field of cultural practices through which sets of distinctions and differentiations order the objects of reflection, generate principles for action and participation, and provide boundaries that shape and fashion the possibilities of our human conditions and its progress (Lindblad and Popkewitz, 2004, p.73)

A strong salvation narrative of education can, for example, explain how through their habitus young people and their parents in Finland internalise the belief that all young people have to participate in education, and that education is one means by which an individual can improve their quality of life. From this discussion it can be concluded that societal values of equity and inclusion appear significant in the Finnish conceptualisation of initial vocational education and apprenticeships as fitting within the education system as a whole. This is in contrast with the English conceptualisation of initial vocational education and apprenticeships as training, separate from other education for this age group, which seems compatible with the notion of liberal individualism as the cultural typology referred to by Green, Wolf and Leney (1999). Liberal individualism can be seen as the key societal value that helps to uphold this divide between education and training, as it is more concerned with the rights of the individuals and the negative impacts of state interference than issues of equality of opportunity as conceptualised in communitarian solidarity or universalism.

The liberal individualist values are also partly reflected in the relative levels of education investment by the state. Based on Eurostats (2012) data on public expenditure on education in 2009, with data for United Kingdom being used as a proxy for England, United Kingdom spends only 5.7% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on public expenditure on education, compared with Finland spending 6.8% of its GDP and France 5.9%. As societal values, the ideal of universalism in France, and equity and inclusion in Finland can also be seen to lend themselves to conceptualising education as a part of nation-building, that is, viewing education as a key constituent of the nation-state.

Education as nation-building

It seems that in Finland and France, apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds, as one part of the education system for this age group, is conceptualised as contributing directly or indirectly to the nation-building activity as discussed by Green (1990). Reference

to nation-building is indeed evident in both Sahlberg's (2011) and Niemi's (2012) accounts of the recent success of the Finnish education system, with education being seen as key to a successful Finnish economy and society. Rinne, Kivirauma and Simola (2002, p.655) further argue that education has continued to have special status and that "the market-based rhetoric and practices have not been able to take root in the core areas of the traditional Nordic welfare state –education, social services and health – as easily as in other areas of society." This suggests that the salvation narrative of education (Lindblad and Popkewitz, 2004) is strongly rooted in Finnish political culture, as well as being strongly rooted in Finnish popular culture (Sahlberg, 2011), and that education's special status may partly arise from viewing as something that binds the nation together. The education system in France has traditionally been seen as safeguarding French culture and values, but the appropriateness and the adaptability of the traditional French republican values and concepts in education to contemporary France is now debated (Mattei, 2012). In contrast it seems that the conceptualisation of apprenticeship in England as training separates it from any potential nation-building that the general education system might contribute to. The discussion now turns to differing levels of trust as the last aspect of the contextualisation in terms of societal values.

Differing levels of trust

Fukuyama's (1995) comparative research on cultures and economies helps to further explore another aspect of societal values in the cases of Finland and France. On the basis of his study, Fukuyama (1995, p.119) concludes that France is a low-trust society and he writes of a "strong preference for authority that is centralized, hierarchical and legally defined" that in terms of organisation of work is reflected in "a single, nationally established job classification system that assigns a coefficient to every position in the hierarchy from unskilled worker to top manager" (Ibid, p.234). The findings from this study resonate with this characterisation of France. The multitude of different levels and types of qualifications that can be undertaken in apprenticeship are closely linked to specific types of jobs in the labour market, and the best way to trace the development of apprenticeship in France is through the laws relating to its organisation and management. Fukuyama doesn't include any of the Nordic countries or the UK in his sample of countries, but at least in the education sector in Finland there does seem to be a greater element of trust in schools and in teachers than in England (Sahlberg, 2011; Niemi, 2012; Finnish expert interview). The Finnish expert interviewee considered that this trust did not, however extend to include education researchers, and that overall, since the 1990s

there had been evidence of a gradual erosion of trust in the education system. Nevertheless, this level of trust that enables long-term strategies to be pursued within the education system is also argued to be one of the reasons for Finland's success in the PISA rankings (Aho, Pitkänen and Sahlberg, 2006, Sahlberg, 2011). In England, the education system is instead characterised by continuous change and a focus on accountability rather than trust.

In conclusion, contextualised analysis of apprenticeship has here provided insight to understanding the contribution of the respective societal values to the meaning and purpose of apprenticeship. A strong salvation narrative of education has been identified as partly explaining the special status of all education in Finland, and the role of education as nation-building. This further confirms the study finding of the continuing importance of the state in education in Finland. The Finnish state has also played a key role in contributing to what can be characterised as a culture of trust in the education system through the pursuit of long-term strategies. In England, the importance of the state in apprenticeship through societal values is significantly weaker as the key value is that of liberal individualism. In France, the ideal of universalism in education persists, but the importance of the state through societal values seems to be weakening.

PART 2. DIVERGENCE AND CONVERGENCE IN RESEARCH AND POLICY (RESEARCH QUESTION 2)

5.5 Differences in research and policy

This second part of the chapter addresses the second research question about divergence and convergence in apprenticeship research and policy. These are explored first through a discussion of the differences in apprenticeship research and policy in the three countries, and second through illustration of the similarities in the rhetoric of apprenticeship in England and France.

Boundaries arising from terminology

From the systematic literature reviews and expert interviews it seems that research in apprenticeship is compartmentalised in a number of different ways. The research can be characterised as being divided into different research cultures, as well being divided by the boundaries of definition, the research problematic and geography. The different research cultures relate both to the culture of the community of researchers in which research on apprenticeship is undertaken, as well as the wider national cultures in which the research is situated. The definitional boundaries arise

from how different researchers conceptualise their research questions, and how this includes and excludes other research and concepts. Conceptual differences arise for example from the French word for apprenticeship, '*apprentissage*', which as has already been explained, also means the process of learning. It may be that this dual meaning has aided the trend towards an increasing use of the term '*alternance*' to include apprenticeship, as an attempt to immediately signify to the audience that the discourse relates to workplace learning rather than the generic process of learning. The relative strength of '*alternance*' as a concept, particularly in political discourse has in turn led French research on apprenticeships to be more intertwined with research on work-placements and related schemes, even though many researchers are vocal about the conceptual differences between '*apprentissage*' and '*alternance*.' In the English and Finnish research literature samples, there are no references to 'alternation' and apprenticeship has relatively stronger currency conceptually even though different definitions of it are used (see discussion in section 4.2, Chapter 4).

Conceptualising the research field for apprenticeship

Alongside the differing conceptualisation of terminology there are also differences in how research areas have been defined and in the interest that they generate in the research community (for thematic findings on apprenticeship research cultures see section 4.4, Chapter 4). In his review of research into vocational education, Mehaut (2008) suggests that the French system is compartmentalised into initial vocational training and lifelong learning, and that there are few connections between the systems and research in these areas, with research into lifelong learning featuring more prominently. Mehaut (2008) groups the main research themes into: inequalities in the educational system, research on the socio-professional integration of young adults, growing amount of research into the consequences of decentralisation, evaluation of regional policies, different strategies of training institutions, involvement of trade unions and of employer associations, the organisation of labour and its evolution and learning situations at work. He explains the prominence of the economics-based studies examining youth transitions into the labour market in France by the relatively high levels of youth unemployment and the "significant lack of connection between the world of education and the world of work" (Mehaut, 2008, p.47) in the French education system. It also seems that in France the creation of the professional baccalaureate has generated increased interest in research on vocational education.

As has already been discussed in Chapter 4 (see section 4.4), in Finland the vast majority of the research in vocational education has focused on the dynamics introduced by the creation of the polytechnic university sector in the 1990s. This focus on vocational education at the higher qualification levels has marginalised research into initial vocational education, which suffers from a lack of research interest. It seems that there is consequently insufficient dialogue to generate a critical mass of research that would in turn help to establish the area as an interesting one for researchers. The finding from this study that there is relatively less critique of government policy in the Finnish research literature sample cannot, however, be purely explained by the small number of relevant studies in this area. One explanation could be that fewer changes in educational policy generate fewer critiques of those changes. Another possible explanation is to view academic researchers colluding with the consensual policy-making process, which emphasises common agreements and compromises, downplaying extreme viewpoints. Further research examining the relationship between policy and research more broadly in Finland would have to be undertaken to explain this finding.

In England, however, a critical mass of research on apprenticeship and vocational education exists. The relative breadth of research literature focusing on apprenticeship is reflected in the publications reviewed in the systematic review of literature in this study, but research more widely in vocational education covers yet further ground. Key research areas in vocational education in England include skills, competencies and competency qualifications, the academic-vocational divide, parity of esteem, managerialism and the role of the state and benchmarking against other countries. As in the Finnish and the French research literatures, many of the researchers focusing on these areas of work in England have authored multiple publications and have collaborated with other authors in the field. The sheer number of publications on English apprenticeships and the vocational education system that is reflected in the final list of publications reviewed in this study also indicates a relatively rich culture of research characterised by healthy critical debate.

This critical mass can perhaps be partly explained by structures facilitating research in vocational education. Many universities in England have specialised education departments, some of which have a focus on aspects of vocational education. The Institution of Education in London, for example is a university focusing on education and education related research with a significant amount of research being undertaken in vocational education. Mehaut (2008) suggests that in France there

are only a very small number of research communities grouped around the theme of vocational education apart from the National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts (Fr. *Conservatoire national des arts et metiers*), which focuses on research in adult education; and CEREQ, which focuses on young people's transition into the labour market and undertakes research through a network of associated centres. Mehaut (2008) identifies CEREQ as the key player in research on vocational education, but highlights that curriculum and pedagogy do not feature in its remit for research. In contrast in Finland, Tampere University is the only university to have an education department with an explicit interest in vocational education. With their close links to the relevant industries, the Finnish polytechnics would seem ideally placed to also research this area in the future.

Compartmentalisation by geography

In the publications reviewed in this study, the researchers examining apprenticeship in Finland were all Finnish. Some UK-based researchers examined vocational education or apprenticeship in France, but this was always as part of a comparative study also including England or the UK. This compartmentalisation by geography has obviously much to do with the practicalities of research. Academics concentrating on researching their country of origin or where they work are more likely to have practical expertise and knowledge of that country. They are also more likely to be eligible and to be aware of research funding opportunities that relate to studies of that country, they are more likely to have existing networks that they can utilise in developing, setting up and disseminating the research, and to be familiar in operating within the home research cultures. This compartmentalisation by geography, however limits the potential of research in this area. This is identified in Part 3 of this chapter as having implications for research on apprenticeship.

Nevertheless, the study found some evidence of disciplinary compartmentalisation that is different from one country to another. For example, in the publications in English focusing on England or the UK, there was a relatively wide spread of what could be termed disciplinary approaches. This was in contrast with the research literatures in French, which tended to be either sociology or economics based, and the research literatures in Finland, which tended towards historical or sociological approaches to education, or research or evaluation type reports, which were more descriptive and summative in their nature. Different inclusion and exclusion criteria in the systematic literature reviews might of course have generated a different spread

of disciplinary approaches, particularly in the sample of French publications. This is discussed in Chapter 6 under limitations of research.

Differences in policy arising from the scale of the NEET problem

As the overview of the current apprenticeship programmes presented in Chapter 1 (see section 1.5) has shown, apprenticeship policies in the three countries differ in how apprenticeship is conceptualised and how the programmes are funded. The publications discussed in Chapter 4 highlighted further differences in the apprenticeship policies in terms of the educational content of apprenticeships and the respective institutional frameworks.

Whilst there might appear to be similarities in the overall approach in England and in Finland to using apprenticeships to re-engage disaffected young people, the above discussion of apprenticeship in the context of the wider education system has shown that the number of NEET young people is significantly higher in England, whereas a very high proportion of young people in Finland are still engaged in education aged 18. It should be again noted that this is not due to compulsion, as the school leaving age in Finland is 16, as in England, although the school leaving age in England is being raised to 17 in 2013. Consequently, re-engaging disaffected young people in Finland partly through enrolling them on an apprenticeship is bound to be a relatively small-scale, although challenging, programme. In England, re-engaging disaffected young people through apprenticeship would have to be a programme of a significant size and scope. As Hayward and Williams (2011, p.186) point out, many of the disaffected young people included in the NEET statistics are not “apprenticeship ready to the extent that they could cope with academic and technical study at level 2 and beyond.” Furthermore, the re-engagement of disaffected young people is not the only policy aim of apprenticeship as the discussion on the research literature on English apprenticeships in Chapter 4 (see section 4.2) has already highlighted. Apprenticeships in England are also meant to be about improving the intermediate level skills of the future workforce, as well as increasing the skill levels of the population as a whole. The study findings suggest that multiple aims of apprenticeship policy confuse the purpose of apprenticeship, dilute the meaning of apprenticeship and can consequently diminish its impact.

Transnational policy-making not accepted at face value

Transnational policy-making particularly through the EU could be expected to be harmonising education policies and to minimise the sense of fragmentation of education policies at least on a trans-European basis. Key steps in European-wide

vocational education policy making have included the 2002 Copenhagen Declaration on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and the development of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training. The influence of the EU in vocational education policies across Europe has not, however, been significant to date (West, 2012). Across education policies as a whole, there is evidence of increasing influence of transnational policy-making, but this policy-making seems not to be accepted at face value (Derouet, 2006; Niukko, 2006).

5.6 Similarities in policy rhetoric of apprenticeship

Transnational policy-making may also be contributing to the study finding that there are some similarities in the rhetoric about apprenticeships in the three countries. Despite the differences in the content and meaning of apprenticeship and the respective roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the systems, the study findings suggest that there are similarities in the use of apprenticeship as a policy tool, which is trying to give apprenticeship further meanings through rhetoric. These similarities in the rhetoric seem to resonate with Levin's (2001, p.20) argument that "some policies may be substantially rhetorical with little thought given to actual outcomes". This trend is more evident in England and France than in Finland.

Similarities in the policy rhetoric in England and France

Since the introduction of the Modern Apprenticeships in the 1990s in England, there have been two different and somewhat incompatible policy aims to apprenticeship; skilling up the labour force and re-integrating excluded youth. As has already been indicated in Chapter 4 (see section 4.2), for numbers of 16-18 year olds going through the apprenticeship system, both aims have failed, but this duality of objective persists in the apprenticeship policy to date (Steedman, 2011a). Apprenticeship seems to be used as a policy tool when other policy solutions appear to have failed, as was evident when apprenticeships were proposed as a solution to the disengaged youth involved in the riots of August 2011. These policy pushes seem to be more about the policy rhetoric than actual outcomes, and apprenticeship has perhaps turned into the magic word that politicians resort to when at a loss for what to say in relation to education and employment policy. In France, the use of apprenticeship as a policy tool is a recent invention dating to the Paris riots of 2005, but the deployment of the 'need for more apprenticeships' argument reached fervour in the 2012 French Presidential campaign of Nicolas Sarkozy, who incidentally also used the German model as the ideal that the French should emulate. In practice, the rhetoric has been

followed by only minor changes in apprenticeship policy that have not had an impact on the actual numbers of apprentices.

It is interesting to reflect on the possible reasons for this prevalent use of apprenticeship in political rhetoric in England and France. One explanation could relate to its relative marginality, at least in terms of initial vocational education. The majority of the electorate will have little experience or understanding of what apprenticeship currently entails and will consequently have fewer means of critically assessing the potential of rhetorical arguments in practice. This could explain why it feels like a new enough of an argument for politicians in England to use, even though similar discourses have been rolled out in various guises for over 20 years. A slightly less cynical explanation would be the impact of EU-wide education and training policies that have been promoting apprenticeship as a mode of vocational education.

Less evidence of policy rhetoric of apprenticeship in Finland

In Finland there is less evidence of apprenticeship being rhetorically used as a policy tool that would differ from its general meaning in initial vocational education as a part of an approach to re-engaging young people. Furthermore, political discussion of apprenticeship in relation to initial vocational education seems to have emerged from the promotion of apprenticeship in the EU-wide education policy and has generated little interest outside of this remit of a policy direction that should be adopted as part of competitiveness strategies.

In conclusion, this thesis has found divergence in apprenticeship research in the three countries arising from concepts and fields of research being differently defined. The geographical compartmentalisation of apprenticeship research has been identified as a limitation for the potential of research in this area. In terms of apprenticeship policy, there is divergence arising from the scale of the NEET problem in England and Finland, but convergence in policy rhetoric of apprenticeship in England and France. Transnational policy-making appears not to have had significant impact on apprenticeship policy in practice. This points to the continued importance of the nation-state in apprenticeship research and policy in the three countries.

PART 3. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND FURTHER RESEARCH (RESEARCH QUESTION 3)

Distinguishing between policy, practice and research

There are four specific implications for policy and further research that arise from the contextualised comparative analysis presented in parts 1 and 2 of this chapter. Two of these implications relate more to apprenticeship policy and practice, and two to research on apprenticeships. These are consequently presented separately starting with the implications for apprenticeship policy and practice. Policy and practice are here discussed together, as policy in this thesis is conceptualised as being made at all levels of the education system through the interpretation of policies when they are being implemented (see section 1.2, Chapter 1). The discussion of the different implications in this chapter is followed by recommendations presented in Chapter 6.

5.7 Implications for apprenticeship policy and practice

Understanding context is crucial to successful policy and practice

The increasing reliance on external rankings, such as OECD's PISA, seems to be coupled with an increasing appetite for external solutions for improvement. External solutions for improvement, that is solutions imported from another country, are often perceived as easier fixes than attempting to improve the system from within. The findings from this thesis, however, suggest that the contextualised nature of apprenticeship systems is unlikely to lend itself to easy externalised solutions. Rather, it seems that it is important for policy-makers and practitioners to acknowledge that some of the issues that are seen as problems in apprenticeship are the indirect results of the apprenticeship systems' interdependence with, for example, the wider education system. This interdependence with the wider education system means that many apprenticeship policy solutions are doomed to fail unless they also address aspects of the wider education system. Externalising the problem can enable solutions with relatively narrow remits to be put forward as opposed to leading to wider 'soul-searching' that would be inevitable from acknowledging a perspective of apprenticeship as a "social, political, economic, pedagogical and cultural phenomenon" (Kraus and Heikkinen, 2009, p.9). Consequently, it seems that it is crucial to understand the country context to make successful apprenticeship policy and practice. This applies both to changes to policy and the institutional framework arising from internal, that is national concerns, and to policy imports introduced from seemingly more successful apprenticeship systems.

Agreeing on the meaning of apprenticeship makes for stronger policy and practice

Research on apprenticeship in the three countries documented in this thesis highlights the difficulties of implementing apprenticeship policies with conflicting policy aims. These conflicting policy aims seem to arise from presenting apprenticeships as a solution to a number of different problems without adequately reflecting on how these policies would be simultaneously implemented, or how they would interact in day-to-day practice. In the English context in particular, this seems to be exacerbated by the development of a policy-sediment that builds up with new policies being introduced whilst legacies of the previous policies are still being felt. The findings of this thesis suggest that having a country-specific consensus on the meaning of apprenticeship that is explicit in long-term policy would provide a stronger platform for policy and practice. Multiple meanings are more likely to lead to potentially conflicting strategies and disagreements amongst the key stakeholders, as well as to poor outcomes in the implementation of apprenticeship policy. These findings echo those of Finlay (1999, p.13) who asserts that “developing a shared vision, a common set of values and a common understanding of the basic terms” are crucial to consensual and participatory vocational education policy-making.

5.8 Implications for research on apprenticeship

Apprenticeship research limited by geographical boundaries

As has been discussed in this chapter (see section 5.5), it was the UK-based researchers who had England or the UK as their primary study focus, whilst Finnish researchers focused on the Finnish education system, and the French researchers examined the French education system. The theoretical exploration of, for example, the different meanings and concepts relating to vocational education in different languages can, however offer a different perspective for improving curricula and pedagogy in vocational education. Consequently it seems that these geographical boundaries act to limit the scope, and consequently also the potential of research in apprenticeships and vocational education.

Scope for more contextualised comparative accounts of apprenticeship

The findings from this study suggest that there are relatively few comparative accounts of apprenticeship that provide insight to the country context related nature of apprenticeship. Such accounts can present the intertwined relationship between apprenticeship systems and the wider education systems in a more complex way that reflects the delivery of apprenticeships more accurately than is possible within,

for example, simple typologies of apprenticeship systems. This thesis consequently argues that contextualised comparative accounts can make a significant contribution to an improved understanding of apprenticeship in different countries.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the study findings arising from contextualised comparative analysis. The findings from a contextualised comparative analysis of apprenticeship have been presented in terms of the wider education systems, the institutional frameworks and the respective societal values that have highlighted the unique features of the apprenticeship systems in England, Finland and France. The discussion of the pathways for 16-18 year olds in particular has illustrated differences in the three apprenticeship systems.

The findings have highlighted the continuing importance of the nation-state as explaining divergence in these three apprenticeship systems. The role and responsibility of the state in apprenticeship is however contested in England, and to a lesser extent, in France. A particular feature of the system in Finland seems to be the salvation narrative of education, which helps to explain the special status of education in the society.

There is evidence of divergence in apprenticeship policy and research, but also some evidence of convergence in the policy rhetoric of apprenticeship in England and France. The four implications for apprenticeship policy, practice and research outlined in this chapter relate first to the significance of understanding the context in policy implementation; second to the importance of agreeing the country-specific meaning of apprenticeship; third to research being limited by geographical boundaries; and fourth to the potential of contextualised comparative accounts of apprenticeship. The next concluding chapter summarises the study and its findings and presents recommendations for apprenticeship policy, practice and research.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of research design

The thesis has explored the comparative meaning of apprenticeship through systematic literature reviews of published research on apprenticeships in England, Finland and France, complemented by a qualitative in-depth interview with an academic expert in the field in each country. The thesis has addressed three research questions. The first research question focused on the unique features of the apprenticeship systems for 16-18 year olds in England, Finland and France. The second research question related to evidence for convergence or divergence in apprenticeship policy and research between 1996 and 2011 in the three countries, whilst the third research question was to identify implications for apprenticeship policy, practice and further research.

The interview transcripts and the journal articles, book chapters, books and research reports selected through the systematic literature reviews have been analysed using thematic analysis to draw out key themes. Comparative analysis has then been undertaken to examine three different contextual dimensions for apprenticeship and to reflect on the evidence for convergence and divergence in policy and research. These three contextual dimensions of the wider education system, the institutional frameworks and societal values emerged as the key contexts from the theoretical framework for the study and the systematic literature reviews.

This concluding chapter outlines the key research findings, summarises recommendations for apprenticeship policy, practice and research and presents a discussion of the professional application of the research findings. This is followed by reflections on the limitations of this study and directions for future research.

6.2 Key research findings: unique features of the systems

Apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds a marginal pathway in Finland

On the basis of the study findings it seems that in Finland, the apprenticeship pathway plays a very marginal role in initial vocational education, both in policy rhetoric and in practice. Within the wider Finnish education system that prioritises school-based settings, the role of the apprenticeship pathway for 16-18 year olds is generally seen to fit within broader support packages to re-engage young people

who have dropped out of mainstream education. As such, the meaning of apprenticeship for young people in Finland is mainly constructed from its role as a component of a re-integration strategy. However, the apprenticeship pathway, like all initial vocational education in Finland has a strong educational content. This strong educational content is embedded within the salvation narrative of education (Lindblad and Popkewitz, 2004) that has helped to bring about a societal level consensus about the importance of education. Given that the main function of apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds seems to reside outside of the needs of the workplace, however, it may in practice resemble more a work-placement type programme rather than the expansive notion of apprenticeship described by Fuller and Unwin's (2003, 2011a) model.

Increasing policy rhetoric and dilution of meaning of apprenticeship in France

In France, apprenticeship has an increasingly important role in initial vocational education in the policy rhetoric, whilst in practice its role is still relatively marginal, although growing. The wider education system in France has tended to prioritise school-based settings although the appropriateness of this is being increasingly debated. Whilst the traditional labour market hierarchies of qualifications and corresponding jobs have been eroded by changes in the industrial structure and the organisation of work, the French society can still be characterised as professing a kind of reverence for academic qualifications. Partly because of this reverence, the apprenticeship pathway hasn't fitted easily within the education system, and the changes to enable higher education level qualifications to be undertaken through apprenticeship can be seen as an attempt to bring apprenticeship within the fold of academic education and its aspirations. It seems that apprenticeship is being increasingly used in policy rhetoric and in contrast with the evident inequalities and hierarchies in the operation of the apprenticeship system. Contemporary apprenticeship in France acts as a pathway for 16-18 year olds into specific occupations and trades, but also as a pathway for higher achieving 16-18 year olds into higher education. These two meanings of apprenticeship seem to operate distinct from one another, with almost mutually exclusive apprentice cohorts. This is potentially diluting the more traditional meaning of apprenticeship in France, whilst not creating a clear contemporary meaning for it. This is also reflective of the evident inertia in the French education system. This seems to arise from a shared belief in the benefits of the existing economic and social system, and the power balance between the institutional structures and stakeholder arrangements.

Apprenticeship as training, and its multiple meanings in England

In England, the role of apprenticeships in initial vocational education has been significant in rhetoric since the 1990s, whilst in practice it is still relatively marginal. The apprenticeship pathway as vocational education is seen as a training pathway distinct from the more academic education based pathways. This explains the relative non-existence of wider educational content in apprenticeships. The lack of educational content further reinforces the academic-vocational divide, and the segmented nature of the education system in England through limiting opportunities for progression from apprenticeship study. In practice segmentation is also evident in the apprenticeship system itself with the lower levels of the state funded apprenticeship programme bearing strong similarities to work-placement type programmes, and the higher levels of the programme fitting better with the notion of apprenticeship as a well regarded method of workplace learning. These dual or even multiple meanings of apprenticeship are further confused by the policy rhetoric of apprenticeship, and the use of apprenticeship as a policy tool. The use of apprenticeship as a policy tool, however, needs to be seen in the context of the whole education sector being subject to frequent policy changes. The realm of education in England seems not to contain much that is sacred and could not be changed should the hegemonic political discourse see it as beneficial.

6.3 Key research findings: convergence and divergence

Differing meanings of apprenticeship

The key finding from this thesis is that differences in the country-context give rise to divergent meanings of apprenticeship as a form of initial vocational education in England, Finland and France. The brief contextualised accounts of apprenticeship in the three countries presented above illustrate that there is more evidence for divergence than convergence in apprenticeship policy over the study period. There is also more evidence for divergence in apprenticeship research in the three countries.

Differing research fields in the three countries

The findings from this thesis point to similarities in research on apprenticeships in the three countries in terms of the predominance of the roles and responsibilities of employers being at least one of the foci of research. The concepts and terminology used, and the definition of the apprenticeship research field, however, continue to differ over the study period. This is to be expected given that the different languages and cultures still shape their respective research cultures and communities and illustrates the importance of the nation-state in education systems. Globalisation is,

nevertheless, shaping the space and time continuum (Harvey, 1990), and in the research findings there is evidence of some borrowing of concepts, for example in the increasing reference to competencies in the French context. Transnational borrowing of concepts and policies also perhaps explains the evidence for convergence in the apprenticeship policy rhetoric.

Convergence in policy rhetoric of apprenticeship

The convergence in the rhetoric of apprenticeship policy in the three countries seems to be at least partly due to the increasing influence of transnational policy making that has recently promoted apprenticeship as an effective mode of vocational education. There is less evidence of this policy rhetoric in Finland where there is still a very strong preference for school-based initial vocational education, and less evident interest in attempting to import aspects of apprenticeship policy from the most highly regarded European apprenticeship model, Germany. The English, Finnish and French apprenticeship systems, however, all share some weaknesses when analysed using Fuller and Unwin's (1999, 2011a) interconnected dimensions to apprenticeship.

Interconnected dimensions to apprenticeship missing

Fuller and Unwin (1999, 2011a) question the sustainability of the current apprenticeship programme in England on the basis of their model of four interconnected dimensions to apprenticeship; the pedagogical, occupational, locational and social. Applying these dimensions to the Finnish and French apprenticeship models for 16-18 year olds suggests that the sustainability of these two models can also be questioned. In terms of the pedagogical dimension, both the French and the Finnish models of apprenticeship involve broader educational content, which is supportive of apprentices' wider learning and personal and social development as young people and as citizens. However, until recently both models have prioritised school-based education for this age group over apprenticeships, and the occupational links to apprenticeship as a form of initial vocational education in Finland appear weak. The occupational links to apprenticeship in France appear strong in only a small number of sectors including artisan and crafts industries. The findings from this thesis provide little insight into the locational dimensions of apprenticeship. The increasing prominence of service sectors and the globalisation of businesses, however, potentially make it harder to embed locational dimensions to apprenticeship in the three countries. The social dimension of apprenticeship as part of initial vocational education in Finland is, nevertheless, highly questionable given the weak occupational links and the marginality of the programme. The social

dimension of apprenticeship in France is potentially more sustainable, at least in its connection with the artisan and crafts industries where apprenticeship appears to generate some possibilities for identity formation as, for example, an anti-intellectualist choice for an educational pathway (Moreau, 2005). In conclusion, the three countries fare poorly in terms of the interconnected dimensions of apprenticeship. This raises questions about the capability and capacity of the contemporary systems in England and France to meet the ambitious targets set for apprenticeship growth by the respective governments.

Status and participation in apprenticeship

Returning to Green, Wolf and Leney's (1999) four models of apprenticeship introduced in Chapter 2, it is now possible to summarise how this study enhances our understanding of comparative apprenticeship models through its dedicated focus on apprenticeships for the 16-18 age group.

The findings from this study suggest that apprenticeship as a form of initial vocational education for 16-18 year olds does not fit the country groupings as identified by Green et al (ibid). A detailed examination of apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds in three countries suggests that of the three countries, only Finland sits comfortably in the model it has been assigned. The model of very low participation and low status is representative of apprenticeship as a form of initial vocational education in Finland. Apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds is not, however well represented by the respective models within which Green et al (ibid) have placed England and France. Green et al (ibid) suggest that apprenticeship in England is characterised by moderate to high status and moderate participation. The statistical data referred to in this study (see Chapter 1), however identify that participation in apprenticeships by 16-18 year olds is low. The study findings also suggest that the status of apprenticeship, particularly in relation to the education and training system as a whole, is rather low to moderate. The statistical data presented in Chapter 1 also dispute Green et al's (ibid) placing of France in the model of low status and moderate participation.

Furthermore, the study findings raise questions about the concept of status within Green et al's (ibid) model. Rather than identifying status as one-dimensional, this concept might be usefully contextualised to provide a more nuanced understanding of the meaning and status of apprenticeship. On the basis of the findings from this study, it seems that there are two different perceptions of status; the status of apprenticeship within the wider education system and the status of apprenticeship in

education policy rhetoric. The wider education system has been an important dimension of the contextual analysis in this study, and the study findings point to the importance of understanding apprenticeship for 16-18 year olds in the context of the wider education system that encompasses academic and other vocational education and training pathways for this cohort (see section 5.2 for the detailed discussion). Consequently, the status of apprenticeship within the wider education system is presented in table 9 below as one reading of the status. Another reading of the status of apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds is provided by its status in education policy rhetoric. The study findings have highlighted considerable tension between the rhetoric and reality of apprenticeship systems and pointed to the increasing visibility of apprenticeships in education policy rhetoric in England and France. Table 9 below presents these two different readings or perceptions of status alongside participation (see Table 3, Chapter 1 for the statistical data) in 16-18 apprenticeships in the three countries.

Table 9. Status and participation in 16-18 apprenticeships in England, Finland and France

Status/ participation in 16-18 apprenticeships	England	Finland	France
Participation	Low	Very low	Low
Status within education system	Low (viewed as training not education)	Low (preference for school-based settings for cohort)	Low, but growing as school-based settings questioned
Status in education policy rhetoric	Moderate	Low	Low, but growing

The table above updates Green et al's (ibid) categorisation of apprenticeships to reflect the findings from this study with respect to apprenticeships for the 16-18 cohort in England, Finland and France. As has already been discussed above and in more detail in Chapter 1, participation in apprenticeships by 16-18 year olds is low in England and France, and very low in Finland. Differentiating between the status of apprenticeship within the wider education system and the status of apprenticeship in education policy rhetoric provides a more contextualised understanding of the

differences in status. Furthermore, whilst the status of apprenticeship within the wider education systems is low in the three countries, the findings from this study suggest that there are different reasons for this. In England, the low status largely stems from apprenticeship being conceptualised as training, and consequently of less esteem, than education. In Finland, the low status stems from the strong pedagogical preference for school-based settings for all education, including vocational education, for this age group. In France, the low status is, however growing as policy-makers and employers are increasingly questioning the appropriateness of school-based settings in the delivery of vocational education qualifications. This questioning is also the reason why the status of apprenticeship in education policy rhetoric in France is growing albeit from a low base. The study findings suggest that the status of apprenticeship in education policy rhetoric in England is moderate, and at odds with the participation rates. The low status of apprenticeship in education policy and in education policy rhetoric in Finland is, however reflective of the very low participation rates in apprenticeships by 16-18 year olds. There are a number of implications arising from these findings that are discussed next.

6.4 Implications and recommendations

Apprenticeship education policy and practice

Two key implications arise from this thesis for apprenticeship policy and practice in the context of different countries. First, the implication that understanding context is crucial to successful policy and practice leads to a recommendation that any improvements to apprenticeship policy and practice should only be introduced after consideration of their potential impact given the wider education system, the institutional framework for apprenticeship and societal values. Whilst seemingly successful in another country, a policy import may not succeed in 'foreign soil' given differences in the context of apprenticeship between the country of origin and the country of import.

Where there are indications that policy borrowing is more about the form rather than the content (Halpin and Troyna, 1995), and where policy may be pushed through despite resistance from policy-makers and practitioners at different levels of the 'home' apprenticeship system, a form of strategic compliance (Shain and Gleeson, 1990) may be more beneficial in terms of the outcomes for learners. In the English

context in particular, there are numerous examples of education policies that have been introduced with great fanfare only to be soon forgotten.

Second, the implication that agreeing on the country-specific meaning of apprenticeship makes for stronger policy and practice leads to a recommendation for developing a consensus around the country-specific meaning of apprenticeship, and not diverting from it, at least in the short and medium term. Having the key stakeholders agree on the meaning of apprenticeship is difficult, but policy-makers should not shy away from these difficult discussions, as arriving at a coherent meaning would benefit learners, employers and the training providers delivering apprenticeships. This would be particularly evident in the long-term, as a consensus on the meaning would enable successful long-term strategies for the promotion and development of apprenticeship pathways to be introduced. These two recommendations for apprenticeship policy and practice can be summarised as:

Recommendation 1.

Consider staged improvements to 'home' apprenticeship policy and practice giving due consideration to the context given the wider education system, the institutional framework for apprenticeship and societal values rather than being attracted to import seemingly successful policy given that it may not succeed in 'home soil'.

Recommendation 2.

Develop a consensus around a country-specific coherent meaning of apprenticeship that key stakeholders can work with and do not diverge from it, at least in the medium to short term.

Research on apprenticeships

A further two implications arise from this thesis for further research on apprenticeship. First, the findings from this thesis suggest that the potential of research on apprenticeships is being limited by its geographical boundaries. From my experience of undertaking comparative research on apprenticeship as the sole researcher, it seems that undertaking comparative research with teams of researchers from different countries would be the best way to overcome the geographical boundaries from a practical perspective. This could particularly enable larger-scale research to be undertaken. In such set ups the problem can be seen as validating the comparability of the findings of the teams. However, Lauterbach (2003, p.257) suggests that positivist notions of validity tend to dominate in

comparative research and that the notion of validity needs to be conceptualised differently as:

...comparative international research projects already exhibit interdisciplinary cooperation. That is not only the result of the complexity of education in TVET [technical and vocational education and training] as a research topic, but reflects those disciplines which conduct research into education in TVET within the different countries and which form international networks. These research findings are transferable because, here again, the internal study remains linked with the external approach with respect to specific problem constellations. This constitutes the long overdue replacement of models that are created on the basis of artefacts in the comparison of TVET systems

What Lauterbach (ibid) is highlighting is the importance of broadening the notion of validity focusing solely on the tangible aspects of education to include the non-tangible aspects that may not meet the positivist criteria of validity, but that are fundamental parts of education in reality in different countries. This also means embracing the multidisciplinary nature of comparative research on education. Jobert, Marry and Tanguy (1997, p.1) suggest that research in education and work necessitates the use of multidisciplinary approaches and reflect that, "every discipline has its own tools for analysing a particular aspect of reality, but it cannot cover the totality." Furthermore, multidisciplinary approaches can avoid what they refer to as the "often mechanical explanations of the relationship between training and employments and to [enable analysis] of the complex relationships between the two concepts and the mediations between them" (Jobert, Marry and Tanguy, 1997, p.5).

Second, the findings from this thesis suggest that there is scope for more contextualised comparative accounts of apprenticeship. Heikkinen (2004, p.33) rightly asserts that, "the building of models is fundamental in constructing theories to understand and shape the world," but also that "their theoretical value is undermined...if their primary function becomes applicability for dominant definitions of the world." As such, comparative research on apprenticeships should contest the potentially overly simple interpretations that can be generated from typologies of education and training systems. Through its focus on developing typologies of education and training, it seems that education research itself is potentially contributing to the construction of simplified meanings of apprenticeship and vocational education, and leading to ineffective apprenticeship policies. These two recommendations for research on apprenticeships can be summarised as follows:

Recommendation 3.

Seek to extend the boundaries of comparative apprenticeship research in terms of the countries or cases being studied, the concepts of validity used in the comparison and the disciplinary approaches adopted

Recommendation 4.

Counteract research generating typologies of education and training with more contextualised accounts of apprenticeship to ensure that over-simplified interpretations of typologies of education and training do not lead to ineffective apprenticeship policies

6.5 Professional application of findings and dissemination plan

The findings and recommendations from this thesis are useful to policy-makers and practitioners in the field of apprenticeship, but also in the field of education more widely, as they highlight the intertwined nature of the different segments of the education sector from traditional academic education to vocational education and apprenticeships. The findings also point to the need for policy-making that is in tune with this interconnectedness rather than developing distinct and mutually exclusive policies for different segments of the education sector.

The study findings provide practitioners with a different perspective to reflect on the practice and policy in their own country context. The study findings also support practitioners in developing their own assessments of the appropriateness or applicability of best practice lessons or policy imports that may be introduced in their professional contexts. For researchers interested in comparison, the thesis provides an account of a comparative research process involving three different languages as an integral part of the research design. For researchers interested in apprenticeship and vocational education, the thesis explains the difference in meaning that is attributable to apprenticeship in three European countries.

As has already been indicated in Chapter 3 (see section 3.7), the dissemination plan for this study is to write articles for publication in academic journals and to circulate findings of the research to CEDEFOP and the government departments and agencies responsible for apprenticeship in the three countries as brief research dissemination reports. The articles and the research dissemination reports will focus on aspects of the research findings, but these will be tailored in such a way as to better reflect the interests of the respective audiences.

6.6 Limitations of research

The rationale for the choice of countries and for the choice of methods in this thesis has been outlined in Chapters 1 and 3. As discussed in these chapters, the study design has been framed within the constraints of an EdD thesis in terms of the size and scope of the study that could be reasonably undertaken to answer the research questions within the time available. Some of these aspects relating to the size and scope of the research design can be seen as limitations of this thesis. These include the focus on only three countries over a relatively short period of time historically, and the very small number of expert interviews that were undertaken. The overall findings might have been strengthened through an exploration of the meaning of apprenticeship in a larger sample of country cases, over a longer time period or by complementing the systematic literature reviews with more expert interviews that could, for example, have been conducted with academic researchers active in the field of apprenticeship education who may not yet have a strong track record of publications. A greater number of publications could have also potentially been analysed had a different set of inclusion and exclusion criteria for the systematic literature reviews been applied. The number of publications in French, in particular seems relatively small given the size of the field of education research in France. Whilst this thesis has demonstrated that the field of apprenticeship research in France is small, a review of a wider range of education research publications could have strengthened the exploration of the reasons for this. This would, however have necessitated the application of a wider set of inclusion criteria for the systematic literature reviews than was feasible to undertake within the time available.

A perspective from, for example, employers or learners gained through interviews or focus groups could also potentially have complemented the societal level focus of the study that has inevitably lead to an emphasis on the structural features of the apprenticeship systems. This could have strengthened the findings by introducing a perspective of those directly involved in the delivery of apprenticeship, but would have involved a significant amount of further fieldwork in the three countries to gather valid and reliable data, which was not possible given the time constraints.

The thesis can also be criticised for its focus on societies as nation-states as the unit of analysis for Finland and France, and for treating England as a comparable case. Billig (1995) suggests that sociologists often research societies as constituted by nation-states as if these were fixed variables without sufficiently problematising the concept of a nation-state and society. This is an important point, but for the

purposes of this thesis, the focus on nation-states has enabled a cross-cultural comparison to be undertaken within the constraints of an EdD thesis. In the design of further research in this area, problems around the notion of the nation-state and the society it is seen to be linked with could, however, be explored in detail.

6.7 Directions for future research

From undertaking this study it is evident that relatively little comparative research on apprenticeship and vocational education has been undertaken with non-positivist concepts of validity as outlined in the above recommendation for research to cross over traditional geographical and disciplinary boundaries. It seems that significant contributions to furthering knowledge and understanding of comparative apprenticeship and vocational education systems could be made, drawing on non-positivist notions of validity in comparison.

There also seems to be a gap in research focusing on the organisations engaged in the delivery and management of apprenticeship, including the French apprenticeship training centres, private training providers in England and the apprenticeship offices and vocational high schools in Finland. The impact of these organisations and their contribution to the nature of the pedagogical, occupational, local and social practices of apprenticeship appear under-researched, and could be the focus of future research.

A study focusing on the organisations delivering apprenticeship training could be complemented by an examination of the ways in which apprentices may use their opportunities to learn tactically, as identified by Waite, Evans and Kersh (2012) in their study of 'Skills for Life' learners. Through such as focus on learners' agency, the apprentices' own constructs of the meaning of apprenticeship in their everyday practices could be documented, and compared with the meanings of apprenticeship presented in this thesis.

Future research could also explore in more detail the reasons for the relative lack of interest in apprenticeship as a specific field of research in France. Such a study could, for example, contextualise this as a research question within an examination of the research culture in French higher education and research institutions more widely.

Lastly, Thelen's research (2004) on institutional evolution can be interpreted as an

approach to exploring the interdependency within the agency-structure continuum in vocational education systems drawing on path dependency theory. She summarises path dependency as a theory emphasising that “once a path is taken, previously viable alternatives become increasingly remote, as the relevant actors adjust their strategies to accommodate prevailing patterns” (Thelen, 2004, p.27). This theory acknowledges the element of chance in historical development through agency and choice, but identifies the processes that can lead to a high probability of a country becoming ‘locked in’ a particular economic, social or political trajectory at a specific point in time. The study findings could act as a platform for further research along the lines of Thelen’s (2004) work in examining the relevance of path dependency theory in explaining aspects of divergence in apprenticeship in the three countries. Alternatively, the emerging field of network theory could help to explain in more detail how inertia to change can eventually or sometimes quickly be overcome through its perspective of networks as encouraging or supporting particular types of behaviour, positive or negative. This could constitute an explanation of how critical junctures emerge and how they contribute to institutional evolution. These seem to be two possible directions for further research in this area with an aim of identifying some kind of causality beyond distinguishing the unique features of the apprenticeship systems and the areas of convergence and divergence in research and policy in the three countries discussed in this thesis.

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APPENDIX

Document 1. List of indicative questions covering the issues and topics to be discussed in the expert interviews

- 1) How would you describe the roles of the individual, the employer and the public sector in relation to apprenticeship education in [insert England/Finland/France]? Do you think there have been changes in the roles in the last 15 years?
- 2) Apart from individuals, employers and public sector, are there other actors/alliances that you would consider significant in influencing the development of the apprenticeship education system?
- 3) What kind of a future do you see for apprenticeship education in [insert England/Finland/France]?
- 4) What current or recent research in apprenticeships or vocational education do you consider to be particularly interesting/illuminating?
- 5) How would you characterise research in apprenticeship or vocational education in [insert England/Finland/France] in terms of e.g. themes, types of research or disciplinary approaches?
- 6) In your opinion, is there sufficient exchange of ideas or collaboration internationally between researchers in this field?

Note: This is the English version of the document. The Finnish and French academic experts were respectively sent the same list of indicative questions translated into Finnish and into French.

Diagram 1. Main pathway options for 16-18 year olds in England

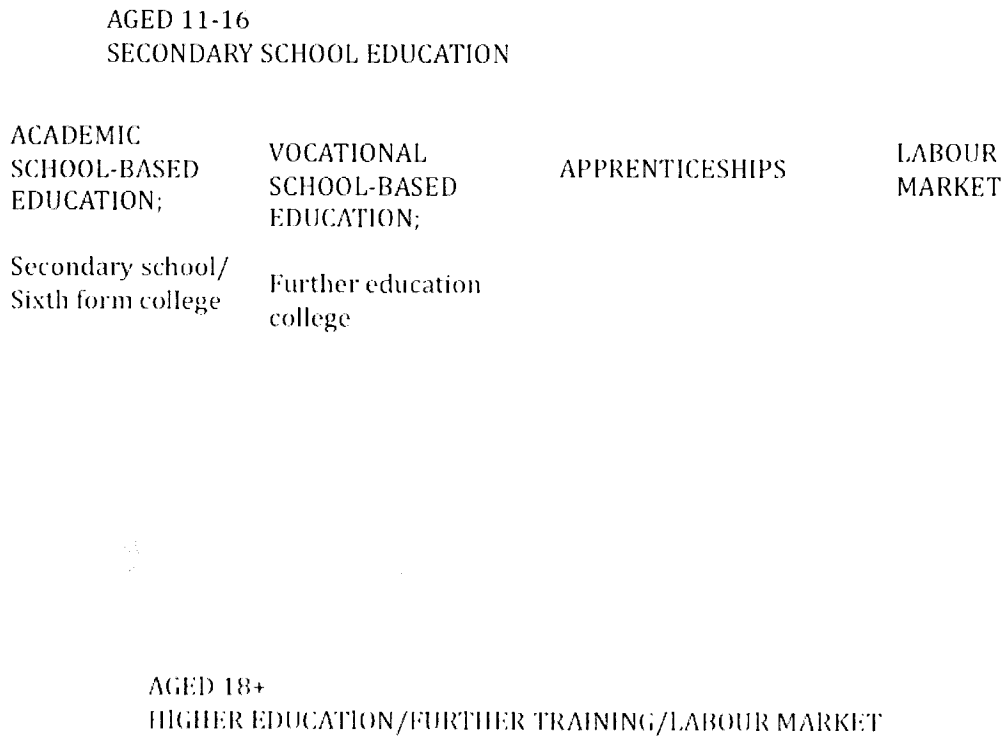


Diagram 2. Main pathway options for 16-18 year olds in Finland

AGED 7-16
COMPULSORY SCHOOL EDUCATION (*Perusopetus*)

ACADEMIC SCHOOL-BASED EDUCATION; High School (<i>Lukio</i>)	VOCATIONAL SCHOOL-BASED EDUCATION; Vocational high school (<i>Ammattikoulu</i>)	APPRENTICESHIPS; (<i>Oppisopimuskoulutus</i>)	LABOUR MARKET
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AGED 18+
HIGHER EDUCATION; UNIVERSITY (*Yliopisto*), POLYTECHNIC
(*Ammattikorkeakoulu*)/FURTHER TRAINING/LABOUR MARKET

Diagram 3. Main pathway options for 16-18 year olds in France

AGED 11-15
SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION (Collège)

<p>ACADEMIC SCHOOL-BASED EDUCATION; High school <i>(Lycée d'enseignement générale & technologique)</i> Aged 15-18</p>	<p>VOCATIONAL SCHOOL-BASED EDUCATION; Vocational high school <i>(Lycée professionnel)</i> Aged 15-18</p>	<p>APPRENTICESHIPS; <i>(Apprentissage)</i> Aged 16-25</p>	<p>LABOUR MARKET</p>
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AGED 18+
HIGHER EDUCATION; *(Universités, Les grandes écoles, Les écoles spécialisées, Les sections de techniciens supérieurs*)* / FURTHER TRAINING/LABOUR MARKET

* 'Les sections de techniciens supérieurs' can be pursued as an apprentice up to Level I

Document 2. Illustration of practical analysis (extract from a research publication reviewed: Kivinen and Peltomäki, 1999)

Coding of analysis: Green (theme of content and meaning of apprenticeship)
 Red (theme of models of apprenticeship)

86 O. Kivinen & M. Peltomäki

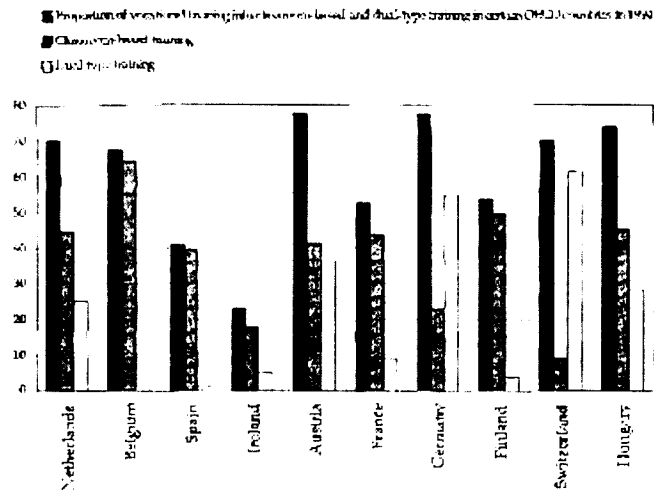


FIG. 3. Division of vocational training into classroom-based and dual-type training in certain OECD countries in 1991.
 Source: Education at a Glance, OECD Indicators 1996.

approved by the chamber. In Germany apprentices are paid fairly low wages, and state subsidies for employers mainly take the form of minor tax concessions.

The new British 'Modern Apprenticeship' system, which is of interest for this article, is still in its infancy, although apprenticeship in itself has firmly rooted traditions in Great Britain. The Modern Apprenticeship system is run by private Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and by the corresponding organs in the Chambers of Commerce (CCTEs). The former are also in charge of on-the-job training, which is being developed in the same direction as in Germany through the Key Worker Scheme. Vocational training institutions have no authority as far as apprenticeships are concerned in the British system, as the training programmes are drawn up by the employers' organisations (Industrial Training Organisations (ITOs)). The key skills to be taught and the national vocational qualifications (NVQs) are decided by the Ministry of Education together with national interest groups (including employee organisations). During the period of Conservative government, no minimum wage rules were applied, and the employers made separate wage agreements with apprentices.

Especially in Finland the apprenticeship has long served as a type of 'life belt', supplementing institutional schooling, for those young people who do poorly in the normal school system. Compared with the German and British systems, the Finnish

not working
 will be
 classified
 as apprentices
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Document 3. Illustration of practical analysis (extract from an interview transcript, interview with the English academic expert)

Coding of analysis: Green (theme of content and meaning of apprenticeship)
 Red (theme of models of apprenticeship)

I think there have been a lot of changes and I think there are constant changes. I think the weighting given to each of those players, the state, the employers and the employees, the actual weight of their role hasn't actually changed, but the role has changed so what they're doing has changed. So the state has always been quite strong, and a major player, whereas employees have had much less of a voice, and employers have always been in the middle, and I suppose to a certain extent, less has been expected of them over the years with more research. What at least in the rhetoric there is talk of greater expectation from employers, but what that means in practice remains to be seen. I think there's been constant rebranding. I think there have always been two levels of apprenticeship almost. You've got those Rolls Royces and all the other big companies, and not just the big ones, SMEs as well, where the apprenticeship has followed that traditional kind of a model of apprenticeship. And that has always been almost a silent partner,

models of apprenticeship
 models
 by process
 expectations from employers
 rebranding

they just keep chugging along, and doing well. But then you've got the rebranding on the other side, all coming in under the apprenticeship banner and there's been more changes on that side of it than on the traditional side of it.

apprenticeship banner

I: But you would still see that there are those two kinds of streams in a way?

[I think so. I mean you've got your industries and occupations that wouldn't even consider going beyond Level 3 for apprenticeship, and then you've got the invention and re-invention of a lot of Level 2 apprenticeships that don't actually have counterparts on the continent, and that's not to say that they have to, but retail for example, the norm here is Level 2, whereas retail in Germany is at least Level 3. So I think there's a lot branding and rebranding going on, in the other stream. All the service sector occupations I suppose.

levels of apprenticeship

I: I find that really fascinating how, also thinking about apprenticeships that have existed in sectors, like hospitality that you've been looking at for example don't necessarily have the same kind of a tradition either, and how they have very much been created.

Yes, well definitely more of a recent tradition. I mean chieffing goes back to the late, mid 1800s for apprenticeships, but other hospitality occupations are more recent, as recent as, I think now you can even do an apprenticeship in hotel room attendance, I mean you couldn't do that five years ago.

traditions

I: And what about, if you're thinking about the employers, the employees and the state, in the English system, would you consider any other big players or do you see any other kind of alliances influencing the system as such?

Unfortunately the unions don't have a very, like they do on the continent, so you definitely don't have the tripartite system in that respect. I mean, you have, you've got employers, you've got the state. Interestingly, and this is an under-researched area, private training providers, I think they have a bit of sway behind the scenes, just very little known about them, but given that they're now employers as well, I think they're probably very under-researched, and under-acknowledged as players in the system.

private training providers

I: So they're a bit under the radar?

Yes. We don't really know much about private training providers. We certainly don't know who they are in terms of what training they have received, or what qualifications they have in providing training, unlike say an FE College lecturer. You've got employees, but it's not really, I suppose education itself, you've got academics, FE Colleges, which are clearly part of the conversation, but would I consider them major players, possibly not.

academics