WHAT DO THEY MEAN BY SKILLED?
A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SKILLS POLICIES FOR APPRENTICESHIP IN CANADA AND BRITISH COLUMBIA: 1980-2010

by

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

(Educational Leadership and Policy)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA (Vancouver)

AUGUST 2014

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Abstract

This study contributes significantly to scholarly debates about skill and its relationship to apprenticeship education in British Columbia and Canada during the period 1980-2010. Apprenticeship has long been viewed as a way of filling gaps for skilled workers in Canada and British Columbia. Political, economic and ideological perspectives of both federal and provincial governments of skills policies in apprenticeship have resulted in dysfunction and disjunctures at both the development and implementation stages. There is evidence that governments and industry play powerful roles in developing skills policies in apprenticeship, leaving post-secondary institutions to implementation while not respecting their role in training and development.

This study takes into account the process, text, production, and implementation of skills policy in apprenticeship. It provides a representation of the complex and messy production and implementation of skill policy in apprenticeship. The rationalization and legitimization of skilled labour shortage and skills development discourses are influenced by globalization, technology, economic fluctuations, prevailing and changing ideologies and power structures. Neoliberalism and human capital theory are prominent in the concept of skill, as is power. A critical examination of texts was completed to identify the contexts of specific political periods, resulting in the identification of the central themes of skilled labour shortages at the development phase and skilled workforce development at the implementation phase. Unemployment, return on investment, industry and training, and barriers and perceptions are significant and contributing discursive themes.
Overall the texts show a marked divide between the intentions of skills policy in apprenticeship and the delivery by post-secondary institutions. The intentions of skills policy in apprenticeship appear to be in responding to economic, not social, conditions.
Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work of Dana Lynne Goedbloed.

The research methodology used did not require University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board approval.
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Acknowledgements

This work would never have been completed without the steady guidance of Kjell Rubenson and Don Fisher of the Department of Educational Studies, and Richard Johnston, former CEO of Malaspina University College (now Vancouver Island University). Kjell provided many lively conversations and extended his immense wisdom and knowledge to steady the course. Don patiently provided feedback, comments, a place to work, and his thoughtful insights during a particularly hectic time. Rich shared his immense personal collection of texts and his vast wealth of personal experiences within the apprenticeship system in post-secondary institutions in British Columbia. Kjell, Don and Rich model the best of educators and leadership.

My thanks to the numerous librarians who gave guidance and support during many, many hours of research, particularly Joanne Naslund at the Education library, Mary Luebbe at the Koerner library, and Jennifer Kitching at the Legislative Library of British Columbia.

I also thank my family and friends who encouraged me, especially when I was ready to give up. You have been my cheerleaders, my counsellors and my support group. Don (Douwe) has been there every step of the way, giving with all his heart.

Finally I say a huge thank you to Dana (the other one) who gave her unfailing support by providing me with a place to stay and work. You truly are a wonderful friend.
Dedication

For Douwe
Chapter 1: Introduction

A song for occupations!
In the labor of engines and trades of fields I find
The developments,
And find the eternal meanings.
Workmen and Workwomen!
Were all educations practical and ornamental well display’d out
of me, what would it amount to?
Were I as the head teacher, charitable proprietor, wise statesman
what would it amount to?
Were I to you as the boss employing and paying you, would that
satisfy you?
The learn’d, virtuous, benevolent, and the usual terms

Walt Whitman (1881)

1.1 Situating the Study

A significant body of research and a barrage of media have documented the current and impending labour shortages facing Canada and British Columbia. Industry organizations, governments, unions, and others have taken up the call to fill the skilled-worker shortages in trades by creating newspaper articles, reports, conferences, symposia, webinars, papers, and documentaries. Canada Immigration (2005) proclaims, “[w]e don’t have enough of the skilled trades necessary just to carry out...functional construction tasks” (p. 2). The Canadian Labour and Business Centre, (2006), notes, “A shortage of skilled labour is one of many important public policy issues in Canada. Concerns about productivity performance and the need for improvement in innovative capacity have been at the forefront of much policy debate over the past several years” (p. 14). Newspaper articles appear on an almost daily basis. The Globe and Mail presents an article asking, “[d]oes Canada have a labour shortage or a skills shortage?” (Jackson, 2012). A daily paper in Saskatchewan questions the lack of workers for construction
sites that sit idle, with the headline “Trades in demand: Skilled labour shortages headed for crisis levels?” (StarPhoenix, 2006). There are a plethora of references to the shortages of skilled workers in trades in Canada. These few examples are merely representational of many hundreds of thousands of references.

Within the field of vocational education in post-secondary institutions, there has also been considerable discourse and concern related to skills-training and apprenticeship. The impact of the many texts and documents circulating appears in training policy. During my tenure as an instructor and program developer, and then as an academic administrator in vocational education, I was actively involved in developing and implementing policy related to skill development in apprenticeship. Often, there was confusion about the policies and their (in)ability to address a need for skilled workers. In order to understand the context of the policies developed over time in relation to skill and apprenticeship between 1980 and 2010, I believe that it is necessary to explore the many political, economic, and ideological debates related to the concept of skill in terms of producing a “skilled” workforce.

I have chosen to introduce each chapter with verses from Walt Whitman’s epic poem “A Song for Occupations,” as it reflects the complexity of how work, skill, society, and individuals are viewed, even more than one hundred years after the poem was written. It is an evocative and enchanting poem, so craftily using words to portray skill that is both challenging and pleasing, like this study is for me.

1.2 Description of the Problem

Discussion needs to occur to identify what is meant by “skilled” and its relationship to
trades education in British Columbia. This study critically examines the discourse of provincial and federal skills policies to identify where disjunctures and dysfunctions occur between the social construction of skill in apprenticeship training and the policies that are critical to vocational education within post-secondary institutions. The Compas Group, in its 2007 study, note that “apprenticeship training may have relevance to policies relating to education, economic strategy, employment strategy, labour policy, and social inclusion” (p. 3). Steiger maintains that there are two basic elements in socially constructing skill: a) establishment of the skills needed for a job, and b) determining how to judge a person's skill set. In judging whether or not a person has required skills, a variety of criteria are used. Criteria include formal training credentials, quality and length of experience, associations or union memberships, licenses, "or a number of social criteria like sex, race and ethnicity" (1993, p. 537). For Gaskell (1992), the politics of skill is not technical; rather, the value of skill is entrenched in politics, culture, and economics.

1.2.1 A brief history of the concept of apprenticeship

In this section, I define the context, and provide an overview, of the history of the development of apprenticeship. I will explicate the federal and provincial roles in apprenticeship training and education in order to provide the context of apprenticeship in its historical forms. Apprenticeship is one of the oldest forms of training, one in which skills and knowledge required of craft- and skill-occupations are passed from a skilled worker to a learner. The Babylonian Code of Hammurabi provides a written account of a system of apprenticeship that existed in 2100 BCE. Trade groups, called guilds, were established in the 13th and 14th
centuries (Cantor, 1993). As Webb notes, “[t]he traditional history of ‘apprenticeship’ is in its root meaning of the Latin *apprehendere* – to seize, or lay hold of – by which the novice was bound to a master for a fixed term of instruction in order to learn a craft or trade” (Webb, 1999, p.101).

Apprenticeship is presented historically, in its conventional form, as diligent and faithful service. This came about primarily because of the relationship between the apprentice as the learner, and the master, or journeyman/journeywoman, as the teacher. The formalized roles of apprentice, journeyman/journeywoman, and master were well established in medieval Europe. Polanyi (1958) describes apprenticeship as “watching the master and emulating his efforts in the presence of his example” and in so doing, “the apprentice unconsciously picks up the rules of the art, including those which are not explicitly known to the master himself” (p. 53). Aldrich (1999) points out that many of the principles and practices of apprenticeship are applied to the university (with its master’s degree), as well as to studies in medicine and law, continuing into the modern period. Historically, apprentices were bound by indenture, which usually lasted between five and nine years.

Over time, the manner in which apprenticeships were completed evolved. Rikowski (1999) identifies three models, or periods, of apprenticeship: (old) classical apprenticeships, (new) modern apprenticeships, (post) modern apprenticeships. “They are all about self-generating skill, apprenticeship as ‘learning how to learn’ and the application of lessons learnt in production” (Rikowski, 1999, p. 67). When historians consider “apprenticeship,” they often generalize in terms of three extended periods. Aldrich (1999) characterizes the first of these
periods as that of “guild apprenticeship,” which lasted from the 12th century to the mid-16th century, with the state reinforcing the practice. The second period, statutory apprenticeship, lasted from the mid-16th century to the early 19th century, as guilds were slowly losing their prominence. The third period, which includes present practice, involves “voluntary” apprenticeship consisting of agreements between employers, unions, and apprentices.

Although apprenticeship training in Canada first appeared in 1668, provisions for formal apprenticeship did not come in to being until 1799 with the introduction of the Education and Support of Orphan Children Act. The general view is that the Act was introduced as a welfare or social policy that has remained, thereby stigmatizing apprenticeship as “the lowest form of training or education” (Weiermair, 1984, p. 5). Weiermair claims that, because of the view that apprenticeship training produces semi-skilled, as opposed to highly or fully skilled, workers, there is continuing criticism of the system (1984).

The BNA Act of 1867, and the Constitution of 1982, Section 93, assigned responsibility for education in Canada to provinces. Although education is solely the responsibility of the provincial governments, apprenticeship governance is shared by the federal government with the provinces, in a particularly circuitous manner. Apprenticeship is considered “adult training,” with funding centrally controlled. Constitutionally, the federal government is responsible for economic growth and for training to meet the needs of the national economy; jobs and training contribute significantly to economic growth and decline.

Apprenticeship training all but disappeared until early in the 20th century, when the Technical Education Act was introduced in 1919. It was not until 1942 that the Vocational
Training Coordination Act (VTCA) allowed for negotiations between the federal and provincial governments in order to develop and fund vocational education and apprenticeship training agreements. British Columbia was not a signatory to the VTCA during the first ten years that it was in force. Weiermair (1984) claims that it was during the post-World War II period that “basic philosophies regarding manpower and education policies were formed. In many instances, they were simply derived from existing economic circumstances” (Weiermair, 1984, p. 11). The “baby boom”, along with rapidly changing technology, realignment of jobs and training, and an increase in consumerism, contributed to the changing economy.

Basically, apprenticeship is an agreement between an unskilled person/apprentice and a skilled person/journeyperson, or master. “Apprenticeship is the means by which individuals are recruited into the ranks of specialists” (Coy, 1989, p. 4). Coy addresses apprenticeship as “the means of imparting specialized knowledge to a new generation of practitioners...where there is implicit knowledge to be acquired through long-term observation and experience” (ibid, p. xii). The specialized knowledge required is passed on to the apprentice by a journeyperson.

1.2.2 Contemporary apprenticeship

The Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA) is a national body comprised of the provincial and territorial government officials responsible for managing and directing apprenticeship programs, along with two federal government representatives. CCDA defines an apprentice as a person who works in a trade, occupation, or craft under an agreement or contract and is registered with the Apprenticeship Authority (Human Resources & Skills Development Canada, 2007). The apprentice learns the knowledge, skills, tools, and
materials of the trade, occupation, or craft through on-the-job training and technical instruction under the supervision of a certified journeyperson. CCDA defines apprenticeship as a structured system of supervised training leading to certification in a designated trade, occupation, or craft, consisting of systematic programs of on-the-job training supplemented by technical instruction through which an apprentice gains experiential learning and develops skills (Human Resources & Skills Development Canada, 2007).

Apprenticeship is a complex and multi-faceted concept. It clearly involves education, social relations, and economics, and it suggests an ideology of life and work associated with a specialized role. During an apprenticeship period, a balance of theory and practice is upheld. Along with employers, governments and educational institutions have major roles in training apprentices. Clarke (1999) asserts that training should be a tripartite responsibility shared by states, educational institutions, and industry. The government’s role is primarily to ensure that there is an adequate supply of skilled craftspersons for economic growth and national defence; education’s role is to provide training based on theoretical concepts, while employers’ role is to certify that apprentices are applying theory to their practice.

The apprenticeship system has a long history as an effective vehicle for work-based learning. Ryan (2001) notes that “apprenticeship tends to be viewed either as part of vocational education or as part of labour-market training” (p. 291). That being said, in Canada, an apprenticeship is completed by a person who enters into a formal apprenticeship program by signing a contractual agreement with both a provincial or territorial government and a sponsor (Watt-Malcolm, 2008), and is embedded in both the workplace and in school. A
sponsor can be an employer, industry organization, local apprenticeship committee, union, or
training provider such as a post-secondary institution, depending on the location of the
apprentice and the governing apprenticeship board. Formerly, the sponsor was an employer
and an apprentice was indentured, much like a slave to a master; however, over time, the
concept of indenturing evolved into a registration process.

Apprentices are often registered with different employers throughout their training,
dependent upon economic conditions and the type of work required to fulfill their work-based
learning outcomes. Provinces and territories, through governing apprenticeship boards, take
on monitoring of apprentices as well as the structure, content, and implementation of formal
apprenticeship programs. Partnerships between industries and apprenticeship programs in
each jurisdiction allow for the development of a comprehensive set of occupational standards
relating to curricula, examinations, certification, new methods of training delivery, and
enhanced access to designated groups. The major stakeholders that most commonly determine
training requirements for each trade at local, provincial/territorial, and national levels include
unions, business and industry, post-secondary institutions, and government.

The highest level of skill recognition in Canada is the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal
Program (also known as the IP), which was established more than 50 years ago to provide
standardization and greater mobility across Canada for skilled workers. Through the Red Seal
Program, tradespersons are able to obtain a Red Seal endorsement on their
provincial/territorial certificates; they do this by successfully completing an interprovincial Red
Seal examination. Completion of the exam acknowledges tradespersons’ competence and
ensures recognition of their certifications throughout Canada without further examination (Interprovincial Red Seal, 2011). Individuals are therefore not required to write a separate journeyperson certificate examination for a specific province or territory (called a Certificate of Qualification, or C of Q) in order to work there. Quebec is the only province in Canada that does not subscribe to the Red Seal program, having opted out. In Quebec apprentices attend a CEGEP (Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel) – known officially in English as a General and Vocational College – to complete the theoretical component of training before employment.

The Red Seal Program encourages common standards for trades in all of the provinces and territories. The program is designed to extend the benefits of training across all provinces and territories. As well, it is meant to alleviate barriers to labour mobility for workers in the skilled trades and reduce the risk of skill shortages by allowing qualified workers to seek work in other provinces/territories (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2011). Existing barriers to mobility are only circumvented when an apprentice has completed the program of study.

1.3 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to provide a thematic and critical examination of the discourse of skills policy in apprenticeship in Canada and British Columbia over the period of 1980-2010. The findings will contribute significantly to scholarly debate in other social policy fields by recording and describing various shifts in the discourse of skills policy in apprenticeship.

In addition to the major research question, “what do they mean by ‘skilled’?”, I
investigate two supporting questions:

1) What forces – political, economic, and ideological – have driven, and are driving, the policy development at federal and provincial levels that define skills for apprentices? In addressing this question, I conducted a critical discourse analysis of texts produced between 1980 and 2010 to determine the dominant and contributing discourses from a power perspective of skills policies for apprenticeship.

2) What role had policy assigned to the post-secondary education system in relation to the development of a “skilled” workforce, during the implementation stages? I address this question by analysing policies and contributing texts to determine how the implementation of the policies has affected apprenticeship training in post-secondary education.

1.4 Personal Background, Interest and Bias

I am not a tradesperson, but I am an apprentice – my journey to better appreciation of my practice continues with this study. My background as an educator includes an undergraduate and master’s degree in industrial/vocational education, with a focus on program-development in adult, career, and technology education. During my undergraduate studies my professors placed significant emphasis on the concepts of knowledge, skills, and attributes, or what are referred to as the “KSAs” that are represented as behavioural outcomes and standards used to assess students. KSAs are recognized as foundational to vocational programs and are identified by subject matter experts through various processes; they are also integrated into curricula (Goedbloed, 1991). Throughout my career as an instructor, program
developer, associate dean, and dean, I became more aware that no clear definition of skill exists. I want to provide more clarity about the use of the term “skill” in vocational education, particularly in apprenticeship policy.

I began this study when I was the academic and administrative leader of the trades and technology programs at Kwantlen University College, which subsequently became Kwantlen Polytechnic University, at a time when legislation had created a new provincial apprenticeship governing board. The new legislation came about as the result of the election of the Liberal party, the ideologies of which vastly differed from their New Democratic Party (NDP) predecessors. The Industry Training Authority Act (ITA Act) introduced substantial changes in administration and funding, which affected industry relations with apprentices and the post-secondary institutions offering trades training. The ITA Act provided a framework upon which the Industry Training Authority (ITA) came into existence, with substantial changes to the structure of the governing body, though its overall mandate remained similar to its predecessor. While justification was provided to explain the rationale for policy changes, much of the rhetoric about skills development remained the same, indicating a continuation of the previous NDP government’s ideology.

The government’s expectation was that the post-secondary institutions offering trades training would smoothly integrate different policies and new procedures. The reality is that post-secondary institutions received no provisions to implement the legislated changes and were effectively relegated to the status of “training providers,” rather than recognized as participants. Industry had been included in the consultation phases to develop the new
legislation; post-secondary institutions were excluded. While the previous government had been largely inclusive of stakeholders – including employers, industry, labour, and post-secondary representatives - the Liberal government dismissed post-secondary participation when designating membership of the Board of Directors of the new ITA.

Significant gaps existed between the expectations of the Liberal government and the abilities of the limited stakeholder group that formed the new board, making the implementation of new policies and procedures difficult. Without a clearer understanding of what the specific expectations were in terms of developing a skilled workforce and what the ITA meant by “skilled,” post-secondary institutions were at a clear disadvantage. Again, as an administrative leader, it fell to me to interpret and implement the new policies; however, I was required to do this with little support and within a somewhat adversarial environment. A provincial body represented by the academic leaders of all post-secondary institutions in B.C. offering trades-training programs (British Columbia Association of Trades and Technology Administrators-BCATTA) provided some assistance as well as a provincial presidents’ group; however, the day to day operationalizing of the policies within my own institution remained largely within my scope of duties.

By examining the policies and legislation of both the federal and provincial governments, I recognized clearly that dysfunctions and disjunctures have developed over the last 30 years, which has created a legacy of an ill-conceived training system. Evidently, the concept of skill has taken on other dimensions and definitions in apprenticeship policy that negatively impact training.
1.5 Outline of the Study

Chapter 2 offers a review of the literature on scholarly debates of both policy and skill. Scholarly debates on skill, in its various forms, are reviewed particularly in relation to Braverman’s concept of the degradation of work within trade occupations. I also present a review of scholarly work related to policy research.

In Chapter 3, I present an overview of Critical Discourse Analysis according to the theoretical perspectives of sociological work in order to justify my position for using CDA as the methodology in this study. The chapter explains how Fairclough’s CDA framework, along with Foucault’s notions of archaeology and his conceptions of power and knowledge, are used as the methodology to analyse discursive events. I present my discursive apprenticeship policy network, which is based on analyses of ideology and hegemony to illustrate how skill is presented in apprenticeship policy. The chapter concludes with an outline of how I use CDA to analyse the discourses pertaining to the development and implementation of skills policy and their impact on apprenticeship training in post-secondary institutions in British Columbia.

Chapter 4 provides a description of changes in the political context of federal and provincial policies and initiatives, and contributes significantly to this study by responding to the first research question: what forces – political, economic, and ideological – have driven, and are driving, policy development at federal and provincial levels in defining skills for apprentices? A comprehensive examination of the legislation and policy documents developed by the federal and provincial governments during the period between 1980 and 2010 establishes policy directions and decisions.
Chapter 5 examines the findings from the review of texts responding to the second research question: *what role has policy assigned to the post-secondary education system in relation to the development of a “skilled” workforce during the implementation stages?* I provide a discussion of the central themes of skilled-labour shortages and skill development, as well as the significant contributing discursive themes that emerge. The chapter concludes with a critical analysis of the dialectical relationship between the contexts and discursive themes identified in Chapters 4 and 5. In particular, I am relating the hegemonic and ideological perspectives of apprenticeship skills-policy to identify where power relations exist, who is exercising the power, and what is said or unsaid.

The concluding chapter provides a discussion of the study, implications, recommendations for further research, and reflections.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Why what have you thought of yourself?
Is it you then that thought yourself less?
Is it you that thought the President greater than you?
Or the rich better off than you? Or the educated wiser than you?

List close my scholars dear,
Doctrines, politics and civilizations exurge from you,
Sculpture and monuments and any thing inscribed anywhere are
tallied in you,
The gist of histories and statistics as far back as the records reach
is in you this hour, and myths and tales the same,
if you were not breathing and walking here, where would they
all be?
The most renown’d poems would be ashes, orations and plays
would be vacuums.

(Walt Whitman, 1881)

This chapter begins with an overview of various scholarly debates and definitions of the
concept of skill, examining Becker’s (1964) theory of human capital and the concept of
neoliberal ideology. The second section will provide an overview of Braverman’s thesis on the
degradation of work, as well as other scholars’ views of the concepts of deskilling and
upskilling. I will also examine various theories of low versus intermediate versus high skills. The
next section surveys academic literature on policy research.

2.1 Skills Debates: Deskilling, Upskilling, Low and High skills

Numerous scholars (see Polanyi, 1958, Braverman, 1974, Attewell, 1990, Vallas, 1990,
Wajcman, 1991, Ainley, 1993, Spenner, 1990, and Steiger, 1993) have considered the concept
of skill to include degradation of skill or de-skilling, social construction of skill, conceptual
perceptions of skill, technological changes and skill, and other divergent views from sociological
and psychological understandings. The dialogue amongst leaders in trades’ education often
paralleled those of the scholars, leading to my desire further to research this topic. As Gaskell and Rubenson point out, “[q]uestions about what counts as ‘skill,’ as well as which intellectual, social, technical, and personal factors count for whom, opened up a complex and interesting research agenda” (2004, p. 8).

Skills debates have been increasing over the past three decades, particularly in light of the identification of skills as they relate to trades and other occupations, and the demands of employers for employees who develop specific skills during their education and training. At a practical level, The Conference Board of Canada has made an industry of creating employability skill-profiles that, reportedly, reflect the demands of employers. While there has been discourse at the practical level, Attewell notes “[i]t has taken the intellectual debates and controversies of the 1970s and 1980s to raise the theoretical consciousness and sophistication of many sociologists of work about fundamental concepts like skill, which they previously tended to use in an unreflective way” (1990, p. 446). Yet, with all of these ongoing efforts to define the concept of skill, there continues to be deep concern by employers about the readiness of graduates for employment.

Spenner (1979) maintains that “[a]ll scholars ostensibly agree that skill refers to job complexity: the level, scope, and integration of mental, interpersonal, and manipulative tasks required in a job” (p. 30). However, Form (1987) clarifies that not all scholars agree on the meaning and measurement of skill, especially since not all researchers compared deskilling in capitalist and non-capitalist societies and “even the best historical data cannot provide definitive answers to questions about skill trends” (1987, p. 30).
Attewell (1990) further points out there are etymological issues about skill because at its core is the idea of competence or proficiency, or the ability to do something well with an emphasis on the knowledge aspect. The word is also used in the context of increasing ability, when, in reality, it can be used to denote a lessening, or placement of skill. It has been my experience that terms such as “upskilling,” “deskilling,” “reskilling,” and terms such as “low skilled,” “intermediate or medium skilled,” and “high skilled” have entered into our lexicon, further confusing a shared definition. Discourse about skill and its meaning can lead to confusion and misinterpretation.

Noon and Blyton (2007) question where skill actually exists— is it the person, the job, or the setting? If it rests in the person, analyses will indicate that skill is inherent in a person’s attributes and qualities, a stand typically taken by psychologists. When skill is identified as inherent “in the job, “there is more focus on the complexity of the occupation. Management theorists usually take this view, particularly because it is so strongly emphasized by employers. Finally, when identified within political or historical settings, skill is examined by how it is constructed, an approach usually taken by sociologists.

The following is an adaptation of a matrix developed by Noon and Blyton (2007) of approaches to the analysis of skill. I have added the summary column to provide an overview of each of the focus approaches that they developed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Principal area of concern</th>
<th>Typical approach taken</th>
<th>Typically adopted by</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Individual attributes acquired through education</td>
<td>Questionnaire surveys</td>
<td>Economists</td>
<td>Sometimes described in terms of human capital. Simple but problems lie in methods of measurement and practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use of proxy measures (e.g. qualifications, numbers of years of training)</td>
<td>Psychologists</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aptitude tests/experiments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td>Task requirements</td>
<td>Job analysis</td>
<td>Occupational psychologists</td>
<td>Seen as objective features of work and must be measureable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complexity, discretion</td>
<td>Job evaluation</td>
<td>Management theorists</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Industrial employment relation theorists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Social relations</td>
<td>Case studies of industries and occupations</td>
<td>Social historians</td>
<td>Social closure achieved via ideological, political, and material processes that mutually reinforce each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnographic studies of workplaces</td>
<td>Sociologists</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender theorists</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.1 Approaches to the analysis of skill**
Lewis (2005) asserts that skill is seen, in the United States, as being as much a socio-political construct as an economic one. For the purposes of this study, my focus will be on the person- and setting-approaches, which are typically adopted by economists, psychologists, and social historians, as this gives me the opportunity to recognize the plurality of approaches to the skill problem.

Darrah (1996) agrees with Noon and Blyton’s matrix and further explains that skills may be conceptualized as characteristics brought by individuals to the workplace, an approach favoured by psychologists emphasizing human abilities, and by economists who conceptualize skills as human capital. Job analysts and sociologists, on the other hand, typically treat skills as characteristics of jobs or tasks, independent of those who perform them. Darrah further states that rhetoric of skill requirements has been created in which sweeping generalizations have been made “to analyze work by decomposing jobs or people into constituent characteristics that are somehow necessary for the work to be performed” (ibid, p. 6).

More (1982) points to skill as being viewed as either a production issue or a social issue that “comes into being through the artificial delimitation of certain work as skilled, the purpose of this delimitation being the label ‘skilled,’ thus ensuring for them high wages, better chances of employment or some other advantage” (p. 109). Little data exists to show increases in wages or better employment opportunities in relation to apprenticeship skills training.

Gaskell (1992) suggests that skill is entrenched in politics, culture, and economics, but also that judgments about skill are overwhelmingly influenced by social context, in which the value of particular abilities relates to an ongoing historical struggle between workers and
employers, and between different groups of workers. From a work based approach to
determine skill, Darrah (1996) maintains that skills analyses and the determination of skill
requirements may result from political agendas, reflecting normative visions of individuals and
groups. Skills therefore become a neutral metric through which to express the salient features
of the workplace.

Shields (1996) declares that skill is a very difficult object to quantify because, to a large
degree, it has always been socially constructed. A social construction model of skill, created by
Noon and Blyton (2007, p. 130), integrates a framework showing the interrelatedness of
ideological-political, political-material, and material-ideological regulation, which overlaps to
create social closure.

Figure 2.2 Social Construction of Skill
Steiger (1993) maintains that, in socially constructing skill, there are two basic elements: first, to establish the skills needed for a job, and second, to determine how to judge a person’s skill set. In judging whether or not a person has required skills, a variety of criteria is used. Various measurements have been developed and adopted to quantify skill. Vallas (1990) argues, “[t]he point here is that rather than taking skills requirements for granted, we need to define the social valuation of work as an object of study in its own right” (p. 390). This study takes into account how the work, and training, of apprentices are recognized as social value.

2.1.1 Deskilling

In addition to the academic debates about the meaning and situation of skill, there are various studies defining skills within the context of decreasing levels, or “deskilling,” which is seen to be dependent on many variables. As well, there are considerations of increasing skill levels, commonly referred to as “upskilling,” and the resulting polarization into high- and low-skill jobs. Sawchuk (2008) completed a review of the long-running skills debate within the realm of the sociology of work, showing that, over the last three decades, discussion has produced what can be called the “up-skilling/de-skilling impasse.” He theorized that “[t]he roots of this impasse are found in two opposing sets of theses: the ‘industrialism’ and ‘post-industrialism’ thesis on the one hand, and the Marxist labour process theory or ‘capitalism’ thesis on the other” (Sawchuk, 2008, p. 52).

In 1974, Harry Braverman wrote one of the most influential sociological accounts of the degradation of work in the twentieth century, which has since become subject to extensive academic debate. Because of Braverman’s leanings toward Marxist economics, he was sceptical
of the development of the capitalist mode of production, in which he saw the very concept of skill becoming degraded along with the degradation of labour itself. “The worker may remain a creature without knowledge or capacity, a mere ‘hand’ by which capital does its work, but so long as he or she is adequate to the needs of capital the worker is no longer to be considered or called unskilled” (Braverman, 1974, p. 474). Braverman’s work is important to this study because it focuses so closely on skill amongst tradespeople. Braverman argued that white-collar jobs were being subjected to the same processes of “deskilling” that had destroyed the skill content of craft employment throughout the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries (Brown, 2003).

As Aronowitz and DeFazio (1994) state, Braverman saw the capitalist labour process degrading workers. Furthermore, Braverman argued that capitalism allows employers to introduce work organization and technological innovation that lead to workers’ skills being degraded. According to Aronowitz & DeFazio (1994), “Harry Braverman argued that the capitalist labor process degrades all workers through techniques of domination and deskills them by separating the conception and planning of production from its execution” (p. 147).

Parallel to Braverman’s concept of deskillings lays the theory of human capital. Becker (1964) produced extensive analyses of both the theoretical and empirical perspectives of human capital to show the significance of monetary rates of return in relation of education, which he argued “ought to be significant” (1964, p. xv). In a follow up, study Becker reported that general on-the-job investment in human capital produced marketable skills that could be transferred between employers, while specific on-the-job training produced non-marketable
skills (Becker, 1983). These findings are important to the apprenticeship skills policies in that skills identified for training are usually completed at both macro and micro-levels.

Kincheloe (1995) and Braverman (1974) addressed deskilling during the Fordist era, when it was profitable for corporations to maximize the automation of production processes to yield huge quantities of standardized products, particularly in light of consumerist society. However, during the post-Fordist era, the workplace began to require workers of all levels to be engaged.

Braverman’s notion of the degradation of work led the way in terms of opening discourse on deskilling, which he based on two organizational models. The first model was Taylor’s concept of scientific management, which he believed would lead to organizational deskilling. The second model was Ford’s concept of the assembly line, which he believed would lead to technological deskilling. Braverman described organizational deskilling as the principle of separating the formation and execution of work assigned by managers to mundane tasks, thus requiring lower skills. Technological deskilling results when managers remove the autonomy of craft workers to make decisions, thus reducing skilled workers to performing automated work.

Braverman particularly took exception to the term “semi-skilled” as it has evolved, particularly as it relates to the length of time over which a person has been trained. He believed that the length of time required to complete training in an occupation became directly related to the recognition of the workers as either skilled or semi-skilled, with the longer period obviously resulting in a more skilled worker. Over time, the classification of semi-skilled
became more aligned with unskilled, again because the periods of time required to complete training were shortened. While professions added to the length of programs, apprenticeship training decreased, shifted, and took on less importance in the formal education system, thus relegating apprentices to a degraded social status.

Technological advances determined that apprenticeship was also declining in skill requirements because employers only wanted workers to be able to perform specific functions, while professionals would be responsible for supervision and innovation. Employers were able to determine who would become more skilled, and post-secondary education became an industry that responded to their demands. The concept of skill-development as a major part of post-secondary education was created. Livingstone looks at how “[f]ormal educational credentials are now commonly used as entry requirements” (2010, p. 209) and how credential gaps occur.

Diplomas, degrees, certificates and graduate credentials became a "ticket of admission to almost any kind of job" (Braverman, 1974, p. 438). Coincidentally, perhaps, Braverman used the term “ticket,” as it is the traditional name of the credential awarded to apprentices to signify their completion of theoretical and practical training, and of their journeyperson status. As a journeyman coppersmith, Braverman believed:

[t]he breakup of craft skills and the reconstruction of production as a collective or social process have destroyed the traditional concept of skill and opened up only one way for mastery over labor processes to develop: in and through scientific, technical, and engineering knowledge (1974, p. 443).
Additionally, Braverman based his belief on the notion that mechanization and science and technology resulted in the deskillling of workers. Some occupations changed dramatically and some disappeared, including his own role as a coppersmith.

Several scholars (see Aneesh, 2001, Attewell, 1987 & 1990, Burawoy, 1996, Form, 1987, and Gallie, 1994) have responded to Braverman’s deskillling discourse, providing both support for, and opposition to, his views. Form (1987) notes that social scientists have written about the degradation of work for over two centuries, yet Braverman’s work was enthusiastically received because he “was riding a wave of concern about the crisis of work in America” (p. 30) that had not been empirically documented. However, Form also remarks that Braverman made contributions by opening a long-needed channel of communication between Marxists and non-Marxists, integrating skill degradation into a coherent Marxist framework. He was therefore successful in “showing that monopoly capital was using automation to deskill blue- and white-collar jobs just as early capitalists used mechanization to deskill the proletariat” (Form, 1987, p. 30). Gallie (2005) presents a different argument about the social, scientific analysis of work and work organization that suggests a very different scenario of long-term change, one that results in a decline of the real skill content of jobs, as espoused by Braverman. Gallie (1994) argues that “[t]he underlying dynamic behind the process of deskillling is thought to be an increased concern by management to tighten control over the work process” (p. 42) by making work so routine that there is a likelihood that production will increase and that the ability of employees to fight back will be weakened through greater substitutability of labour.
While Gallie (1994) describes deskillling according to a pessimistic perspective of the workforce, Penn (1982) opined, “[i]t should be clear now that deskillling involves not technical change per se but social changes, whereby management gains control over the manning of machinery” (p. 108). On the other hand, Aneesh (2001), suggests that the notion of deskillling needs to be unpacked by separating the idea of “loss of skill” from “degradation of work.” He also claims that Braverman himself was critical of the debate about whether or not the average level of skills in society were rising or declining, “as the answer leaves out the question of the polarization of skills by employing the criteria already in use to evaluate jobs as high or low skilled” (p. 365).

Buchanan and Boddy (1983) claim that deskillling looks at employees, or workers, as being totally passive and allowing domination by managers; however, Burawoy (1979) argues that workers must consent to their subordination and do so through a series of manipulations, or games, which ultimately lead to their domination. Lewis (2005) observes that “technical features of production become dominated by the social features introduced by the capitalist, who takes away the power held by the worker by privileging only those skills needed for production” (p. 400).

Littler (1982) supports More’s (1982) argument by pointing out that there needs to be a distinction between “systemic and occupational forms of change in the structure of employment” (p. 161) by looking at how the term deskillling is used. He points out that the conceptions of skill and deskillling will vary, dependent upon the social construction of skill. Littler claims that Britain’s deskillling has resulted not so much from technological changes, as it
has in the US, but more from lack of innovation and the ability to be responsive to changes in markets. Brown et al. (2003) further support Litler’s argument by stating, “[i]t was not until the 1980s that the detailed division of labour based on low skilled, low trust relation (Fordism) was successfully challenged in Britain and the United States as the principal paradigm of economic deficiency” (p. 4).

Friedman (1977a, 1977b, 1990) shares in the common criticism of Braverman’s thesis by claiming that it ignores alternative management strategies; these include strategies in which there are broader choices in the mechanisms employed by management for the accumulation of capital than Braverman suggests. Paul Adler (1992) is a leading critic of Braverman’s perspective; he theorizes that technology upgrades, rather than degrades, skill because it benefits most workers, whereas deskilling only affects a minority. Accordingly, Braverman’s notion of skill is based on a romantic view of the nineteenth century craft worker, and skill must be redefined in the context of modern technological advances. Adler proposes that deskilling only affects a minority because technological change is beneficial to most workers and new skills are created as old skills are destroyed; therefore, the creation of new skills outweighs deskilling. Defence comes from Burawoy (1979), Armstrong (1988), Spencer (2000), and Tinker (2002), who suggest that many of Braverman’s critics were actually relegating his original theories to less importance by revising and replacing them with their own.

Lewis (2005) points out that the current high-skills discourse tends to be framed in relationship to where skill resides – in the person or in the job. Spenner (1995) has asserted that deskilling inquiry should proceed on the assumption that skill resides in jobs, not in
individuals. This is not how the current high-skills discourse tends to be framed. To see skill as residing in jobs is to recognize that policy must reconcile the demand and supply sides of the skill question. Evidence from deskilling literature has been mixed. While some studies have reported deskilling (e.g. McLaughlin & Webster, 1998, Hecht, 2001), others have reported upskilling (e.g. Penn et al., 1994, Kim, 2002, Koike, 2002). Yet others have reported both phenomena occurring simultaneously, yielding either skill-polarization or mixed effects (e.g. Zuboff, 1988, Cappelli, 1993, Lewis, 2004).

2.1.2 Upskilling

In 1974, Braverman argued that the industrial use of modern technology was stripping skills from both service and manufacturing jobs, resulting in deskilling. However, Bailey (1990) believes that the opposite would occur when technology is introduced, resulting in the need for upskilling. The upskilling arguments continue as technology advances and economic conditions change. Myles determines that “skill change can occur in two ways: through changes in the work content of occupations and through compositional shifts in the distribution of occupations” (1987, p. 9). However, deskilling in work content may also result in overall upgrading, or upskilling, because although the skill requirements of some jobs may decline, they may also be completely phased out.

Gallie (1994) sees the concept of upskilling according to an optimistic perspective, suggesting that advances in technology will result in increased skill requirements within occupations, such that employers become more reliant on workers to have more initiative. Cappelli (1993) points out that numerically controlled machines, which he sees as the main
technological innovation in production work, have played a relatively minor role in changing the way that jobs are performed, whereas new management views appear to have a much stronger effect on changes in production jobs.

Betcherman, McMullen, and Davidman (1998) assert, “technological change is contributing to an upskilling process that is reducing the demand for unskilled workers and raising the stakes for investing in education and training” (p. 6). Kim, however, claims “there appears to be a positive association between information technology and upskilling, whereas this is not necessarily the case with automation technology” (2002, p. 89). He bases his claim on the empirical research that shows OECD countries experience upskilling because of technological change, noting, “[t]he effect of technology on changes in skill requirements seems to vary with the skill level of jobs. The upskilling effect of technology is likely to be higher for jobs requiring a high level of skill than for those requiring a low level of skill” (Kim, 2002, p. 106).

Some of the issues here are taken up by Brown and Campbell, in Lewis (2005), who suggest that current measures of technology-use and costs are unreliable, as are measures of output and productivity. They point to the need for examining “the relationships among new technology, impact of work activities and skill use, and compensation” (Lewis, 2005, p. 403). Aronowitz & DeFazio (1994) claim that knowledge, not skill, defines production processes. This constitutes a fundamental shift from viewing experience as the foundation of training and acquisition of skill to formal education as the basis of training and the acquisition of knowledge. Kincheloe (1995) claims that post-Fordist management techniques, where upskilling had
become the new approach, hid their power by encouraging workers to “problem solve” by making decisions that were “consistent with the productivity goals of management” (p. 133).

Braverman also referred to upgrading as a necessity, as some occupations were shifting into others and there was a prolonging of periods of education, resulting in higher categories of skill requirements. He further stated that “[t]he concepts of ‘skill’, ‘training,’ and ‘education’ are themselves sufficiently vague, and a precise investigation of the arguments which are used to support the thesis of ‘upgrading’ is further hampered by the fact that they have never been made the subject of a coherent and systematic presentation” (Braverman, 1974, p. 424).

Gallie (2005) offers criticisms of the notion of the upskilling perspective by noting that there is a false assumption that the growth of the service sector will create skilled jobs. There also appears to be an overstatement of the extent to which advanced technology requires higher skill levels from employees, and the extent, or rate, of change, as well as overstating the skill-enhancing impact of new working methods, which need to be put into a global perspective.

Penn, Rose, and Rubery (1994) refer to task versatility as “polyvalence” that occurs because of the change in the nature of competition, particularly in relation to internationalization. This may raise the need for upskilling, or for a polarization of skills by employers creating securely employed, flexible, and highly skilled workers or disposable, low-skilled workers.

The crux of all discourse about upskilling is advances in technology that may or may not require workers to advance their skill sets. As Form (1987) notes, three persistent facts impede agreement about skill change:
First, scholars disagree on the meaning and measurement of skill. Second, since researchers have not compared deskilling in capitalist and noncapitalist societies, they cannot conclude that whatever happened under capitalist industrialization was unique. Third, even the best historical data cannot provide definitive answers to questions about skill trends” (Form, 1987, p. 30).

2.1.3 Low vs. intermediate vs. high skills-credentials and mismatches

Over many years, there has been much discourse about levels of skill, particularly as they relate to specific occupations and how they are socially constructed. The trades have been variously recognized as requiring low, and sometimes intermediate, skills. Brown, Green, and Lauder have asserted that “[s]kill is not simply a question of acquired technical competences through formal education and training, it also includes an ability to ‘learn how to learn’ as a lifelong activity” (2003, p. 15). As Debling and Behrman (1996) point out, arguments occur in high- and low-skills debates in terms of proficiency, and whether the skills are basic or advanced.

Fisher, Rubenson, and Schuetze (1994) refer to “low skill” as traditionally existing in areas such as resource-extraction and manufacturing sectors, and being particularly vulnerable to replacement or reduction by technology. They further define occupations such as trades as intermediate work and technological and executive work as requiring high skill. “The use of tools and the operation of machinery have been key criteria in the categorization of work as skilled or unskilled” (Dunk, 1996, p. 105). Historically, lower-skill workers have had a very limited need for transfer. “Transfer becomes important when one encounters unfamiliar
situations, and lower-skill workers encountered little that was not familiar and did not have responsibility for handling the nonroutine situations that they did encounter” (Berryman, 1993, p. 371). His perspective supports the notion that apprentices are not low skilled, as transfer of skills is critical. Burawoy (1979) also states there has been considerable debate as to whether or not the deskilling thesis overlooked skill transfer possibilities through which workers can take non-job specific skills from one place to another.

The term “intermediate skill” has been used since the mid-1980s in European post-secondary education and training literature. Ashton, Maguire, and Sung (1991) describe intermediate skills as those that may rely on manual dexterity and that may also rely upon theory; intermediate skill and its usage could be transferable across a range of jobs. The notions that skills cannot be easily categorized and sharply distinguished has been reinforced by Ryan, who notes that the “category ‘intermediate skills’ is heterogeneous in content and imprecise in its boundaries. Its centre of gravity is what in British industry has traditionally been termed craft and technician skills, along with their analogues in the service sector” (Ashton, et al, 1991, p. 17). Lindley (1991) observes that some intermediate occupations jostled for position between the crafts and equivalent skilled non-manual occupations and the professions.

During the 1990s, the government of B.C. determined that there were ambiguities in the terms “vocational” and “career/technical,” which were seen as parallel to intermediate skill development, and a new category of “applied” studies was created to indicate duration and scholastic entry requirements (1997). Grubb (1996) claims that there is a paradox in the call for
high-skilled jobs and the preparation of persons for these, as many occupations will not become high-skilled. Further, he determines that mid-skilled, or intermediate-skilled, workers are those who are from the sub-baccalaureate labour force.

Debling and Behrman (1996) find that arguments exist within high and low skills in terms of proficiency and whether the skills are basic or advanced. Lewis further notes that groups that have typically struggled for equal voice as societies continue to find themselves at the margins in the high-skills push. Again, how skills are measured, and in what occupations, are considerations that leave questions as to how skills can be defined. “Skill formation systems such as schooling, workplace training and apprenticeship may not be equally accessible to all” (Lewis, 2005, p. 398).

Scholarly work on low, intermediate and high skills has resulted in the production of several studies and reports on the relationships between skills mismatch, credentials, and underemployment. Walker (2011) finds that high-skills demand is generally weaker than discourse has stated, as workers have tended to under-use the skills that they have acquired, with employers only recognizing the minimal number of skills of employees. She notes that underemployment has been identified as a greater problem than under-skilling. Borghans et al. (2001) indicate that using only qualifications as a measurement of workforce skills is limited by potential mismatch of qualification with jobs (especially ‘over-education’) and the strong possibility of credentialism, whereby qualifications demanded by employers become imperfect indicators of job skill requirements (p. 377).
Livingstone (2010) reports that changes in credential requirements have changed significantly in the past four decades, which “suggests a certain amount of credential inflation in relation to capability to do the job” (p. 213). However, he also clarifies: “[t]he notion of ‘overeducation’ increasingly used in education–job requirements analyses by human capital theorists to refer to a surplus or excess of formal education is misconceived” (Livingstone, 2010, p. 224). Green and McIntosh (2007) point out that “[t]here is evidence that an increasing proportion of workers are finding themselves in jobs that require qualifications lower than those they have obtained” (p. 427), resulting in over-qualification.

Two surveys, conducted by Livingstone (2010, p. 218) and completed in the same periods of time that this study covers, show that a shift in skills matches between high, intermediate, low, and underemployment has occurred, while the rate of under-qualification has remained constant. Underemployment, on the other hand, has increased, as skills have become more prominently mismatched.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Underemployed (%)</th>
<th>Matched (%)</th>
<th>Underqualified (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1   Credential match and qualifications

Shields (1996) notes that the OECD has recognized that job growth is bifurcated between the high-skill and low-skill ends, despite the premise of the underlying labour-market
theory that was guiding federal reform initiatives. These initiatives were developed on account of the perceived changes in the new economy that involved shifting employment to high-skill jobs and leaving little room for workers who lack skills. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training relates qualifications to skill levels and notes that the numbers of medium- and high-level qualifications will continue to rise in Europe (CEDEFOP, 2012). They contribute to the skills mismatch discourse by noting, “[s]kill mismatch, however, is more than a discrepancy between labour market needs and particular skill levels as measured by qualifications. It is often about lack of the ‘right’ skills in a job and the mismatch between the fields people study and those the labour market requires” (CEDEFOP, 2012, p. 13).

Pyper (2008) reports in a survey of credentials completed by trade workers that 68% had at least some postsecondary education below the bachelor’s level in 2007, while only 50% had completed the same levels in 1990. She points out that plumbers and electricians represent the largest proportion, as entrance requirements for those programs are higher than other construction trades. Increases in demand for higher skill levels may have influenced more trade workers to increase their credentials; however, data do not directly identify a cause-effect relationship. Brown et al. (2003) observe a lack of incentive for skills upgrading, as “there is a serious mismatch between the rhetoric of ‘high skills’ and the realities of policy implementation” (p. 248).

Kincheloe (1995) asks, “[d]oes technological change in the workplace increase the demand for highly skilled or deskilled workers” (p. 130)? This question challenges the basic
premise of Braverman’s notion of technological advancement. The nature of technological change has caused management to make decisions about which jobs would be eliminated.

This continues to be the case in the context of technological innovation occurring simultaneously with economic globalization, it is the possible polarization of our society-into an increasingly poor, ‘redundant,’ deskill underclass and a small, affluent, technical-professional elite-that must be faced and dealt with now . . . (Lerner, 1994, p. 187).

Dunk, (1996) claims that the level of autonomy and authority that some workers have over others distinguishes more skilled workers. His claim represents the notion that some workers are classified as “high-skilled” due to social stratification. Lewis notes, “[t]hus, the high-skills ideal cannot be attained without a full airing of the impediments that beset it, and that requires conflation of workplace and societal discourses such that social inequality in communities is connected with labor process tensions between capital and class at the point of production” (2005, p. 398).

Brown et al. (2003) note, “the question of social exclusion is central to skill formation because is enables us to gauge whether national governments are serious about lifting the skills base of the whole society” (p. 253). The discourse of high, intermediate, and low skills is embedded in policy as being exclusive to some occupations. The formation of apprenticeship skills policy should be based on a foundation of policy research that is inclusive of different levels of skill required in the workplace and the recognition of how skills match education and labour demands.
While there is evidence that levels of credentials have increased, there is also data showing fewer completions in apprenticeship. Journeypersons receive certification by both completing the prescribed work and learning components of apprenticeship, or by challenging the Interprovincial Red Seal. While recording of the first is fairly accurate, the second does not account for traditional completion of apprenticeship and may not be adequately documented. According to CAF (2011), the 2007 National Apprenticeship Survey (NAS) shows a steady decline in completions is due to several factors. The NAS does note, “[t]he level of education held by apprentices upon entering the apprentice program appears to be related to their program outcome” (Menard, et al, 2008).

CAF (2011) outlines a number of negative outcomes that lead to social exclusion, related to non-completion and that indicate the importance of skill development leading to credentials. In particular, they note higher levels of unemployment, fewer opportunities for permanent jobs, lower salaries (for completers, $27/hour, as compared to $20/hour for non-completers). Strong emphasis is placed on completion of apprenticeship to ensure higher standards of living and quality of life, and better opportunities for job advancement.

2.2 Policy Research

As O’Reilly (1991) points out, “Good policy studies require in-depth study of the current situation with an excellent appreciation of the history of the phenomenon being studied” (p. 3). Education policy has been a recognized field of study since the 1950s, initially pursued to address the needs of the state to develop priorities and programmes to ensure efficiency and effectiveness (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Numerous perspectives and conceptualizations of policy
research exist; however, Goldberg (2006) argues that there are few extant educational policy studies. These studies generally have taken a narrow view of policy as an outcome or a text endorsing a state-centred or linear approach to policy, failing to account for the way that policies are embedded in local, historical, cultural, and political contexts that influence how they are taken up. Scholars such as Ball (1994), Ozga (1999), and Rizvi and Lingard (2010) have completed education policy research as it applies to process, text, production, and implementation. This study examines the production and implementation of the text over time.

I adopt the view of Ozga, as she states:

I see research on education policy as a valuable resource for the education community, and as a professional obligation and entitlement for educationalists.

In my practice and profession I am obliged to investigate, analyse and disseminate my findings. Indeed, whatever perspective or views I am exploring and describing may provide educators with an opportunity to develop policy-making skills that contribute to their practice. (1999, p. 7)

The positivist approach to policy studies typically encompasses a description of social problems, discussions of competing policy solutions, considerations of general implementation problems, and evaluation of particular policy implementations (Scheurich, 1994). Seddon (1996) argues that education needs to be viewed as an essential part of the social infrastructure. Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, and Henry describe this as policy representing “political compromises between conflicting images of how educational change should proceed” (1997, p.15). Apprenticeship policies are often constructed in response to political pressure by labour
that does not take into account educational or training issues, which makes it difficult for educators to implement policies. This points to discrepancies in responding to education as a social issue. As governments at both the federal and provincial levels have changed, so have the policies, primarily in order to respond to political ideologies that represent their views of social problems. Dye (1992) claims that policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do. Doherty adds, “[e]ducation policy is taken to be an expression of political rationality, and as a constituent of the scaffolding that establishes and maintains certain hegemonic projects” (2007, p. 193).

From an anthropological perspective, Wedel, Shore, Feldman, and Lathrop (2005) refer to educational policy as a field of activity. They claim that public policies are normative as they express both ends and means to steer actions and behaviours of people. Policy is seen to be rooted in social, political, and organizational structures, in methodologies and technologies, as well as in regulating activities and the assessment of results (O'Reilly, 1991). Educational research takes place in “policy settings,” according to Ozga (2000), which she sees as the “places, processes and relationships where policy is made” (p. 2).

Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt (1989) conclude that the focus of policy research in education has shifted to the role of ideology in the political process. Policies are assumed to exist in texts or in written documents of some kind, but can also be viewed as the process in which text is produced once an issue is placed on the political agenda. Ozga (2000) provides a very broad and all-encompassing definition of policy text as any “vehicle or medium for carrying and transmitting a policy message” (p. 33). “Policy is both process and product. In such a
conceptualization, policy involves the production of the text, the text itself, ongoing modifications to the text and processes of implementation into practice” (1997, p. 25). Ball (1994) refers to policy as both text and action – words and deeds – in its enactment and its intention.

The policy process or the “making” of policy is much researched by scholars. Understanding how and why policy is developed, particularly in the contexts in which it emerges, has led to the creation of several frameworks. As Silver points out “policy theorists discuss policy processes in terms of models . . .” (1995, p. 35). While he is critical of policy models as being too clinical, understanding how and why policy is developed, particularly in the contexts in which it emerges, has led to the creation of several frameworks. An example of a framework developed by Bowe, Ball, and Gold (1992) used to determine how to identify the elements in the contexts of policy is shown below.
The context of influence is where public policy is normally initiated as discourses are constructed. The context of policy text production to the articulation of narrow interests and dogmatic ideologies has an uneasy relationship with context of influence. Gale (1999) maintains, “[p]olicy contexts are domains of interdiscursive struggle amongst discourses which employ strategies to establish and maintain their dominance or challenge the dominance of others” (p. 400). This takes the process further into creating, implementing, changing, and challenging policy.

Policy texts are normally articulated in the language of general public good (i.e. via media, public speeches); they represent policy in various forms such as “official” legal texts, as well as providing commentaries that “make sense” of these “official” texts. Intertextuality is an
important aspect of policy, as texts have to read in relation to the time that they were created and where they were produced.

The third main context, the context of practice, indicates the arena of practice to which policy refers or in which it is addressed, and the consequences of implementation where it is subjected to interpretation and then reconstructed. “Thus it seems far more appropriate to talk of policies as having ‘effects’ rather than ‘outcomes’. The policy process is one of complexity; it is one of policy-making and remaking” (Bowe, E., Ball, S. and Gold, A., 1992, p. 23).

Seddon (1996) views the idea of policy context as not objective, but more often designed to present issues in a particular light. Given that perspective, the nature of problems are never self-evident but always represented in a specific manner or from a particular point of view (Dery, 1984). “Policies cannot be divorced from interests, from conflict, from domination or from justice” (Ball, 1990, p. 3).

Luke and Hogan (2006) define educational policy-making “as the prescriptive regulation of flows of human resources, discourse and capital across educational systems towards normative social, economic and cultural ends” (p. 171). They see policy as involving the allocation of various resources such as human, economic, and ideological. Their definition focuses on the normative nature of education policy that emphasizes the goals and purposes of education. Carly, (1980) a major rational theorist of public policy, identified three elements to policy development: political decisions about the values to be allocated, rational determination
through the phases of development, and the impact of bureaucratic organizations’ arrangements, via their values and realities, on the actual policy.

Considine (1994) explains that the policy process could be considered more a recipe than a blueprint, as “[a] public policy is an action which employs governmental authority to commit resources in support of preferred value” (p. 4). Rizvi and Lingard (2010) point out that “[v]alues are either implicit or explicit in any given policy” (p. 7). In this regard, the development of policy is seen to be as critical as the production.

Weimer and Vining (2004) claim that policy is about change and how governments reform educational systems, or “[t]o use another metaphor, a policy is designed to steer understanding and action without ever being sure of the practices it might produce” (p. 5). Weaver-Hightower (2008) calls these “rational” policies, sometimes referred to as “stage heuristic,” in that they are pointedly prescriptive and direct policymakers regarding how to develop policies. However, Hudson and Lowe (2004) determine that “decision makers are rarely inclined to conduct policy making according to the rational, evidence rich, scientific approach that forms the classic model” (p. 10).

According to some policy theorists, it appears that the essence of policy lies in the fact that, through it, certain things are denied to some individuals and made accessible to others. Bosetti (1991) points out that “policy research findings also need to be adequately communicated to policy makers” (p. 219). “A policy, in other words, whether for a society, for a narrow association, or for any other group, consists of a web of decisions that allocates values” (Easton, 1953, pp. 129, 130). He calls this “the authoritative allocation of values” that Rizvi and
Lingard (2010) see as evident in what is or is not funded and how “policy problems are framed and contexts represented” (p. 8).

The political perspective of ruling parties plays largely in the development and implementation of skills policies. “The state, then, is crucially involved in the political organization of policy processes in all phases of the policy cycle, including the politics of implementation” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 10). Given that perspective, the nature of problems is never self-evident, but is always represented in a specific manner or from a particular point of view (Dery, 1984). “Policies cannot be divorced from interests, from conflict, from domination or from justice” (Ball, 1990, p. 3).

As an educational researcher and administrator, I am interested in the language used in skills policy in apprenticeship, which informs social construction and social relationships as they relate to power and knowledge. Whose voices have been heard, when, how, where, and why? How are the voices that participate in skills policy development represented? I am not a sociolinguist, but do recognize the vital importance of critical discourse analysis as a sociologist/educator. I recognize that my interpretation of the language used in the texts may not be the same as others; however, I do want to bring to light the fact that the discourses used in the policies are very powerful, with biases that should be brought to light.

2.3 Summary

This chapter provides a review of the relevant scholarly literature and theories through which the concept of skill is analysed and interpreted in this study. The chapter began with numerous scholarly debates about skill. The complexity of the discourse surrounding deskilling,
upskilling, and low versus intermediate and high skills illustrates the many facets of definitions and interpretations of skill.

The multitude of debates about skill reflects how it is defined and applied to persons, their jobs, or the places that they work. Economists, psychologists, management theorists, social historians, sociologists, and others view skill as a socio-political construct, using differing methodologies to analyse and evaluate it. Such debates point to how the construction of skill discourse is used by politicians to normalize the concept of skill and to influence policy production. The value of the abilities of workers corresponds to the social context of apprenticeship that is reflected in normalized political agendas related to skill development and training.

Braverman maintained that the capitalistic economic model was intentionally deskillling and degrading trade workers, although Becker had previously argued that employers would invest in human capital to develop skills, creating possibility of return on investment. Opposing theories emerged, particularly in light of differing economic times. Literature conceptualizing shifts in economic periods from capitalistic to neoliberalistic models challenge Braverman’s notions of deskillling.

Credential acquisition and demand and supply for differing skill levels have figured prominently in skills policy; however, little evidence exists to support the increased levels. Data show that there has been minimal change in skill-level requirements in apprenticeship; however, the number and level of credentials has increased. Some trades (i.e. electrical and
plumbing) require higher entry-level formal education and training while the majority remain static.

Studies on the impact of rapid changes in technology and globalization and changes to skill requirement have emerged and continue to challenge Braverman; however, with his death, only those scholars who support or criticize him are left to continue the debates. The concept of upskilling, on the other hand, has emerged in the skills debate due to changes in technology and globalization. While some scholars take an optimistic view, others argue that only higher skilled people will benefit from technological change.

The understanding of the policy process cycle in skills policy in apprenticeship is vital to this study, as it provides contexts of influence, text production, and text practice. The interdiscursive struggle amongst and within the scholarly views and debates of skills illustrates the complexity of the production of skills policy. Policy texts reflect multiple views of how skill is viewed as economics, ideology, and/or politics that emerges in their creation and implementation. Scholars and researchers interpret the “official” texts of policy, particularly in view of when they were created and by whom, keeping in mind that skills policy is interwoven with other policy texts, such as those related to employment and economics. This study contributes to the interpretation of the multiple texts and policies that affect skills policy in apprenticeship.

In the following chapter I present the methodology used in the study.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Souls of men and women! It is not you I call unseen, unheard, untouchable and untouching, It is not you I go argue pro and con about, and to settle whether you are alive or no, I own publicly who you are, if nobody else owns.

Walt Whitman, 1881

In this chapter, I begin by providing an overview of the theoretical foundations of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in order to establish theoretical perspectives in sociological work and to explain my motivation for using it in this study. The following section provides a review of Michel Foucault’s power/knowledge and archaeology as applied to analysis of the beliefs and assumptions that underlie the critical discourse analysis of skills policy and trades’ education. In the fourth section, I provide an overview of Norman Fairclough’s framework for using CDA to analyse discursive events and as the methodological approach that I am drawing on in this study to identify, deconstruct, and open up the identification of the various forces that are driving the definition of skill.

The final section provides a description of how I use CDA in a discursive apprenticeship policy network to analyse the discourses related to the development and implementation of skills policy and its impact on apprentices and post-secondary education in Canada and British Columbia.

3.1 Theoretical Foundations of Critical Discourse Analysis

Rogers, et al (2005) note that the history of CDA can be traced to the early twentieth century, with Michael Halliday’s (1975, 1978) theory of linguistics contributing significantly to
the critical study of language. However, Marston (2002) observes that sociolinguistics does not adequately examine how social formations arise, as it does not recognize the importance of socio-economic class and institutions. He sees CDA as being “informed by the critical theory tradition, with its focus on antagonisms between political groups and social classes” (p. 85).

A group of linguists and literary theorists at the University of East Anglia developed Critical Linguistics in the late 1970s, based on Halliday’s Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Halliday (1978) used the term Social Semiotics and developed Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as a model of grammar that “stresses the importance of social context...in the production and development of language” (Bloor & Bloor, 2007, p. 2). The publication of Norman Fairclough’s Language and Power (1989) demonstrates the importance of SFL as a “valuable resource for critical discourse analysis” (2003, p. 5) in bringing CDA forward as an educational analysis philosophy. White (1994) states:

Critical discourse draws from a more philosophically oriented literature and takes a more critical stance toward the practice of analysis. Proponents charge that traditional policy studies, particularly those based on economic models of behavior, take a narrow and technocratic approach to policy choices, and that they diminish the meaning of politics and obscure the role of values in defining policy alternatives. Rational analysis should not be viewed solely as an instrumental activity, as selecting means to ends, but should include reasoned reflection about political values and critical reflection about the assumptions in any policy (p. 508).
Phillips and Hardy distinguish discourse analysis as different from other research methods, as they see it as a methodology or an epistemology “that explains how we know the social world, as well as a set of methods for studying it” (2002, p. 3). Adding critically to the process of discourse analysis, Fairclough (1992) notes:

Critical approaches differ from non-critical approaches in not just describing discursive practices, but also showing how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities and systems of knowledge and belief, neither of which is normally apparent to discourse participants (p. 12).

Gee explains that “critical approaches, however, go further and treat social practices, not just in terms of social relationships, but also, in terms of their implications for things like status, solidarity, the distribution of social goods, and power . . .” (2011, p. 68). In this study, I am looking at apprenticeship as a social good, and I am considering the relationships that exist within the political, ideological, and economic power of skills policy. Gee strongly maintains that all language use is political, therefore, discourse analysis should be critical because it “involves perspectives on the distribution of social goods” (2011, p. 69). Teo (2000) and Gee (2004), in Smith (2007), note “[t]he use of the term ‘critical’ signifies a departure from this by indicating an analysis that focuses on exploring the ‘ideological underpinnings of discourse that have become so naturalized over time that we begin to treat them as common, acceptable and natural features of discourse” (p. 61). Parker (1992) claims that CDA is also differentiated by its focus on how discursive constructions support certain institutions, ideologies, and power
relations, while Marston (2002) sees CDA as “particularly suited to advocacy based research because it has the potential to go beyond academic analyses of texts by highlighting ‘bottom up’ practices of resistance” (p. 85).

The two major theorists recognized for their frameworks in CDA are Michel Foucault and Norman Fairclough. While Foucault focuses his work on the discourse of the human sciences, Fairclough is inclusive of any sort of discourse with analysis of spoken and written language texts at the core, maintaining that text is central to discourse, within the processes of production and interpretation – interaction; all are set within the social conditions of production and interpretation – context (1989). Inherent in Fairclough’s framework is the sociological perspective of the social world, which includes social practices and social construction. For Foucault, “a discourse is a structuring of meaning-making whose major characteristic is its disciplinary and hence regulatory power. A Foucauldian discourse therefore defines what can be included and what is prohibited” (Edwards, 2008, p. 22).

3.2 Foucault, Fairclough and CDA as Sociological Methodology

I employ CDA within the context of Foucault’s archaeology, although he did not specify discourse analysis as a methodology, nor did he provide a way in which to apply it to research. I will therefore draw upon interpretations and applications from Norman Fairclough’s concept of discourse of text, as well as other sources of critical discourse analysis. The following section provides an overview of Foucault’s archaeology and Fairclough’s CDA and establishes my position in using CDA as a sociological methodology in this study.
3.2.1 Foucault’s power/knowledge and archaeology in CDA

Foucault’s concept of discourse and power has been important in the development of CDA. Fairclough’s work is based on the works of Foucault, providing an understanding of educational policy. Fairclough claims that “Foucault’s work makes an important contribution to a social theory of discourse in such areas as the relationship of discourse and power, the discursive construction of social subjects and knowledge, and the functioning of discourse in social change” (Fairclough, N., 1992, p. 38), while noting that analysts cannot simply apply Foucault’s work to CDA.

According to Marshall (2007), Foucault often claimed that he did not advocate theories or methodologies that were to be adopted or followed. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) claim Foucault chose to focus on discursive practices in an effort to move beyond structuralism and hermeneutics, which were the two major alternative modes of investigation then available to social research.

Foucault saw discourse and discourse analysis in his archaeological works as concerned with analysing statements (Fairclough, 1992, p. 40). Foucault characterizes archaeology as an appropriate methodology for the analysis of local discursivities, and genealogy as a methodology that “would be the tactics whereby, on the basis of descriptions of these local discursivities, the subjected knowledges which were thus released would be brought into play” (1980, p. 85). For the purposes of this study, I am using archaeology as the appropriate methodology to examine and analyse statements over the period 1980-2010. The discourse of
skill remains a concern throughout this period, with the status of the discourse changing, bringing with it various understandings.

I am looking at archaeology as an attempt to isolate the level of discursive practices and formulate the rules for the production and transformation of such practices within skills policy in apprenticeship. In Foucault’s earlier archaeological work, the focus was on types of discourse (discursive formations) as rules of constituting areas of knowledge. In his later genealogical studies, the emphasis shifted to relationships between knowledge and power. I look at who produces the rules for the discursive practice of apprenticeship and the power relationships they exercise in formulating skills policy.

Since Foucault did not provide a procedure to conduct discourse analysis based on archaeology, I am using Gale’s characterization of policy archaeology as “the analysis of constitutive rules and position . . . including the licensing of policy makers and their relations as part of the process of policy formation” (2001, p. 387). Fairclough points out that Foucault’s early archaeological work made two important claims about discourse analysis. The first is the constitutive nature of discourse that constitutes the social, including “objects” and social subjects, and the second is the primacy of interdiscursivity and intertextuality, wherein any discursive practice is defined by its relationship with others, and draws upon others in complex ways (Fairclough, 1992). The major difference between Fairclough and Foucault’s analyses of discourse is that the latter does not include discursive and linguistic analysis of real texts.

Gale has interpreted Foucault’s work on critical policy archaeology to ask the following questions: “1) why are some items on the policy agenda (and not others); 2) why are some
policy actors involved in the production of policy (and not others), and; 3) what are the conditions that regulate the patterns of interaction of those involved?” (2001, pp. 387-88). As Ball points out, there are strategies involved in licensing participants, or, as he referred to them, actors or groups of actors, “so that only certain voices are heard at any point in time” (1994, p. 16). This is so particularly in relation to what agendas are being heard. I observe where those voices are heard in making and implementing skills policy in apprenticeship, as well as how the various actors place themselves within the skills policy agenda.

In my heading, I have indicated power and knowledge as two different concepts; however, Foucault saw power-knowledge as a single, inseparable configuration of ideas and practices that constituted a discourse – they are the two sides of a single process, with knowledge not reflecting power relationships, but being essential in them. My perception of the connectivity of the two concepts of power and knowledge is shaped by the work of Foucault. In looking at power and knowledge, I am attempting to determine the status or placement of them in the development and implementation of skills policy. The understanding of the particular relationships between the participants is critical to this study, as is the context and the language used in the texts. As Fejes and Nicoll point out, “[t]he question of the ‘how of power,’ in by what means it is ‘exercised’ in terms of ‘what happens,’ for Foucault is one that focuses on the means and effects of power in situations when people say that power is being executed” (2008, p. 8).

Ball (1990) claims that Foucault sees modern power emerging in the name of governance, where there was a shift from the sovereign, when property was protected at any
cost, to the modern state in which families and individuals became instruments of the
government. In that regard, Foucault’s (1983) analysis of power relations includes five areas.
The first is the system of differentiation in which law, traditions, and economic conditions bring
apparent power relationships into play. The second area addresses the intentional discipline
acted upon by others, which governs individuals, particularly in power relationships; the third
area is conveyed by the second as power relations forcing compliance, consent, surveillance,
and economic reward. The fourth area looks at forms of institutionalization, such as schools,
that produce governable individuals. School examination is used as a form of power, with the
act of learning being examined. In the last area, Foucault concludes that, dependent upon the
situation, rationalization legitimizes the exercise of power.

Foucault had earlier stated that “[t]he real political task in a society such as ours is to
criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; violence
which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that we can
fight fear” (1974, p. 171). Hoskin (1990) claims that such statements identify Foucault as a
crypto-educationalist because, in using the term “examination,” he was referring to the self,
and that a dilemma exists because power-knowledge is a theoretical, historical construct that is
unfinished.

Peters and Besley (2006) note that several scholars have interpreted Foucault’s work
differently, according to different cultural and national contexts; however, its application to
educational research is widening. In particular, Foucault looked at the disciplines within
institutions such as education. In using the term discipline, he refers to particular areas of
study, not correction, punishment, or restraint. The central theme is the “means of correct training” (Foucault, 1974, p. 31). In that regard, apprenticeship is a discipline that exists within schools and is subject to compliance that rationalizes the power/knowledge of those who govern it. Apprenticeship training is meant to create a knowing subject with licencing that identifies the individuals as experts in their trade. In his early works, Foucault attempts to clarify the structure, rules, and procedures that make up the different types of knowledge as the archaeology of knowledge, which is a study of the rules of what can and cannot be said within discourses at particular times (Kenway, 1990).

Foucault views knowledge and power as interrelated in subjugating workers as individuals who are inert and consenting objects (1977). Burawoy (1979) further adds a theory of worker consent that challenges Braverman, based on Foucault’s views. Foucault looks particularly at labour process control – the management of labour figures largely in his work, with workers being consenting subjects. Foucault sees management’s rationalities of efficiency, practicality, and control as representing the bureaucratization of work. Ball (1990) claims that management separates itself from workers during the implementation and evaluation of policy by using examination and appraisal as forms of discipline and punishment. Edwards (2008) points out that Foucault’s influence on the labour process is far-reaching, as it challenges Braverman’s focus on the subjective manner of work and how workers may resist subjugation through unions. Unions managed many of the functions related to apprenticeship during the twentieth century.
Lewis, (2005) however, argues that Foucault’s labour-process theories were emerging during the early stages of capitalism and that some theorists use the introduction of technology to explain management’s intent to control in contemporary workplaces. In particular, Lewis (2005) contends that technology can be used to enforce *hegemonic control*, by eliciting consent to the labor process. Kenway (1990) notes that many of Australia’s changes in government policy came about as a result of economic crisis and changes in labour market practices due to technological change.

Apprenticeship is a social institution that exists within both education and work, having evolved over centuries to its current formal arrangement in Canada. Post-secondary institutions partner with industry in the implementation of skills policies by providing training to apprentices. “Schools and other significant social institutions are constituted by discourse and discursive relations” (Luke, 1995-1996, p. 9). Foucault determines that “any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses, along with the knowledges and powers which they carry” (1984, p. 123). From this, I analyse power in education to understand the discursive practices embodied within the institution. I am further examining the relationship between industry and post-secondary institutions to establish the power transmitted in their discourses in both policy development and implementation of training.

Appreciating the relationship between industry and training is critical to understanding the development and implementation of skills policy; therefore, discursive relationships must be examined in order to determine where strengths and tension exist. As a post-structuralist,
Foucault pointed out the inevitable slipperiness of social constructs through the use of the language that constructed and represented such constructs. In particular, Foucault saw a relationship between specific “institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization” (1972, p. 45). The use of language by and amongst the various participants can be used to provide their specific perspectives of the construct of skill.

Development and implementation of apprenticeship skills policies must be examined, in particular in terms of Foucault’s notions of development and evolution, which speak to the successive policies and recommendations of skills and apprenticeship that link them. Foucault comments,

There is the notion of ‘spirit,’ which enables us to establish between the simultaneous or successive phenomena of a given period of community of meanings, symbolic links, an interplay of resemblance and reflection, or which allows the sovereignty of collective consciousness to emerge as the principle of unity and explanation (2005, p. 24).

The very nature of the discourses within each of the communities that establish a power relationship emerges to form a view of skills policy in apprenticeship.

As Foucault notes, individuals are vehicles of power, not its point of application; “[p]ower is employed and exercised through a net-like organization” (1982, p. 98). As a critical researcher, I am looking at how the “net-like organization” dominates skilled workforce training policy through power, as is indicated in my discursive apprenticeship policy network. I “believe
that the concept of power is of the utmost importance to understand and explain policy practices” (Arts, 2004, p. 340). Foucault (1980) maintains that power is everywhere and does not extend downwards but rather originates in production by groups and institutions from below. His concept of bio-techno power performs as a strategy “that cannot be found in one single institutions nor one single apparatus of power” (Dreyfus, 1982, p. 113).

3.2.2 Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

In this section, I look at CDA from Norman Fairclough’s perspective, as the model used in this study draws upon his approach toward examining language in texts. In particular, I am looking at how Fairclough (2003) describes CDA as “analysis of the dialectical relationships between discourse (including language but also other forms of semiosis, e.g. body language or visual images) and other elements of social practices” (p. 205). Fairclough (2003) defines discourse, or more specifically what is known as “discourse analysis,” as “an element of social life which is closely interconnected with other elements” (p. 3).

Rogers et al. (2005) completed an extensive review of the literature that found many different approaches to CDA (see Foucault 1969, 1972, Hodge & Kress, 1988, van Dijk, 1993, and Wodak, Meyer, Titscher, and Vetter, 2000); however, Norman Fairclough presents the majority of research on CDA as a theory, method, and research program. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) point out many different perspectives and approaches to CDA applied to social problems in numerous disciplines; however, Wodak (1996) provides an outline for eight foundational principles of CDA that are useful for conducting CDA in education.

- CDA addresses social problems – by nature, it is interdisciplinary
o Power relations are discursive – it highlights the substantively linguistic and discursive nature of social relations of power in contemporary societies

o Discourse constitutes society and culture – it makes sense of the salience of discourse in contemporary social processes and power relations by recognizing that discourse constitutes society and culture, as well as being constituted by them

o Discourse does ideological work – one must also consider how the texts are interpreted and received and what social effects texts have

o Discourse is historical - it is not produced and cannot be understood without taking the context into consideration

o A sociocognitive approach is needed to understand how relationships between texts and society are mediated – how the link between text and society, between the micro and macro is mediated: a mode of mediation between the actual, realized text and the wider social practices in which the piece of text is embedded is assumed

o Discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory and uses systematic methodology – this requires critical reading in a systematic way to see the heterogeneity and vagueness of the text in condensing contradictions

o CDA is a socially committed scientific paradigm – like other linguistic approaches Fairclough’s (1995) analytic procedures provide a systematic three-tiered model that includes description, interpretation, and explanation of discursive relations and social practices
at the local, institutional, and societal domains of analysis, where the analyst must move
between micro- and macro-analysis of texts. Inherent in this model is the “recursive movement
between linguistic and social analysis” (Rogers, R., 2004, pp. 6,7). Within Fairclough’s
framework, text is central to discourse, within the processes of production and interpretation –
interaction; all are set within the social conditions of production and interpretation – context.
(Fairclough N., 1989).

Fairclough observes there is usually an unequal power relationship between participants
in discourses, noting, “on the one hand that power is exercised and enacted in discourse, and
on the other hand that there are relations of power behind discourse . . . in both cases power is
won held and lost in social struggles” (1989, pp. 73,74). The power relationships of the many
actors within apprenticeship skills policy largely impact both their development and
implementation. Who speaks, who is heard, how and why they are heard, and at what point in
time are all impacted.

Within Fairclough’s framework, discourse is seen as the site of power struggles between
participants and that “[c]ritical approaches differ from non-critical approaches in not just
describing discursive practices, but also showing how discourse is shaped by relations of power
and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities and systems of
knowledge and belief, neither of which is normally apparent to discourse participants”
(Fairclough, N., 1992, p. 12). Powerful political, economic, and ideological perspectives have
both supported and discouraged participation in apprenticeship.
3.2.3 CDA and Sociological Work

Gale (1999) refers to the sociological interest in education policy as “policy sociology,” which Ozga (1987) describes as “a concern that is rooted in the social science tradition, historically informed and drawing on qualitative and illuminative techniques” (p. 144). This study investigates power relationships, institutional practices, and political forces embedded in the language of skills policy in apprenticeship and training, while assuming a relationship between discourse and politics. Fairclough (1995) emphasises that “[m]y view is that ‘discourse’ is use of language seen as a form of social practice, and discourse analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practice” (p. 7).

The work of policy sociologists is important to CDA as it relates to the consumption, or implementation, of policy. Ball suggests (1994) that “policy is both text and actions, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended” (p. 10). Gale (1999) asserts, “policy discourses are not divorced from policy producers” (p. 396). I undertake CDA as my methodology in this study by analysing texts while understanding “that analysis of texts should not be artificially isolated from analysis of institutional and discoursal practices within which texts are embedded” (Fairclough N., 1995, p. 9).

Gee (2011) stresses that “language has meaning only in and through social practices” (p. 12). Building particularly on the work of Foucault, researchers have become interested in how processes of social construction lead to a social reality that is taken for granted and that advantages some participants at the expense of others (Clegg, 1989).
Fairclough (2003) provides a link between sociological work and CDA by explaining the relationships between text, social events, social practices, and social structures. He sees texts as “parts of social events which are shaped by the causal powers of social structures (including languages) and social practices (including orders of discourse) on the one hand, and social agents on the other” (Fairclough N., 2003, p. 38).

In drawing upon Fairclough’s model of CDA, I am examining the texts to “reveal how language is deployed to legitimate action and structure the parameters of policy intervention” (Jacobs, 2006, p. 42). I am concerned with the discourses as a place where relations of power are actually exercised and enacted, and how the linguistic features of those policies have naturalized the notion of skill in apprenticeship. Goldberg (2005) stresses that “policy analysis needs to be thought about in a different way that addresses the power relations, institutional practices, and political forces that affect policy processes” (p. 100). Vellacott (2011) notes, “[t]raditional policy analysis approaches have been less than successful in providing an analysis of some of the power and ideological conflicts that influence the deliberation of policy” (p. 102).

Jacobs (2006) observes that although there has been many arguments for and against the efficacy of using CDA as a tool within the field of policy analysis, two compelling arguments stand out for using this methodology. First, he notes that traditional policy analysis approaches have been less than successful in providing an analysis of some of the power and ideological conflicts that influence the deliberation of policy, and second, researchers are increasingly recognizing the important role of language in the policy arena. MacDonald adds,
“[d]iscourse as an ideological practice cannot be separated from a sociohistorical reality reflecting past and current strategies among interest groups. A discourse emerges from struggle among interest groups, rather than belonging to any one interest group” (2003, p. 169).

Gee (2011) claims:

Critical approaches, however, go further and treat social practices, not just in terms of social relationships, but, also, in terms of their implications for things like status, solidarity, the distribution of social goods, and power. In fact, critical discourse analysis argues that language-in-use is always part and parcel of, and partially constitutive of, specific social practices and that social practice always have implications for inherently political things like status, solidarity, the distribution of social goods, and power (p. 68).

3.3 CDA as Methodology in This Study

Fairclough (1989) outlines the three stages of critical discourse analysis as description, interpretation, and explanation. In the description stage, I analyze the formal properties of the text to determine where they may have linking values by connecting together parts of text. During the interpretation stage, I concern my analysis with the relationship between text and interaction. I look at how the text is a product of a process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation, using that term for both the interactional process and a stage of my analysis. In the final stage, I concern myself with an explanation regarding the relationship...
between interaction and social context, including the social determination of the processes of production, and interpretation of skills policy in apprenticeship and their social effects.

Within the three critical stages of CDA, Fairclough promotes the examination of social and institutional order of discourse and how it is used and applied in the different settings. He suggests that situation and discourse type need to be analysed to understand relevant context. Situations are identified as what activities are going on, who is involved, and their relationships to the situation, as well as the role of the language used in the situation. The discourse types are examined for their contents (knowledge/beliefs), subjects (social identities), social relationships, and connections to the situations. In Chapter 4, I examine the discourse contained in the texts in their social order to determine their institutional and situational settings. The following illustrates Fairclough’s conception of the analysis process that I applied in examining the texts.

Each of the discourse types provided traces and cues of the values embedded and their structural effects. The contents provide experiential traces and cues regarding the way in which the text producers’ experience of the natural or social world is presented and are embedded in the structural effect of knowledge and beliefs as they apply to the concept of skill. The relationships are traces and cues to the social relationships, which are enacted via the text in the discourse, and are transparent and embedded in the structural effect of social identities of apprentices. The apprentices are subjects, whom the producers have embedded in the text to form a social relationship with skill and the demand for a more skilled workforce. Production of the texts was examined to determine what expressive structural effects are embedded in the
discourse of social relations between work and skill that nominalize them and make them a perceived reality. I look at who developed the texts, their connections to what is occurring during the development, and what the relationships are between the developers to determine the role of the discourses used in the texts.

3.3.1 Stage 1 – Description: text analysis

According to Fairclough (1992), analysis of text is organized under four main headings – vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure. I use multiple texts and authors to examine the context of what is meant by “skilled” in apprenticeship policy in order to determine the formation of the text and the particular vocabulary and styles used in producing them. In Chapter 5, I present an analysis of the themes and the analysis of the discourses and discursive practices.

Goldberg (2005) argues that Fairclough implies that he relies on only one text, and one producer, however Fairclough (2003) notes that mediation includes moving meaning from one text to another, involving, in many cases, a complex process that engages what he refers to as “chains” or “networks” of texts. I use the term “network” in my discursive apprenticeship policy network framework as it is vital to this study that multiple texts be analysed to respond to the research questions. Taylor determines that reading of multiple policy texts is central to theories of discourse (1997, p. 26). Several policy theorists (see Bowe, Ball, and Gold, 1992; Ball, 1994) argue that policy-making and remaking is a continuous cycle. Given the history of skills policy in apprenticeship, involving multiple authors in multiple texts over time and their intertextual and interdiscursive nature to establish an apparent consensus during the policy
development, it is important to determine the effects of change during development and implementation. By analysing multiple texts, I am responding to the research questions. “The analysis of discourse practice in CDA attends closely to the process of production, distribution, and consumption of key texts” (Woodside-Jiron, 2003, p. 534).

Fairclough (2003) cautions that text analysis has its limitations, requiring one to “link the ‘micro’ analysis of texts to the ‘macro’ analysis of how power relations work across networks of practices and structures” (pp. 15,16). The texts used in my analysis provide a wider view of the power relations within skills policy in apprenticeship. I am using as my text-analysis sources government documents (white papers and discussion papers), journal articles, books, chapters in books, and naturally occurring conversation. A plethora of documents exist that contribute to skills policy in apprenticeship; however, I have chosen those that reflect a number of the key discourses and participants over the specific time covered in this study.

I gathered and analysed government and non-government reports and legislation related to apprenticeship policy development and implementation for the period 1980 to 2010. Over 75 documents were examined, comprised of federal and provincial legislation and policies produced by multiple departments, preceded by and including the current Human Resources & Social Development Canada, provincial ministries and governing bodies, and contributing texts produced by numerous other sources (see Appendix A). The documents contained over 5,000 pages of text. From the texts, I produced 130 pages of notes for the discursive analysis, identifying central and contributing themes.
3.3.2 Stage 2 – Interpretation: analysis of discourse practice

Discourse practice refers to how the policy documents are created, the rules that govern their language use, the way in which they are distributed, read, who reads them, and how they are interpreted (Fairclough, 1992). “The analysis of discourse practice is concerned with sociocognitive aspects of text production and interpretation, as opposed to social-institutional aspects” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 134). I seek to understand how the use of the words “skill” and “skilled” in policy are interpreted in practice. The application of the texts, in reality, can render them to be ineffectual or misleading. The repetitive use of the term “skill” may integrate hegemony, class, and the functions of apprenticeship by those who interpret the texts produced.

Discourse is itself both a site of struggle, as seen in struggles over the meaning of particular words, and a tool in ideological struggle, contesting appropriate actors, institutions, knowledge, and problem definitions. This approach to discourse as an ideological practice compels me to “combine the analysis of discourse with an analysis of material structures of domination and subordination, thus illuminating the manner in which action both reflects and reconstructs material social structure” (MacDonald, 2003, p. 169).

In this study, I look at the connections, or intertextuality, of the texts and the social practices that mediate the discourse practice of skill in apprenticeship. The discourse practice of the production, distribution, and consumption of skills policy is critically important in my examination of the selected texts. As Woodside-Jiron points out “Through repetition and
constantly being pointed to as authority, these texts come to be established as fact or normal when they are simply individual texts packaged together” (2004, p. 180).

### 3.3.3 Stage 3 – Explanation: contextual analysis

The context in which policies were developed over time in relation to skill in apprenticeship is a central theme to this study. All of the texts examined are produced within the context of skill in apprenticeship policies. In some cases, it is difficult to thoroughly understand how the concept of skill in apprenticeship was conceptualized within the texts that were produced. I am relying upon the interdiscursivity of the texts to provide me with understanding of the contexts of the situations, institutions and society, while answering questions about power and ideology.

Three contexts are important for CDA: local, institutional, and societal (Fairclough, 1995). Local context is the result of interactions or outcomes of the institutional contexts; institutional context is formed by social and political institutions that frame local context, and societal context is formed by larger governing bodies including policies, mandates, and political climates that influence the local and institutional context. (Woodside-Jiron, 2004). The three contexts are interrelated within skills policies at both the development and implementation stages by who is creating the policies, for what reason, and to what end.

It is my intent to examine “the context in which the sentence or paragraph was discussed” (Winton, 2007, p. 56) in order to infer its actual meaning and relationship to the broader discourse. As an educational researcher, I must analyse the interactions and relationships between the participants often referred to as “stakeholders” or “partners” of the
skill policy-making process, and how the resulting policies are implemented to determine how the various discourses are linked together as context.

The context in which the developers shape the policy texts influences the way in which implementers will interpret them. In the texts that I am examining, I am bringing to light the key players and discourse types better to understand issues of production and representation in regard to skills policy in apprenticeship. Codd (1988) advises, “instead of searching for authorial intentions, perhaps the proper task of policy analysis is to examine the differing effects that documents have in the production of meaning by readers” (p. 239). The readers of skills policies will, after all, interpret the effects of policy upon, and after, implementation as the policy cycle continues.

In particular, I look at the texts in their micro/macro levels to view the policies in terms of politics, economics, and ideology within social and historical context. Taylor notes that “[p]olicy texts need to be analysed within their context and also in relation to their impact on policy arenas in the broadest sense” (1997, p. 33). I examine the intention of the text and identify the producers’ values and interests, values, their institutional positions, their knowledge perspectives and their purposes, and how ultimately the texts are received and interpreted at the implementation stage.

3.4 Methodological Approach

CDA calls for an iterative approach to text examination. I completed the analysis in various stages, attempting to engage in critical self-reflexivity to remind myself of where I come from in the study and where I am socially positioned. In the initial stage of analysis, I read
documents to gain general understanding and context, coding text for emerging themes and concepts (see Chapter 4). In the second phase, I conducted a thematic and critical discursive grammatical analysis of the texts identified above, using Fairclough's (1989) ten questions about vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures to provide me with a framework to analyse the texts. During the next reading, stage three, I determined whether the meanings of the words and phrases are clear and within the range of meaning they would normally have, or if the words and meanings are being nuanced, making them specific to the policy developers’ worldviews or values or to other special qualities of the context.

Throughout the stages, I kept in mind Gale’s three questions: why are some items on the policy agenda, and not others? Why are some policy actors involved in the production of policy, and not others? What are the conditions that regulate the patterns of interaction of those involved? I also referred back to my research questions: what forces – political, economic, and ideological – have driven, and are driving, the policy development at federal and provincial levels in defining skills for apprentices? What role has policy assigned to the post-secondary education system in relation to the development of a “skilled” workforce, at the implementation stages?

This study centers upon the discourse in policies affecting apprenticeship training and skills within the context of a skilled workforce. Discourse is central to CDA, which is irrevocably linked to ideology, knowledge, and power. Fairclough notes that “[i]deologies are representations of aspects of the world which contribute to enhancing and maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation” (2003, p. 218). Ideologies of both
government and industry that have dominated apprenticeship policy discourse to the extent that skills development has been suppressed, rather than developed. “Hegemony is about constructing alliances, and integrating rather than simply dominating subordinate classes, through concessions or through ideological means, to win their consent” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 92). The concept of hegemony, according to Gramsci, (1971) provides an explanation as to how the dominant class controls the working class through consent, with ideologies that supports ruling class interests being positioned as universal and inevitable. I maintain that the powerful relationship amongst the various participants has created alliances that negatively impact skills training in apprenticeship.

As Gee (2011) points out, there is an assumption that there is a shared understanding of words and phrases based on previous knowledge and experience. However, I argue that the specific policy contexts have not always been clear because the situated meanings have been affected by political ideologies as well as neoliberalism and human capital theory and been limited by previous knowledge and experience of the concept of skill in apprenticeship. I have therefore identified a network that links the shortage of skilled workers in apprenticeship policy discourse with the notions of politics, ideology, policy context, economics, and hegemony and power, to what I refer to as the discursive apprenticeship policy network. The network includes the hegemonic and ideological perspectives of the various individuals and groups involved in the production and implementation of policy. The power perspectives of government, apprentices, employers, unions, trainers and educators, directors of the provincial apprenticeship bodies, educators, and other vested individuals and groups play an important
role in the development of skilled workforce. The participants do not necessarily share a common vision or definition of skill.

The contexts of the word “skill” and the phrases “skilled labour” and “shortage of skilled workers/labour” as the individuals and groups applied their specific ideologies over the period 1980-2010, are integral to this study. “Discourse must not be referred to the distant presence of the origin, but treated as and when it occurs” (Foucault, 2005, p. 28). In reviewing, describing, examining, and analysing the texts, I am able to identify the ideologies as well as the central, recurring, and contributing discourses that have impacted, and continue to impact, skills policy in apprenticeship.

Fairclough (1992) argues that the order of discourse is an open system that affects the particular social structuring and legitimizes interpretation and understanding, thereby legitimizing something as common sense, sustaining relations of domination. As the discourse of skill in apprenticeship became more accepted as common sense, it became naturalized and largely removed from connection to any particular ideology, while remaining largely ideological from a neoliberal perspective. How the various participants have approached the concept of skill, who has participated in the discourse, what their particular perspectives are, and how they gain or retain power are important elements in the analysis.

Gale maintains that policy analysis must contain three elements – the why, how, and what of policy texts. The why specifically looks at neoliberal ideology and human capital theory, while the how is explained by understanding policy discourse, and the what involves understanding of textual meaning, particularly values, and the ideals those promote. I was, in
part, motivated to complete this study by the neoliberal ideology that federal and provincial legislation of apprenticeship training in Canada may create an economic and educational disadvantage for apprentices as workers/learners. Neoliberal ideology may have created an unquestioned assumption that apprenticeship policy be seen as a social structure that benefits not individuals but industry and employers, based largely on human capital theory, which emphasizes a return on investment from a skilled workforce.

The primary discursive constructions within my network support institutions through policy context, ideologies, power relations, naturalization of language, and distribution of social goods within the dominant discourse of skilled workforce. Contributing discourses emerge and support, or contend, the primary discursive constructions, causing tension to the dominant discourse. The situated meaning and the range of meanings in the context of policy is represented in power as well as ideology, impacting individuals and groups who are referenced in them.

Foucault states “we must grasp the statement in the exact specificity of its occurrence; determine its condition of existence, fix at least its limits, establish its correlations with other statements that may be connected with it, and show what other forms of statement it excludes” (2005, p. 31). It should be noted, though, that there is usually an unequal power relationship between the individuals involved in the development of skills policy “on the one hand that power is exercised and enacted in discourse, and on the other hand that there are relations of power behind discourse ... in both cases power is won, held and lost in social
struggles” (Fairclough, 1989, pp. 73,74). My network takes into account the context of the policies texts as they are developed over time, and the contributing, or absent, voices.

I am adding the notion of the intentional discourse of the multiple participants who use the word “skilled” in the term “skilled workforce.” As the concept of “skilled” becomes naturalized, therefore commonplace in addressing workplace shortages, fewer questions are asked as to the intention behind creating a skilled workforce. “Vocabulary thus plays a key role in government, not only establishing the powers of rulers, but also in ‘making up’ government fields, rendering them thinkable and manageable” (Miller & Rose, 1990, p. 168). I maintain that the various participants, including politicians from various parties and ideologies, have adopted a common understanding, or truth, that they continue to rely on as making sense of skills policy production. The powerful intentional discourse shared amongst the participants, over the period of time covered in this study, has enabled the continuing policy development and implementation to be maintained without purposeful examination. The many participants operate as a powerful system that operates the discourses of the discursive apprenticeship policy network. It is important to recognise the multiple discourses and how they link together to structure the power/knowledge relations and act as realities.

3.5 Limitations of This Study

I am interested in conducting critical discourse analysis because it is a socially constructed mode of research that allows for reflective attention to my own perspective, while I am questioning my objectivity, neutrality, and impartiality, to the different categories of data that I am analysing. “Without discourse there is no social reality, and without understanding
discourse, we cannot understand our reality, our experience, or ourselves” (Phillips, 2002, p. 2).

As a reflexive methodology, I am using my own resources to interpret the intentions of the originators in developing policies. Gee points out that reflexivity is an important property of language as it “always simultaneously reflects and constructs the context in which it is used” (2011, p. 101). I do, however, attempt to avoid contaminating the analysis process by focusing on my own power/knowledge perspective as a professional who practices in the field of skills training and apprenticeship.

Fairclough recognizes the limits of textual analysis by noting that “[w]hat we are able to see of the actuality of a text depends upon the perspective from which we approach it, including the particular social issues in focus, and the social theory and discourse theory we draw upon” (2003, p. 16). Gee (2011) maintains that language is political, and “that all discourse analysis needs to be critical, not because discourse analysts are or need to be political...” (p. 9). My perspective includes a concern that ideology has constructed the normalization of skills policy in apprenticeship, resulting in social and educational disadvantage for apprentices as workers and learners.

3.6 Summary

In this chapter I have attempted to outline the methodology used in this study by providing an overview of Fairclough’s CDA and Foucault’s archaeology as they contribute significantly to the structuring of the methodology and analysis of the texts chosen for the study. I provide the characteristics of a thorough critical discourse analysis as the establishment of a network that includes the multiple discourses contained within the policy discourse, the
examination of the context of the policies as they are developed over time, the analysis of texts to identify central and contributing themes. The methodology was completed within the discursive apprenticeship policy network. Research question one is addressed in Chapter 4, addressing the context of the policies as they were developed over time, from the view of those who developed the policies. Findings and analysis from the review of the texts are reported in Chapter 5, responding to research question two.
Chapter 4: Context of Skills Policy in Apprenticeship

There is something that comes to one now and perpetually,
It is not what is printed, preach’d, discussed, it eludes discussion
and print,
It is not to be put in a book; it is not in this book,
It is for you whoever you are, it is no farther from you than your
hearing and sight are from you,
It is hinted by nearest, commonest, readiest, it is ever provoked
by them.

Walt Whitman, 1881

4.1 Major Policy Initiatives

Before starting the critical discourse analysis I am providing the political/ideological,
economic, and social discourses that form the contexts of the policies, as well as restricting the
policy field to focus the review of the documents and analysis to follow in Chapter 5. This study
is limited to skills policy as it relates to apprenticeship and to the documents generated in
relation to those policies. As Goldberg states, this involves “. . . situating the policies in their
discursive context and delineating the boundaries of the investigation” (2005, p. 103). My goal
is to identify the key actors and stakeholders as well as their interests and power relationships
in developing skills policy for apprenticeship. In particular, I am focusing on three areas,
including the activities that occurred to spur action in policy development and change, the
political, ideological, economic, or social perspectives that drove the policy development, and
the relationships of the policies as they formed other areas of policy.

I am examining policy discourses that were generated during the period 1980-2010, at
both federal and provincial levels, when there were differing social, economic, and political
discourses that influenced the development of the skills policies in apprenticeship. My aim is
“. . . to explore the relationships between discursive practices, events, and texts; and wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes” (Taylor S., 2004, p. 435). I will examine legislation, reports, discussion and background papers, and political platforms that make up the policy environment and form the context of the relevant policies. There is a complexity of events and factors, including some key contributing events, which influenced the development of the policies at both the federal and provincial government levels; however, it is almost impossible to include all possible elements. As Wodak (1996) stipulates, discourse is historical; the context must be taken into consideration to be understood.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I describe the changes in political context from which federal policies and initiatives emerged. The policy priorities include maintaining the social safety net, labour market development, human resource development, and marketization. In the second section, I describe the changing political context from which provincial policies emerged. The priorities include labour market development, skills development, and the “new era” in which industry would take a more active role in training. In the final section, I provide an overview and summary of the federal and provincial contexts and discourses that have occurred in skills policy development for apprenticeship.

4.2 Federal Skills Legislation and Policy for Apprenticeship

In this section, I examine the economic, social, and political contexts of skills policy for apprenticeship that begins with labour market development, followed by human resource development, and, finally, marketization of labour at the federal level. It is important to provide an account of the economic and social conditions that drive the development of apprenticeship
policies and the relationship with other policies to establish the context of the activities by relating the political, economic, and ideological forces impacting the federal government’s decisions.

The period 1980-2010 saw political consensus along with the weakening of social policy, while ideological debates were growing stronger in the mid 1980s. “Liberal and Conservative federal governments began acting as if social programs were a hindrance to economic growth and financial responsibility. Federal transfers to the provinces for health and education were restrained” (Rice, 2013, p. 114). Canada’s economic and social policies, from 1980 to 2010, are apparent in the discourses of neoliberalism and globalization.

The social goal of providing education for Canadians has been mired in policy that has been largely influenced not so much by politics as by adoption of other nations’ policies. The OECD (1976) in Ashton and Lowe (1991) state,

Canadian education policy may be one of the least ‘politicized’ in the world . . . reforms in education are almost totally pragmatic or so generally conceived, and rely so heavily on the United States, British or French models, more or less adapted to Canadian conditions, that the opportunity for party political conflict is for all practical purposes, excluded (p. 62).

Rice points out, “Canadian elites, as champions of globalism, are narrowing the view most people have of social policy by giving priority to economic rather than social issues” (p. 150).

Ministerial responsibility for apprenticeship at the federal government level, since 1980, has resided within Canada Employment and Immigration (CEIC, 1970 - 85), Human Resources
Development Canada (HRDC, 1985-93)\(^1\), Human Resources & Skills Development Canada (HRSDC, 1993-2005), and Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC, 2005-current)\(^2\). The constant changes to EI policy are prevalent throughout the changes. Those changes particularly affected apprentices as EI rates increased, while benefits decreased. Each successive department has significantly altered the social responsibility of training, changing UI to EI and subtly refocusing the social safety net to prioritize marketization of labour.

Federal legislation includes the National Training Act (Bill C-115, 1982), which replaced the Adult Occupation Training Act of 1967, shifting the focus to labour-market development. Further legislation specifically addressing apprenticeship became less apparent over time, changing noticeably to an emphasis on unemployment and human resource development.

The Human Resources Development Act of 1996 preceded the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Act (Bill C-34) in 2005, with broad reference to skill development and nothing specific about apprenticeship while focusing on marketization of labour.

The following subsections both contribute to, and form the context of, the development of skills policy in apprenticeship. Each subsection represents a particular political period that also encompasses the social and economic conditions included in this section, as well as further contexts relating to that specific time.

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\(^1\) Human Resources Development Canada was dissolved in December 2003 when the federal government reorganized, establishing two departments, the Department of Social Development and the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSD). Apprenticeship remained within the HRSD portfolio. Canada Employment and Immigration Committee remains the body responsible for the management of employment insurance benefits.

\(^2\) The departments of Social Development and HRSD were re-amalgamated in February 2006 to become Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC). Canada Employment and Immigration Committee remains the body responsible for the management of employment insurance benefits.
4.2.1 The Liberals- occupational training for the labour force: 1980-1984

Major national and international activities occurred, causing both minor and massive economic and political shifts. The 1970s and early 1980s were fraught with high unemployment and high wages. World economies were faced with rapidly accelerating oil prices along with rising inflation and little or no growth opportunities. Canadian governments were challenged to utilize their abilities to manage economic growth and maintain full employment policies.

The goal of full employment dropped off the platforms of both liberal and conservative political parties as well as the successive governments in Ottawa. The official discourse of policy makers and most mainstream economists increasingly referred to a ‘natural’ rate of unemployment. Definitions of what constituted full employment in the Canadian economy continually lowered the target from 97 to 95 to 93 percent (or even lower) of the labour force, as the average rate of unemployment for each decade continually rose (Rice, 2013, pp. 123, 124).

The shifts in economic ideology are reflected in social policies. From a social perspective, the Economic Council of Canada (1983) asserted,

Social goals and programs are not residual to the economic system. They contribute fundamentally to the smooth functioning of our economy and they reflect the basic values of Canadians. Our economic and social goals and programs are not separable, nor are social goals subordinate to economic goals (p. 62).
The Liberal party, under the leadership of Pierre Trudeau (1980-1984) and John Turner (1984) formed the ruling federal government during the first four years of the 1980s. Under Trudeau and Turner, the Liberals held a strong adherence to federalism, supporting political independence from Britain, and the development and maintenance of Canada’s social safety net. Major undertakings during this period included the repatriation of Canada’s constitution and the review of employment/unemployment policies. While the repatriation of the Constitution did not address the issue of federal/provincial responsibilities for education, it did provide an opportunity for the parties to meet and discuss several issues that had emerged around human resource development. Reviews were undertaken of skills development and employment and unemployment policies in relation to human capital development.

Federal-provincial relations were strained during the late 1970s, leading into the early 1980s, largely due the massive oil projects under development in Alberta. Inflation was rampant, leading to instability in the federal government’s ability to service the national debt. While Alberta enjoyed strong economic growth and prosperity due to world oil shortages, the federal government was struggling with a problem of high unemployment in other provinces. Skilled trade workers from many provinces were moving to Alberta to work in the oil sands projects. In 1982, a considerable worldwide downturn in demand for Alberta’s oil occurred, leaving more people unemployed, and resulting in high inflation and crushingly high interest rates that stagnated the economy.

Issues of worker mobility, the transfer of funding for health and education, and most of all, unemployment weighed heavily on the federal government, leading to assessments of adult
training and unemployment policies. The role of industry is prominent in both the development and implementation of policy and review of manpower development programs. Reviews of programs and policies from the 1960s and 1970s (see Allmand, 1981; Dodge, 1981) identified disconnects between labour demand and supply and the institutional training that was being offered to address or prevent skills shortages, resulting in three reports. McBride claims, “[i]n policy terms, the Dodge report, *Labour Market Development in the 1980's* (italics added), is generally regarded as the most influential of the three” (1998, pp. 6, 7). The report specified that increased training, as demanded by employers, focus on providing the higher-level skills that they had identified and that institutional training should be reduced, moving basic skills-training to job-creation projects. (Dodge, 1981). A conclusion of the report was to increase funding of the training system by trainees and employers, reducing demands on public resources, except in the case of “high skill training in many certified trades in the manufacturing sector” (Dodge, 1981, p. 206)

A parliamentary task force, led by Warren Allmand (a Liberal MP), was established in 1980 “to study the serious shortages of certain critical skilled trades in Canada and the mismatches in labour market where these shortages and high unemployment exist side by side.” (1981, p. 4). The task force produced the *Work for tomorrow: employment opportunities for the ‘80’s* report that consisted of 186 recommendations, some operational, others legislative.

The Allmand report points out five specific areas of recommendations directly associated with apprenticeship: training needed to be updated, enrollment of youths needed to
be increased, programs needed to be shortened, programs had to be opened to women, and apprentices had to receive some assurances of continuing work or retraining (Parliamentary Task Force on Employment Opportunities, 1981). For the first point, the committee was especially concerned about governments, industries, and educators cooperating to determine outcomes. In the second area, the emphasis was placed on creating stronger linkages between secondary and post-secondary education to increase youth participation. The committee, in its third area, wanted labour and management to agree to shorter training periods, to “be more in line with realistic industry requirements.” (Parliamentary Task Force on Employment Opportunities, 1981, p. 7). The fourth area specified that women needed to be more actively recruited, including provisions for support systems in industry. In its final recommendation, the committee determined that layoffs should be avoided, and if not, then transferring apprentices to school or to other workplaces should take place; they also suggested legislation to protect apprentices.

The National Training Act (NTA), rescinding the Adult Occupational Training Act of 1967, appeared in early 1982, to address massive changes in the labour market. It was inspired by the Work for tomorrow and the Labour market development in the 1980s reports, according to Watson “after consultation with the provinces, business, labour and education groups . . .” (1983, p. 6). The NTA contains three main emphases. The first is to meet the occupational skill requirements of the Canadian economy in the 1980s; the second is to support industrial adjustment and adaptation to technological change, and the third is to increase the employment opportunities of adult Canadians. (Watson, 1983). Background Paper 29 (Watson,
1983) was prepared to look at the role of CEIC in coordinating the activities of the Interprovincial Standards Program (ISP), otherwise known as the “Red Seal.” The Red Seal had been established to ensure the mobility of apprentices.

Specifically, the NTA specifies that courses more than 52 weeks and more than 1820 hours of part-time instruction need to be approved in writing by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC), otherwise providers could proceed. Apprenticeship fits into the latter category, as most programs consist of less than 52 weeks total of training over the period of the apprenticeship. The NTA remained in effect until 1996. The apprentice/student/learner was defined within the NTA as the “adult,” meaning a person no longer required to attend school by the law in the province in which he/she resided. Watson notes that “[e]ven before certain Red Seal trades were identified as ‘occupations of national importance,’ the members of the ISP were already responding with a whole litany of alternatives to the traditional off-the-job training component” (Watson, 1983, p. 7).

CEIC was prominent in the implementation and operation of the NTA. Specifically, in consultation with provincial governments, CEIC could declare to form joint committees to assess the needs of the labour market and to establish the means necessary to meet such requirements. The needs identified would form the basis of the occupations that were deemed to be of national importance, or met the needs where a national or regional shortage of workers existed. The bilateral nature of apprenticeship, with governance and funding, clearly established that it would fall within the jurisdiction of labour, thus creating a long, messy

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3 CEIC was enacted in 1985 and repealed in 1996 when the Human Resources Development Act was passed. It was replaced by the Canada Employment Insurance Commission, which used the same acronym causing some confusion. The mandates and purposes of both commissions remained the same.
relationship. The federal government retained all funds related to apprenticeship training, with the provinces seeking transfers as registrants enrolled.

The purpose of the NTA was to establish a national program that would provide occupational training for the labour force better to meet the need for skills created by a changing economy and to increase the earning and employment potential of individual workers. The wording of this Act clearly denotes a “human capital” perspective of training and education. This ultimately led to deskilling as several occupations, including those occupied by tradespeople, were not able to increase training to meet changing occupational roles and an increased focus on technology.

The role of the CEIC officer (person employed by CEIC, designated to enforce the NTA) is significant within the NTA. This person acts as the arbiter of the NTA and plays the role of the liaison between the federal and provincial governments, as well as the adult training agency. Specifically, the officers enrolled adults in the provinces in which they lived, as long as the adults had not attended school on a regular basis within twelve consecutive months since becoming an adult, or as long as the course would increase earning and employment potential. Restrictions regarding enrolment specified that the adult could take the course only within the vicinity of their residence and by a public authority (a provincial or municipal authority or a public educational authority), or by an organization that was registered, licensed, or otherwise authorized by CEIC, and charged less. The CEIC officer was required to inform the province that an adult was enrolled in a course; however, the province could disapprove. No guidelines
or reasons for objection were outlined, other than registration or licensing of the training deliverer, which varied over time.

Financial assistance was outlined to include payment of training allowances as well as the tuition and other related costs, particularly for those enrolled by an officer. The same financial arrangements applied to apprentices; however, agreements between CEIC and the provinces stipulated that an officer did not have to arrange for enrolment - the province took on that role on behalf of the apprentice. The arrangement between the federal and provincial governments allowed the provinces to create legislation for training programs related to apprenticeship. Financial assistance agreements with both the provinces and non-profit organizations for the purchase, building, and conversion of buildings, as well as machinery, equipment, or other facilities for use in occupational training (to be used in occupations of national importance) were also outlined. In addition, startup costs, including initial operation and development of courses, were provided. CEIC was obligated to consult with the joint committee on the establishment of training facilities and provide public notice of their intention to enter into agreements for the purchase or construction of a building. Parliament appropriated all payments.

Agreements could be directly entered into between individual employers or groups of employers that gave a course or wanted to give a course for adult employees, providing full or part remuneration. The employer or employer group did not necessarily have to give the course; CEIC would directly enter into an agreement on their behalf. In both instances, the agreements had to be agreed upon by the federal and provincial governments.
A Governor in Council was appointed to make regulations affecting the definition of university instruction, full-time instruction, and part-time instruction. That person also specified the circumstances that deemed an adult to have attended school on a regular or irregular basis, the payment of training and rates, adjustment of the rates, governing tuition, and the general carrying out the purposes and provisions of the NTA. Finally, The NTA repealed the Adult Occupational Training Act.

4.2.2 The Conservatives –market force development: 1984-1993

The final report of the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects of Canada (1985) pointed out that political consensus around social policy had weakened, while ideological debates were growing stronger by the mid 1980s.

In 1991, the economy of Canada was in deep recession, with high unemployment that rapidly declined through to 1996, when there was strong economic growth and job creation. Economic ideological and policy shifts were prominent during this period. In particular, the emergence of the neoliberal economy that Howlett et al. assert promotes “individual property rights and the use of market mechanisms as the basic principle and instruments of political-economic organization” (1999, p. 26) that still includes variants of Liberal political economy. The post-Keynesian welfare state had sought to assure high government intervention in the development of social welfare policy with a shift toward placing responsibility on individuals. The Macdonald Royal Commission (1985) report notes, “[t]he positive state tradition of our history, which has supported an influential role for governments in the economy, has
nevertheless always assumed that most economic decision making will be in private hands” (p. 47).

Globalization has risen, significantly changing the nature and capacity of the autonomy of the Canadian federal government. The emergence of the European Union (EU), from the European Economic Community (EEC), presented unification that included common currency and the ability to mobilize labour, giving political and economic strength to countries that had not previously been as powerful on their own. The North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was meant to provide a similar platform between Canada, United States, and Mexico, although it is far less encompassing. Ruff (1996) claims “the reforms of the 1990s were externally driven and externally oriented” (p. 101), pointing to globalization as the driver of change in Canada, not internal choices.

The Progressive Conservative party, reflecting a neo-liberal ideology that strongly relied on industry involvement in economic policy development, won the election of 1984, “shrinking the Keynesian welfare state and freeing the market” (Fisher, 2006). Under the leadership of Brian Mulroney, the Conservative party stressed the development of market forces in the economy. The Conservative party favoured lower taxes for larger corporations, smaller government, relegating federal government powers to provincial governments, and the maintenance of traditional religious and cultural values.

The major economic downturn that occurred at the beginning of the 1980s brought about high unemployment. The federal government, responsible for adult training and funding through unemployment insurance, had to respond to the demand for worker training and
retraining. While industry appeared to be involved in policy development, reviews of the system found that its direct involvement in training was negligible.

A major policy direction of the Mulroney government was the establishment of human-resources development programs designed to address changes in the labour market by replacing Canada Employment Immigration Commission (CEIC) with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). In 1985, just as CEIC was being subsumed by HRDC, the Minister announced the Canadian Jobs Strategy (CJS) as a “new strategy to prepare Canadians for the future – for a world in which accelerating change will place new and heavy demands on Canadians and challenge our ability to compete.” (Department of Employment and Immigration, 1985, p. 1). CJS emerged to reorganize labour programs; interestingly, the Minister noted:

We can’t just keep moving people around from project to project like packages in a warehouse until things get better. We have to attack the problem directly. And this means examining the structure of our labour market and making the changes necessary to link training with ongoing economic activity and real jobs (Department of Employment and Immigration, 1985, p. 1).

Ostensibly, it appears that CJS was created in response to huge shifts in jobs and occupations due to technological change. CJS provided a vehicle to provide training, and funding for federal/provincial initiatives. While funds were collected by the federal government, the provinces received transfer payments to offset training costs. The federal government, ultimately, kept control of all funds and created annual budgets to develop
“responsive” programming. The Conservative government began implementing cutbacks to UI benefits as well as other social programs that had supported the labour market. My own experience with CJS programs as an administrator and instructor (1991-1995) is outlined below.

The Conservative government claimed that CJS was formed as a “blueprint for revitalizing Canada’s labour market” (Department of Employment and Immigration, 1985, p. 3), based on a need to move toward global economic changes that challenged the country’s ability to remain productive and competitive. The strategy was established to address long-term issues through job training and development by focusing on providing Canadians with “valuable skills, practical work experience, and meaningful employment opportunities.” (Department of Employment and Immigration, 1985, p. 4). This strategy was to recognize the effects of globalization on labour markets, which was creating a shift toward more highly skilled workers.

A call for collective action that included employer participation is prominent in the strategy, as is the need to be adaptable and flexible to changing conditions. Watson, in his 1983 report, notes a conflict with the Red Seal apprenticeship programs, as “[t]he need for flexibility sometime conflicts with the demand for standardization.” (Watson, p. 7). A consultation paper released by EIC in December 1984 showed that there was a realisation that “employers may need to play a larger role in determining the priorities of public institutions involved in skills training.” (McFadyen, 1997, p. 61). The reference to the link between employers and skills training continues to raise issues related to determining what skills are required and how and where they will be delivered.
While CJS appears to be an intensive, thoughtful initiative to intervene in a struggling labour market, the programs identified resulted in a “shotgun” approach that benefitted few in gaining meaningful work. Fisher et al. claim that the federal government was directing funding to employer-sponsored programs that would provide the private sector “a greater role in decision-making on federal training priorities” (2006, p. 122).

I managed a CJS program in the early- to mid-1990s that focused on the training of displaced workers to provide upskilling leading to employment in vocational occupations. At the onset, the program received funding for a substantial number of registrants; however, the funding quickly diminished, thereby decreasing enrolment opportunities. Constant changes to the program outcomes, terms of duration, accountability measures, and funding resulted in fewer registrants. Registrants were required to attend classes and then perform an unpaid work placement; they continued to receive EI benefits. Although many employers took advantage of the “free” labour, they did not hire registrants.

The CJS requirements for placing displaced workers in the workplace often fell short of its intended targets, as employers were disengaged from the primary purpose of the program. Ultimately, registrants did not benefit in gaining long-term meaningful employment, nor had they acquired the skills to become more flexible and adaptable, largely because programs were often generic and unrelated to specific industry needs.

Equity was stressed, particularly for women, youth, the employment-disadvantaged, disabled persons, Native persons, and visible minorities. While equity was stressed, programs were established for specific beneficiaries, with outcomes outlined for each. The Skill Shortages
program was the only program of six that specified an apprenticeable trade (millwrights) as eligible beneficiaries. It is unclear as to why only one trade was identified. CJS enforced the Conservative’s endeavour to introduce employment equity for “target group members” in the workforce, especially in Crown Corporations and businesses and companies that were responding to government tenders. The skilled trades were minimally addressed, even though it was noted that there was a looming shortage.

Because of ongoing issues between post-secondary institutions and the federal and provincial governments, the delivery of the training shifted from educational institutions to Local Advisory Councils (LAC) established to strengthen links between business, training organizations, community groups, and governments. The LAC would meet with government representatives to identify key local employment and training concerns and foster collaboration with local Canada Employment Centres. Fisher et al. state “the introduction of CJS in 1985 served notice to provinces that the federal government planned to reduce institutional training purchases in coming years and to redirect these funds to private and voluntary sectors.” (2006, p. 122). McBride claims “In reality the main attributes of the CJS were decreased funding for training, dilution of the quality controls upon training, and gradual privatisation of the delivery of training” (1998, p. 9).

Gallagher, Sweet and Rollins note that a study was completed in 1989 looking at the apprenticeship system because it was not meeting the equity goals of CJS; therefore, they were “not inclined to fund the school costs of apprentices” (1997, p. 63). The *Joint Canada/British Columbia Study on Apprenticeships (EIC)* notes that the federal government had issues of access
and efficiency costs were clearly established in policy literature, although an agreement was eventually reached.

Tensions had increased between national and provincial governments’ policies for skills training; the federal government saw inclusion of adult training as part of their purview because they controlled the funding through what had previously been unemployment insurance (UI) and was now named employment insurance (EI). The federal government’s role was changing, as they were no longer as thoroughly involved in the delivery of training programs – that role had been assumed by the provinces. The provincial and territorial governments maintained that they should receive block funding to support skills training, using their own legislation and political mandates.

In April 1989, the Conservative government created a new Labour Force Development Strategy to extend developmental use of the unemployment insurance fund, particularly for training purposes. Increasing tensions in the early 1990s led to the formation of the labour market boards that suggested a “more inclusive policy process was evolving in the active labour market policy (ALMP) network at both federal and provincial levels of government” (McFadyen, 1997, p. 59), signalling a major shift from a more passive, responsive labour market policy approach. The Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB) was created in 1991 with a mandate to address a broad range of interests including societal groups that wanted the establishment of a non-governmental labour market board. The EI fund would provide $775 million for training purposes and was to be administered on the advice of the CLFDB, led primarily by business and labour representatives.
McFadyen maintains CLFDB’s “mandate proved to be a source of uncertainty and also constrained the activities and ultimate impact of the board” (1997, p. 71). The board representatives consisted of various interest groups that had difficulty coming to consensus, particularly amongst equity groups and economic interests. Despite their vague mandate and diverse membership views, the CLFDB weighed in with their views of the apprenticeship training system with three discussion papers to address expansion (1994), standards (1994), and models for transition into employment (1994). In its first paper, CDLFDB supported expansion of the training model, while also recommending, “industry and government initiate a process for selecting and funding expansion” (1994, p. 10). The second paper suggested that a national trade-specific forum, coincidentally similar to that outlined in Bill C-432, be created. The CDLFDB also noted “the lack of industry input at the national level” (1994, p. 21) and a lack of national standards for apprenticeship. In the third report the CDLFDB encouraged linkages between secondary and post-secondary and school to work models. They specified, “[g]overnments at all levels, the education community and industry work together to increase the number of transition mechanisms available so that people can move more easily into the work force” (1994, p. 15). All three papers resonate with the often-repeated recommendations.

The CLFDB ceased to operate in 1996, but did create the profile for Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR), initiated in 1997, its most enduring contribution to education and workforce training. The national standards were meant to allow students to move amongst post-secondary institutions. PLAR was created to ensure that individuals receive a fair
assessment of their skills and knowledge. The application of PLAR is particularly important to apprentices, who often move around during their training periods as labour and employment requires them to do.

Along with the creation of CFLDB and provincial Labour Force Development Boards (LFDBs), the federal government recognized the need to address the changing role of the federal government in adult skills training. The Department of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) was formed in 1993 by the short-lived Conservative government of Kim Campbell, with the Department of Employment and Immigration forming its nucleus. HRDC’s creation became the most enduring decision made by Campbell’s government. The new department had a wide range of responsibilities and mandates including unemployment insurance, issuance of social insurance numbers, job training, and counseling. The mandate provided a base for ongoing policy development into the next era in federal government, with the Liberal government using it as a center for its job creation and other social programs.

4.2.3 The Liberals – labour market development agreements: 1993-2006

Jean Chretien replaced Kim Campbell in 1993 using the Liberal’s “Red Book,” officially titled Creating Opportunity: The Liberal Plan for Canada (Liberals, 1993), to outline his government’s plans for a broad range of social, fiscal, and military policies. Chretien’s government, while strongly supporting social programs, was faced with massive deficits, which initially forced them to impose cuts to federal-provincial transfer payments that affected health and social service programs. The Liberal government also faced the threat of separation by Quebec by a strong Parti Quebecois; the threat was ultimately quelled in a defeated
referendum. Chretien’s government was able to manage the debt issues, particularly due to strong economic recovery, thereby allowing the Liberals the opportunity to address labour and workforce issues.

A significant shift occurred in the 1990s, when federal governments encouraged the provinces and territories to take on a more robust role in skill development. Labour market agreements formed between the two levels of governments allowed for more autonomy in the development and implementation of policies and legislation that would address skills shortages, particularly for apprenticeship. The federal governments, whether Liberal or Conservative, were showing a propensity toward reframing social policies to focus on economic development and labour market adjustment. As Rice and Prince (2013) point out,

Governments that focus their social policies on training the unemployed and on education are now considered part of the ‘social investment’ state. From this perspective, policy is directed toward training and mobility, wage subsidies, and investments in human capital designed to enhance people’s capacity to participate fully in labour markets (2013, p. 151).

Again, the impact of globalization reflects human resource development and changes in the labour market, reflected within neoliberal ideology that promotes reduction of state involvement in social programming. Brown (1994) notes that, in particular with industrial and technological sectors requiring higher-skilled workers, “the availability of relatively low-skilled jobs in Canada is being reduced” (p. 111). Rubenson and Gaskell (1987) note that the primary focus of federal training programs was to
remedy deficiencies in provincial education programs for low skill levels, causing a shift to higher-level skills.

Concurrent with the shift to global and neoliberal economic and social policies was the threat of separation by Quebec. Two referendum votes took place, one in 1980, the second in 1995. The referendums proposed that Quebec would have exclusive power to make its own legislation, levy its own taxes, and establish separate international relations. While both referenda were defeated, the federal governments were forced to deal with the economic and social uncertainty of separation.

With the ongoing threat of separation put aside, the period from 1996 – 2007 was relatively economically stable in Canada. The low Canadian dollar meant higher exports and higher employment. Sweetnam (2002) identified the policy focus on skill development of the early 2000s as appropriate in that “[e]ducation, which produces human capital, affects all levels and is a crucial determinant of productivity growth in both the medium and long terms; it is a key element of working smarter” (p. 158).

In 2004, the Standing Committee on Finance predicted strong economic growth, low inflation, relatively low unemployment rates and budget surpluses. The prediction is based on maximizing human potential noting, “EI provides temporary financial assistance to unemployed Canadians while they look for work or upgrade their skills . . .” (p. 103), and also remarking,

The federal government noted the need for investment in helping workers to enhance their skills in light of constantly changing workplace requirements. It indicated that the government will develop a new workplace skills strategy,
which will include a focus on enhanced apprenticeship systems, literacy and other essential job skills, training facilities, and labour market agreements developed with the provinces/territories, unions and sectoral councils (Standing Committee on Finance, 2004, p. 150).

The Department of Human Resource Development Act was brought into force in July 1996, providing a considerable overhaul to the “unemployment/employment” system. The Liberals introduced the EI Act in 1996, withdrawing federal government training to EI clients. McBride (1998) asserts that the main attributes of the CJS led to the Liberal training strategy to restructure the unemployment insurance system. Section 156 of the EI Act noted the retention of payments for training in accordance with the NTA, as well as sections 5 and 7, although the remainder of the Act was repealed (Minister of Justice, 2011).

Although there were clear overlaps between the ministries of Human Resource Development (HRD) and Labour, it was outlined that “every reference to the Minister of Labour in any Act of Parliament or in any order, regulation or other instrument made under an Act of Parliament shall, unless the context otherwise requires, be read as a reference to the Minister of Human Resources Development” (Canada, 1996, p. 3). The two departments were to make use of the resources and services within them as required, with HRD having additional powers to access and use information collected by Statistics Canada and coordinate cooperation with the provinces in “preserving and improving human resources development” (Canada, 1996, p. 4). Boards and a Council for National Welfare were to be established to assist and advise the
Minister of HRD. The Minister could negotiate agreements with provinces, agencies of provinces, financial institutions, and others in the interest of fulfilling the mandate of HRD.

Canada Employment Insurance Commission (CEIC) would continue to function as a separate corporate body, consisting of four members, including the Deputy and Assistant Deputy Ministers of HRD, a representative of workers, and a representative of employers. The commission held a great deal of power, including dealing with unemployment insurance, employment services, and the development and utilization of labour market resources.

The EI Act also allowed the federal and provincial/territorial governments to enter into Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs). The LMDAs brought about a stronger link with active policy to integrate labour market strategy by allowing individuals to move between systems and programs. This is particularly important for apprentices who need mobility to access training and employment. Initially, full-transfer LMDAs were negotiated with five provinces and two territories, which led to the full responsibility to design and deliver active labour market programs to be funded through EI. Four provinces and one territory agreed to co-manage LMDAs wherein they shared the responsibility with the federal government to design and manage training programs, and the federal government continued to deliver the programs. The province of Ontario did not initially enter into an LMDA, but has since negotiated a full-transfer agreement. The federal government maintained its control of adult training to members of targeted groups, including Aboriginal peoples (Brisbois, 2006). That practice has remained in place to the present time.
In 2002, the provincial and territorial labour ministers prepared a report to address skills training using LMDAs (Labour Ministers, 2002). They noted, in particular, “LMDA employment programs and services should be expanded, because an investment in skills development gives high social and economic returns” (Labour Ministers, 2002, p. 1). The ministers based their findings on statistical reports that supported the relationship between education and employment (Labour Force Survey, 2001). They did not, however, identify what the specific skills or occupations are that benefit from the LMDAs. While the report indicated support for LMDAs, it also noted that a substantial amount of EI funding was not being used to support skills training for the unemployed and that “Canada trails most of the major OECD countries in spending on training and employment programs and services by a wide margin, and Canada’s ratio of income support spending to training support spending does not compare well with other leading countries” (Labour Ministers, 2002, p. 5). While the federal government was claiming that EI funds were being used for training, it appears that this was not the case.

The Labour Market Training Act - Bill C-432 (Canada, Labour Market Training Act, 1998) was brought forward by Pat Martin, NDP member of parliament, as a private members bill to establish national standards for labour market training, apprenticeship and certification. The purpose of the Act was to secure the establishment of nationally recognized training and certification standards for trades, and to establish a process for co-operation between all stakeholders to establish standards for apprenticeship, institutional training, and certification standards for prescribed trades and to secure the recognition of the standards across Canada.
The standards established would recognize both the labour market needs and the need for a school-to-work transition plan.

Four specific areas were identified to recognize that industry practitioners were the best individuals in a field to determine the sets of skills that should be provided to those seeking work in that field, that a school-to-work transition plan should be supported and expanded for young persons entering the work force and the apprenticeship model because apprenticeship develops an attachment to the work force, and the communication of craft-trade skills and other apprenticeable trades is best achieved through work experience. As well, standardized entrance requirements, curricula and examinations required development to ensure that the skills of the work force in every industrial sector were based on uniform and consistent training, and workers had to have portable skills that were recognized across the country by all levels of government.

In order to fulfil the purposes of the Act, the Minister was to be given the task of entering into agreements with provinces or with organizations concerned with apprenticeship training and certification. The Minister was to create a national apprenticeship and training advisory committee (NATAC) the purpose of which was to advise on training and certification for each trade, both in a college or other educational institutions, as well as in the context of apprenticeship. The NATAC membership was to consist of the Minister, provincial ministers, industries that employed apprentices in the trade, labour organizations representing the trade, and colleges and educational institutes offering training in the trade.
The NATA was to consult with the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA), provincial ministers, labour organizations, industry representatives, and with existing trade-training organizations to propose national standards to apply to apprenticeship, training, and certification for the prescribed trade, and report their recommendations to the Minister. The Minister would then consult with the representatives of the provincial ministers to attempt to seek to gain recognition of the standards by each of them. The NATAcs were to advise the Minister of what funding they considered necessary to establish training in accordance with the identified standards.

The Minister was also to make regulations relating to the prescribed trades that have or should have apprenticeship as a part of training and certification in Canada. The Minister was to be responsible for the regulations for the establishment, membership, and the term of members of the NATA for every prescribed trade, as well as setting the remuneration and reimbursement of expenses of members of NATAcs. Finally, the Minister was to issue national standards for training for a prescribed trade after the NATA created for the trade had reported its proposals to the Minister. The Minister was to submit a report outlining the functions of the NATAcs every year to the House of Parliament. The report was to be referred to a standing committee appointed to deal with apprenticeship training matters. Bill C-432 has since been introduced seven times since 1998, but has not yet been passed into legislation.

The Liberal government remained in power, at the federal level, for the first five years of the new millennium, continuing to apply its policy directives as outlined in the Red Book of 1993, although updates had been made. There had been persistent allegations, in the early
2000s, by the Canadian Alliance\textsuperscript{4} that the EI program had been poorly managed by the Liberals. These rumours damaged the Liberals, eventually leading to the departure of Jean Chretien as leader of the party. Paul Martin replaced Chretien, forming a minority government in 2004 until 2006, when the Conservative Party of Canada, led by Stephen Harper, formed a minority government.

\textbf{4.2.4 The Conservatives – human resource development: 2006-2010}

The Conservatives won minority governments in the 2006 and 2008 elections and initially focused on fulfilling election promises to decrease the Goods and Services Tax (GST) as well as personal income taxes. A major shift in political ideology was made from the Liberals to again decentralize government, as per the Mulroney years, particularly in relation to skills development and employment/unemployment insurance. There continues to be a major focus on human resource development in skills policy. While the names of the departments changed frequently, the focus of skills development for apprenticeship has centered on fulfilling a perceived gap in the workforce.

Federal governments in Canada became fully engaged in realigning social policy to meet the requirements of both domestic and global capital starting in the 1990s. Central to the goal of social reform, through EI in particular, was to change benefits and programs to promote a more mobile labour force, which is fundamental to apprenticeship. Prince (1996) contends that politicians took on a very narrow view of social policy determining,

\footnote{The Reform Party of Canada was disbanded in 2000 when it aligned with the Canadian Alliance Party. The Canadian Alliance Party merged with the Progressive Conservative party in 2003 to become the Conservative Party of Canada, after it had become the official opposition in the federal government.}
Social policy is about much more than welfare and providing relief to those in dire straits. It also entails providing essential services and benefits to the general public; building infrastructure such as schools and parks; and investing in people through learning and training as a way of both promoting human development and managing the economy (1996, p. 240).

Few of the policies adopted by the Conservatives reflect Prince’s view, as infrastructure to support apprenticeship is largely ignored in favour of labour-market development and marketization. Human resource development appears more a catch phrase than a commitment.

The Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) was formally established by the Human Resources Skills Development Act (Canada, 2005), superseding the Human Resources Development Act of 1996. In 2003, HRDC was separated into two distinct departments, creating HRSDC and Service Development Canada (SDC). HRSDC’s primarily purpose was to focus on workforce-related issues, and SDC was to concentrate on social support programs. The 2005 act gave formal recognition of the two departments and their mandates.\(^5\)

The Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Act (2005) came into effect, with the Minister’s powers extended to “improving the standard of living and quality of life of all Canadians by promoting a highly skilled and mobile workforce and an efficient and

\(^5\) The Conservatives brought HRSDC and SDC together again in 2006, in the process eliminating SDC as a separate department; the name was refashioned to Human Resources and Social Development Canada. The title returned to Human Resources and Skills Development again in 2008.
inclusive labour market” (Canada, 2005, p. 2) again taking into consideration cooperation between the federal and provincial governments. Strong links were established with the Department of Social Development and retained with CEIC.

The Minister’s duties included creating and implementing programs and granting structures to support skilled labour and human resource development. The power of the Minister was significantly increased, with that person determining what committees needed to be created, who would participate on the committees, what their mandates would be, and how they would operate. Additionally, the Minister could “enter into agreements with a province or a provincial public body, financial institutions and other persons or bodies that the Minister considers appropriate” (Canada, 2005, p. 4).

The power was shifting from CEIC to the Minister, although the composition of the commission remained the same as under the previous HRD Act. CEIC could also make agreements with other countries to establish reciprocal agreements, but not with the provinces and territories in Canada. Although the act initially specified that members of CEIC were to be members of the Department, that item was repealed in 2008.

A significant addition to the act is the inclusion of the “protection of personal information,” which recognized the Privacy Act, but did not apply to the EI Act. The part specifically addressed what information about a claimant could be made available and to whom. This would be particularly important to HRSDC in its relationship with Statistics Canada and the collection and distribution of information about EI claimants and skills development
Policy. Policy analysis, research, and evaluation were the purposes stipulated as the rationale for access to information by HRSDC.

The Conservatives’ budget over their initial three years in power, from 2006 to 2009, included incentives to both apprentices and employers, leading to policy development designed to provide additional support to the creation of a “skilled” workforce. In the budgets, there is still a strong indication that economic development and labour market adjustment strategies are framed within a neoliberal and global context to respond to market needs. Rice et al. comment, “[b]udgeting for social programs has become a top-down process concerned more with sum totals than with service priorities” (Rice, 2013, p. 154).

The 2006 budget introduced action for a more skilled and educated workforce by proposing new tax credits for employers and apprentices, grants to first and second year apprentices, and tax deductions for tool acquisitions required for employment by apprentices. “In today’s knowledge-based economy, a more educated and skilled labour force is key to Canada’s competitiveness in the world. Government investments in education and training are therefore critical to productivity and economic growth” (Government of Canada, 2006, p. 80).

The new Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit resulted in eligible employers receiving a tax credit equal to ten per cent of the wages paid to qualifying apprentices in the first two years of their contract, to a maximum credit of $2,000 for each apprentice employed per year. The new Apprenticeship Incentive Grant program (AIG) was established to provide a cash grant of $1,000 per year to apprentices in the first two years of an apprenticeship program in one of the Red Seal trades and other economically strategic apprenticeship programs, which were not
identified. Finally, tradespeople (apprentices and journeypersons) were to receive a tax credit on tools purchases as a requirement of employment. All strategies were included in the section “Promoting Education, Training and Research.”

The 2007 budget plan acknowledged that the government would establish LMDAs to “move forward to complete the transfer of responsibility for the delivery of EI employment benefits and support measures to those provinces and territories that do not currently have full transfer” (Government of Canada, 2007, p. 130). A new plan, to be housed within EI, was identified under the heading “Creating a New Labour Market Program.” Emphasis was placed on Canada having “an adaptable labour force with the right skills demanded by employers . . . Meeting this challenge will require creating the best-educated, most-skilled and most flexible workforce in the world and increasing labour force participation rates to meet demand. This means that Canadians must be able to easily access the training they need” (Government of Canada, 2007, p. 211). Participation of Aboriginals and immigrants in the labour market was identified as priority.

The 2008 budget plan provided for continuing support to encourage participation in apprenticeship. It was particularly noted there was a commitment to “[i]mproving Canada’s competitive position means developing the best-educated, most-skilled and most flexible workforce in the world” (Government of Canada, 2008, p. 104). In the section headed “Support for Training and Adjustment,” a pledge was made to provide $100 million per year for the Apprenticeship Incentive Grant to encourage more young Canadians to pursue apprenticeships. Additionally, $200 million per year for a tax credit to a maximum of $2,000 was allocated per
apprentice for each year of training through the Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit to encourage employers to hire apprentices. The Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP) program was allocated $105 million over five years as an initiative to ensure that Aboriginal Canadians would receive skills and training, leading to “increased participation in opportunity-driven economic development projects across Canada” (Government of Canada, 2008, p. 126). Under the heading “Federal Support for Post-Secondary Education” grants, scholarships, loan programs, tax credits, and research funds were identified for students enrolled in post-secondary educational institutions across Canada.

The Conservatives established most of their most targeted workforce policies in the 2006-2008 budgets. Canada’s Economic Action Plan (CEAP) was introduced months after a severe economic downturn occurred, when major world markets were adversely affected; therefore, the Conservatives “developed an Economic Action Plan to boost confidence and economic growth and support Canadians and their families during this period of economic weakness” (Government of Canada, 2009, p. 67). The 2009 budget was meant to address “labour challenges with decisive action to support workers and families. In doing so, it responds to this short-term downturn and includes a long-term strategy, recognizing that skilled labour shortages remain a critical issue in many regions of the country” (Government of Canada, 2009, p. 97). In particular, increased funding was made available through EI, as well as the launching of an Apprenticeship Completion grant that was meant to address low completion rates. Over $100 million was added to support increased Aboriginal participation in apprenticeship. A coalition formed by the Bloc Quebecois, Liberals, and NDP in 2009 forced
some departure from the Conservatives neoliberal orientation, to include a stimulus package not previously included in the federal budget.

Predictions for continuing strong economic growth did not take into account the global financial crisis that began in 2008. The EU and United States were hit hard by the collapse of markets and currencies. Canada, on the other hand, realized an increase in the value of the dollar and is presented as the model on which banking institutions should make their economic policies. Continued exploration of oil, natural gas, and mining has kept unemployment rates low; however, skills development policy is stalled.

Federal responsibilities for economic growth and funding of apprenticeship training is irrevocably tied to the provinces. The power relationships between the federal and provincial governments and the ideological and political discourses around skills development have not always peacefully co-existed. The history of both the federal and provincial governments must be taken into consideration in order to understand the production and context of the discourses. The unequal power relationships between the two levels of governments are inherent in skills discourses.

In the next section, I present the context for a review of provincial policy initiatives for the period 1980-2010, paying attention to the licensing of the policy makers and BC’s role in the process of the policy formations. Keeping in mind Foucault’s view that systems of education are political in that they maintain or modify the suitability of discourses and the knowledge and power held in them, the next section speaks to the contexts of skills policy in apprenticeship within the purview of the province of BC.
4.3 **Provincial Skills Policy for Apprenticeship**

In this section, I provide an overview of the contexts that influenced the BC governments’ political, economic, and social policy decisions. The province’s policy directions are closely tied to economic and social decisions made by Ottawa as well as globally. The determination of the federal government to reduce or cut social programs has vast impact on BC. Many components of social policy fall under BC’s jurisdiction, on account of the fact that the federal government’s constitutional spending power allows for conditions relating to the administration of the province’s spending. Allocation of diminishing resources caused by economic downturns, political choices, and social needs have impacted apprenticeship skills training policy over the past 30 years.

Three parties dominated the political scene in British Columbia over the three decades covered in this study, although voting was often polarized, with the election of only two representative parties, except for a brief period in the early 1990s when representatives from the Social Credit Party (Socreds), NDP, and Liberals were elected. The Socreds party won its first election in B.C. in 1952, with W.A.C. Bennett as its leader (1952-1973), and formed the dominating ruling government for the next 38 years. The New Democratic Party formed a government in 1972 for one term, and the Social Credit returned to power, with leaders Bill Bennett (1973-1986) and Bill Vander Zalm (1986-1991), for another four terms. In 1991, the New Democratic Party (NDP) was again elected, replacing the discredited Social Credit Party. Mike Harcourt, the former mayor of the City of Vancouver, led the NDP to power. The Liberal party, led by Gordon Campbell, another former Vancouver mayor, was elected Premier in 2001.
During each of the political periods, there were vast changes in economic and social priorities. During the Socreds reign, there were both boom and bust economies, at some points increasing reliance on the social welfare system. The NDP government ruled during a large economic uptake due to an influx of Asian investors that led to a dramatic rise in house construction, at the same time, they attempted to reduce the legacy of the welfare state left by the Socreds. The economy continued to grow with few dips during the Liberal period, and further shifts in social policy were implemented to reduce funding to education and healthcare.

Employment across the province varies dependent on international, national, regional, and local economic conditions. “The role of the resources sector now pales in comparison to that of the service sector in terms of the occupation and employment of the provincial workforce” (Brownsey, et al, 2010, p. 21). Resource-based economies remain important in the interior, while service-based economy rules the urban centres, making for vastly different political, social, and economic priorities. “Many of the relevant aspects of BC’s political life, including electoral competition, party structure, and systems of interest intermediation, are tied to the nature of the provincial political economy and change along with it” (Howlett, 1996, p. 30). The result is that many of the apprenticeship policies were contested on the grounds that they do not represent regional employers.

The ideologies of each of the parties, along with changes in economic and social programs introduced by the federal government, have brought about vast changes in apprenticeship policy over the three decades. The development and implementation of apprenticeship policies depended upon which relationships the government of the day saw as
instrumental. The Socreds encouraged employer leadership, while the NDP sought to bring about more partnerships by engaging labour and employers. The Liberals brought in an employer-dominated perspective in apprenticeship policy. The evolution of participation and ideology and changes in the national economic and social priorities is strongly reflected in BC’s apprenticeship polices.

The following subsections both contribute to, and form, the context of the development of skills policy in apprenticeship in BC. Each subsection represents a particular political period that also encompasses the social and economic conditions included in this section, as well as further contexts relating to that specific time.


The Social Credit was the party preferred by those who favoured individuals assuming responsibility for their own economic well-being (Carty, 1996). From 1979-1983, the Socreds maintained an emphasis on social policy, including “increased capital spending and expanded operating expenditures on training programs were aimed at avoiding skill shortages, creating jobs, and stimulating the provincial economy” (Prince, 1996, p. 252). They followed a neoconservative agenda, like the federal Conservative party, in recognizing

The supreme importance attributed to individuals and their freedom: even more than economic efficiency. They prefer the market state because the market is based on the principle of free choice among individuals whereas the authority of the state rests on coercion” (Howlett, et al, 1999, p. 27).
The Social Credit party held largely conservative and populist ideals that urged social and political system changes, with its roots stemming from the Alberta Social Credit League formed by William Aberhart and later reformed by E. C. (Ernest) Manning. The BC party formally severed connection with the national Social Credit Party in 1971 to facilitate the loyalty of faithful federal Tories or Liberals (Morley, et al, 1986). The Socreds, in the 1980s, under pressure from non-union construction contractors, introduced labour legislation reforms, which substantially weakened the trade union movement, and opened several large, civil infrastructure projects to bids by non-union contractors. This pressure also influenced apprenticeship enrolment and graduation, wage rates, and the participation and workplace experience of under-represented groups. Industry played a prominent role in the development of policy and the implementation and review of apprenticeship.

BC is heavily dependent on income generation by its resource-based export industries, which makes it vulnerable to the cyclical nature of work-market prices, resulting in fluctuations in the economy (Scarfe, 1996). In particular, the BC economy experienced a prolonged recession and budget deficits from 1982 to 1986, when there was a fall in world-market prices for BC’s commodity exports, as well as high interest rates and a high exchange rate of the Canadian dollar in relation to its major offshore trading competitors. Unemployment rose to almost 15 percent of the labour force. In an attempt to solve rampant unemployment, the Socreds eliminated “the factors that inhibit the operation of labour markets, such as trade union rights, minimum wages, and unemployment and other welfare payments made by governments” (Howlett, et al, 1999, pp. 28, 29). Dependency on welfare and EI grew
substantially as cycles of unemployment occurred. At the same time, the federal government was also divesting itself of involvement in social-program responsibilities, offloading expenses to the province. “The postsecondary education sector absorbed a cut of nearly 10 percent in real terms (that is, after accounting for inflation) in operating budgets” (Prince, 1996, p. 256).

Rapid economic growth resumed in 1987, with surpluses in 1998-1990, brought about partly by increased demand for natural resources, immigration, and Expo ‘86. New economic policies were more closely aligned to neoliberalism, placing high value on productivity. Expo ’86 was undertaken as a quasi-social, economic project. Employment was created in construction and tourism and signalled a movement in BC’s urban economy toward the service sector. Demands for single and multi-family construction projects rapidly increased, with a parallel increase in demand for retail and commercial space, due in large part to Asian migration.

In early 1980, a Provincial Apprenticeship Board (PAB), administered by the provincial Ministry of Labour, was formed to oversee the indentureship certification process of over 150 apprenticeable trades, as well as coordinating the delivery of in-class technical training. The major shifts in the system occurred because of a sharp downturn in the primary resources economy, along with a stringent public-sector restraint program, causing high unemployment. (Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 1984).

The *Apprenticeship and Training Development Act* (ATDA) (1977), which repealed the *Apprenticeship and Tradesmen’s Qualifications Act* of 1955, the *Special Provincial Employment Programmes Act*, and the *Trade-schools Regulation Act*, provided the primary provincial
legislation for apprenticeship throughout the 1980s. The ATDA performed in tandem with federal legislation in relation to training, job creation, and apprenticeship as well as other matters related to human resource development. Unlike the federal legislation, the ATDA clearly laid out expectations for the governance and administration of apprenticeship in British Columbia.

Specific accountabilities related to employment of persons, to be performed on behalf of the minister for administration of the Act, were assigned to the director of apprenticeship and directors of trade schools. Accountabilities included inspection of facilities and records of employers and trade schools, and inquiring into working conditions. The ATDA required prohibition on agreements without authorization, subject to the Colleges and Provincial Institutes Act.

Occupational training councils could enter into agreements with trade schools to provide training. They also acted as arbiters when a decision of the PAB or director of trade schools was questioned. Ultimately, the final decision of the occupational training councils could not be challenged, reviewed, or called into question by a court, except on grounds of lack or excess of jurisdiction. Funding for operations, training allowances, capital and other grants were allocated by the minister. Employers and employees could be assessed to cover the cost of maintaining a program of apprenticeship and training, with the funds collected being placed in the Consolidated Revenue Fund. Funds were allocated to an occupational training council, defined as per the Colleges and Provincial Institutes Act, and to institutions and trade schools. “The province receives federal funds for apprenticeship training and works in close cooperation
with Canada Employment, but the administration and delivery of apprenticeship programs in BC is a provincial responsibility." (Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 1982, p. 4).

A schedule of designated and apprenticeable trades was included, to be governed by a provincial apprenticeship board (PAB), with the minister designating the chair and vice-chair of that board, usually a member of the Ministry of Labour staff. PAB included appointees from employers, trade unions, government and the public. A listing of the members in *Apprenticeship in British Columbia* (Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 1982) shows that of the eleven members, six represented major unions; one member was from the Ministry of Labour, three were employers, and one was a consultant. The designation of trades was meant to require that a person employed in a designated trade have a certificate of qualification, exceptions being allowed only by the director of apprenticeship.

The powers of the PAB were varied and included responsibility for determining and issuing directives for the qualifications required for designated or apprenticeable trades, or certificate of qualification (C of Q). They set out the terms and conditions of apprenticeship agreements, registration of the agreements, and the fees to be paid for the C of Q. PAB was to establish trade advisory committees and examining boards; advise the occupational training council on apprenticeship matters; hear and decide appeals from the director of apprenticeship, and carry out other duties as assigned by the minister. The Trade Advisory Committees measured achievements, identified problems, and proposed changes and improvements (Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 1982). PAB made recommendation on policy and actions required to keep apprenticeship training up-to-date with employment needs,
including “recommending steps to meet urgent trade skill needs and proposing policies to encourage increased apprenticeship training” (Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 1982, p. 4; Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 1984).

Along with the PAB, a director of apprenticeship (DA) was to carry out a number of duties in regard to the operation of the ATDA. Those duties included making decisions on rights and duties of apprenticeship agreements, establishment, maintenance, and issuance of registration and certification, monitoring of training, appointing boards for examinations and trade advisory committees, advising the occupational training council and PAB of apprenticeship issues related to instruction at institutions, maintaining a system to review and develop course content and examinations, maintaining a counselling system for apprentices, and carrying out other duties assigned by the minister or the board.

The DA was ultimately responsible for the filing and registration of apprenticeship agreements, particularly for designated trades. He was given the responsibility to refuse to register an agreement and cancel it if he felt it was not in the best interest of the apprentice. The agreement was between the apprentice and employer and either could terminate without notifying the other; however, they both had to notify the director, who would decide what further training or experience the apprentice would need to qualify for a certificate of apprenticeship. Agreements restricted the number of apprentices employers could employ, as per the number set by order of the DA and minor apprentices were treated in the same manner as adults.
The minister determined fees to be paid by students attending a trade school, and the fees to be paid by the trade school to register as a training deliverer. The Ministry of Education was responsible for the delivery of classroom instruction, contracting with the Ministry of Labour, community colleges, and other institutions. Trade schools had to be registered with the director of trade schools who was obliged to specify hours of instruction and the terms and conditions by which tuition fees were to be collected and refunded.

As the national and international labour situation was experiencing declining employment in the 1980’s, so was BC. PAB (1984) presented a report, as per its mandate, with policy recommendations to the Minister of Labour. The report indicated that while numbers in apprenticeship had noticeably increased in the first year of PAB’s operation, they were steadily and rapidly declining due to high unemployment. PAB noted, “[a]pprenticeship is not a system of job-creation; nor is it a catch-all solution to unemployment problems” (1984, p. 3), yet further clarifies that “British Columbia requires skilled trades people to build, maintain and operate the businesses and industries which drive its economy. Everyone agrees on that, whether the times are good or bad” (1984, p. 4).

Roles and responsibilities for training are allocated to employers, individuals, and government. Employer responsibility is indicated as primarily to “train sufficient numbers of journeymen for their requirements” (Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 1984, p. 12), with training to occur on-the-job to provide “real hands-on experience.” (Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 1984, p. 12). Individuals were to make a commitment to be productive both at the workplace and in their classrooms. Government’s primary responsibility was to encourage
employers to provide training as well as administer and regulate the system for scheduling and validation of training and the certification of journeymen.

The specific recommendations made in the report to the Minister of Labour focus on the government’s social and economic role in taking initiatives to encourage smaller employer groups to take on more cooperative training programs, the expansion of communication strategies around apprenticeship, assuring employers that skills training would be cost effective, facilitating cost-sharing and other incentives for training of laid-off apprentices, providing more locally-based technical training, and encouraging entry-level training to encourage more apprentices and employers.

The first recommendation came about as a result of the economic downturn and the disengagement of smaller employers in apprenticeship training. It was determined that individual small employers have limited resources to provide training; however, cooperative efforts could result in more opportunities for apprentices. The second recommendation was made to create “a background of greater public understanding of apprenticeship and its benefits” (Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 1984, p. 16), based on the assumption that more effort is required to reach the smaller employers. In their third recommendation, PAB recognized the social and economic goals of apprenticeship, particularly during economic downturns. They determined that employers alone should not endure training costs, nor should the system be expected to provide a complete solution to unemployment issues.

The fourth recommendation recognizes the benefits of training, particularly as an investment. It explains that there is mutual benefit to employers and government in the
training system that benefits society and the economy, but where government imposes
standards beyond the scope of the employers, employers should not be expected to bear the
additional costs. In the fifth recommendation, PAB encourages the delivery of training locally,
which makes the system “more flexible, socially-desirable, and more cost-effective” (Provincial
Apprenticeship Board, 1984, p. 19). They see this as being made possible by being able to work
directly with public education institutions to contract for training. The final recommendation
addresses the TRAC (training access) program that was introduced in 1983, which was
developed to provide training for non-apprentices. A caveat is placed on the recommendation
that the Ministry of Education complete an evaluation to determine if an employer’s needs are
being met with the TRAC program. The TRAC program evolved into Entry Level Trades Training
(ELTT), which has continued to be contentious within the ITA (which called the program
“Foundations” in terms of the employers needs being met or not – still no evaluation).

4.3.2 The New Democratic Party – skills development: 1991-2001

In 1991, the New Democratic Party (NDP) was elected in British Columbia, replacing the
discredited Social Credit Party. Mike Harcourt, the former mayor of the City of Vancouver, led
the NDP to power. The NDP party’s ideology was strongly socialist, with its roots going back to
the 1930s, when the founding party, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), fought
for the introduction of unemployment insurance, universal health care, decent wages, and
pensions. The party claimed a long-standing commitment to low- and middle-income
individuals and to social justice. The NDP received considerable financial and ideological
support from labour unions. Not surprisingly, many of the Social Credit policies, and much of
their legislation relating to trades and apprenticeship, was immediately placed under scrutiny, resulting in major shifts.

The election of the NDP in 1991 brought about a focus on elimination of the provincial deficit, at the same time increasing funding to education and postsecondary education at a pace higher than in any other Canadian province during the same period (Howlett, et al, 1999). The NDP party is endorsed by those who favour “collective, government-devised solutions to personal and societal economic problems” (Blake, 1996, p. 5), strongly aligned with the social welfare system, heavily dependent on government spending. This is strongly evident in Mike Harcourt’s formation of the 1993 Premier’s Summit on Skills Development and Training, which “brought together representatives from business, labour, education, communities, and government” (Prince, 1996, p. 262) in an attempt to create connections across sectors by including stakeholders in policy discussions to find agreement on routes for reform of both social and economic programs.

Harcourt’s focus was on elimination of the provincial deficit, at the same time increasing funding to education and postsecondary education at a pace higher than any other Canadian province during the same period (Howlett, et al, 1999). However, at the same time, the federal government was reducing funding; in particular, postsecondary education funding was reduced to cover only one-third of the province’s expenditures, whereas it was at one-half in the mid-1980s (Scarfe, 1996). A major shift had also occurred in the employment and production sectors. Brownsey et al. (2010) comment, “[t]he role of the resources sector now pales in comparison to that of the service sector in terms of the occupation and employment of the
The service sector, comprised of retail, wholesale, transportation, communications, and public sector occupations, replaced the former major economic stimulants of forestry, mining, and fishing.

Much of the activity for welfare reform brought about by the Premier’s 1994 Forum on New Opportunities for Working and Living focused on promoting skills training, ostensibly to establish “a public image of being tough on welfare abuse” (Prince, 1996, p. 263). The Skills Now labour-market initiative contained a training plan meant to boost skill levels and employability of persons in BC. Social investments included more than $2 billion for construction and improvement of schools, colleges and universities, hospitals and health care, non-profit housing, childcare, and recreational and cultural facilities. All projects were intended to stimulate the economy; however, they were funded with borrowed money, incurring an increase in the provincial debt. Funds were provided from the Skills Now initiative for up to 50,000 persons on welfare. Overall, the goal was not so much to improve unemployment but to cut down on welfare fraud. By the mid-1990s, social ministry portfolios represented almost half of the government cabinets.

In the latter part of its first term, the NDP began moving its policy direction to neoliberal orientations and commitments, reflecting the federal government’s significant reduction of transfer of funds by almost 28 percent over a two-year period (1995 and 1996) (Teghtsoonian, 2010). The shift is apparent in the Skills Now program, designed to reduce welfare fraud and further target social assistance by introducing “BC Benefits,” which focused significantly on employability. In its second term, the NDP continued to push a neoliberal policy agenda,
particularly by requiring ministries to prepare three-year performance plans that included performance indicators and targets, a move highly criticized by academics and others (Teghtsoonian, 2010).

In 1994, the NDP government passed Bill 37, The Fair Wages Act, to ensure that the growing “open shop” movement of contractors, who had been supported by the Social Credit government, would pay the same wages and benefits as closed-shop contractors. Open-shop contractors hired both union and non-union workers and were often non-signatory to the same labour groups as unions; closed-shop contractors hired only workers who were signatory to specific collective agreements. The NDP was responding to pressure by organized labour to ensure that trade workers would receive equitable pay for work they performed, regardless of whether or not they were signatory to collective agreements.

The purpose of Bill 37 was to ensure skill-development training in the construction industry, high-quality work standards on publicly funded construction projects by requiring that employees hold the appropriate qualifications, and that employees would receive fair wages for work performed on publicly funded construction projects. It applied to employees of contractors, sub-contractors, and any other person performing construction. Employers were required to provide a statutory declaration to the tendering agency that outlined their compliance with the requirements of the Act. If the contractor or sub-contractor was successful, they were required to make available a listing of all trade employees with proof of their qualifications or apprenticeship status and number, wage, and benefits to be paid on an hourly basis to each trade employee, and any other information required in the Act before the
first progress payment would be made. Ongoing and updated lists were to be provided to ensure compliance. Contractors had to ensure that all their sub-contractors were also following the regulations of the Act.

All employees were to be registered under the Apprenticeship and Training Act and hold either a B.C. certificate of apprenticeship, a B.C. certificate of qualification, or an Interprovincial Red Seal. The conditions applied only to a trade where both an apprenticeship program and a British Columbia certificate of qualification were available under the Apprenticeship Act. Apprentices were to work under the supervision of a qualified tradesperson; the provincial director of apprenticeship determined the ratio of apprentices per journeyperson.

Fair wages were tied to the Employment Standards Act. Enforcement of the Act required all employers to keep records of employees’ trades, their registration or certification numbers, and the wages and benefits paid for one year after the completion of the project. A copy of the fair-wages schedule was to be posted at each worksite.

The Lieutenant Governor in Council was tasked with creating the regulations to designate corporations or classes of corporations as Crown corporations, as well as with establishing the fair-wage rates. Further, the Lieutenant Governor in Council was to govern the method of calculating rates, the procedures to follow in the execution of contracts with the tendering agencies, and the enforcement and exemptions of the regulations. A clause was included, allowing for the recognition of different types of construction or projects, especially for employees with different qualifications or for different regions of the province.
In 1991, the NDP received *The Way Ahead* report submitted by Kenneth Strand, the Chairman of the BC Task Force on Employment and Training. That report recommended efforts to revitalize apprenticeship by reforming the Provincial Apprenticeship Board, giving labour and business greater control in the system’s governance. The Premier followed up with the *Premier’s Summit on Skills Development and Training* (1993), made up of members representing business, labour, and community groups that focused on three areas. Those areas were the vision, obstacles, opportunities, and actions required to meet the challenges of an ideal learning/training system. The conclusions, based on several plenary and community sessions, pointed to the need to revamp the learning/training system, including establishment of “partnerships among all players and sectors required to take action for future success.” (British Columbia, 1993, p. 38; British Columbia, 2003). No post-secondary institutions were represented at the summit.

In 1997, the NDP government presented a summary paper and a report on governance (1997), which led to the formation of the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission. In the summary paper, specific concerns were expressed about delivery systems, facilities, standards, funding, curriculum, scheduling, marketing, and infrastructure. The report on governance recommended the establishment of ITAC to replace the PAB, with a broad mandate to “provide and promote a vision of industry-driven training and apprenticeship for the 21st Century that is attractive to workers, learners and industry, and that is consistent with the economic development needs of the Province.” (1997, p. 2). The summary paper, along with a report on governance, contributed significantly to the discourse about apprenticeship training
in BC during the 1990s, ultimately contributing to the introduction of Bill 43, *The Industry Training and Apprenticeship Act*.


ITAC’s mandate, while similar to the PAB, focused on creating an industry-led training and apprenticeship system responsive to industry needs and priorities. They were to accomplish this by assessing the needs of the labour market, expanding the “number of skilled persons in designated trades” (1997, p. 3). Further, ITAC was to increase participation of under-represented groups, integrate education and training systems between school and the workplace, promote “continuous skills upgrading, lifelong learning, and certification” (1997, p. 3), and expand designated recognized trade credentials to promote laddering, portability, mobility, and transferability to provincial, national, and international standards. ITAC was to carry out its mandate by consulting all parties involved in apprenticeship and training as well as those “who are under-represented in designated trades and designated occupations.” (1997, p. 3).

ITAC’s membership was significantly expanded from its predecessor, with 25 persons representing labour and education, and training providers being appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the recommendation of the minister. A noticeable change is the joint delegation of the Minister of Labour and Minister of Education, Skills and Training being
charged with the administration of the ITAC Act. In the previous Act, administration was solely
done by the Minister of Labour. ITAC committees could include individuals who were not
members, as long as it was chaired by a member.

A Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was recommended by ITAC and appointed by the
Lieutenant Governor to carry out the functions and duties of the bylaws developed and to
appoint staff to perform the daily business operations. ITAC could delegate the performance of
powers and duties to the CEO or employee(s). An advisory committee could be established by
ITAC to provide advice and recommendations on its mandate. “The role of the advisory
committee and the criteria for appointment to an advisory committee are to be established by

Funding was provided by a special account in the general fund of the consolidated
revenue fund. The special account revenues included money transferred, assessments
collected from employers or employees, a schedule of fees the commission may charge for
services, and any other revenues that ITAC received while carrying out its mandate. Expenses
were paid out of the account for projects and initiatives and costs associated with the operation
and administration of ITAC, which was a variance from the Financial Administration Act. ITAC
was to be subjected to an annual audit by an auditor appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. A
multi-year business plan that included a report of operations, proposals for fees, revenues and
expenses, and the annual audit report were to be submitted to the minister. ITAC could not
borrow money or run at a deficit without the approval of the Lieutenant Governor.
Industry training and apprenticeship focused primarily on the designation of trades, compulsory certification, industry training and apprenticeship programs, industry training and apprenticeship agreements, and granting of credentials in designated trades and occupations. The first order of designation of trades and occupations was to define what it constituted and then to encourage “the expansion and coordination of training in any trade or occupation” (Province of British Columbia, 1997, p. 7). Prescribed criteria had to be identified and a list of designated trades and occupations were to be published and provided free of charge. The Lieutenant Governor, with ITAC providing advice, was assigned the responsibility of defining designated trades and occupations requiring compulsory certification. Workers could not work in a compulsory trade or occupation unless they were in training or had completed training. Employers were also not allowed to hire workers whom they knew, “or would be reasonably expected to know” (Province of British Columbia, 1997, p. 8) were not in training or had not completed training. ITAC could investigate and grant permission in writing, on application, for a worker to receive an exemption to the regulation.

ITAC was to establish industry training and apprenticeship programs for every designated trade and occupation. ITAC was further responsible for establishing standards and requirements, eligibility of trainees and employers, including a limit on number of trainees for each employer, technical and practical content of programs, length of programs, standards to assess successful completion of programs, and the evaluation methods used to measure the standards. Published bylaws were to be made publicly available.
ITAC was responsible for registration of industry-training agreements. Those agreements identified the trainee and the employer and could be cancelled by ITAC if they believed that the trainee was not receiving the necessary training successfully to complete the program. Either party to the agreement could terminate without the consent of the other, but ITAC had to be notified in writing. Transfer of agreement could be assigned by ITAC on request of the parties. Minors were recognized as adults, thereby binding them to the registration of agreements. ITAC could determine the form and terms of the agreement.

ITAC granted credentials to trainees who had successfully completed industry training or an apprenticeship program, or who “otherwise meets the standards or requirements that are established, approved or recognized by bylaws of the commission in respect of that trade or occupation” (Province of British Columbia, 1997, p. 10). They could also suspend or cancel credentials if the holder did not maintain acceptable standards during his/her practice, if it was altered in any manner, obtained by fraud, or used by another person. Again, ITAC was to publish bylaws for credentials to be made available to the public.

Several items were identified under the general provisions of the Act, including the appointment, by the Lieutenant Governor, of an appeals officer to conduct appeals, entry and inspection powers, industry assessments, offences and penalties, and powers to make regulations. The nature of the appeals included the refusal to grant exemption under compulsory certification, refusal of registration or suspension or cancellation of agreements, refusal to grant credentials, and suspension or cancellation of credentials. The process and timelines of appeals, as well as the conduct of the appeals, were clearly outlined. Inspectors,
designated by the minister, were to ensure compliance with the Act and its regulations to inspect employer training facilities and their records, and to determine that wages, hours of work, and conditions of work were being followed.

The Lieutenant Governor, with advice from ITAC, could assess employers or employees for costs required to maintain industry training or apprenticeship programs. Offences and penalties were to be levied against anyone who contravened the compulsory certification requirements. The Lieutenant Governor was assigned the power to make regulations to specify additional duties of ITAC, prescribe criteria for designation and notice of appeal, and prescribe the schedule of fees to be charged for services. A review committee was to be established to consult with business, labour, education, and training providers, government, learners, members of groups that are under-represented, and anyone else they deemed appropriate to review the Act. The review committee was to present the minister with an evaluation report identifying problems and recommendations.

ITAC had become a massive organization, with hundreds of employees across the province working directly with apprentices and employers. As the NDP government’s tenure was coming to an end, due in large part to ongoing concerns about leadership, spending, and union affiliation, ITAC’s days were numbered. Registrations and completions were not substantially growing despite the support provided.

4.3.3 The Liberals – the ‘industry led’ system: 2001-2010

The NDP were “swept away by the revamped BC Liberal Party running on a platform of competence, probity, and good governance – a very different discourse from the populist class
struggle rhetoric of earlier periods” (Brownsey, et al, 2010, p. 25). The party, led by Gordon Campbell, won the 2001 provincial election by a landslide, securing 77 of 79 seats. The B.C. Liberals, unlike their federal counterparts, were seen as primarily neo-liberal, privatizing some government assets and establishing austere budgets to respond to economic challenge remaining from the 1990s. The resounding defeat resulted in dominance that shaped social and economic policy decisions.

The Liberal’s election undertakings were built on the promise of a “new era” in government, identifying a number of pillars. Those pillars included “[f]iscal responsibility. Free enterprise. Equality of opportunity and responsibility. Compassion for those in need. An unflagging commitment to public health care, education and public safety. Commitment to Canada’s Constitution and equality under the law. Open and accountable decision-making. Belief in a professional, non-partisan public service.” (B.C. Liberals, 2001, p. 3). The Liberals went on to identify specific areas that they would address immediately, in response to what they viewed as mismanagement by their predecessors, particularly the NDP government.

A strong relationship had been developed with employer associations, particularly those within “open shop” construction industries. One such group, The Independent Business Contractors Association (ICBA), was particularly prominent in supporting the Liberal government, noting, “[i]n the face of a persistent building trade union lobby for preferential treatment with respect to public work, ICBA has grown and continues to be the champion of open tendering and fair treatment for all contractors, regardless of their union affiliations” (ICBA, 2012). They lobbied for changes to NDP legislation around apprenticeship, union
affiliation requirements, tendering processes, hiring, and wages. The Liberals promised to address all the concerns within 90 days of election.

Howlett notes the Liberals had begun their realignment in the 1990s to show their support for “large corporations as well as with elements of the traditional middle class of professionals and small businesses, all of which prefer a regime of privatization, deregulation, and tax and deficit reduction” (Howlett, 1996, p. 29). The Liberals established traditional conservative priorities that focused on “fiscal austerity, deficit reduction, smaller government, privatization and deregulation, legislation to protect corporations and property owners, and massive tax cuts” (Howlett, 1996, p. 25), particularly launching an aggressive campaign to create public-private partnerships to provide funding to construct health and education infrastructure. They attempted to support both the resource-based interior and service-based urban centres by protecting corporate interests in both.

Unlike the NDP, which focused on social welfare policy, the Liberals introduced massive cutbacks to social assistance benefits, citing “a significant shift from a culture of entitlement to a culture of employment and self-sufficiency” (Teghtsoonian, 2010, p. 319). They established back-to-work legislation and a two-tiered minimum wage system, with the lower amounts assigned to youth and immigrants; they reversed NDP labour legislation, training subsidies, and workers’ compensation benefits.

During its second election period, the Liberals increased spending on infrastructure and social welfare, while shelving plans for further privatization of public assets and Crown corporations (Brownsey, et al, 2010). The NDP won 33 of the 77 seats, replacing them as the
Official Opposition; however, the Liberal’s approach to social policy continued to reflect neoliberal commitments and priorities (Teghtsoonian, 2010).

The Liberals were particularly anxious to replace ITAC. While ITAC was aware of many of its shortcomings and challenges and prepared numerous documents (see Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002), it was unable to meet its mandate and, given the promise to employer associations, the newly elected Liberal government conducted a core review of ITAC in 2002. The review identified that ITAC was unable to implement the needed changes to make “the province not only competitive but a leader in developing its resources” (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2002, p. 3). This was seen as essential if BC were to address current and projected shortages of skilled workers in key occupational areas. A number of other problems were identified, including the inability to meet employer needs for trade workers and to address skills shortages, inflexible training methods, high dropout rates, and a lack of commitment by employers to the model of training.

As a result of this review, the government outlined a new strategy for industry training in the province. The key reforms of the new strategy were to include the elimination of ITAC and the establishment of an Industry Training Authority (ITA) and a Board appointed by the government. Industry was expected to take a more active role and private trainers were to be given a more significant role in meeting the training needs at all levels of industry training. At the program level, a more unified system with better linkages between ELTT and apprenticeship was identified along with the importance of laddering and availability of “progressive” credentials. In addition, program standardization was emphasized. Finally, competency-based
programs were to be increased and time-based programming decreased. At the program accountability level, utilization of funded spaces and retention issues were seen as needing to be addressed.

In May 2003, legislation introduced a new entity - The Industry Training Authority (ITA). The ITA was to be a stand-alone authority, responsible to government through the Ministry of Economic Development. Composed of a nine-person board of directors, the ITA was given the mandate to manage program development, delivery, provide all client services, allocate funding, and select trainers and contractors to deliver programs/services. The new model also emphasized the need to provide relevant training with the highest standards for the work force and to encourage youth to choose industry training as a career path. In order to meet this important and challenging mandate to expand and improve industry training in BC, $78 million was committed to the ITA by government. The funds were transferred from the Advanced Education Ministry to the Ministry of Economic Development (MED). MED became the first of many ministries to take on the responsibility for ITA and apprenticeship training. Almost concurrent to the announcement of the new apprenticeship system with the announcement in 2003 of the awarding of 2010 winter Olympics in Vancouver and Whistler. There was a renewed call for skilled labour for massive construction projects for both the games directly and related services. Added to this was the rekindling of natural resource development in the interior and northern BC. Calls for skilled labour increased, with some employers going out of country to bring workers to fill gaps.
The Liberal government stated that it was not abandoning traditional apprenticeship and would continue to be an active partner in the development of the national Red Seal Certification program. Whereas ITAC had provided a full range of services to apprentices, these persons would now be required to register for training, update their own records, and register themselves. An interim agency was created during the transition period between the dismantling of ITAC and the establishment of ITA. A complete overview of the comparisons between ITAC and ITA follows (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2002, p. 8).

The Industry Training Authority Act was brought into force in 2003, repealing the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Act to establish the ITA as a corporation and an agent of the government with the power and capacity of a natural person of full capacity. (British Columbia, 2003; Canada, 2005). The Minister responsible was to appoint the nine-member board, with the board members electing a chair. A Chief Executive Officer (CEO), responsible for the day-to-day operation of ITA, was to be appointed by the authority. The CEO was to hire and manage employees who were exempted from both the Public Service Act and the Public Service Labour Relations Act. ITA was given full authority to spend its budgets as it saw fit; however, it was required to submit multi-year business plans for review and approval, and undergo annual audits. The ITA is not allowed to borrow or run budget into deficit without the approval of the Minister, the same as other government agencies.

The powers of authority respecting training programs were extensive and included designation of training programs; recommending training program as accredited programs, developing programs of training and apprenticeship and program standards, determining and
developing processes to determine candidate eligibility for participation in industry training programs, developing examinations and assessment standards and procedures for industry training programs, and for the recognition of training in another program or jurisdiction. The ITA designated trainers and defined their duties and could, with cause, suspend or cancel an industry training credential or industry training recognition credential, as well as enter into industry training agreements with trainees.

Further, the ITA was to develop criteria to award industry training credentials, or authorize training institutions and trainers to award industry training credentials to trainees who completed industry training programs, including those who had completed training or apprenticeship in another program or jurisdiction that was equivalent, and to attest to the trainee being qualified to practise the trade or occupation to which the industry training credentials related. They were to establish standards, procedures and fees for examinations, assessments and services, set requirements for trainers funded by the authority to deliver industry-training programs, conduct examinations and assessments of training and apprenticeship, and, with the approval of the minister, specify industry-training program standards for accredited programs. The ITA was to establish processes for program review to ensure that prescribed standards and standards set by the authority were being met for industry training programs and for examinations and assessments related to those programs. With the prior approval of the minister, the authority was allowed to delegate one or more of its powers to a training institution or any other person.
In respect of trainees, the authority was to maintain a register of trainees, industry training agreements, and training records for trainees according to their category of training and be satisfied that an individual qualified as a trainee and paid any fees for registration as a trainee, register the individual as a trainee. If they were not satisfied that the individual was entitled to be registered, they were to inform the individual with written reasons of the refusal. Policies respecting continuing eligibility of trainees and the reasons for which the registration of individuals as trainees may be cancelled were to be set and published. If the ITA was not satisfied that an individual was ineligible under the policies of the authority or under the regulations, such as not meeting their obligations to continue to be registered as a trainee, they could cancel the registration of the individual and inform the individual of the cancellation, with written reasons.

In order to accommodate appeals of cancellation of registration, an appeal board was established, consisting of a member appointed and designated as the chair, and other members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, in consultation with the chair. The CEO could also intervene and make decisions on appeals. The Minister responsible for ITA was enlisted with the power to make the regulations as per the Act.

In 2005, the ITA introduced another aspect of the “industry led” mandate that they had undertaken in the form of Industry Training Organizations (ITOs). The ITA noted that “[i]ts key objective is to ensure that training outcomes are continually adjusted so as to align with ever-changing labour market needs.” (Industry Training Authority, 2005, p. 1). The ITOs were to be established and operated by industry sectors, ultimately to benefit industry by aligning “current
and evolving industry needs, and employers will have enhanced ability to attract and retain skilled labour” (Industry Training Authority, 2005, p. 3). In essence, the ITOs were to assume the majority of the ITA’s operational activities for training development and delivery, including the identification of occupational competencies and skill requirements. Funding for the ITOs came from the monies allocated to the training system (Industry Training Authority, 2006, p. 2).

The ITA, now reporting to the Ministry of Skills Development and Labour, was committed to increase the number of trainees and apprentices in training by 30 percent by 2006/07, thereby fulfilling its New Era obligation. In the 2004/05 Annual Service Plan report (2004), the ITA was to work with employers and post-secondary institutions to increase training apprenticeships in trades and technical sectors.

Geoff Plant’s highly anticipated The Campus 2020 report (2007) stated that the ITA saw itself as serving two groups – industry and learners. The industry group consisted of “any employer or group of employers with a need for formally trained worker possessing credentials within the ITA scope of operation” (Plant, 2007, p. 42). The learner group consisted of “apprentices and trainees who participate in industry training programs with the intent of obtaining credentials” (Plant, 2007, p. 42). He noted that the ITA’s accountability was transferred from the Ministry of Advanced Education to Ministry of Economic Development. Plant further expressed concern that “[i]n creating opportunities for vocational training we are not trying to match ‘worker widgets’ with employer needs . . . Vocational and career skills training must be done within the broad context of knowledge acquisition” (Plant, 2007, p. 43).
The B.C. Auditor General’s report (2008), resulting from ongoing and growing frustration with the ITA by employers and training providers, documented several issues. The report provided specific feedback and recommendations based on the input of the ITO, industry, post-secondary institutions, and employers. Overall, the report identified issues related to leadership and communication, employer involvement, quality of programming, and funding. The report indicated, “[i]n introducing changes to the trades training system, the ITA leadership did not adequately consult and communicate with its key stakeholders. The result has been acrimony and distrust between the ITA and some key stakeholders” (Auditor General of British Columbia, 2008, p. 29).

The ITO model had been developed “without conducting adequate industry consultation to understand their needs” (Auditor General of British Columbia, 2008, p. 31). The report criticized the ITA for lack of policies and practices related to quality assurance in program development and delivery and “that the ITA strengthen its compliance monitoring mechanisms to provide greater assurance that training providers and apprenticeship sponsors are following program standards” (Auditor General of British Columbia, 2008, p. 42). Funding issues were identified in several areas as being inadequate for both the ITOs and program development and delivery.

BC did not go untouched by the worldwide economic downturn, also referred to as the “global economic crisis” that started in mid-2008. The government repealed its balanced budget policy, allowing deficit spending. This signals a small, but significant departure from the convincing neoliberal agenda previously followed by the Liberals.
4.4  Contexts 1980-2010

The tables below offer an overview of the discursive contexts of politics, ideologies, economic, and social conditions that form the contexts of the governments from 1980-2010. The first table provides the contexts of political/ideological, economic, and social discourses of the ruling federal parties. The second table represents contexts of the political/ideological, economic, and social discourses of the ruling provincial parties.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politics/Ideology</th>
<th>Economic Conditions</th>
<th>Social conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal (1980-84) Liberalism</td>
<td>• High wages and inflation&lt;br&gt;• High unemployment</td>
<td>• Move away from full employment, redefining unemployment&lt;br&gt;• Move skills training to job creation projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative (1984-93) Neoconservatism</td>
<td>• Need to meet demands of global competition&lt;br&gt;• Stable with periods of fluctuation&lt;br&gt;• Labour market adjustment</td>
<td>• Shifts to strengthen links between institutions and employers for training&lt;br&gt;• Disconnects between labour demand and supply&lt;br&gt;• Promotion of mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal (1993-2006)</td>
<td>• Change to strong growth&lt;br&gt;• Globalization&lt;br&gt;• Offloading program funding to provinces</td>
<td>• Job creation&lt;br&gt;• Formation of LMDAs&lt;br&gt;• Shift to use of market mechanisms&lt;br&gt;• Employment rising&lt;br&gt;• Reduction of EI benefits to apprentices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative (2006-10) Neoconservatism</td>
<td>• Extremely strong&lt;br&gt;• Global financial crisis of 2008</td>
<td>• Expansion of LMDA programs&lt;br&gt;• Increased incentives for apprentices and employers&lt;br&gt;• Strong push to promote apprenticeship, especially non-traditional participants</td>
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Table 4.1: Federal policy contexts 1980-2010
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politics/Ideology</th>
<th>Economic conditions</th>
<th>Social conditions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Credit (1980-91)</td>
<td>• Weak until late 1980s</td>
<td>• Increased dependency on welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neoconservatism moving to Keynesian</td>
<td>• Drop in demand for natural resources</td>
<td>• High unemployment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Federal government offloading expenses affecting post-secondary education/training</td>
<td>• Focus on apprenticeship to meet social and economic goals</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Recovery with immigration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>New Democratic Party (1991-2001)</td>
<td>• Strengthening</td>
<td>• Welfare reform to cut down fraud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keynesian moving to Neoliberalism</td>
<td>• Growth of service sector</td>
<td>• Movement from welfare to workfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Heavy borrowing</td>
<td>• Substantial increase in social ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Apprenticeship system highly supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal (1991-2010)</td>
<td>• Strong growth in natural resources and service sector</td>
<td>• Massive cutbacks to social assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neoliberalism</td>
<td>• Fiscal austerity</td>
<td>• Minimum wage restrictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Substantial cuts to apprenticeship system support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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| Table 4.2  Provincial policy contexts 1980-2010 |

Political ideologies play an important role in the discourses of the federal and provincial parties in terms of their responsibilities and policies for apprenticeship during the period 1980-2010. The contexts and discourses indicate disjunctures and dysfunctions between the federal and provincial governments. Disjunctures at the federal level, throughout the periods, appear to be in the EI Act, and in the view of apprentices as “workers” rather than “learners.” Dysfunctions at the provincial level are in the roles and responsibilities of the boards that
oversee the provincial enactment of labour force development, and the inability to encourage employers to take responsibility for training.

Key shifts occurred in the ideological perspectives of the governing parties during the decades 1980 to 2010. The Liberals and Conservatives held significant periods of power alternately throughout the three decades at the federal government level. Their core perspectives shifted, resulting in changes to policy and funding priorities. The Liberal party, which was historically the ruling party in federal politics for decades, has diminished in size and popularity due in large part to a lack of strong leadership and disenfranchisement of voters in Quebec and Ontario. The perspective held strongly by the Liberal governments of 1980s and 1990s has shifted slightly away from support of broader social programming. The federal New Democratic Party (NDP) also went through a decline in popularity in the late 1980 to early 2000s, but has since recovered to gain immense support as the alternate party in Quebec, picking up the majority of the votes in that province. The NDP continues to favour largely New Left socialist and pluralistic policy perspectives. The Progressive Conservative party, on the other hand, went through a complete transformation in the same period, due in large part to discontent from members of the stronghold western Conservative provinces, who held ultra conservative views. The Reform Party, followed by the Alliance Party, were established, from which emerged the neo-conservative Conservative Party. Overriding all parties’ ideologies are dominant neoliberal perspectives, strongly affected by globalization.

While the federal government maintained skills policies for apprenticeship within the UI/EI realm, and the evolving Human Resources departments, the provincial government
moved responsibility through several ministries. The changes in policy direction, at the federal level, showed a fairly consistent regard for apprenticeship as a human capital development opportunity that addressed employment, equity, and a desire for the provinces and employers to take responsibility for training.

Of the three parties that held power in British Columbia during this period, only two remain viable political organizations, signalling a return to polarized voting. The Social Credit has all but disappeared from the political agenda, remaining a fringe party that is currently not represented in the legislature. The NDP has maintained its social program policy program while alternating between power and as the primary opposition party. The Liberal party has maintained a strong hold throughout the first decade of the 21st century and continues to hold onto its neo-liberal ideology.

The responsibility for apprenticeship training remains under an arms-length board and structural organization the base of which has shifted from Labour to Advanced Education to Industry Relations to Economic Development to Skills Development, and short-gap stops in other Ministries. The constant movement, at the provincial level, has often led to changes in policy and funding that cause confusion amongst employers, apprentices, training institutions, union, and the federal government. Policy continues to focus on the development of a skilled workforce and the encouragement of under-represented groups to participate in apprenticeship training.

Funding has shifted, through the LMDA agreements, from the federal government directly funding training to the provincial governments allocating money to public and private
trainers. The Liberal government continues to fund the ITA from targeted funds received from the federal government. ITA receives its revenue from three sources; the first is a core operating grant from the provincial government, the second is received via the provincial LMA funds transferred from the federal government for programs to support trades participation by woman, immigrants, and Aboriginal people, and for training delivery, the third source of revenue is received from other sources such as examination and assessment fees (Industry Training Authority, 2012). Apprentices are responsible for applying in order to receive EI benefits during training periods and pay all tuition-related costs including textbooks, materials, tools, and supplies. Employers are responsible for costs of replacement labour while apprentices are in school, if required. The funding directly to support apprenticeship participation in BC has decreased due to additional funds being allocated to ITOs and the increase in staffing within the ITA.

In addition to the political parties and groups identified in this chapter, there were several contributing groups who largely influenced development and implementation of policies. Those groups included government funded entities as well as non-government, unions, employer associations, educators, and sector councils. The federal government created the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) in 2000 with operational funding provided by the Sector Council program. CAF’s primary mandate is to engage in research and promotion for the apprenticeable trades and “[p]articipants work collaboratively to support vibrant and innovative apprenticeship systems and policies with a view to developing a highly-skilled, inclusive and mobile skilled trades (sic) workforce” (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2012).
Despite persistent efforts to be more inclusive of specific target groups, such as Aboriginals, women, immigrants, and youth through massive media campaigns, such as Skilled Trades: A Career You Can Build On, there has been little improvement. Barriers to accessing apprenticeship, such as negative perceptions and employer disengagement, continue to plague participation. (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2004). In a 2011 survey, CAF notes “there is a perception among stakeholders that more could be done in terms of reducing barriers to apprenticeship training across Canada and within local areas.” Respondents recommended “there should be additional opportunities to discuss and share information among stakeholders across the country” (p. 7). Public and private educators have had little representation in the reports prepared by CAF despite their rich and critical roles.

The Canada Council of Director of Apprenticeship (CCDA) remains an influential body consisting of the directors of provincial and territorial apprenticeship organizations, along with two HRSDC representatives who set individual policies and practices for apprenticeship. The CCDA’s mandate is primary to work with industry to develop a skilled labour force, and facilitate labour mobility throughout Canada. CCDA holds responsibility for The Red Seal program, which engages employers, unions, industry, training institutions, and apprentices in developing, implementing, and recognizing Red Seal trades and credentials, promoting high standards in occupational training, fostering harmonization in training among jurisdictions, and increasing public awareness of apprenticeship training and certification. CCDA is housed within HRSDC, under the auspices of Service Canada. Although journeypersons have flexibility in workplace
mobility, apprentices still struggle when moving between provinces for recognition of prior training and work experience.

During the three decades of federal politics, the Liberals and Conservatives held power, the former favouring a centralized approach and the latter a more decentralized approach to human resource development. With both parties, however, primary focus was on reducing unemployment and increasing competitiveness in a rapidly changing world. Economies became more closely tied with the development of human capital and production. Neoliberalism, through technology and globalization in particular, influenced policy direction. During the three decades in question, economic conditions changed rapidly, affecting Canada and its relationships with its major trading partners and competitors.

In formulating the rules for the production and transformation of skills policy in apprenticeship, I look at how the local discursive practices of the ruling parties, as well as economic fluctuations, changes to society, and the emergence of neoliberalism during the three decades examined in this study affected policy directions and decisions. While some of those movements resulted from different political parties with differing ideologies, others came about due to economic changes, and some emerged to affect social changes. Neoliberalism, in particular, sought to limit government intervention in free markets. The tenets of neoliberalism apply to free markets and supply and demand of labour; however, Hunter (2012) points out, “it should be noted that education is not like any other commodity and does not exhibit all of the characteristics essential to fully develop an economic market” (p. 25). Consistently,
governments hold the view that apprenticeship training should be in the hands of industry and apprentices treated like a commodity.

Industry has played a major role throughout all periods as employers and training partners, although both of those areas have been volatile and unpredictable. In its discursive practice, industry laid claim to demands for labour but participated minimally in human-resource development and training. The critical relationship between industry and post-secondary institutions is strongly identified for its importance in apprenticeship and the power transmitted in discourses in policy development and implementation. A fracture appears in the power relationship and the dominant discourse of industry in training. Post-secondary institutions have been variously included and excluded in policy decisions affecting apprenticeship training.

Federal governments shifted funding from provincial training facilities, as industry claimed that there was a disconnection between supply and demand of labour and that institutions were not responding as required. Employer-sponsored training programs are funded with EI money. Despite the recognition of investment in human capital and required contributions to EI, employers remained critical of returns on investment. Skilled labour shortages and the development of skilled workforce discourses remained constant throughout all periods.

There have been continued attempts to engage employers in the apprenticeship system; however there appears to be little improvement in the employment of apprentices. Employers continue to be engaged in the development of the standards and curricular
outcomes of particular trade programs but not in the hiring and employment of apprentices.

Forecasts for the demand for a more skilled workforce particularly in the trades remains unsubstantiated; however, no data has been created to show specific shortages. Public and private educators and trainers have remained largely outside the policy discourse, continuing to be viewed as providers rather than stakeholders of the apprenticeship system. Apprentices themselves are overlooked as participants in the policy-making process. They appear as potentially skilled “workers” rather than as “students,” or as individuals in the apprenticeship system, but rarely as participants who contribute to the discourse.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to provide an overview of the context and history of the key policies that have contributed to the discourses on skills policy in apprenticeship. The context of the documents, as they occur over time, reflects the political ideology and economics of that era. While the documents show a marked relationship between the political parties in power, they also reflect the contexts of apprenticeship, skill, and policy, and the roles of the various stakeholders in the development and implementation of those policies. The chapter provides context for the political/ideological economic or social elements activities that occurred to stimulate policy development and change, and the relationships formed with other policies.

Recurring discourses and themes will be critically examined in the following chapter. The particular discourses will focus on 1) the discourse of unemployment/employment, 2) the discourse of employer/industry roles, and 3) the discourse of training/education. All three
discourses reflect upon the contexts of policy, apprenticeship and skill, particularly from a power/knowledge perspective.
Chapter 5: Discursive Themes and Analysis

The men and the work of the men on ferries, railroads, coasters, fish-boats, canals;
The hourly routine of your own or any man’s life, the shop, yard, store, or factory,
These shows all near you by day and night – workman! Whoever you are, your daily life!
In that and them the heft of the heaviest – in that and them far more than you estimated, (and far less also,)
In them realities for you and me, in them poems for you and me,
In them, not yourself – you and your soul enclose all things, regardless of estimation,
In the development of good – in them all themes, hints, possibilities.

Walt Whitman, 1881

5.1 Examining the Texts

Fairclough (1992) notes that CDA is used to examine the contexts of the texts developed over time in relation to discourses being analyzed. I undertook the contextual analysis in Chapter 4 describing the emergence of federal and provincial initiatives, the priorities and the changing political contexts between the federal and provincial forces from 1980 to 2010. Chapter 4 contributes significantly to this chapter by providing the context of the various discourses.

In this chapter, I offer a discussion and analysis of the findings from my examination of the policy texts in three sections. The first two sections essentially respond to the research questions. In these sections, I undertake a discussion of the central, significant, and contributing discursive themes that emerged. I also follow Gale’s suggestion that policy analysis should contain the three elements of the why, how, and what of the texts. I have added the who element, as it is important that the individuals and groups who contribute to the policy
texts be identified. The final section provides the critical discourse analysis of the themes in relation to the dialectical relationship between discourse and social practice. In using critical discourse analysis, I am individualizing and describing the discursive formations of the texts to compare them as well as distinguish them within the time in which they were created (Foucault, 2005).

Two significant themes emerged in the review of the texts. Those significant themes – skilled labour shortages and development of a skilled workforce – are explored in the first two sections in this chapter. In the first section, I present an exploration of the significant skilled labour shortages discursive theme within neoliberal and human capital political and economic ideologies and the contributing and recurring themes of unemployment and return on investment, responding to the first research question:

What forces – political, economic and ideological – have driven, and are driving, policy development at federal and provincial levels in defining skills for apprentices?

The following diagram illustrates, visually, the interrelation of the central, significant and recurring discursive themes that emerged from the review of the texts for the first research question.
In the second section, I examine the significant theme of a skilled workforce discourse within the connective themes of industry and training, along with the significant and contributing themes that emerged of employment and employers, and barriers and perceptions answering the second research question:

What role had policy assigned to the post-secondary education system in relation to the development of a “skilled” workforce at the implementation stages?

The following diagram illustrates, visually, the discursive themes for research question two. The central theme is overlapped by the contributing and recurring themes.
Figure 5.2 – Thematic Analysis – Policy Implementation Phase

I am answering both research questions in this chapter, as there is an evident link between the political, economic, and ideological forces that develop apprenticeship skills policy and the implementation of those policies at public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia. The power relationship amongst the various actors is portrayed not only in the development of the policies but also in the implementation. Responding to the two research questions in this chapter provides a deeper understanding of the findings as well as brings clarity to the analysis.

In addressing these questions I conducted an in-depth review of the multiple texts identified in Appendix A to determine central and contributing themes that supplement the *discursive apprenticeship policy network*.

The critical analysis of the thematic discourses at the conclusion of the chapter identify the discursive constructions that exist in the political, economic, and ideological contexts of
skills policy, as well as power relations, naturalization of language, and distribution of social goods. The discursive practices and rules of production of the practices within skills policy in apprenticeship identify who produces the rules and their use of power and knowledge. I also look at how that power is transmitted through policy development and implementation.

5.2 Skilled Labour Shortages Discourse: Politics, Economics and Ideology

In this section, I examine the central discourse of skilled labour shortages, and the recurring discourses of neo-liberalism and human capital theory within apprenticeship that emerged in the analysis of the texts. The review of the texts also brought forward significant contributing discourses of unemployment and return on investment that supported, or contended, the skilled labour shortages dialogue, causing tension.

The situated meaning and the range of meanings in the context of the policy texts developed over time in relation to skill and apprenticeship impacts the relationships, represented in power as well as ideology, of the individuals and groups who are referenced in them. As is illustrated in Chapter 4, various political parties and ideologies were in power over the three decades discussed. They brought with them particular perspectives, representing key participants and economic conditions that resulted in skill policy development to suit the particular periods. The groups and individuals identified as central to skills policy in apprenticeship as an institution and how they establish their power relationships and ideological perspectives appear in the documents over the entire period of this study.

In 1980, a parliamentary task force was established with a mandate “to study the serious shortages of certain critical skilled trades in Canada and the mismatches in labour market
where these shortages and high unemployment exist side by side” (1981, p. 4). The ruling federal Liberal party and provincial Social Credit party placed high priority on the results of the task force’s study and the resulting recommendations set off a series of policy initiatives that have impacted apprenticeship training in Canada and British Columbia over the following 30 years. The task force explained their mandate:

We were told that unless corrective policy measures are taken soon, shortages will worsen as we move into the ‘80s. Paradoxically, these shortages exist side by side with unacceptable rates of unemployment (Parliamentary Task Force on Employment Opportunities for the '80s, 1982, p. 67).

Two outstanding themes emerged from the task force’s mandate, the first being the shortage of skilled labour and the second being unemployment. I begin the analysis by attempting to provide a suitable definition of the phrase “skilled workforce” as it relates to meeting skilled-labour shortages. I will return to the contributing theme of unemployment further in this section.

A suitable, one-purpose definition of a skilled workforce is extremely difficult to assign, given the multiple ways that the phrase is used within political, economic, or ideological context. As an example, the BC Labour Force Development Board defined labour force as “[t]hose who are either working for pay or profit (employed) or not working but actively seeking work (unemployed)” (1995, p. 50). I offer the following definition: “persons who have or show the knowledge, ability, or training to perform certain activities or work tasks well because of their special abilities or training, who are engaged in, or are available, for work.”
Neither definition indicates that apprenticeship is the only means for individuals to be able to perform work-related activities due to their specific formal or informal training or where the acquisition of the knowledge or abilities will take place, either at the workplace or at a training institution. What is clear is that knowledge and ability are required to perform the tasks of trade work.

The concept of “skilled” appears to be essential as an adjective that gives status to a workforce that can produce and compete in a global economy. With the declaration of the parliamentary task force that there is a serious shortage of certain skilled trades in Canada, apprenticeship policy became firmly positioned within the “skilled labour shortage” active labour market policy discourse as a means of addressing the problem, although the Parliamentary Task Force on Employment Opportunities for the '80s had very early recognized that “[i]t does not make sense for employers to complain that they are short of skilled workers when they do very little themselves to correct the problem" (1982, p. 67).

Apprenticeship has been, and continues to be seen as, key to overcoming the Canadian skills-crisis, strongly influenced by neoliberalism and human capital theory.

5.2.1 Neoliberalism and a shortage of skilled workers

Ozga (1999) explains neo-liberalism as "belief in the unfettered free market as economically beneficent allied to political ideas stressing the importance of individual freedom and the need to curtail state intervention and interference in individual lives" (p. 59). Jessop (2006) concurs with Ozga’s definition, further identifying other key elements of neoliberalism:

1. Legitimatizing the authority of particular individuals, classes or social
categories and the authenticity of their collective view of the world.

2. Economic liberalization promoting competition in the open market place.

3. A strong emphasis on deregulation, giving greater economic freedom from state control and legal restrictions.

4. Privatization where possible of the public sector involvement in the direct or indirect provision of goods and services.

5. The commoditization of the residual public sector to promote the role of market forces, either directly or through market proxies.

6. A focus on globalization and encouraging mobility of both capital and labour.

7. Reduced direct taxation to expand the scope for market activity.

In reviewing the texts, all of the above items apply to the development of skills policies as governments have shifted priorities to meet the needs of free market mechanisms. A key shift occurred in the 1990s, when the federal government loosened its hold on apprenticeship funding in favour of transferring training dollars to the provinces. Another major shift was the legitimization of the industry-led system, where industry had previously been participants in the discourse; they became the major drivers of policy.

Economic policies, through EI and human resource development, were adopted to promote competition, particularly in training. Whereas publicly funded institutions and unions were major deliverers of apprenticeship training until the early 1990s, the federal government began to promote more alternatives, including private and alternative training, such as on-line
delivery. Seat purchases, which guaranteed apprentices’ placement in public post-secondary institutions, were eliminated and funds were allocated to an open-bid system to deliver training. The open-bid process signifies the adoption of apprentice commodification. Best practices for alternative trades training in B.C. (Norman and Langill, 2006) recommended the use of media and technology, self-paced learning, and mobile training to replace the in-school component of apprenticeship.

Over time, both federal and provincial governments put more emphasis on individual apprentices and employers to ensure that they were aware of and following prescribed guidelines, while decreasing state regulations. Guidelines became more open to interpretation. A focus on the need for the mobility of apprentices in order to fill gaps in their unemployment and to fill labour demands has been strongly emphasized as both a recruiting tool and economic benefit. Skilled labour immigration has steadily declined over the past three decades; however, new policies target a mobile international workforce. Finally, direct benefits have been offered to both employers and apprentices as incentives to promote more participation in training.

Governments claim that skills policy in apprenticeship contributes to social investment by minimizing their intervention and promoting individual participation in the workforce. The thickly veiled rationale is that employability, through training, eradicates unemployment and assists in developing individual capabilities. Specifically, employers and industry require less government interference of the labour supply and demand. Responsibility would then be placed on individuals to become more productive, increasing earning potential and innovation.
through knowledge acquisition. Apprenticeship training is seen, in a neoliberal sense, to increase investment in individuals’ value and productivity through knowledge and skill acquisition.

The National Training Act of 1980 was created to address massive changes in the global labour market, which came about primarily due the adoption of neoliberal economics and ideologies within politics in Canada. The Act specifically notes:

The purpose of this Act is to establish a national program to provide occupational training for the labour force and thereby to better meet the need for skills created by a changing economy and to increase the earning and employment potential of individual workers (Government of Canada, 1980).

A definition of “occupational training” “means any instruction, other than university instruction, that provides a person with skills for, or improves a person’s skills in, an occupation” (Government of Canada, 1980). Initially, there was no indication as to what system of national occupational training program would be used to address increased earning and employment potential for the labour force.

It would appear that apprenticeship became the de facto institution that would be used to respond as an active labour-market adjustment program that would enhance skill-development and the allocation of labour toward basic neoliberal market forces. As an institution, apprenticeship is assigned the role of the vehicle by which to meet the demand for skilled labour. The apprenticeship system was expanded to meet the needs of a highly skilled workforce that could fulfill labour shortages while also addressing unemployment. Sharpe and
Gibson note that “[a]s an institution that provides training, the apprenticeship system has been the subject of considerable policy interest” (2005, p. 13) while at the same time, policy makers question whether or not the system can be counted upon to fulfill demands for more skilled workers in the knowledge economy and to increase productivity. HRDC offers:

Workers in the skilled trades, in particular, have been identified as essential to building and maintaining Canada’s place in the knowledge-based economy. An adequate supply of skilled trades workers is the key to keeping Canada economically strong and socially sound (Government of Canada: HRDC, 2002).

Further discourse points to the relationship between neoliberal policies adopted in Canada and the primary rationale for its adoption in alleviating skilled labour shortages. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, a strong voice for business and industry, proclaims that there are “[f]our main forces are driving the global skills crisis: demographics, technology, globalization and changing job skill requirements (2008, p. 25). The shift in Canada’s workforce has been primarily due to the aging of the largest group, the Baby Boomers, those who are moving out of the workforce into retirement; the shift has also been influenced by lower birthrates and changes in immigration patterns. Immigration, in particular, has contributed immensely to Canada and B.C.’s skilled workforce. The Parliamentary Task Force on Employment Opportunities notes:

A large part of the skilled-labour shortage problem is due to the fact that, historically, we have not done enough industrial training in Canada. We have relied on immigration as a source of our trained and skilled labour because it was easier
to bring skilled labour to Canada than to train Canadians. Many industries, relying heavily on immigration over the years, did not develop the capacity to provide their own on-the-job training programs. These sources became less certain as suppliers of our skilled labour as employment opportunities expand for skilled people in their own home countries. In addition, with the slow down in population growth in countries which have traditionally provided our skilled labour, this situation will worsen. As world demand for skilled labour increases, the possibility of world-wide shortages becomes more real (1982, p. 32).

While immigration had been a major source of skilled labour in the past, one document specifies:

In the past, immigration has been viewed as a method of responding to shortages of skilled personnel in Canada. With unemployment currently at unacceptably high levels and with acceptance by industry that is has a responsibility to train, the Board strongly recommends that immigration not be used by the Government as a policy tool to respond to future needs for skilled workers. (Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 1984, p. 17).

In making this statement, the provincial government had initiated policy contributing to the current skilled worker shortages, although ITAC, PAB’s predecessor, later warned:

Here and globally, the labour force is aging and many workers are approaching retirement. Meanwhile, birth rates are decreasing and the number of people retiring will soon exceed the number of young people entering the work force. Even
with increases in the number of working women and higher immigration levels, economists believe that by the end of this decade, the work force will have stopped growing and B.C. will lose more workers each year than it gains (Industry Training Apprenticeship Commission, 2001).

Texts point to the idea that technology, another element identified as contributing to the global skills crisis, is a major force driving skilled-worker shortages. Definitions of what technology means, how it is applied, and association with productivity vary vastly within neoliberal discourse of skilled worker shortages. The use of the terms “hard” and “soft” technology delineate how work is done and who does the work. Herschbach (1995) defines technology as more than technique and process, as it is inextricably linked with the development of science, along with an emphasis on knowledge. The British Columbia Labour Force Development Board (BCLFDB) provides a broader definition with emphasis on the process:

Technological change consists of applying new technologies to old tasks and developing entirely new products and processes. There is the “hard” technological change associated with computers and robotics, but there is also what may be termed the “soft” technological change in work organization and processes that are often associated with new technologies, such as flattening organization, increased front-line decision-making and the loss of middle-management jobs (1995, p. 5).

The emphasis on technology, in the various ways that it is described and defined in the texts, is said to also bring about changing job-skill requirements. One document relates:
The shift from a “working force” to the “learning force” will not be an easy one but, aside from being a necessary change when coping with the new reality, it does offer potential benefits such as greater work flexibility, a wider range of work choices, and ultimately, greater personal and work fulfillment (British Columbia Labour Force Development Board, 1995, p. 7).

The reader may view this statement as having negative impact on workers, discouraging them from adjusting from working to learning. The opening statement detracts from the message that is meant to encourage workers to prepare for changing job skill requirements. The text also limits its application to apprentices whose working/learning model is customary.

Globalization, in particular, impacts the development of skills policy in Canada and British Columbia. Ozga (1999) claims “[i]t is necessary to understand the two processes of globalization and economizing of education policy, because they have such an impact on potential answers to policy research questions like where education policy comes from, and in whose interest it is made” (p. 58). Glenn (2007) describes globalization as an outcome of various structural processes that manifest in different ways in the economy, politics, and culture. It has resulted in stronger social and economic relations between distant countries, shaping events such as skilled-labour shortages and policies. Globalization appears frequently in the documents, although its ties to the development of skills policy in apprenticeship are often abstract, leaving a wide range of interpretation open to readers of texts. Broad definitions such as one provided by BCLFDB may confuse both policy developers and readers:

The phrase globalization describes recent changes to the world economy and
reflects the portability of new technologies, declining transportation costs, reduced trade barriers and more integrated financial markets. Increasingly, global companies can readily shift the production of all or parts of products to wherever the mix of skilled workers, labour costs, materials and infrastructure offers the greatest potential to compete in a global market (British Columbia Labour Force Development Board, 1995, p. 4).

Others note that globalization is responsible for the high demand for skilled workers, which makes it difficult for B.C. employers to attract and keep skilled workers, as there are so many opportunities. A pattern appears frequently in both government and non-government documents that recognize both skilled labour shortages and the linkage to globalization. The following text appears in a document produced from Premier Mike Harcourt’s speech at a summit established to address skills-development and training in B.C.

Building a skilled workforce is now seen, more than ever, as critical to British Columbia’s ability to produce good jobs for ourselves and the next generation of workers in a changing global economy....We must begin to value skills development much more highly than we have in the past. Our future depends on it. As a province that earns its livelihood through trade, we’re powerfully affected by external forces. We cannot design the world economic order to suit the style of life to which we are accustomed to living. Like it or not, we have to compete in a global economy (British Columbia Institute of Technology, 1993, p. 1).
The reader is left to ponder whether the provincial government is, in any way, able to affect its own skills policy direction if B.C. is to remain coexistent within the demands and needs of the global economy. Canadian and British Columbia policy addressing skilled labour shortages is deeply entrenched within neoliberal ideology and globalization.

CAF, with its strong ties to HRSDC, outlined in its 2004 report how globalization and development of new markets leads to more competition, making a strong statement about human resources, specifically within the realm of apprenticeship:

Skill shortages, declining birthrates, an aging workforce, and increasing global competitiveness in Canada are all combining to create an environment in which human resources are the country’s number-one comparative advantage—or weakness, if Canadians do not respond to this challenge. For this reason, skill shortages and the need to be innovative in how we develop and utilize human resources have become top public policy and private-sector concerns in Canada (p. 7).

The discourse of who should be responsible for training appears to be significant within the neoliberal discourse of skilled-labour shortages. While CAF was addressing human resource development, the report was less direct in stating the relationship between the global economy and apprenticeship as a means to address skilled labour shortages. The association of public policy to private sector concerns is tied to a national crisis whereby a strong nationalistic voice appears for all Canadians to rise up and respond. The identification of who would be responsible for being involved in the process is evident. CAF points out that Canadians,
generally, must be held responsible to meet the challenges of skilled labour shortages. Other texts point to the need for collaboration and partnerships as essential to the development and delivery of a skilled workforce:

Business, labour, government and education and training communities all need to take joint action now. B.C.’s economy and society will be seriously shared without joint action (Industry Training Apprenticeship Commission, 2001, p. i).

BC’s Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development, in a much later report, notes that “[c]ollaboration is essential to delivering a skilled workforce to support British Columbia’s economic future” (2010, p. 2).

While the identification of who is responsible for policy development and reform is evident, the how remains problematic. HRDC (2002) claims that increased investments in industry training and apprenticeship should be identified as part of the solution to the skills dilemma.

A key part of a strategy to address our province’s skills needs involves partnerships and joint action. Such a strategy needs to be driven by employers and employees who best know the skills needed and how and where learning should be provided for maximum access and participation (2001, p. i).

The joint forces of technology and globalization also occur regularly in the texts. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, a powerful organization influencing skills policy direction in Canada proclaims:

the international economy is moving along at a dizzying pace, driven by the forces of technology and globalization. In this new and dynamic environment,
the demand for technical and skilled workers will only increase . . . Canada is not immune to these forces (2008, p. 3).

The text provides a strong reminder to policy developers that globalization and neoliberal ideology continue powerfully to influence skills policy development. Neoliberal politicians and policy analysts support the use of human capital theory in apprenticeship skills policy as they see the gains from investment, through education and training, benefiting primarily the private individuals who participate. Hunter (2012) notes

Education policy in the new-liberal era was not focusing as much on directly improving social mobility so that the growing middle class would demand more goods and services. It was focused on supplying a particular type of human capital so that the supply of goods and services could be optimized (p. 26).

There is a strong indication, initially in the texts examined, that the apprenticeship system is used as a social means for educating/training a skilled workforce and building economic stability:

The general public interest is served by the apprenticeship training system, in that the process helps to ensure that the province has available the trade skills required to develop and maintain the businesses and industries which make its economy grow ultimately to the benefit of the general population. In addition, there is a government responsibility to ensure that training opportunities are available to individuals so that they might acquire marketable skills which can bring them job opportunities and employment security (Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 1984, p. 18).
The discourse of industry and training is evident in all texts and is examined in detail in the section 5.2.1. The reader is strongly directed to attach training to industry. The statement above leads the reader to interpret that skills shortages occur because there is a lack of direction being taken by government in favour of employers, particularly the “how” and “where” of learning to increase skills.

While there is an apparent intention in the discourse to meet skilled-labour shortage demands, the policies developed often under-achieved these goals, instead focusing on larger issues related to globalization and technology, ignoring the subtler but more critical issues of how the apprenticeship model could be used as a viable response to the need for more, or better, skilled workers. The shifts inherent in the policies, as well as the power relations within the political, economic, and educational institutions and employment that support apprenticeship skills training remain disconnected.

5.2.2 Skilled labour shortages, human capital: unemployment and return on investment

Scholars have argued that human capital perspectives on skill-formation ignore the social context in which individuals choose to invest in training (Schuetze & Sweet in Ashton, 1999). The texts reviewed would confirm that statement. There is a noticeable absence of discourse regarding the benefits of skill development, either in policy or in text, for apprentices. Tension emerges in the apprenticeship-training policy language because it focuses on the benefits to industry, while at the same time employers proclaim that all of the benefits of training are primarily for the apprentice. This in the face of policy makers espousing views that
training is a form of investment in human capital and should be regarded as essential to both competitive advantage and to the long-term well-being of workers.

Education is seen as an investment in human capital that pays off in terms of higher productivity. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce views skills shortages as a critical economic issue impacting Canadian productivity and competitiveness. Canada competes in a global marketplace and it is vital that we produce our goods and services as efficiently as possible. “Having the people to produce those goods and services is a key part of economic success . . . Not only is Canada facing a skilled labour shortage, but a productivity problem as well” (The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, 2008, p. 2).

Skills policies are also principally influenced by the discourse of human capital theory, particularly in meeting skilled labour demands. Texts point to specific definitions of human capital. Becker, in Human Capital (1964), describes human capital as an investment in education or training, in particular focusing on monetary rates of return, via production, in relation to the level of education or training. Murray and Sharpe define human capital as “the stock of knowledge, skills, and abilities embodied in individuals that determines their level of productivity” (2011, p. 2). Taking into account Becker’s description and Murray and Sharpe’s definition, I determine that human capital theory points to a strong correlation between training, employment and production that is seen in apprenticeship skills policy as a means to meet the demands for a skilled workforce.

Determining whose demands and in what way the demands are to be met, is not always apparent in the policy texts. The discourse of the texts speaks largely to human capital theory and its
relationship to skilled-worker shortages, principally in relation to investment in humans, unemployment, and return on investment:

In the long run, British Columbia’s human capital – the knowledge, skills and experience of its people – is undoubtedly the most critical element in its economic success as a province, and will play a dominant role in determining how BC fares in an increasingly competitive and fast-changing world (British Columbia Labour Force Development Board, 1995, p. 1).

BCLFDB’s proclamation is followed up in later text by ITAC:

Right now, there are significant skill shortages in some industries. And soon, every sector of the economy will be affected. Across the board, business, labour, private researchers, educators and government agree that ‘human capital’ is the single most important factor ensuing the long-term health of B.C.’s economy (2001, p. 4).

5.2.2 Unemployment

Apprenticeship skills policies are situated within active labour market policy, where trends are informed by macro-economic policy during particular periods. Returning to the statement made by the Parliamentary Task Force, the mandate was to look at both skilled labour shortages and high unemployment, thereby twinning the two issues. The solution was to use active labour market policies as they are usually aimed at integration of unemployed workers back into the workforce. COMPAS notes that active labour market policies were introduced “in contrast to passive income maintenance programs that tend to deter such an allocation” (2007,
Texts point to active labour-market policies being initially financed by unemployment insurance (UI) funding and programming and later through employment (EI) funding and programming with the addition of Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs) in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The LMDAs came about when the federal government handed over the funding for adult training, which included apprenticeship, to the provinces in 1996 when the Employment Insurance Act was passed, thus eliminating a major source of contention with the provincial governments (Government of Canada, 2007).

EI is a key component of apprenticeship training as apprentices receive reduced income support through EI when attending training.

Workers who participate in the apprenticeship process require input on a national basis, because they rely on the training education they receive to begin a career path, they support the program through unemployment insurance contributions and they work at a reduced income while in the program (Canadian Labour Development Board National Apprenticeship Committee, 1994, p. 2).

The reader is not told that reforms to the UI/EI Acts during the past 30 years have substantially changed the provision of income support to apprentices, as there are considerably higher costs associated with apprenticeship training (such as tools and equipment) as compared to other learners. By focusing on the social benefit/provision of income support to trainees with individual grants and loans, UI/EI policy has shifted the benefit to the individual apprentice’s
responsibility. The gap between the costs associated with apprenticeship training and their earning power has not received adequate attention, particularly given the absence of the voice of apprentices. Although there is strong reliance by apprentices upon the EI system to provide income while attending in-school training, no text exists to show that they have had input into the development and implementation of policy.

With the decentralization of training policy from the federal government to the provincial governments, economic policy within the realm of the development of a skilled labour market . . . has moved over time from a minor sub-set of the education portfolio under provincial jurisdiction, to an adjunct of economic policy with an associated intrusion of federal interest during the Keynesian period, to being rhetorically portrayed as the solution to a wide array of post-Keynesian policy problems including unemployment, competitiveness and national prosperity, to more recently being viewed as an individual and private matter chiefly connected to individual human capital accumulation . . . (Labour Education and Training Research Network, 1998, p. 1).

This statement clarifies that the funding transition brought with it the opportunity for the provincial government to address provincial, regional, and local unemployment issues with training. The need to address unemployment, in particular, was placed firmly within the realm of skills policy. Many politicians, economists, analysts, and other stakeholders in the apprenticeship skills policy area repeat the message. At a particular point in time, apprenticeship training was adopted as the model with which to increase earning and
employment potential, although the Parliamentary Task Force on Employment Opportunities note:

In theory, job seekers should be encouraged to take retraining programs in which employment opportunities are good and from which they can benefit. In practice, however, the aptitudes and needs of job seekers are often not properly identified and, as a result, they are put into training programs, which neither lead to improved employment possibilities nor benefit them in any other way (1982, p. 59).

The concern of the policy makers is centered upon the use of apprenticeship as a means to reduce unemployment. The Provincial Apprenticeship Board in B.C. defines apprenticeship as “[a] system of supervised employment through which an individual learns a skilled trade or occupation” (1984, p. 3), while also stating that “apprenticeship is NOT (capitals in original text) a system of job-creation; nor is it a catch-all solution to unemployment problems” (1984, p. 3). The definition provided does not indicate that there is a duality in apprenticeship for employment and training, only that apprentices become skilled on the job. At the same time, the second part of the quotation emphasizes that apprenticeship should not be used to solve ongoing issues around unemployment.

Following another economic downturn in B.C. and high unemployment, the provincial NDP government outlined their plan to develop SKILLS NOW, with “[a] forward-looking skills training plan to make sure students, workers and the unemployed get the new skills for the new jobs in our changing economy” (British Columbia, 1994, p. 1). The Parliamentary Task Force
on Employment Opportunities for the '80s notes, “[o]ddly enough, high levels of unemployment coincide with existing skilled-labour shortages (1982, p. 29). It appears that the discourse of apprenticeship training as a solution to a lack of skilled workers emerged over time as a functional way by which to deal with unemployment.

With the economic recovery that occurred in the late 1990s, due in large part to mass immigration to B.C. by Hong Kong Chinese and their demand for single family and multi-residential housing construction, a different discourse emerged that almost eliminated the discourse of unemployment from the skilled labour shortages discourse. The shift was not adequately taken into account by the federal government as they continued funding of training with EI dollars that were targeted for unemployed workers. The supply of potential apprentices has dwindled as birth rates and immigration slowed to a zero-growth population. There were simply no more unemployed people available to fill gaps in the workplace. The skilled labour shortages discourse took on a very different perspective in terms of industry demands for workers and the ability to supply apprentices.

5.2.3 Return on Investment

Throughout the documents, the skilled-worker shortage discourse is a major concern in terms of employers considering the costs associated with apprenticeship, particularly in their return on investment. As early as 1982, there was acknowledgment that “[t]he costs of training and retraining and the provision of incentives for people to accept training should not be looked on as ‘social assistance’, but rather as an investment in our economic future” (Parliamentary Task Force on Employment Opportunities for the '80s, 1982, p. 32).
Various texts produced by CAF attempt to address employer concerns, particularly by pointing out cost-benefit ratios. “Although the costs associated with apprenticeship training are generally quantifiable, the benefits are more difficult to measure” (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2009, p. 6). Sharpe and Gibson point out that substantial evidence exists that apprenticeships are maintained at a net cost of employers (2005, p. 7). Although CAF has allocated considerable resources and provided various documents to employers showing benefits, there continues to be resistance to apprenticeship training. In particular, employers indicate concern over journeyperson wages and time spent during training; however, CAF cites benefits to both journeyperson and apprentice in skill enhancement and productivity. One particular document points out qualitative and quantitative benefits:

For each trade, the cost-benefit results indicate that apprentices begin to generate net benefits for employers within a short period of time. This is further supported by the survey results. Specifically, the majority of employers (66.1%) indicated that the apprentice’s productive value to their organization exceeds the training costs by the end of the second year or earlier . . . In addition to the quantitative benefits associated with apprentices, employers indicated that there are qualitative benefits of apprenticeship training (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2006, p. 8).

Finally, CAF appeals to employers to invest in apprenticeship training by noting:

Overall, apprenticeship training is a worthwhile investment to employers.

Although the costs and benefits associated with apprenticeship training will vary
on an employer-by-employer basis, the results suggest that apprenticeship training builds a skilled workforce we need for a strong bottom line (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2006, p. 8).

Skills Competences Canada point out that employers will benefit from hiring apprentices and investing in the long-term success of Canada’s economic stability and growth (Skills Competences Canada, 2004). Sharpe and Gibson, however, present a different view, noting that “[e]mpirically, studies suggest that training and apprenticeship are costly, where the returns to employers in increased productivity do not offset the resources of time and money put into training” (2005, p. 21).

Despite their concerns about skills shortages, texts point to the reluctance of many employers to create or fully support apprenticeship programs, particularly due to the practice of poaching. “Poaching,” often seen as a disincentive to apprenticeship training, refers to the situation where competing employers hire away recently qualified journeypersons. Employers often regard apprenticeship training as expensive and many fear that, once trained, journeyed employees will go elsewhere. Financial incentives should be directed to employers such as lowering the cost of investment in apprentices for employers, therefore lowering the costs of poaching and encourage collective investment in apprenticeship training by firms (Sharpe, A. & Gibson, J., 2005).

ITAC outlines their recognition of the poaching problem by stating “In the face of the competitive labour market, employers risk losing their highly-skilled employees to other companies. In some cases, this makes employers less likely to invest in training” (2001, p. 11).
The Canadian Chamber of Commerce sets out its recommendation that “Canada must do more to encourage greater investment in training by employers, as well as to encourage individuals to invest in their own life skills” (2008, p. 17). Sharpe and Gibson, however, note:

Few structural barriers to employer investment exist, except collective action problems, employers arguing for support from government are essentially asking to have their own investments in training subsidized to meet expected demand. It is up to policy-makers to decide who should be responsible for these training costs and whether subsidization is a worthy investment (2005, p. 81).

The emphasis in the text is on the reluctance of employers to invest in training because they see it as a cost-cost situation that requires subsidization by government to increase appeal.

B.C.’s Ministry of Advanced Education maintains: “A key concern expressed by unions and associations was that employers are not always willing to commit to long-term training for employees” (2003, p. 4). Clearly, employer reluctance to make investments in apprenticeship training continues to be an issue, despite federal policy implementation to create employer and apprentice subsidies over the period between 2006 and 2010 (see Government of Canada budgets 2006-2010). No textual evidence exists of the B.C. government developing policies that provide for financial support for employers for training. In one text, ITAC, the provincial body responsible for apprenticeship in B.C., declares “[c]ompared to other countries, Canada ranks very low when it comes to investments in formal in-company training, however this varies widely by industry sector and company size” (2001, p. 10), while noting that “there are general
issues that concern both employers’ and employees’ investment in work-based training” (ibid, p. 11).

Employers show a reluctance to invest in training, as they believe returns are too low, thereby inhibiting the ability to adopt apprenticeship as a model to develop a skilled workforce. Employers continue to decline participating in apprenticeship training as they simply do not see an added value, or return on investment, despite the obvious benefits pointed out in human capital theory.

5.3 Skilled Workforce Discourse: Post-secondary Education

The preceding section focuses on an analysis of the central theme of the skilled labour shortages discourse within a political, economic and ideological framework that exists within neoliberalism and human capital theory, along with the recurring themes of unemployment and return on investments. In this section, I present an analysis of the discourse of the skilled workforce through industry and training. Industry figures prominently in the discourses of training and post-secondary education. Generally the discourse is concerned with employment and employers, and perceptions and barriers that encourage or discourage apprentice participation.

The power relationships between industry, government, and post-secondary institutions result in policy implications for post-secondary education at the implementation stages. Valuing the performance of the apprenticeship system depends on how one defines its role in the post-secondary education system and in the relationships between employers and the skilled labour market.
Skills have tended to be described in terms of how they are obtained, rather than of what they consist. Consequently, most statistics relate to educational attainment and credentials obtained, as proxies for ‘what people have the skills to do’ (British Columbia Labour Force Development Board, 1995, p. 18).

The text leads the reader to understand that credentials are an end unto themselves, when, in reality, the recipients do not actually meet expected standards. Specifically, credentials are used as recognition of educational completion for employment purposes by post-secondary institutions, apprenticeship bodies, and the federal government.

Standards figure prominently in the discourse of the post-secondary education system and apprenticeship training. Employers expect that apprentices meet certain standards in order to obtain the credentials. The technical training component provided by post-secondary institutions refers mostly to the delivery of skills identified by employers and sector councils. Training will play a significant role in building and maintaining Canada’s competitive workforce. (Canadian Labour Force Development Board, 1994, p. 19). A very complex organizational relationship exists between various bodies that provide credentials, which results in the responsibility for the technical training of a skilled workforce being left to post-secondary institutions in B.C.

While the federal government has moved its central role in training to the provinces, it has not completely disassociated itself from controlling apprenticeship policies and funding as part of its economic and social mandate, particularly for issuance of credentials. The combined forces of meeting the demands of a market economy for skilled workers and the social goods of
education and training bring about tensions in the development and implementation of skills policy, particularly in post-secondary education. Politicians and labour market analysts do not see society, as a whole, being the primary beneficiary of apprenticeship training. The federal government, through its relationships with the Red Seal, the CCDA, and provincial and territorial apprenticeship bodies, largely controls credentials.

Employer and labour representatives, as well as individuals, perceive a lack of consistency and jurisdictional harmony in provincial and territorial approaches to apprenticeship, by both apprenticeship boards and post-secondary institutions. Overall, “[t]his perceived absence of consistency often makes it difficult for apprentices and employers to understand rules, regulations and requirements” (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2004, p. 56). The rules appear to be different not only from province to province but also within regions.

Decentralization of skills policies has resulted in apprenticeship training being assigned a minor role in provincial education ministries, with major economic policy implications, although texts point to the importance of post-secondary institutions’ role in the training of a skilled workforce. “Public education institutions are, and should continue to be the principal source of technical training in the apprenticeship system” (Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 1984, p. 19). The emphasis on post-secondary’s role in training is clear at the policy-implementation stages, with very little input or influence at the policy-development phases.

As is noted in several texts that provincial governments are constitutionally responsible for education, though some texts point to the federal government as responsible for economic growth and for training to meet the needs of the economy.
The Federal Government spends a large amount of money buying training courses from provincial governments which in turn control the educational institutions providing these courses. Thus there is need for close cooperation between the two governments to ensure that the required courses are actually made available and that necessary changes are carried out by educational institutions in an organized manner (Parliamentary Task Force on Employment Opportunities for the '80s, 1982, p. 54).

The text points to the federal government’s power in holding the funding for training, while at the same time indicating the need for cooperation between the two levels of government who may hold differing values and ideologies. The role of the post-secondary education system is to implement training with little or no input into policy direction that determines the standards. Stress is placed on educational institutions ensuring the availability of training for a skilled workforce in an organized manner, despite the complexity of multiple government, industry, and private organizations providing policy direction.

The apprenticeship training system is created in a top-down manner, as per the following illustration, which allows for very little dialogue between skilled-workforce policy makers who are represented in the first six boxes, and the post-secondary education system responsible for technical training, which is presented in the final box.
The division of power between two tiers of government, along with the provincial governing body and a national certification body (The Red Seal), has created a very complex system of training, leading one provincial board to appeal for greater flexibility by empowering ministries to deal directly with public institutions to deliver technical training (Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 1984).

The following text specifically notes that the long-standing practice of dividing policy development creates issues for apprentices who attend post-secondary institutions for training. Appeals such as this have been largely ignored in favour of the top-down approach. The CFLDB explains:
Legislative responsibility for the apprenticeship training system resides with the provinces and territories. Each of the 12 jurisdictions has an Act governing apprenticeship, which allows it to select the trades to be designated apprenticeable and to establish standards for all aspects of apprenticeship training and certification. Thus, Canada has 12 apprenticeship training systems. As a result, the qualifications of tradespeople trained in one jurisdiction may not be recognized in another. This lack of recognition can act as a deterrent to labour force mobility (Canadian Labour Force Development Board, 1994, p. 3).

The reader will note that the provincial and territorial apprenticeship bodies hold a great deal of power in their responsibility to provide training, although lack of coordination between them contributes significantly to preventing the development of a skilled workforce throughout Canada. The Parliamentary Task Force on Employment Opportunities for the '80s relates, “[s]ince these standards vary form one province to the next, they may actually prevent the movement of skilled persons to areas with good employment prospects” (1982, p. 54). This text supports the statement made by CFLDB while further describing an obvious dysfunction of the apprenticeship training system as well as an impediment to apprentices.

The CFLDB asserts that the apprenticeship system can meet the need to provide a skilled workforce capable of competing in the global economy; however, they also contradict themselves by stating their concern over the noticeable lack of national standards, which impedes worker mobility and the ability of apprentices to transfer between post-secondary institutions to complete training.
The concept of standards figure prominently in various texts, mostly noting that industry is concerned with the lack of them. COMPAS points out [i]Inter-jurisdictional comparisons are especially tricky since occupations counted as involving apprenticeship training in one jurisdiction may not count in another” (2007, p. 6), and CFLDB adds “The lack of national standards for so many aspects of apprenticeship could seriously undermine the ability of this training approach to produce workers with the skill levels needed to compete in the global economy of today and tomorrow” (1994, p. 19). PAB, however observes that standards may be exceeded by individuals

At the same time, while every certified journeyman has successfully completed practical skills and technical training to required standards, many will exceed the required standard, each to a degree which reflects the individual’s abilities and desires to achieve (1984, p. 11).

PAB comments that standards can be controlled within public post-secondary institutions; however, the majority of apprenticeship training “is devoted to practical skills training in the workplace where supervision is provided by the employer, not the Branch or some other independent monitor” (1984, p. 26). Post-secondary institutions are limited in their control of the standards, which are established by government and industry.

“Maintaining the Red Seal certification was widely supported for guaranteeing standards of quality and mobility” (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2003, p. 3). This text suggests that there is wide support for the federal government to maintain standards; however, it gives no source as to where that support originates. Again, the federal government has established its
powerful position by monitoring standards for labour development while not enforcing cooperation of the separate apprenticeship boards. What is clear is that standards for training are controlled centrally causing apprentices to face uncertainty about the quality of their training, allowing employers the opportunity to exploit them. The Red Seal is, in fact, only of value to journeypersons, not apprentices who are completing their training. Until an apprentice completes his/her training, he/she is not recognized under the Red Seal.

The concept of the Red Seal has become very problematic as it maintains the same status it had when it was developed over 50 years ago. It is not clear how the Red Seal has figured in shifting and changing skills policy for apprenticeship. The standards set at the completion of apprenticeship have not been adequately addressed at the onset of programs. The various participants involved in contributing to Red Seal standards do so at the operational level of implementation by identifying curricular outcomes. The equally important issue of identifying appropriate entrance requirements is costly in terms of non-completion.

The system and the relationships of the various parties involved in apprenticeship training are far more complex than is suggested in many texts. As the Auditor General report states, “[t]he trades training system in British Columbia involves a number of organizations and stakeholders, all with different interests and mandates” (2008, p. 5). Those organizations and stakeholders are referred to in various texts as employers, public and private post-secondary institutions, industry, unions, and apprenticeship boards. The power relationship between and amongst the various partners and stakeholders is not clarified in the text. Their roles and
responsibilities, capabilities and abilities, values, and mandates are overlooked in favour of meeting an end goal.

5.3.1 Industry and training

“. . . industry is concerned about Canada’s ability to produce highly qualified tradespeople to meet the needs of today’s labour market – will there be enough trained people to meet demand?” (Canadian Labour Force Development Board, 1994, p. 19).

Industry and training are parallel themes. The text above refers to the acknowledgement of a need for training, while at the same time questioning how it will be done. No recognition is given to post-secondary institutions’ roles in providing technical training for apprentices. As the reader will note, the two themes of work and learning/industry and training appear disparate, but the link is critical to apprenticeship.

Many texts point to the fact that both federal and provincial governments place high value on the coexistence of industry and training in establishing training programs for apprentices. B.C.’s Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development declares that steps must be taken to “[s]trengthen regional partnerships between post-secondary institutions, economic development agencies, and employers to develop solutions to local labour market challenges” (2010, p. 15). A closer examination of the relationship between those bodies and apprenticeship training in post-secondary institutions appears in the discourse of industry and training.
As Gale has asks, “why are some policy actors involved in the production of policy (and not others)?” (2001, p. 387). Ball points out that there are strategies involved in licensing participants to be heard, particularly in relation to the agendas of some of the participants (1994). The texts often point to a lack of voice on behalf of post-secondary institutions, with emphasis placed consistently on the voice of industry in training. As the discourse of industry and training became more prominent, the texts change to focus on the dual purpose of apprenticeship as a model of work and learning, along with the role of post-secondary institutions as technical training providers.

“One way to think about apprenticeships is to situate them at the intersection of two concepts: the first is a method of training or educating student-workers, and the second is training for a particular set of occupations that are traditionally seen to centre on the skilled trades” (COMPAS, What are the desirable characteristics of a well-functioning apprenticeship system?, 2007, p. 5). Apprenticeship is a unique form of education in which apprentices not only learn skills in an academic setting, but also learn in a practical, work-based environment. The text provides a definition of the apprenticeship model that is critical to the delivery of training. Again, the relationship between industry and training is inherent in development of a skilled workforce. Specifically the relationship between industry and the “academic setting” is the focus of this text. Apprenticeship training is often characterized as industry-driven; however, it is important not to underestimate governmental influence.

Policy decisions, particularly related to budgets, are the most important determinant of apprenticeship training. The configuration of the education system is a key linkage in the
provision of training as well as the provincial regulatory regimes governing certification and safety regulations. As can be seen in the hierarchical model presented on page 165, provincial apprenticeship boards govern apprenticeship training in B.C.

Over the past 30 years, the mandates and governance models of those boards has largely impacted the delivery of apprenticeship training in public post-secondary institutions. Each of the three boards, PAB, ITAC, and ITA were created to reflect the political parties in power. Each has also had a different relationship with public post-secondary training. The Social Credit government was supportive of the public system, while the NDP encouraged union training centres and a more market-driven system by establishing guidelines for private trainers to offer training. The Liberal government initially strongly advocated for, and funded, private training centres, but eventually returned to public institutions. Union training centres have remained influential in some trades, but others have redirected their support to regional public post-secondary training.

During the 1980s, PAB was primarily responsible for ensuring employer-apprentice agreements that were enforced to keep apprenticeship training up-to-date with employment standards identified by industry in B.C. In addition to apprenticeship training, retraining and upgrading were identified within their scope of responsibilities. They define “retraining” as:

. . . new education and training for an individual who has been displaced in his or her employment for reasons of technology and/or economy. An individual displaced because the product of his or her skills has become obsolete, making the skills redundant, may require retraining in entirely new skills so that he or
she can find new employment. In that context, ‘retraining’ become more of a social matter to be dealt with in a broader context than apprenticeship (1984, p. 21).

The reader notes that PAB identifies there is a social responsibility for apprenticeship training to be available for those who are not employed due to changes in technology and/or the economy. The link between the old ways of doing work and new ways is evident, particularly as neoliberal ideology becomes more prominent. As well as retraining, PAB undertook to provide upgrading, which they define as

. . . training and education which, in one application, brings and individuals skills up to current standards within the trade or craft and, in a further application, enables the individual to develop ‘specialized’ skills covering specific job-or industry-related technology (1984, p. 21).

While PAB saw the responsibility for training as tri-partite between employers, individuals, and government, they do not acknowledge the relationship of the duality of industry and post-secondary institutions in training. Specifically, the relationships and roles were clearly defined: for employers are to train enough journeymen; individuals are to make a commitment to be productive on the job and in classroom; government is to encourage employers to do serious manpower planning, create an encouraging climate to train to meet province’s requirements; and for administration and regulation of the system (validating training, certification, scheduling classes) (1984, p. 13).
This text illustrates the non-recognition of post-secondary institutions in fulfilling the technical training component of apprenticeship. By doing so, it established an uneven power relationship between industry, government, apprentices, and post-secondary institutions.

The NDP government responded to ongoing concerns that there were not strong enough links between industry and training by creating ITAC to replace PAB. Early documents produced by ITAC included strong language showing support for an industry and training model.

Today’s labor (sic) market is changing significantly and we need an industry training and apprenticeship system to which can respond accordingly . . . we need to strengthen the links between learning and workplace (Ministry of Education, Skills and Training & Ministry of Labour, 1997, p. 1).

The reader will note that the emphasis has shifted from industry and training to become industry training – the word “and” has been eliminated. Clearly, the powerful relationship between industry and training has been established, despite the earlier observation that industry takes minimal initiative in establishing training programs within their workplaces.

“The mandate of the ITAC will be to create a new industry training and apprenticeship system which has the capacity to increase/expand the number of trained people, and to increase the contribution of all partners to the system” (Minister's Committee on the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC), 1997, p. 2). The mandate appears as a singular mission on behalf of a government organization, created to bring together a multitude of partners. The text does not point out, in particular, who the partners are or how they are represented in the mandate, nor does it clarify for the reader if attention to the needs of
apprenticeship training will be made the purview of individual partners or of the “system.” The principles and values of ITAC included terms such as “relevance” and “accountability” whereby “the system must be industry-driven” (1998, p. 1), and it “must produce a highly skilled workforce” (1998, p. 2).

All of the texts produced by the various apprenticeship boards would indicate that the government held the interests of industry in high regard, although there continues to be ongoing distrust between industry and training institutions. Industry has continued to resist mandatory training programs, while showing more interest in “voluntary training measures such as training trust funds, sector-based partnerships and wage subsidy programs” (Industry Training Apprenticeship Commission, 2001).

The ITA, created in 2004 by the Liberal government in B.C., was directed to address some key concerns that ITAC could not resolve, specifically the lack of flexible and accessible industry-led training. Of particular interest is the change in the title from an apprenticeship commission to be an apprenticeship “authority.” The ITA was established to become the ultimate power in apprenticeship training.

The structure of the ITA is also significantly altered to exclude many of the “partners and stakeholders” identified by other boards as critical to apprenticeship training to “significantly expand its direct engagement in and support for training” (Industry Training Authority, 2005, p. 1) because “... it has been recognized that industry challenges are best met through industry solutions” (ibid). The new board operates as an agent of the government to “increase the quality and quantity of industry training in British Columbia targeted to addressing current and

Two fundamental changes in the structure of the board include the creation of ITOs and “a non-stakeholder board consisting of nine members, predominantly employers” (Auditor General of British Columbia, 2008, p. 28). The concept of ITOs, which will have the responsibility to work directly with the post-secondary institutions to meet training needs, is based on a model used in New Zealand and Australia. They are not-for-profit legal entities (incorporated under the provincial Societies Act), which take lead responsibility for industry training within a particular sector. ITOs are established and operated by industry, and approved and financially co-supported by industry and the ITA” (Industry Training Authority, 2005, p. 2).

The language used in the ITA texts shows a marked disregard for the existence of post-secondary institutions and their role in delivery of technical training. With focus shifted to industry representation via ITOs, another level of intervention has been placed in apprenticeship training, further silencing the voices of the institutions. The reader notes the board representation of the apprenticeship community is now termed as “non-stakeholder,” while at the same time ITA asserts that it represents industry, leaving one to question how industry is to appear as a stakeholder under the new authority.

Other texts point to the roles and expectations of post-secondary institutions, now referred to as “trainers.”

Public and private trainers who deliver industry training will be expected to offer relevant programs, ensure employer and learner satisfaction, and to comply with
the information and accountability needs of government and industry. They will be key to ensuring that training is changing to match changes in industry and technology that require new skills sets and current knowledge of workplace standards. As in other programs areas, they will be expected to anticipate and respond effectively to the needs of learners and employers through collaborative planning processes aimed at developing an integrated post-secondary education system (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2002, p. 11).

The Ministry has inserted its power by assigning training conditions to public and private trainers, while meeting accountability standards set by industry and government. Trainers, referred to even more distantly as “they,” are provided with a list of criteria. The expectations identified in the text leave the reader to understand that other programs present models that will address deficiencies in the apprenticeship model.

Further directives are forthcoming from the Ministry of Advanced Education that establishes a process of “coopetition” amongst public and private training institutions. Trainers and institutions will compete for students and offer programs. (2002, p. 24). Use of language such as “compete” places the post-secondary institutions in the awkward position of vying for the same apprentices, thus disadvantaging some rural institutions.

5.3.2 Employment and employers

One of the most important current policy debates is about how education and training resources can be best utilized to ensure there is an optimum fit between
the needs of the workplace and the knowledge, skills and experience of current and future employees (British Columbia Labour Force Development Board, 1995, p. 1).

The text speaks to the ongoing relationship between apprenticeship training structure, employers, and employment. The discourse of skilled labour, particularly in apprenticeship, focuses on the relationship between employers and employment. In Canada, employers have complained that much of the knowledge and skills acquired in the education system is inadequate or irrelevant to the workplace (Schuetze and Sweet, 2003).

“Some employers expressed concerns over the usefulness of training and the support they receive from training institutions, and provincial and territorial apprenticeship administrators” (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2004, p. 50). This text points to the fact that employers have long held the belief that they do not get value from the post-secondary system in preparing workers for the workforce. In addition, by and large, employers do not want to be told how to train their employees. In fact, employers very often resist apprenticeships because they oblige employers to follow externally dictated rules and regulations, which they regard as inflexible and ill-suited to their needs (Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission of BC, 2001).

Specifically, the text recognizes that employers do not appreciate government intervention. Employers see rules and regulations as impediments to hiring, although government believes that it has a responsibility to make sure that apprentices are properly trained, and that the responsibility for delivery falls upon post-secondary institutions. However,
apprenticeship boards maintain that “there is a government responsibility to ensure that training opportunities are available to individuals so that they might acquire marketable skills which can bring them job opportunities and employment security” (Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 1984, p. 18). While on one hand, government insists that employers have the lead role in training so that apprentices meet the needs for skilled workers, it also persists in establishing itself as the purveyors of the training opportunities. Ultimately, it believes that offering employers a significant stake in the administration of the apprenticeship system will also offer greater cooperation in providing apprenticeships.

B.C.’s Ministry of Advanced Education continues to maintain, “[e]mployers will have more input into training content and delivery mechanisms” (2002, p. 24). Employability skills in particular, which are identified by employers, are embedded in training. BCLFDB defines employability skills as “[g]eneric skills and knowledge which help an individual worker to quickly become a productive participant in the modern workplace and which form the base of future learning and success” (1995, p. 50); however, employers maintain that apprentices often lack these skills. (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2004). Employers see employability skills, which have evolved into essential skills, as critical to the development of apprentices, but place little faith in the ability of post-secondary institutions or government to deliver. The notion of “generic” skills is vague and largely undefined.

Employers also determine that, in addition to employability/essential skills, apprentices should also acquire broader skills that allow for greater mobility. With the multiple apprenticeship boards not recognizing trades training in other province and territories,
employers see that

[t]here was an emerging employer consensus that broad skill sets are vital for certain regions where workers are required to be trained in all aspects of a trade, while in the lower mainland specialty skills might be useful because of the size and demands of the labour market (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2003, p. 3).

Interestingly, CAF points out that “[m]any employers have expressed the concern that apprenticeship with a single firm often leads to an overly narrow skills set, particularly when smaller firms might specialize in a specific aspect of the trade” (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2004, p. 47). Other texts (see return on investment section) point to employers being unwilling to offer apprenticeship training because of fears of poaching. While employers demand broad skill sets, they limit the acquisition to only some apprentices – how would training providers identify those apprentices?

Given the varying perspectives of skill held by many employers, the challenge will be in identifying the specific skills required to build a skilled workforce. Matching those skills, through training, with the demand from employers in communities across several regions further complicates the implementation. Despite ongoing mixed messages and a lack of coordination and cooperation amongst various stakeholders, the Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development in B.C. aims to “[s]trengthen regional partnerships between post-secondary institutions, economic development agencies, and employers to develop solutions to local labour market challenges” (2010, p. 15). Claims continue that greater input by employers into the content of apprenticeship programs will improve the fit between the skills provided to
apprentices and the skills demanded by employers, although the identification of those skills remains ambiguous.

With the continuing ambiguity comes a great deal of uncertainty by prospective apprentices. Apprenticeship continues to be plagued by low participation, for varied reasons. The following outlines the recurring themes of barriers and perceptions.

5.2.3 Barrier and perceptions

“The Task Force agreed that steps should be taken to correct the attitudes towards blue-collar skilled work as part of our employment policies” (Parliamentary Task Force on Employment Opportunities for the '80s, 1982, p. 64). Negative attitudes toward apprenticeship, also called “blue-collared” work, have prevailed despite policies attempting to encourage participation. The barriers and perceptions that plague apprenticeship continue to contribute to the discourses of skilled-worker shortages and the development of a skilled workforce. In particular, skills policies need to respond to negative perceptions. Very few stakeholders believe that their efforts to overcome barriers have resulted in a change of perception (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2011).

A 2004 report commissioned by CAF (2004) identified nine barriers to accessing, maintaining, and successfully completing apprenticeships. The barriers were as follows:

- Negative attitudes to apprenticeship and a poor image of trades
- A lack of information and awareness of apprenticeship
- Difficulties with unwelcoming workplaces or training environment
- Costs of apprenticeship to individuals, employers, and unions
• Concerns over the impacts of economic factors on work and apprenticeship continuation

• Concerns about the lack of resources to support apprenticeship

• Concerns about apprentices’ basic and essential skills

• Shortcomings of workplace-based and technical training

• Issues regarding regulations governing apprenticeship

Many of the issues listed by CAF have been addressed throughout this chapter as themes that emerged during the analysis of the documents. It is noted that, despite several attempts to address the concerns, such as through media campaigns, conferences and proceedings, research, and dialogue, a lack of awareness about apprenticeship is the key challenge. Career preparation for youth, women, and Aboriginals points to apprenticeship as a viable option; however, there continues to be concern that the secondary school system discourages this decision, primarily due to lack of career guidance.

The high-school system in Canada has a strong academic bias, and often counsellors know little about vocational careers in general and apprenticeship training in particular. However, a large proportion of high-school graduates do not continue directly on to postsecondary education . . . thus, a considerable number of young people need an alternative to postsecondary education. These are the youth who often spend years drifting from one low-skilled job to another. A bridging mechanism is needed to guide students from school into the labour market.
Apprenticeship, which is designed to train highly skilled workers, could provide such a bridge” (Canadian Labour Force Development Board, 1994, p. 3).

Apprenticeship, as a form of vocational education, is marginalized. With the continuing influence of neoliberalism and the focus of the knowledge economy that sets university education as a priority to viable careers, students, parents, teachers, and guidance counsellors continue to be cautious about apprenticeship. The concept of youth apprenticeship as a way in which to address low participation plays largely in the development of a skilled workforce.

Sharpe and Gibson argue:

[i]t is possible that reorienting the emphasis of secondary career preparation to include vocational training could promote a more efficient match between education aspirations and skills without detracting from the supply of skilled labour for emerging sectors (2005, p. 77).

The Canadian Labour Force Development Board points out the problem is far deeper and embedded in the commitment of the education system to apprenticeship training by stating:

[i]n general, vocational training has an “image problem”; it is regarded as a lower-status career option than academic education. Sometimes this reputation is deserved, when vocational training leads to a dead end. However, areas in which vocational training is not a career dead end are often unrecognized. Apprenticeship training, for example, has a great deal to offer, but the strengths of the system are often overlooked and little may be known about this option
within the education system that places such a high value on academic education (1994, p. 1).

Attracting participation from specific groups appears frequently in texts and policies as a way in which to fill large gaps. “There will be greater diversity in the future with existing workers, the emerging workforce, aboriginal peoples and members of equity groups all having very distinct skill training needs” (British Columbia Labour Force Development Board, 1995, p. 9). Despite the prediction of the BCLFDB, there has been little change in appealing to diverse members of Canadian society to engage in apprenticeship training. There have been consistent appeals and campaigns (see Government of Canada: HRDC, 2002, Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2004, Skills Competence Canada, 2004, Industry Training Authority, 2005, etc.) with minimal movement in attracting diverse populations to participate in apprenticeship.

Women, aboriginals, and young persons continue to face system barriers and biases that exist in both the workplace and during technical training. Overall, the statistics show that efforts have largely failed to attract the very groups that policy makers have targeted for participation. BC Outcomes Working Group (2007) identifies that only four percent of apprenticeship students surveyed in B.C. in 2007 were Aboriginal, with the same percentage of women participating. “Attitudes towards trades are clearly conditional on gender, where trades are systematically considered ‘man’s work,’ leading to both female self-selection into other career avenues and influence from family or the educational system to do so” (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2004, p. 14).
Further, statistics show that 90 percent of respondents had taken an entry-level training program. Forty one percent took other post-secondary education after high school before starting an apprenticeship program, and 27 percent had completed a previous post-secondary credential, covering other trades credentials and baccalaureate degrees.

CLFDB notes “Making a successful transition from school into employment can be difficult for young people, particularly those who do not pursue an academic career path” (1994, p. 2).

Laddering credentials into the apprenticeship system to better fit with other post-secondary programs has become a way in which to attract students into trades programs. The integration of apprenticeship certification into more advanced degrees has occurred in several post-secondary institutions in B.C. (see Thompson Rivers University, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, University of the Fraser Valley).

Sharpe and Gibson pronounce, “[a] more flexible system in this respect would remove barriers between forms of post-secondary education and allow ambitious students to match their skills to education without sacrificing higher education options” (2005, p. 77).

Apprenticeship offers students who may not favour academic forms of learning an alternative to preparing for successful careers, although there is strong evidence that apprentices are undertaking academic programs prior to and after completion of apprenticeship.

Apprentices do not always complete their training, especially for trades in which certification is voluntary because of personal economic difficulties, employee/employer relationship problems and perception problems with skilled trades in general – largely due to the popularity of university and other options,
fewer young people are choosing apprenticeship as a form of post-secondary training (Skills Competences Canada, 2004, pp. 18, 19).

Provincial apprenticeship boards have removed the requirement for compulsory certification in some trade areas that creates a perception by employers and apprentices that a formal relationship is not required, thus decreasing the number of apprentices recognized in the training system.

Strong concerns among employers, unions, and individuals over the impacts of economic factors that can lead to a lack of work hours and interruptions or possibly terminations of apprenticeships. Concerns, particularly on the part of employers, about apprentices’ basic and essential skills (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2004, p. 11).

Employment instability is another problem for apprentices as they are subject to layoffs when economic downturns occur. Whereas stakeholders continue to focus on the mobility aspects of apprenticeship, this is seen as a barrier for participation. Additionally, employers cited barriers including collective agreements, a shortage of training spaces, and a secondary school system that doesn’t seem to value the trades (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2003, p. 3).

All texts indicate a real and ongoing concern for vocational education and trades programs. Of greater concern is the notion that students are missing opportunities to participate in the social realms of education and work because of barriers and perceptions to skill development in apprenticeship. “Too many Canadian students finish school without the
training they need to compete in a job market that puts an ever-increasing premium on knowledge and fully developed skills” (Skills Competences Canada, 2004, p. 20).

There is a widely held belief that a shift in the perception held by youth, parents, and educators would result in apprenticeship becoming a more esteemed post-secondary option, despite frequent campaigns. That shift is seen to result in the opportunity to create a highly skilled workforce. However, criticism continues that focuses on industries’ concern that technical training is out-dated and post-secondary institutions are using obsolete equipment in delivery. CAF points out this perception may be true and “might be due in part to the lack of funding for college programs, which often run apprenticeship modules at a financial loss (2004, p. 38). Despite enhanced provincial jurisdiction over adult training, the provinces have not made great progress in integrating the apprenticeship system into the education system.

Potential workers may lack the basic skills or language to be able or eligible to join a training program. Many members of groups under-represented in the workforce experience significant barriers to formal learning, and require special supports to be successful in such programs (Industry Training Apprenticeship Commission, 2001, p. 11).

Given the negative attitudes to apprenticeship, and a poor image of the trades by young persons, parents, and employers, along with the marginalization or apprenticeship training, the barriers and perceptions identified continue to plague enrolment.

5.4 Analysis

In this section my goal is to present a deeper and more critical analysis of the contexts and discursive themes by considering the hegemonic and ideological perspectives that exist in
apprenticeship skills policy. In particular, I am analysing where the hidden relations of power lie, who is exercising the power, and what is being said or unsaid, or unspecified. By isolating discursive practices, I attempt to formulate the rules for production and transformation of skills policy in the field of apprenticeship. This is important to the analysis, as the various partners make claim to their dominating interest in the development and implementation of the skills policies in apprenticeship, as Gale (2001) points to the need to identify the conditions regulating patterns of interaction of those involved.

The analysis is presented in two subsections, using CDA to analyse the dialectical relationship between the context and the discourses and of the various participants’ intentions, values, and ideals in relation to the meaning of skill. By using critical discourse analysis, I am individualizing and describing the discursive formations of the texts to compare them as well as to distinguish them within the time in which they were created. The first subsection provides an analysis of the skilled-labour shortages discursive theme; the second subsection offers an analysis of the skilled workforce discursive theme through training in public post-secondary institutions.

I offer the tables below as an overview for the analysis of the contexts identified in Chapter 4 and the thematic discourses discussed in this chapter. The contexts include the initiation of the discourses and the articulation of the ideologies of the participants that is produced in the policy documents. The first table represents the policy context and discourses of federal governments; the second table represents the policy context and discourses by the provincial governments. In each table, I am including the notion of spirit to which Foucault
(2005) spoke, which enables me to establish the power relationships between the simultaneous and successive periods of policy development and implementation.
<table>
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<th>Discourses</th>
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<td>Occupational training for the labour force (1980 – 1984)</td>
<td>• Industry influence encouraged</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>• Disconnects between labour demand and supply</td>
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<td>Human Capital</td>
<td>• Training to focus on developing higher skill levels</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Need to decrease unemployment</td>
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<td>Market force development (1984 – 1993)</td>
<td>• Need to meet demands for global competition</td>
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<td>Conservative</td>
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<td>Human Capital to Human Resources</td>
<td>• Call for more employer participation in training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labour market development agreements (1993-2006)</td>
<td>• Decreasing training funds to EI clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>• Human capital as human resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>• Shortages of skilled workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>• Rapidly advancing technology changing workplace requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resource development (2006-2010)</td>
<td>• Demand for a highly skilled and mobile workforce to meet skilled labour shortages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>• Moving funds for training from federal government to provinces/territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>• Demands for increased incentives to employers and apprentices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Developing adaptable workforce to meet employer demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emphasis on equity participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4: Federal policy contexts and discursive themes 1980-2010
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Discourses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Labour market development (1980-1991) Social Credit Human Capital | • Disengaged employers and industry  
• Greater flexibility in training needed  
• Emphasis on training as investment  
• Recognition of apprenticeship as system to meet social economic goals |
• Shortage of skilled workers  
• Expanding trade credentials-focus on standards  
• Attempts to increase equity participation  
• Stronger oversight by government of training system |
| The “industry led” system (2001-2010) Liberal Human Resources | • Shift to focus on “open shop” employer needs, moving away from union affiliation requirements  
• Need for more skilled workers  
• Emphasis on standardization and laddered credentials  
• Establishing strong employer presence with Industry Training Organizations as major part of new apprenticeship body  
• Strong interference with public post-secondary training with few supporting resources |

Table 5.5: Provincial policy contexts and discursive themes 1980-2010

I remind the reader that the contexts are critical to provide a setting for the developments of the policies and the way in which they can be interpreted. Therefore, I am offering the tables above to situate the analysis of the contexts and the dominant skilled labour shortage and skills development discursive themes. As well, I use discourse to designate the conjugation of power and knowledge. The analysis focuses on the ideological underpinnings of the discourse of skill as it has become naturalized over time, evolving into common, acceptable
features of discourse. My purpose in this analysis is to present a more complex view of what is being said, who is saying it, why they are saying it, and how they are saying it in the texts reviewed. The questions regarding why skills policy in apprenticeship is on the political agenda and why some voices are heard and some unheard contribute to understanding the contexts.

5.4.1 Skilled labour shortages – understated and disappearing discourses

The tables indicate that neoliberal ideology and human capital theory figure prominently in the skilled-labour shortage discourse. Human capital discourse plays a dominant role in the discourse of skilled-labour training, while skilled-labour shortages discourse includes both neoliberal and human capital characteristics. Although there are characteristics of both neoliberalism and human capital/human resources in the discourses they should not be conflated; they each have contributed significantly to skills policy in apprenticeship development.

While understanding that human capital and neoliberalism are foundational to policy to address skilled labour shortages, a question that must be asked at this point is: who is behind the neoliberal and human capital ideologies that drive skills policy to respond to skilled labour shortages? Obvious participants in the development of policy are government, economists, organized labour, and industry; less obvious, but equally important, participants are training institutions and apprentices. Noon and Blyton (2007) note that shared ideological beliefs and values are reinforced by common language and symbols. This notion is problematic in that beliefs and values are not always equally shared amongst the various participants involved in developing apprenticeship skills policy.
Of particular note is that human capital discourse has shifted over time to human-resource development, with employment-related training a vital component. Texts show that economists conceptualize skill as human capital that plays a major role in the development of skills policy. Employers and industry at large are still reluctant to provide training to apprentices without reliable and notable data showing return on investment. Economic benefit offered by the federal government through tax deductions to employers has been met with little success.

Tactical language figures prominently in skills policy for apprenticeship as successive governments have adopted increased focus on neoliberalism. The intentional legitimizing of industry as the producer of the rules for training supplants the discursive practice of educational institutions. The use of human capital and neoliberal discourse in education is modified by its appropriateness in education. Educational institutions need to be examined from their own power perspectives to understand their social discourse practices.

Again, despite ideological differences, all governments have paid particular attention to the needs of industry and a growing global economy, often with limited data that supports the contention that there is an epidemic of skilled-labour shortage. Economists claim that little credible evidence exists to support industry and government claims that serious mismatches between jobs and skills exist (Goar, 2013). Specifically, questions and concerns are raised about how widespread labour shortages are and whether they exist only in specific industries and regions, which can be easily determined by comparing unemployment rates and job vacancies (McQuillan, 2013).
Economists also claim that serious labour shortages correlate to an increase in wages; however, this is not evident in many apprenticeable trades. This can be partially explained by the declining presence of organized labour as a major participant in skills-policy development over the last thirty years, particularly at the provincial level. While the federal government still actively seeks organized labour input, the province has changed labour practices to focus on open-shop arrangements. Organized labour representation, overall, has declined significantly, assigning trade unions to a far lesser level of power. Gaskell (1992) points out that the politics of skill is entrenched in economics, and this analysis shows that it is also entrenched in the power of representation.

At the federal level, industry groups are largely represented by sector councils who represent specific employers and receive funding through EI to “focus the attention and commitment of industry partners to take action by developing human resources solutions that are specific to their sector or industry” (Employment and Social Development, 2013). The sector councils are expected to take an active role in presenting their labour supply and demand “to find solutions that benefit their sector in a collective, collaborative and sustained manner” (ibid). The argument put forth by some economists and academics that skilled labour shortages do not exist in all work shows that the sector council model grants a great deal of power to specific industries in directing policy development. That power may be displaced as industry, as a whole, does not represent individuals.

Major economic shifts contributed to reforms in legislation that were meant to decrease unemployment while creating a higher skilled workforce that could compete in a globalized
economy. Those reforms had a wider impact on education and social polarization. At the same time that apprenticeship is being flogged as a reasonable way to address unemployment, there has been a marked increase in other forms of post-secondary education and training, such as cooperative programs, that are more in tune with the notion of high skill development. Apprenticeship remains viewed as requiring intermediate skills, mired in the hierarchy of skill levels. Technology continues rapidly to advance with little incentive for either industry or apprentices to invest in human-capital training, as questions remain about costs versus benefits. The material process of appropriating the necessary tools and technology to create a higher skilled workforce necessary to meet skilled labour shortages appears to be lacking.

Legislation, as a form of social closure spurred on by ideology, has often broadly addressed occupational skill requirements that are rapidly changing, while at the same time attempting to decrease unemployment. The idea behind the various acts of legislation appears to be to improve productivity and competitiveness. While benefits increase for individual workers and industry in some areas, it has largely decreased at the national level. Mobility continues to be an issue, as provincial bodies do not recognize skills sets from other regions. Industry continues to focus on the need to meet specific skill requirements. The Red Seal presents a hegemonic perspective of recognition of skill, as it holds the power to approve and grant credentials, although all training is completed by employers and training institutions. The political process requires a collective organization of the regulation of labour supply; however, that element is lacking as the hierarchical, hegemonic views of some participants take precedence over others.
Governments at all levels, of all ideological perspectives, continue to attempt to balance the dual concerns of decreasing unemployment while meeting increasing skill requirements. From a human-resources perspective, the supply and demand of skilled workers remains problematic. The creation of the LMDAs is meant to resolve tension between federal and provincial governments; however, the terms of the agreements vary between provinces and territories and investment in training remains low. The values of social equity and participation are compromised by the exclusive/inclusive nature of the agreements. The federal government remains the dominant voice in accreditation and funding. Provincial apprenticeship bodies are reluctant to increase access to work for workers from other regions in favour of employing local labour. Overall, while the federal political parties were specifying that their concern lay in developing a skilled workforce to meet labour shortages throughout all periods it more likely they are looking to eradicate unemployment.

The provincial government, on the other hand, is more closely aligned with apprenticeship skills training or skill development. It is clear that only one context is specific to skills development, and that was during the NDP period when stronger oversight over training by the government was a fundamental decision. Since the province was in the position of relying on federal funding for apprenticeship training, it was often disadvantaged in terms of being able to commit to long-term planning or having the ability to adapt and respond to policy direction, particularly to UI/EI.

Hegemonic and ideological characteristics are dominant within the central thematic discourse of skilled-labour shortages within neoliberal and human capital ideologies and the contributing and
recurring discourses of unemployment and return on investment. Discourse is dominated by political groups and industry using their power to develop apprenticeship skills policy to meet their own particular needs. The skilled-labour shortages discourse focuses on economic advantage and a reliance on apprenticeship as the system that will provide a solution to unemployment, at the same time providing benefit to industry, particularly by emphasizing the development of high skills. Obviously the relationship between training and the economy are closely tied.

Governments created the prominent catchphrase “skilled labour shortages” to address negative aspects of apprenticeship that are influenced by its social context, and to increase employment opportunities. The normalization of the phrase is meant to provide readers with a more socially acceptable perspective of apprenticeship. Using the word skilled as a collocation with workers emphasizes that the workforce is upskilling so that labour can be more productive, thus benefiting industry and consumers. As Darrah (1996) points out, the determination of skill requirements reflects the normative vision of individuals and groups.

Industry plays a major role in the apprenticeship system, both for employment and training. Identifying just who industry is remains problematic. Largely, the texts refer to industry as a group of dissatisfied employers. They appear to represent small employers and large corporations, with emphasis placed on regional demands. With the deliberate absence of any particular voices, industry remains a voice without a clear presence. Although there are consistent references to industry as drivers in the need for more skilled workers, in fact, government speaks largely in the texts. The federal government stepped forward to address skilled-labour shortages on behalf of industry. While some groups and sector councils, such as the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Construction
Sector Council, produced documents about skilled shortages and their concerns, there is a noticeable absence of many industry voices.

Industry has retained a prominent contributing voice through the establishment of sector councils and other influential groups that advise government in policy development, while continuing to be highly critical of the apprenticeship system, suggesting that workers are not sufficiently skilled to meet their specific workplace needs. There is disconnection between industry’s demands for skilled labour and its actual requirement for a supply of workers who meet particular labour needs. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce (2008) claims that Canada faces a productivity problem in addition to a skilled-labour shortage. It is implied that there is a correlation between skill level and labour shortages; no specific skills are identified or suggested.

Government took the primary responsibility for providing the required supply of workers for industry, while attending to industry demands as well as attending to the larger social issue of unemployment. Early documents were produced when Canada was suffering from a major economic downturn, resulting in high unemployment. Those documents created the basis of almost all further debates and constructions concerning apprenticeship. The issues of skilled-worker shortages and unemployment have remained constant as economic cycles have improved or declined. Data are not provided in any documents that show the quantitative effect of skilled labour shortages.

Government has created an emphasis on globalization, competition, and technology – all characteristics of neoliberalistic ideology – and the reliance on a skilled workforce being able to respond to unemployment concerns. The social construction of skill is an important element that is largely overlooked throughout the texts, while globalization and technology remain at the fore.
Deskilling brought about by the capitalistic mode of production is overshadowed by the neoliberal ideology that focuses on technological change, globalization, and upskilling. Unemployment had become a major economic issue that drove policy makers to respond to industry and employer demands for a better skilled workforce.

Disjunctures occur between industry’s demands and policy makers’ ability to respond with a supply of skilled workers for the workforce. As an example, a text from a report prepared by a parliamentary task force, with members principally appointed by the ruling federal Liberal government, representing large business interests that were dissatisfied with skill levels of workers, states “. . . serious shortages of certain critical skilled trades in Canada and the mismatches in labour market where these shortages and high unemployment exist side by side” (1981, p. 4). The text indicates a concern that certain critical skilled trades require attention; however, no data are presented to show which trades were referenced or what the skill mismatches were that employers were concerned about.

The neoliberal approach to skill formation suggests that government should not intervene in labour market issues, primarily due to globalization, that are best handled by industry, and yet governments continue to take a lead role. The structure of apprenticeship and skills policy in Canada, with its dual levels of government policy approaches, leaves little flexibility in responding to rapidly changing labour markets. Industry specified concern with the supply of skilled labour; however, it takes little initiative in owning responsibility. Texts point to industry reluctance to participate in apprenticeship due to a number of factors; however, it appears that employers are basically not willing to invest in human capital/resources.
Further supply issues have arisen, as Canada is a country that has relied principally on immigrants for skilled labour, while immigration has declined due to an increasingly globalized economy. Policy makers continue to overlook the fact that lower levels of immigration, a declining birthrate, and minimal levels of participation by under-represented groups continues to contribute to unemployment and skilled-worker shortages. An almost naïve relationship exists between what had previously existed in workforce development, where a steady and reliable immigrant population filled skilled worker requirements, and the little attention paid to ongoing development and support within the Canadian education system.

Disappearing discourse

It is important that this analysis take into account the disappearing discourse of unemployment, as it became the language of employment. The subtle, but confusing, change in the naming of Unemployment Insurance to Employment Insurance took place when neoliberal ideology was taking hold in skills policy. The relationships between social practices, social events, and social structures at the time legitimized the use of the different language. The discourse of unemployment disappeared in favour of employment to reflect specific social practices that have implications for political objects, such as the distribution of social goods and power. The application of the term “employment” to reflect what had previously been known as “unemployment” was a deliberate act to reconstruct social structure.

The production of employment text shifted the way in which implementers would interpret skills policy in apprenticeship to focus on the development of a skilled workforce. Ideologically, the texts show that a strong relationship between unemployment and skilled-
worker shortages remains problematic within the realm of apprenticeship. While it is recognized that apprenticeship is not a model meant to address unemployment, it is also the most obvious model that can be used to establish a work-learning environment. Active labour-market policies, through employment (not unemployment) insurance, places apprenticeship training as central to the economic development of a skilled labour force.

5.4.2 Skilled worker training

The dialectical relationship of the employers involved in developing the apprenticeship training system and the post-secondary institutions who deliver the in-school training forms a powerful perspective that is strongly reflected in the texts that influence apprenticeship skills policy. However, a major flaw exists in the bio-techno power of industry and post-secondary institutions. There has been reluctance to change the apprenticeship institution and there has not been recognition that, while the world of apprenticeship is changing, the way of “doing” apprenticeship remains the same. Brown et al. believe that “vocational training should be driven by employers because they are best placed to make judgments about the demand for specific kinds of skills” (Brown, 2003, p. 11). There is little evidence to dispute this claim; however, several issues and concerns arise around the powerful natures of industry and post-secondary institutions in apprenticeship training.

From a human capital perspective, employers continue to determine that their primary concern is their own labour force, not educating apprentices as a social issue. Industry requires specifically, rather than generally, trained apprentices, thus causing deskilling. In turn, mobility
is reduced, limiting apprentices’ opportunities to transfer work situations as required and contributing to cycles of unemployment.

Systems within the institutions of post-secondary education and apprenticeship are undervalued in the policy development process. As has been noted previously, policy is political. Education is also political. Post-secondary institutions are fraught with internal mechanisms that make them slow to respond to externally enforced policy change. Bi-cameral governance systems that include senates (or Education Councils in B.C. colleges) and boards of governors have no influence on policy development but make significant decisions at implementation stages.

A major shift and transformation of several colleges to university colleges and then to universities in B.C. throughout the 1990s-2000s persuaded many institutions to reduce their focus on vocational training programs. The federal and provincial governments were, at the same time, developing policy that placed more emphasis on apprenticeship training in both private and public post-secondary institutions with no additional funding or supports.

The Red Seal program has not been reviewed or fundamentally revised since its inception more than 50 years ago. Its primary role in providing credentials and establishment of standards is flawed by the provincial apprenticeship bodies that set their own standards and establish their own credentials. Industry support for the Red Seal certification appears strong in some trades (i.e. culinary arts), while in others, (i.e. hairdressing) it is virtually non-existent. However, as an institution, Red Seal practices represent a socially accepted practice that retains
hegemonic value as the arbiter of standards. Both levels of governments continue to support the mechanisms of the Red Seal without examining how it relates to changes in policy.

Both federal and provincial governments are prominent in the skilled-labour shortage discourse, but with different levels of power. The provincial government has played a subservient role in the development of policy at a national level as the federal governments continue to suppress direct funding for training. Economic conditions dictated that the ideologies and economic policies of both levels of government shift over time. Those shifts were not always in alignment as economic conditions vary between provinces. Economic swings have brought about both demands for more workers and more workers than demand. Ideologically, there has been consistency, despite different parties in power, as governments recognize the need to ensure that workers remain competitive and productive in global markets. In that regard, they created specific legislation to address adult training programs. However, the political process did not always allow for collective organization and regulation of labour supply.

There is not an equal representation of the many voices involved in skills policy development and implementation. Apprentices, as participants, are largely absent from the discourse of skill development, despite their central role as objects of the policy. On the other hand, there is little evidence in texts to suggest that apprentices take opportunities to invest in themselves through further education or lifelong learning. While ancient forms of apprenticeship called for indentureship, or subjugation, that practice has largely disappeared. Apprentices have an opportunity to represent themselves from below as workers and learners;
however, they have abdicated their personal responsibility actively to represent themselves. As a result, other participants in the process continue to dominate the discourse of skills development and implementation.

Texts indicate that while apprenticeship registrations have risen significantly over the past several years, they do not complete training and acquire credentials (Sharpe, A. & Gibson, J., 2005). It is not clear whether the low completion rates are due to unemployment, inability to complete in-school training, or failure to pass standardized exams. There has been acknowledgement that credentialing needs to be examined so that more opportunities open up for apprentices to continue their education after completion; however, few post-secondary institutions have taken on the initiatives, often because they would have to eliminate other programs to service and fund the programs. Standardization of exams is also problematic given the wide range of practices of apprentices within regional industries. Low completion rates defer apprentices’ opportunities for employment or further knowledge acquisition, relegating them to the low- and intermediate-skill strata.

Texts point toward a decided reliance on the influence of industry in determining skilled workforce needs for human resources and training requirements. The discourse of industry-led or employer-led apprenticeship training systems appears to be of foremost importance in the development of skills policy; however, it also becomes clear that there are disconnects between industry demands and the supply of particular labour types. While employers are calling for higher levels of skill development, they are not clarifying what those skills are or how they are to be developed and implemented by policy makers. Texts also indicate that there is strong
capitalistic influence through normalization of behaviours, or the identification of expected skill levels, of apprentices. In this regard, apprentices have been caught up in a training system that gives power to industry.

The current apprenticeship authority, under pressure from industry, introduced modularization of some occupations that clearly leads to deskilling, as apprentices are unable to achieve journeyperson status. Modularization failed due to rejection by trade unions, training institutions, and apprentices. There are also instances in the documents that point to the disinterest of employers in taking a leading role to create training opportunities for apprentices. The most commonly recorded rationale for lack of training is concern about poaching. Braverman would characterize the stand taken by industry and employers as capitalist and degrading to apprentices.

While there is recognition that technology figures prominently in the changing nature of apprenticeship that may lead to deskilling, the texts also speak to upskilling that provides workers with more power over employers. This perspective is most often taken by government to promote retraining or upgrading in their attempt to encourage continuing learning for apprentices. Specifically, PAB (1984) claims that retraining leads to new skill-sets and new employment; in that context, apprenticeship becomes a social matter. The discourse of credentialization figures prominently in upskilling debates. Government documents (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2002) encourage and support the development of laddered programs to the level of applied degrees. However, it appears that the continuing attempts to encourage
apprentices to complete further training and education are impeded, as there is no articulated system outside of the formal apprenticeship system that offers recognition or rewards.

Flexibility in training designed to respond to technological change is a major concern to both industry and post-secondary institutions. The cumbersome nature of apprenticeship training makes it almost impossible to adapt training to support technological demands. With three levels of industry-sector representation, federal and provincial accrediting bodies, policy development and legislation bodies, post-secondary institutional approval processes, collective agreement issues, the nature of 80% practical/20% theory training, as well as limited funding available, shifts are slow. However, without flexibility, the system is unable to create a highly skilled workforce that remains competitive and productive.

The provincial apprenticeship bodies play a significant role in training, along with industry, post-secondary institutions, and government. Each ruling party in B.C. has attempted to “fix” the apprenticeship training system, to fit within their labour/political ideology. The system is constantly in flux. Funding continues to be limited and bureaucratic entanglements create misinterpretation and distrust. The texts point to the desire of each successive apprenticeship body to create a better system, while the outcomes indicate ongoing concerns. The current system in B.C. is undergoing its second major review in the past five years due to its lack of success in meeting goals. Two critical differences from the previous apprenticeship board and the current are the representation on the board and the independent status of the “authority.” Previous boards had included training institutions as equal participants and partners in training. The current board is limited to nine members who are appointed by the premier’s office, largely representing specific employers and
industry groups who are in alignment with the Liberal ideology; no representatives of training institutions are included.

Relationships with the post-secondary institutions have deteriorated as the authority expresses its distrust of apprenticeship training, placing blame for lack of registrations, incompletions, and a perceived misuse of funds. The authority granted to the board brought about the creation of industry training organizations (ITOs) for provincial sectors, which have removed funds that were previously available for training. The ITOs represent the “go-between” industry and training to identify and solve skills shortages. In addition to identification of skills by ITOs and the Red Seal, each post-secondary institution is required to hold program advisory committee meetings for each program to ensure adequate regional industry input. Clearly, industry plays an important role in training delivery, with little consensus, and oversight has become intense. Again, employers represent their own specific training requirements first, making it difficult for institutions to provide transferable training.

**Understated discourses**

The dominant and recurring discourses of skilled worker training are clear in the texts; however, other discourses need to be recognised. As Gale (2001) points out, some issues are on the policy agenda and others are not. Ball (1994) declares that strategies are used in policy to hear only certain voices. I believe that it would be remiss not to identify and discuss the understated discourses of class system, identification of entry-level skills, and human resources.

By class system, I am referring to the social view of apprenticeship as a less equal form of education, even within the vocational system. Fairclough (1992) and Gee (2011) clarify that
critical approaches to discourse analysis must also pay attention to implications of status and class. The notion that apprenticeship is viewed as “intermediate skill” integrates hegemony and class. The Business Council of British Columbia (BCBC) developed three resources for teachers, parents, and students to create more interest in apprenticeship. *The third option* (2001), *The third option: A first choice* (2003), and *The third option rocks* (2005) were circulated widely to schools and, while well intentioned, served to confirm that apprenticeship is not a first, or even second, educational choice. The program was widely disparaged by vocational educators as denigrating and did little to support growth in apprenticeship registrations. The primary student target was on those who had difficulty successfully completing “academic” work, not taking into account the need for skills and knowledge appropriate for apprenticeship.

There are references in several texts (see CAF 2004, Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2004, SkillPlan BC, 2001) to the need to examine entry-level requirements for apprentices. Many trades require minimal entry requirements; however, high non-completion rates are attributed to poor preparation. One report in particular notes, “[c]hanging policies in entry standards suggest that different jurisdictions are employing a range of strategies to select apprentices with sufficient skills to meet the challenges of technical training” (Fownes, 2001, p. i). In addition to grade levels completed is the issue of the age of apprentices and changes in technology. The average age of a first-year apprentice is 26 years, leaving a significant length of time between secondary school completion and entry into the trade. The discourse of entry requirements is subtle but needs to be examined and incorporated into apprenticeship policy in order to ensure that skills mismatches are identified.
I have revealed the evolution of human capital into human resources, in the form of training, in other parts of this study and include it in this section, as it deserves a more prominent role in the discourse of skilled-worker training. Although it remains an understated discourse, it is important to note that the neoliberal perspective, which places more responsibility on individual learners, is evident in changes to the provincial apprenticeship board enacted by the B.C. Liberals with the dissolution of ITAC and creation of ITA. Whereas PAB and ITAC had created systems that strongly supported apprentices and employers, the ITA dramatically shifted that responsibility. Apprenticeship counsellors had supported employers in the creation of apprenticeship agreements and assisted apprentices in ensuring that their work hours were tracked and registration for in-school training was completed. With the elimination of this support, there was widespread disengagement of formal apprenticeship agreements. Training is often the purview of human resources; however, small companies often do not have resources to allocate to human-resource departments. Apprentices and employers are left on their own to establish and track human-resource development, leaving gaps that are not recognized in the formal learning systems.

5.6 Summary

The significant discursive themes of skilled labour shortages and development of a skilled workforce brought forward the related themes that respond to the second research question. The objective of this study is not to provide definitive answers to the primary question: “what do they mean by skill,” but is rather to explore the various conceptions, over time, of the texts that distinguish them.
In responding to the first research question, I have provided several examples of texts in the documents examined that point to the emergence and continuance of the recurring discourse themes. The political, economic, and ideological forces within neoliberalism and human capital are major contributors in driving policy development at federal and provincial levels in defining skills for apprentices.

In responding to the second research question, I have focused on the significant theme of skilled workforce, particularly as it is developed within the post-secondary education system. The complexity of the apprenticeship institution, particularly within provincial apprenticeship bodies and the institution of post-secondary education requires attention to the roles of industry and training, employment and employers, and the barriers of perceptions.

Overall, my analysis responds to the central research question by presenting the hegemonic and ideological perspectives of the various participants involved in the development and implementation of apprenticeship skills policy. I have outlined the contexts and discursive themes to analyse the intentions, values, and beliefs of the participants in terms of the development and implementation of a skilled labour force. The analysis shows that the values of the participants are implicit and explicit in the policy texts; however, the intentions are troubled as to how skill is actually conceptualized. The beliefs of the participants vary and do not necessarily align in the best interest of apprenticeship skills policy.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Offspring of ignorant and poor, boys apprenticed to trades,
Young fellows working on farms and old fellows working on farms,
Sailor-men, merchant-men, coasters, immigrants,
house-building, measuring, sawing the boards,
Blacksmithing, glass-blowing, nail-making, coopering tin-roofing,
shingle-dressing,
Ship-joining, dock-building, fish-curing, flagging of sidewalks by flaggers,
The pump, the pile-drive, the great derrick, the coal-kiln and brick-kiln . . .
Walt Whitman, 1881

6.1 Highlights of the Study

This study explores the meaning of skills as it is used in developing and implementing apprenticeship skills policy in British Columbia and Canada over the three decades from 1980-2010. In particular it focuses on the political, economic, and ideological perspectives that dominate skills policy. The study includes a comprehensive review of hundreds of documents that present historical, theoretical, hegemonic, and ideological perceptions. The texts provided an archaeological and contextual interpretation of how language is and has been used in defining skills policy in apprenticeship. The discursive apprenticeship policy network links the policy discourse of skilled workers in apprenticeship to politics, ideology, economics, hegemony and power.

This study contributes significantly to scholarly debate in skills policy by offering a critical examination of the discourse of skill in apprenticeship policy. Apprenticeship has a long history of contributing notably to the work- and learning-model of training. I argue that a critical examination of the discourses of provincial and federal skills policies needs to be
completed in relation to the social construction of skill relating to other social policy fields such as education, economics, employment, labour, and immigration. Successive governments have claimed that skills policy in apprenticeship contributes significantly to social policies in general, yet ideological and hegemonic relationships contribute negatively to skills training.

The literature review contributes significantly to numerous scholarly debates about skill, human capital, neoliberalism, policy, and conceptions of power and knowledge. There is agreement and disagreement within the discourse of skill that can lead to confusion and misinterpretation. Noon and Blyton’s (2007) socially constructed matrix outlines three foci that are widely used by scholars. The person and setting approaches are used in this study. The work of Braverman (1974) provides a base upon which scholars have presented agreement and disagreement about deskilling and upskilling. Low-, intermediate-, and high-skill debates are presented, taking into account credentialism and skills mismatch. Technology figures largely in the skill-level literature. Policy research examines the production and implementation of educational policy from several perspectives.

The methodology involved multiple stages, using Fairclough’s and Foucault’s frameworks of the CDA process. Documents that are important to the study were used to provide an archaeological and chronological outline of the strategies used to advance the skills agenda over three decades. During the first stage, the policy documents were analysed to gain general understanding of the contexts while also coding the text for central, emerging, and contributing themes. In the second phase, I completed a thematic and critical discursive grammatical analysis of the texts using Fairclough’s ten questions as a framework. At the final
stage, I determined the meaning and nuances to explain the relationships between interaction and social context and the processes of production and interpretation of skills policy in apprenticeship. The discursive apprenticeship policy network – focusing on institutions, ideologies, power relationships, naturalization of language, and the distribution of social goods – established the identification of the multiple voices and perspectives present in the policy discourse, situating them in their discursive context. The network and multiple discourses exposed the relationships and interactions of the various participants with each other, tracing the discursive shifts over time while highlighting predominant discourses.

A review of the texts identified the contexts for each political era, specifically the politics, ideologies, economic, and social conditions. The contexts point to the fact that activities that occurred were varied between federal and provincial governments and their specific periods of rule. Political, ideological, economic, and social conditions drove policy development, largely based on liberalism, conservatism, neoconservatism, and emerging neoliberalism. Economic conditions fluctuated throughout the periods, with resulting policy variations that impacted on social conditions and policy changes.

The key findings and the results of the analysis of participants’ language, roles, and intents in developing skills policy in apprenticeship point to two dominant discursive themes: skilled labour shortage, at the development phase, and development of a skilled workforce, at the implementation phase. The discourses of unemployment, return on investment, industry and training, and barriers and perceptions are significant and contributing. Government and industry emerge as powerful participants with post-secondary education and apprentices
relegated to an insignificant role. This results in policy that focuses primarily on responding to political, ideological, and economic conditions, resulting in turn in social policy focusing on employment.

This dissertation provides a complex view of the development and implementation of apprenticeship skills policy.

6.2 Discussion/Observations

Rationalization plays largely in the legitimatization of the skilled-labour shortage and skills-development discourses. The nature of the various parties’ interest in the development of skills policy is often misaligned between social and economic goals. Influences such as globalization, technology, economic swings, prevailing and changing ideologies, and power structures are prominent. Economists argue that skills shortages actually exist only in some regions and in some industries. They claim that there appears to be mismatches between skills identified as crucial to certain work. The evidence suggests that policy development participants identify general skills that do not benefit all employers or all industries.

The use of particular language and discourse heavily emphasizes a definition of skill that spans low, intermediate, and high. Socially, skill in apprenticeship is seen as belonging to the low to intermediate range. The dominant skill discourses emphasize the need to increase skill levels and diminish labour shortages. The underlying discourse is the need to decrease unemployment. The relationships between the participants and the processes used to develop skills policy are inconsistent in that there is no clarity as to what the actual goal is to be achieved.
Braverman (1974) had expressed a great deal of concern about deskillling and the degradation of work. The policy decisions of the Liberal government in B.C. exhibited this perspective with the introduction of modularized training in some trades. The purpose was to produce more workers in certain aspects of construction trades. In reality, modularization of some trades led to apprentices only being able to perform specific functions, thereby limiting their ability to obtain full credentials and work outside a limited area.

Industry and training are synonymous with apprenticeship. Apprenticeship is a bifurcated system in which training takes place in both the workplace and in post-secondary institutions. Texts focus on the indelible relationship that is established in assigning roles to both industry and the training system; however, in directing much of the discourse toward industry as the sole sponsor of training, the post-secondary system has been relegated to providing technical training with little input into policy development. Industry and training are connected in a prominent manner that excludes the value of the post-secondary education system to provide a broad education that supports learners.

In their various forms, the texts produce a naturalization of the language accepted in apprenticeship policy, as well as the power relations and distribution of social goods of education and training. The texts may not be fully encompassing, but they do provide a broad perspective of the many voices that contribute to the discourse of skill. Many voices contribute to the policy-development phase; however, the voices of apprentices are noticeably absent. None of the texts examined were produced by apprentices, but rather by organizations that
claim to represent their voices. It was not my intention to eliminate or to fail to acknowledge texts produced by apprentices; they are simply unavailable.

Political forces show that governments are reluctant to enforce training requirements on employers and provide few incentives. Some documents indicate that governments have attempted to provide financial support to both apprentices and employers; they are often not related to specific requests made by industry. Funds are allocated within budgets; however, many of the intended recipients are either unaware of their availability or are not inclined to follow up, given the administrative work required and minimal impact of the incentives.

Governments have used apprenticeship to create employment and economic policies so that industry will benefit. Human capital as a human resource is problematic, as employers’ investment in apprenticeship continues to stagnate. This is due to the preponderance of small- and medium-sized employers who have neither the need for, nor the resources to support, human development. The governments see apprenticeship as a vehicle to develop human capital/resources, but have not connected that concept with employers.

6.3 Conclusions

Language has been intentionally used in skills policy for apprenticeship to create a particular perspective of skill. Those who have the most prominent influence as policy makers have vastly differing opinions than educators and scholars as to what is meant by “skilled.” Policy makers see skills in apprenticeship as a means to an end, particularly in resolving employment and economic issues. Educators and scholars see skill as a social construct. While policy makers watch for changes in enrolments, educators look at who is participating. Policy
makers consistently focus on increasing participation. Educators and scholars look at who is enrolling and how they are prepared for their training. Policy makers look at labour demand and supply. Educators and scholars are concerned about participant completions. Policy makers see apprenticeship as a way to respond to a need for increased production and competition. Educators and scholars see skill development as a process that occurs over a lifetime, difficult to measure at any particular time. Politicians use their power in the construction of skill policy to normalize and influence social views of apprenticeship training.

Clearly, the determination of skill results from political agendas that reflect the normative visions of apprentices. The social construction of skill in apprenticeship points to political processes that regulate the supply of labour, reinforce the values and beliefs of their ideological processes, and control work organization through material processes. Much of the skills policy developed over the past three decades has focused on creating a workforce that will be productive, while largely ignoring the social perspective of skill as being little more than the acquisition of technical competence that should be viewed as an ability to learn as a lifelong activity.

Technology, as Braverman had predicted, is driving shifts and changes in economy and work practices. Texts suggest that industry has used technology to enforce hegemonic control. Apprentices are required, more than at any other time in history, to be prepared for technological changes throughout their apprenticeship - flexibility in training is required. The length of times required to complete apprenticeship has become critical as rapid changes in technology have made it difficult for training to be meaningful or applicable. The demands of
industry and inability of training institutions to keep up with the changes in technology create increasing pressure to adjust. Some apprenticeable occupations (i.e. printing press operation) have become obsolete, or changed substantially (i.e. automotive mechanics) because of technology.

The number and status of the various participants involved in addressing skilled labour shortages and skills development is problematic. A hierarchy of individuals, groups, government, and bureaucrats are involved in defining skill – with no clear agreement. Government takes the lead as the creators of legislation, despite the neoliberal theory that industry should take the lead in skill development. Industry, however, does not appear to present a resolute view about what skill is, or how it will be measured. Industry is heavily represented in the policy development process; however, it is disconnected in the implementation. Demand for skill in one particular industry and region does not always correlate with others. The notion of the “spirit” that enables the collective consciousness to emerge in unity is fractured. Employers continue to argue that apprentices do not meet their specific needs.

The influences of neoliberalism and human capital are prominent in the concept of skill, as is power. Neoliberal ideology places demands on industry and workers to produce more and be more competitive. Although economists conceptualize skill as human capital particularly in investing in human-resource development, policy developers have been negligent in supporting employers and apprentices in training. The judgments about skill exhibited by policy makers show the influence of the social context of skill in apprenticeship as supporting an ongoing
struggle between apprentices and employers. Although Becker (1983) determined that marketable skills could be transferred between employers, the prevailing view of employers, which is not challenged in policy, is that apprentices should only be trained for specific work.

Economic perspectives indicate that return on investment remains a high priority, while at the same time, little attention is given to creating opportunities for attracting investment in training by both public and private sources. Employers are reluctant to invest in human capital development for a variety of reasons, including the belief that it is up to individuals, the apprentices, to invest in themselves. The concept of poaching deters many employers who feel that they should not be responsible for developing a mobile workforce.

This study takes into account the process, text, production, and implementation of skills policy in apprenticeship. The implementation of the policies remains problematic, as the myriad of participants cannot determine how the policies will be put into practice. The interests, conflicts, and domination of participants’ perspectives are not separated from their particular points of view. Also problematic is that the system appears to be flawed as neither industry nor educational institutions acknowledge that apprenticeship has changed.

Education and training are social concerns while unemployment is an economic concern. While the concept of skill is not well defined in the texts, deskilling and upskilling are addressed frequently, particularly in terms of training. Both issues have caused ongoing concern amongst the various participants and are addressed through advances in technology that spur on change in skill requirements. The ability to be flexible is difficult given the number
of participants involved in training. Post-secondary institutions appear to be unwilling to change as required, when required.

The many stakeholders who participate in the policy-development phase also establish standards and credentialing criteria. Post-secondary institutions do have representation in the form of developing curriculum, specifically in terms of outcomes; however, a boundary exists between post-secondary education, industry, and training when it comes to establishing standards of training. Employers who provide employment for apprentices see themselves as under-represented for their specific training needs. Although sector councils exist to identify employer needs, many employers do not see their specific skill-requirements identified. As apprentices require mobility to work where labour is required, they must be prepared to move between jurisdictions with little promise of recognition of prior work experience or learning. Given the demands of local employers, post-secondary institutions must integrate the specific skill-needs into technical training, thus restricting apprentice mobility. Post-secondary education’s mandate is to provide a broad educational experience that does not focus on specific employers’ skill requirements; however, employer demands make it impossible to provide wide-ranging training.

Governments, through credentialing and funding, present further limits to the opportunities that post-secondary education has in effectively integrating apprenticeship into the academic environment, causing barriers and negative perceptions to be created regarding the apprenticeship system. The federal government, in particular, controls credentialing through the Interprovincial Standards/Red Seal. Apprentices and employers rely on the EI
funding policies successfully to participate in training. Given the power perspective and top-down approach used within these two areas, little opportunity exists to contribute to a more effective system.

Finally, barriers and perceptions created by employers and the education system limit the ability to attract and retain individuals in apprenticeship. While specific groups are targeted, others are discouraged from participation by the continuing emphasis being placed on acquisitions of university credentials. Even with significant policies developed to attract apprentices over a long period of time, little has been accomplished to change the social status of apprenticeship. Both secondary and post-secondary institutions have largely ignored the possibilities of apprenticeship as a viable career option. Employers remain suspicious of government intervention in their labour issues, and post-secondary education marginalizes apprenticeship training. Individuals appear almost by mistake in the apprenticeship system, not through coordinated effort by government, industry, or educational institutions.

Overall, the texts show a marked divide between the intentions of skills policy in apprenticeship and the delivery by post-secondary education. The relationship between industry and post-secondary institutions to establish the power transmitted in their discourses for policy development and implementation in training appears to be fractured and uneven. Connections between development and implementation fall short because all stakeholders are not involved in the entire policy cycle. Industry’s role is strongly evident in influencing policy development while post-secondary institution’s role emerges at implementation. The discourses used in each phase are substantially different. While industry understands the
languages of production and commodities they are unclear about the processes of post-secondary institutions, and vice-versa.

Education needs to be viewed as an essential part of the social infrastructure. As a broad statement, this refers to all forms of education; however, the area of apprenticeship training is often overlooked to the extent that any and all policies developed are negated by the insistent reluctance to appropriate apprenticeship as part of the formal education system. Apprenticeship deserves far more attention within all levels of education. As a social institution education has failed to acknowledge the apprenticeship model while embracing cooperative learning models.

6.4 Insights and Recommendations for Future Research

As Wildavsky (1979) suggests, “it is more important to practice policy analysis than define it” (p.410). When I first began this study, I was deeply immersed in the day-to-day administration of publicly funded apprenticeship training. I was deeply aware of the dysfunctions and disjunctures between the development and implementation of policy related to apprenticeship training. As a practitioner, I had virtually no time to conduct research or to critically examine the discursive relationships of the various institutions.

At the outset, I sensed that I would find a plethora of areas that would provide me with the opportunity for further research and I was not proven wrong. I would strongly urge those who have an interest in apprenticeship, training, vocational education, gender studies, skills policy, social inclusion, economics, labour - to name just a few - to take up the cause. While there is some scholarly research and debate in these areas, much can be done to contribute to
apprenticeship skills policy. It is clear that much of the discourse has focused primarily in meeting skilled labour shortages, and how training can/should be used to develop a skilled workforce.

Specific actions need to occur to respond to the ongoing lack of widespread support for apprenticeship generated by many years of policy-making, which has elicited a response to its intended purpose. I recommend that specific research be conducted into three critical areas – preparation of students for apprenticeship, mediatisation of apprenticeship, and international apprenticeship models and policies in relation to those in Canada. I make these recommendations not only to educators and scholars, but also to all participants in the policy-making process. Following I list the areas in the areas of priority.

The first priority is preparation of apprentices as students and learners. As I have indicated throughout this study that there is a deep and disturbing disconnect between the entry-level skills and knowledge requirements for apprenticeship and the ability successfully to complete programs. Many factors contribute to the low completion rates of apprentices and it has been my observation, by completing this study and others, that far too many apprentices are ill prepared for the rigour of their programs. Statistics and data need to be accessed to determine where gaps occur. A more realistic situation must be proposed to address where and how interventions can be created. The allocation of resources, including funding, should be examined in relation to the expectations of apprentices as learners.

At the beginning of the study, I indicated that there is a barrage of media around apprenticeship skills policy. I place this as the second priority that emerged from this study, as
research needs to take place to determine to how the language of the policies regulates normalization and acceptance without deeper examination of intention. The policy texts are often used as public relations tools to create positive spin, which the media in Canada has been negligent in not questioning. There needs to be critical analysis of media reports, especially those linking to policy documents. As I have indicated there are numerous press releases that provide the public with a perspective of apprenticeship, how those are received would provide an interesting and indispensable study for both those who write them and those who read them.

Finally, I encourage researchers to study international apprenticeship policy and models in order to influence Canadian policy and models. Apprenticeship is widespread in many forms and traditions throughout the world. While not all models and policies will integrate into Canada, including British Columbia, there needs to be more concerted attempts. This is particularly important as we continue to rely on immigrant workers, trained in other countries, to fill our skilled worker gaps. Issues examined should include funding, standards, training, and employer participation. Some of the findings of this study, such as employer participation, return on investment and the contexts identified will contribute to further research of successful models.

The research areas that I have recommended above should not be viewed as limited. It is my intention, with this study and its suggestions that we attend to the discourse of skills policy in apprenticeship in Canada and British Columbia in a more critical way. A dearth of research perpetuates the policies and practices of skills-policy in apprenticeship. Solid, reliable
research needs to be done that critically examines the ongoing policies in relation to apprenticeship and training. While there are active scholarly debates about skill, they do not tend to focus on apprenticeship.

6.5 Recommendations for Practice

Education practitioners need to take an active role in providing input and feedback to the policy process; they could gain much in both development and implementation. As Bowe, Ball, and Gold (1992) outlined in their policy process cycle, there is an uneasy relationship between the context of influence and the context of policy text production. While public policies are the result of discourses, they may narrowly articulate the interests and dogmatic ideologies of those who dominate. Practitioners need to be aware of the time in which policy text is created and where they were produced, and how they are articulated.

Education practitioners need to speak beyond the “accountabilities” imposed by governments to address the consequences of implementation. I very much appreciate how the daily grind of dealing with a myriad of issues related to the institutional needs of both institutions of post-secondary education and apprenticeship limit the abilities of administrators, faculty, staff, and students. With both federal and provincial governments having a strong influence on the implementation of skills policy in apprenticeship, it is difficult to attend to research. However, educators have the ability to speak publicly and have an obligation to represent their students. They have a vested interest, like other groups who are represented in apprenticeship policy. They should be prepared to voice their interests, conflicts, and
objections. This can be done by advocating for a place at the policy table that respects and recognizes the challenges and benefits of public training in the post-secondary system.

Representative groups at national and provincial levels can lobby for changes at both the development and implementation phases. The Council of Deans of Trades and Apprenticeship Canada (CDTAC), with the support of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), has the capacity to become a powerful national voice. The B.C. Association of Trades and Technology Administrators (BCATTA) has taken great strides in presenting themselves as viable partners in apprenticeship training; however, it needs a stronger presence during high-level policy decision making.

At the regional and local levels, educators need to “come out of the institution” to meet with industry and prospective apprentices. Post-secondary institutions need to make more of an attempt to understand the language of apprentices and employers to be able effectively to communicate and identify where gaps occur between policy development and implementation. Speaking to the value of human capital and human resource development is critical. Encouraging industry to better to understand the language of education and training is vital. Partners in industry must be heard; again, language can be an invitation or an inhibition to participation. The gaps between use and understanding of language by educators and employers must not continue to be a barrier to a better apprenticeship system.

The nature of post-secondary institutions tends to be very insular, with process and policies that often place emphasis on research-based or traditional teaching-based programs. Apprenticeship administrators must develop a strong support system within their own
institutions to ensure that there is clarity concerning the challenges and complexity of apprenticeship training, while also noting how federal and provincial policies may supplant the institutions.

Many post-secondary institutions are working with secondary schools to encourage youth participation. More attention needs to be placed on how differences in policies between apprenticeship and educational institutions impede participation and completion. Apprenticeship is concerned with “adult” training, while secondary students are recognized as involving a “youth” market. It is not simply a matter of transplanting students from one learning environment to another, but attending to the difference in the learner’s age and status as well.

All educators, inclusive of secondary and post-secondary levels, must tackle math and literacy preparation of apprentices. There is widespread recognition of the serious issues related to the continuing perception that students who are academically challenged should be encouraged to go into apprenticeship. The realities of poor preparation are evident in low completion rates. Establishing appropriate entry levels, similar to those of other post-secondary programs, needs to be done. This means working within educational institutions and with industry to ensure that math and literacy levels assist in apprentice success, particularly in establishing required resources.

Apprentice voices need to be heard, as learners and workers. Encouraging apprentices to participate in the development of policies for training is problematic given the short periods over which they attend post-secondary institutions. Educators should encourage apprentices
to take an active role in local industry organizations better to understand their position in the policy process.

As I have pointed out, economic and social policies also affect apprenticeship. Educators need to make more effort to attend events outside the realm of education to expand their understanding of how they affect apprenticeship. Much can be gained by attending to intertextuality and multiple discourses. Looking at EI policies, economic action plans, job plans, and industry strategies provides insight into the policy planning process and its resulting impact on implementation.

The recommendations that I make are not exhaustive, but provide a variety of ways for educators to be more active in policy development and implementation.

6.6 Reflections

As I have pointed out in this dissertation, I am not a sociolinguist, but I chose CDA as the methodology for the study in order to take advantage of the opportunity to become more aware of the discourses within skills policies in apprenticeship and the impact of the operationalizing of the policies. As an educator/sociologist who represents apprenticeship, I needed to reflect on my own activities in my practice. The complexity of the policies were beyond the scope of my daily practice; however, I was mindful of the number of steps in the policy cycle from text to practice that obfuscate the implementation. The reflexive process brought about clarity that “policy is palimpsest in the move from production to practice and sometimes back again” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 19). Skills policy in apprenticeship involves compromises and trade-offs due to forces much larger than the educational institution or
programs that I represented. The commodification of apprenticeship has evolved in response to the need for a more competitive workforce.

Since starting this dissertation, I have left my position as Dean of Trades and Technology and have focused on consulting in the area of apprenticeship and on research. Both of these activities have given me the opportunity to be more reflective about the field of apprenticeship in post-secondary education. While in my various positions at the institution, I had little opportunity to prepare for the implementation of policy, having to react, rather than be proactive, as a valued member of the development community. Both consulting and research open my mind and senses to making better decisions, as I am not deflected by the necessity of dealing with the demands of daily operations.

I have indicated there has been ongoing concern about the ITA and its ability to fulfill its mandate. On April 29, the Times Colonist (Bell, 2014) reported that the ITA board would be replaced, as it is “unfocused, bureaucratic and slow to make decisions.” The Minister of Advanced Education, Amrik Virk, introduced the Skills for Jobs Blueprint that will provide no additional funds for apprenticeship training, but will require that at least 25% of post-secondary grants must be applied to skills training by 2017/18. Aboriginals, youth, and those with disabilities will be targeted to train for welding, pipefitting, and engineering positions to fill labour demand for major upcoming projects. The B.C. government plans to develop a labour-market data system to determine where to direct funds within the education system that could lead to funds being shifted away from liberal arts programs. Shirley Bond, Minister of Jobs states, “[i]t isn’t always about adding new money. It’s about making sure that the money you
have is invested in the areas we need to be invested in.” The news article confirms my findings
and my ongoing concerns about the apprenticeship system in B.C.

I did not fully appreciate that language and processes were normalized to reflect
powerful dominant discourses, including my own. I always thought of myself as a good listener,
but now understand that I heard my practice through my own ears, translating and changing
contexts and language to best suit my views. It has been a great experience; more needs to be
done.
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Appendix A

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