

Professional Learning for
Children's Centre Leaders

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the experiences of Children's Centre leaders of the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL) who find themselves in a newly developed role and lacking a professional identity. Its aim is to explore the developing professional identities of NPQICL participants from their own perspectives, focusing on ways in which their professional identities are developing and how, correspondingly, these might be better supported on the NPQICL.

Clarification of core ideas embedded in these aims theoretically and conceptually reveals that professions are publicly shaped in line with established traditions, and therefore often prescribed. Processes of professional development are correspondingly seen as largely publicly organised processes of professional learning and/or acculturation. However, a key area for research is the interface between publicly shaped expectations of those learning to be professionals and the particular needs and expectations of course participants themselves especially with regard to how they see themselves as Children's Centre leaders.

Because this area is fluid, uncertain and shaped partly by professionals themselves it is hard to investigate. A flexible Adaptive Theory research design is selected along with an array of conceptual tools (orienting concepts and a conceptual cluster) which can be modified, discarded or replaced according to the demands of data collected. Using a relatively open-ended data collection device also allows a wide range of potentially revealing data to be 'storied' for analysis in order to preserve their individualised nature.

Although a process of subjective self-conceptualisation in role can be used to explain how NPQICL participants adapt to expectations from the wider professional community and social context, there is a need to explain how public influences and individual co-constructions of professional identity shaped by professionals themselves are synthesised in individual responses to fluid, uncertain professional identities. The research aims are met by modelling the process of developing a professional identity on the NPQICL as an 'autobiography'. This conceptual device brings together public and individual influences into a synthesis and allows insight into the experiences of individuals. It explains some of the success of the NPQICL course and some of its dynamics including how the development of Children's Centre leaders' identities can be supported in a professional learning programme.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the learning of a group of leaders in Children's Centres who are undertaking professional development in relation to their new roles. These roles involve leading multi-professional teams in settings which cater for the needs of families and children in the Early Years. This type of provision has increased in the UK due to recent government policies that aim to support very young children and their families in improving their life chances.

Courses for leaders in Children's Centres have been developed which lead to the qualification of National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL). Currently I am involved in, and responsible for, the NPQICL in the East of England and, from my university base, collaborate with the Eastern Leadership Centre to provide professional development in this field. These courses are a fairly new initiative and have as yet been little researched. My role gives me an opportunity to undertake research which could give insight into the learning of Children's Centre professionals and to identify implications for professional development in this context. Drawing on my knowledge of professionals working in these settings, and from working in the field of professional learning for some time, I am particularly interested in considering the nature and purpose of professional learning. I am also interested in developing an understanding of the relationship between professional learning and professional identity, especially, as in the case of these professionals in newly established posts, where there is the potential for professional role uncertainty and ambiguity.

Section 1: The socio-political and policy context

The policy drive to professionalise work with young children

Enshrined in the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 is the aim to develop interprofessional and multi-agency working so that professionals working with children and their families offer integrated provision to meet their needs more effectively. Following on from 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' (DfES, 2004), the 'Ten Year Childcare Strategy: Choice for Parents - the Best Start for Children' (HMT, 2004) proposes radical reforms to the framework of qualifications for people working with and for children and their families that are intended to improve outcomes for children's lives. Guidance to steer the path of the reforms is published in 'A Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce' (H. M. Government, 2005). Most of the reforms are intended to 'professionalise' work with children and to improve the status of working with very young children in a kind of 'professional project' (Larsen, 1977:38) of establishing a monopoly in the market for its services as well as status and upward mobility (collective as well as individual) in the social order (Ericsson et al., 2006:109).

The rationale for this policy of professionalisation is found in evidence from a longitudinal study, the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) study, (Sylva et al., 2004) which shows that improving the quality of children's experience in Early Years settings is directly related to better outcomes for their learning and development. Key factors contributing to the quality of this experience are shown to be the qualifications, training and experience of staff. As a result there are a number of new roles created with the intention of improving the quality of provision for children, such as the Early Years Professional, Lead Professional, Playworker Leader, Youth Professional and also, the

role which I have chosen as the focus of this research, the Children's Centre leader.

The expectations of Children's Centres

In 1999 New Labour, influenced by the vision of Norman Glass (1999), introduced the Sure Start programme which aimed:

To work with parents-to-be, parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children – particularly those who are disadvantaged – so that they can flourish at home and when they get to school, and thereby break the cycle of disadvantage for the current generation of young children (DOH, 2001).

The intention was to target early interventions that would make a positive difference to children's lives (Labour Party, 2001). The aim in 2003 was to have a children's centre in every community by 2010 as a key strategy to counter unemployment and child poverty. Despite the change of government in May 2010, Children's Centres remain centre stage in UK government initiatives to promote multi-agency team work and improve the lives of children (Field, 2010:7).

Professionalising leadership of Children's Centres

One part of the policy to develop and establish Children's Centres was the design of and investment in a new nationally recognised professional accreditation programme to improve practice and raised standards of care and learning for children and their families. The National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL) was commissioned in 2003 by the Department for Education and Skills as a leadership programme for the newly established Children's Centres. The programme for the NPQICL began as a pilot in the autumn of 2004. From the

start, a defining feature of it was that the Children's Centre leader role, to which the NPQICL was linked, was not clear or established.

Section 2: Rationale

Why the NPQICL? Why this focus?

As a professional learning programme for a newly created role for people working with children and families, the NPQICL offers an unusual and interesting context for research. It was created as a result of a policy in which the UK government 're-engineered' parts of the workforce in the public sector by devising new professional roles in order to meet its priorities and targets. In addition, although the NPQICL is a nationally recognised qualification and has a prescribed, formal curriculum and means of assessment, both external formal evaluations, for example from the Henley Management Centre (Williams, 2006) and informal reports, personally experienced, from regional providers and participants, suggest a pattern of unexpected benefits for participants' leadership roles. The consistency of this type of feedback from year to year suggests that there may be something in the participants' experiences of the NPQICL that they see as particularly valuable in the context in which they work, that may be of interest to a wider audience including tutors of professional learning in higher education.

Changes in professional roles

The new developments outlined above are changing expectations of people working with children which, in turn, are changing and challenging the nature of their professionalism. They impose and require shifts in assumptions, structures, processes, culture and strategies. Such changes create challenges for the incumbents of the new professional roles but also the other professionals who

interface with them. The new requirements of being a professional in the 21st century are recognised as mostly 'implicit' and hidden (Fish and Coles, 1998:36), 'changing' (Hargreaves, 2000:151), 'multi-agency' (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2007: xiv) and 'complex' (Trede, 2009:1-2).

Hargreaves' 'call to arms' regarding professional learning

There is very little existing work in this area that relates directly to Children Centre Leaders. In relation to teachers, Hargreaves acknowledges that the constructs 'profession' and 'professional' are both changed and changing. Hargreaves (2000) characterises current challenges experienced by teachers as features of the age of 'post-modern professionalism' where there is:

a diverse and complex clientele, in conditions of increasing moral uncertainty, where many methods of approach are possible, and where more and more social groups have an influence and a say (p. 175).

He argues that the response to these changes and the challenges to professionalism they bring should not be left to 'fate'. His view is that educators should engage in dialogue about what professional learning can offer participants whilst researchers should contribute to understanding how professional learning programmes can support them. This research responds to Hargreaves' 'call to arms', at least in part, and in relation to Children's Centre leaders, with the aim of contributing to dialogue about what professional learning is for and can do.

Potential value of the research

The findings of this research do not apply to all Children Centre leaders or professional learners. The study explores participants' perceptions of the impact of the NPQICL programme on their

professional identities, paying particular attention to changes in their personal and professional efficacy, agency and autonomy. I chose these concepts because of their face validity and relevance as a means to explore features of the experiences of NPQICL participants that were of interest.

The main focus is on aspects of the programme's perceived qualities rather than its benefits and inadequacies, although the interviews in the data gathering process ask participants to comment on both aspects of the NPQICL. There is no attempt to deny that there might be ways that the programme did not fulfil its own explicit aims and objectives or failed to meet participants' needs in every regard but it is valid to view that separately from participants' views of its impact (Davies and Kushner, 2009). However, the findings have potential to be useful in the creation of future professional learning programmes particularly those linked to newly created or ambiguous roles.

Section 3: Research Aim and Approach:

The perspectives of NPQICL participants

Guided by the argument of Swann et al. (2010) that we can learn a great deal by asking those who are professionals about their perspectives on the nature of professions and professionalism, the research enquires into NPQICL participants' perspectives. Its aim is to explore the developing professional identities of NPQICL participants from their own perspectives, focusing on ways in which their professional identities are developing and how, correspondingly, these might be better supported on the NPQICL. I contextualise this aim in a theoretical study as a prelude to selecting some conceptual tools to guide data collection and analysis. Although it is impossible to predict the views of NPQICL participants, these do arise in

personal and professional contexts thought likely to be powerfully influential and so deserve scrutiny prior to empirical investigation.

To illustrate, as part of Chapters 2 and 3, I differentiate between the two very different views of what it means to be a professional- publicly shaped views often guided by criteria used by professional and publicly accredited bodies, and those which allow some flexibility for individual 'construction' by the novice professionals themselves. In common with other professionals, Children's Centre leaders are working in the context of expectations, pressures and constraints from public criteria and ideologies that define professionalism (to a certain extent these are built into the NPQICL) but they are subject also to the more variable pressures and constraints (ambitions, talents, role-perceptions) that differ between individuals and within small groups. I expect that by eliciting participant perspectives, interactions between both kinds of constraint may be explored.

In summary, therefore, although the intention is to explore learner perspectives on their professional development with as few preconceptions as possible, I believe that some theoretical guidance is needed to inform the empirical study and aid data analysis. For this reason, as well as exploring potentially useful theoretical positions in Chapters 2 and 3, I take a flexible (Adaptive Theory) approach to empirical study rather than a grounded theory approach, so that the research can be both faithful to participants' views and sensitive to the utility of pre-existing theory.

Adaptive theory

Adaptive Theory 'allows the dual influence of extant theory (theoretical models) as well as those that unfold from (and are

enfolded in) the research' (Layder, 1998:133). Data gathered in earlier studies of the NPQICL (Isaacs and Trodd, 2008) suggests that standard theories have to be interpreted in diverse ways and remain provisional in order to cope with the uncertainties and ambiguities endemic in the NPQICL. The uncertainty faced by Children's Centre leaders about what professional identities are appropriate for Children's Centre leaders and also with regard to their own professional identities, requires caution and open-mindedness about standard theories. Adaptive Theory suits these circumstances as it encourages the researcher to theorise at all points in a research study whilst treating such theory as provisional with potential to be adapted to new data and perceptions. Its aim is to allow new ideas to emerge and to generate novel theories.

The literature on profession, professional, professionalism, professional learning and identity is itself large, diverse and complex. Helpfully, Adaptive Theory encourages the researcher to select the most promising theoretical orientation suited to the research context in order to organise and interact with the data whilst acknowledging that nothing in the research process is fixed. This suits the intention of this research by allowing the focus to be on complex interactions between individuals and also individuals and curricular processes rather than structural or socio-political matters. Adaptive Theory fits well with my professional work as a teacher in which I adopt a broadly constructivist stance to learning and teaching as it remains tentative, keeping options open to explore novel or radical pathways in the research process and to create theory. Lastly, Adaptive Theory is helpful in reminding the researcher that theory is generated against a backdrop of assumptions rather than a grand system of ideas.

Collecting the data

The emphasis in data collecting is on obtaining first-hand descriptions of the experiences of the NPQICL from Children Centre leaders. To this end I sought data from semi-structured depth interviews conducted with a sample of former members of three consecutive cohorts of students who participated in a NPQICL programme for participants from the East of England, totalling 15 participants. The strength of a semi-structured interview is that it allows the bi-directional strategy of Adaptive Theory: the structured questions let the researcher tap into theory that is of interest, the unstructured dimension allows the emergence of themes which might lead to new theories or new perspectives on existing theories.

Pseudonyms are assigned to the participants in order to protect the identity of the research subjects. To achieve a balance that is broadly representative of the programme demographics, purposive sampling is used for participant selection. The interviews are conducted face to face and are recorded and transcribed for later corroboration by interviewees and then analysis.

Triangulation of the interview data

To triangulate the interview data, I obtained and systematically analysed 3 other sources of data with the 15 interviews

1. Copies of assignments written for assessment purposes in the NPQICL.
2. Follow up interviews of 7 of the same 15 participants to gather comments on emerging themes

3. A researcher-participant log completed by the researcher that includes notes completed about the 3 NPQICL cohorts and about the process of completing this research

Contextualisation of the data

External evaluations of the programme by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) are used to provide valuable contextual and sometimes corroborative information about the NPQICL and to help to clarify the formal aims and objects of the programme by showing the criteria against which the programme was evaluated. In addition, the NPQICL programme materials published by the NCSL are used to contextualise the participants' learning in terms of its programme aims and to represent its philosophies about learning. See Appendix 4 for further details of the context of the NPQICL.

Construction of participants' stories

First, I agree the transcript of the interview with each participant. Second, the transcripts, triangulated by data drawn from the assignments and researcher-participant log, are constructed into 15 individual participants' stories preparatory to exploring their narratives of professional identities. Then each participant receives a copy of his or her story and comments on and approves it. Attention is paid to the unique features of each story as well as recurrent themes that emerge from them as sets of stories.

Analysis of the participants' stories

The stories are analysed using an Adaptive Theory approach that seeks to discover the meaning the participants find in their learning and actions. Adaptive Theory (Layder, 1998) draws from both modified grounded theory and hermeneutic theory. Whilst it acknowledges concepts and theories that influence the research

design and analysis, research questions arise from the outcomes of the research not only in its inception stage but throughout the research process. I used it because the validity of the self-reported, qualitative nature of the participants' stories is best served by the use of an open-ended research design and also because Adaptive Theory corresponds to an assumption of an unfixed, fluid epistemology tied to the perspectives of individuals and groups which I believe underpins their learning.

The stages of the analysis

Analysis of the data occurs in 3 stages:

Stage 1:

The construction of the participants' stories
Exploring the use of figurative language in the 15 individual stories

Stage 2:

Open coding of stories involving a process of sorting, grouping and naming
The construction of descriptive themes using emic naming of themes
Grouping the descriptive themes together in relation to the key and orienting concepts and the conceptual cluster

Stage 3:

The emerging analytical themes are explored in further interviews with 7 participants
The analytical themes are constructed in relation to the key and orienting concepts and the conceptual cluster

Key areas of study, orienting concepts and conceptual clusters

There are some key concepts that underpin this area of research that I believe are essential areas of study. They include a group of concepts that are part of a discourse of '*profession*' and

'professional' for instance, *professionalisation* and *professionalism*. They are important because the status of their meaning, purpose and characteristics form part of the publicly shaped context in which participants define their role and identity. That is, they are key features of the way society constrains NPQICL participants' perspectives on their roles and so form a significant feature of the context in which their professionalism is situated and against which they define their own versions of a professional identity for Children's Centre leaders. Extant notions of *'profession'* and *'professional'* are likely to influence the views of *professional learning* and *professional identity* and so are further key concepts in this exploratory study. All of the key concepts are part of a large academic discourse so it is important to problematise them in order to arrive at provisional views that might have significance for later data collection and analysis. The main discussion of these key ideas is found in Chapters 2 and 3.

The conclusions drawn from reviewing and problematising profession, professional and related concepts (developed in Chapter 2) and professional identity and professional learning (developed in Chapter 3) form initial orienting theories and concepts. Layder (1998:109) identifies an orienting (background) concept as one that 'helps to impose meaningful patterns on the data in a provisional way' that may increase in importance but may also open up new lines of enquiry which equal or overshadow it. Orienting concepts may also lead to other concepts that describe the particular experiences that are explored because Adaptive Theory aims to avoid a 'verificationist' approach (Layder, 1998: 35) in which there is some 'forcing' of data to fit predetermined and defined concepts.

Layder is, however, somewhat ambiguous about the relationship between orienting concepts and sensitising concepts. His orienting concepts have a provisional, flexible relationship with data and are open to revision and rejection during the research process rather like Blumer's sensitising concepts (1954). They shape the data but function as sensitising concepts that not only suggest or indicate patterns and further lines of inquiry, but also are shaped by or sensitive to the data. In order to operationalise Adaptive Theory the characteristics of orienting, sensitising and being sensitive to data are deliberately conflated into a tool referred to as an orienting concept from this point onwards. Initial orienting concepts that emerge from Chapters 2 and 3 are *agency*, *efficacy* and *autonomy*. Each is considered in relation to *professional* identity and learning and act as initial analytic units around which coding and analysis takes place.

Another useful element in Adaptive Theory is the conceptual cluster. Layder describes this as a group of concepts that relates to or is derived from the same or similar theories. Once recognised, mapping the relationships of the concepts in the conceptual cluster facilitates understanding of any bi-directional relationships between them. Here a conceptual cluster is derived from theories of *constructivism*. In my view it includes *co-construction and reification*. Both describe processes in which learners are active in their learning. Similarly *learning community and subjective self-conception in role*, describe reflexive understandings and self-perceptions that may be developed by constructivist processes. Again, this cluster is provisionally defined and, like the orienting concepts, is held open to allow closer review, revision and application, contradiction or abandonment during or following the data analysis.

Section 4: Outline of the thesis

The structure of the thesis follows a traditional approach. It is divided into 11 Chapters.

The following chapter (Chapter 2) discusses key studies to explore publicly shaped expectations of professions, those learning to be professionals and professionalism. In doing this the aim is to outline the ideology of professions which potentially exerts a constraining effect on the professional identities of the Children's Centre leaders who are the research participants. Included in this chapter are descriptions of key features of some recent views on being a professional working with children and families.

Chapter 3 discusses various conceptions of professional identity and professional learning (key themes in the dissertation). The dividing of theories into (loosely) those imposing pre-existing positions on novices and those vulnerable to construction and co-construction is meant to clarify the research 'territory' being explored in the light of existing academic discourse.

Chapter 4 establishes professional agency, efficacy and autonomy as orienting concepts. I selected these concepts because of their potential utility in helping detect significant patterns in complex data, organise it accordingly and guide analysis.

Chapter 5 reviews elements of a constructivist conceptual cluster that I also selected to guide data organisation and analysis while beginning to explore the dependencies and influences (if any) that the elements have on each other. At the close of Chapter 5 is a summary of key features of orienting concepts that I will use in the research.

Chapter 6 explains the approach taken to the inquiry and the rationale for choosing Adaptive Theory and narratives as important aspects of it. I outline the research methodology and offer some contextualisation of the research (more can be found in Appendix 4).

Chapter 7 marks the beginning of stage 1 of the data analysis and includes an explanation of how the participants' stories are constructed and an analysis of figurative language found in the stories. The aim behind the latter is to use the themes that emerge to shape later themes in the analysis. At the end of Chapter 7 is a summary table marking the end of Stage 1 of the analysis. It indicates features of the interaction between the data and theories, the orienting concepts and conceptual cluster, offering an opportunity to see whether they are useful ways of interpreting the data. If they are not, I can seek others instead.

Chapter 8 outlines Stage 2 of the development and analysis of the descriptive themes that emerge from the research. At the end of the chapter is a revised summary of the orienting concepts and conceptual cluster after 2 stages of analysis.

Chapter 9 marks the beginning of Stage 3 of the analysis and presents the development of analytical themes.

Chapter 10 shows how the analytical themes are re-sorted, focusing on their relationship with professional learning and using Bandura's four sources of efficacy information and the most relevant concepts in the conceptual cluster to draw out conclusions from the analysis. The chapter closes with a revised summary of the key orienting concepts and conceptual cluster as they are at the end of Stage 3.

Chapter 11 concludes the thesis by presenting the findings in relation to the research aims, the contributions to knowledge and practice, reflecting on the study overall and making some suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: Key studies: what we mean by profession, professional and professionalism

Introduction

How are Children's Centre leaders' professional identities developing and how can these be better supported on the NPQICL? In order to answer these questions empirically, we have first to make sense of them conceptually and theoretically. Unfortunately, there is considerable uncertainty in the literature about what it means to be a member of a profession, become a professional and, therefore, develop a professional identity. Terms such as 'profession' and 'professional', for example, are used loosely and frequently prescriptively although their meaning is usually taken as understood and obvious in everyday life.

At the same time, the nature of the two constructs continues to be debated in a large, established field of academic discourse. The meanings of the terms 'profession' and 'professional' are significant because they and terms derived from them carry expectations that influence professionals, educators, employers, governments and clients and there is also an obvious logic in expecting that '*profession*' and '*professional*' are also important components of *professional learning* and *professional identity*. This chapter explores how far the traditional discourse of what it means to be a member of a profession and thus a professional person reflects the kind of professionalism and principles and values required in new emerging roles working with and for children in the 21st century. Some discourses do so more than others, pointing to the challenges faced by incumbents of the new roles, of becoming clear about their professional identities.

Section 1: Profession

Although it is a term in common parlance that everyone understands in their own way, it has proved impossible to agree on a definition of a 'profession' (Squires, 2001). There is a 'folk concept' of 'profession' (Becker, 1970) or common sense view evolved in everyday discourse which adds confusion to the difficulties of arriving at a precise definition of its meaning. Becker argues that, in his view, a 'profession' is a symbol used in several ways, by a range of people and groups, each with different motivations. However, he is willing to acknowledge one consistent characteristic - that a profession is seen as 'honorific' (Becker 1970:34). This widely-held perception offers an explanation for the current widespread use of the words, 'profession' (and 'professional'), to convey 'good' in the sense of being consistent or of high quality or trustworthy.

In fact the existence and value of professions as a beneficial part of society have remained largely unquestioned. In western culture the words 'profession' (and 'professional') tend to be imbued with respect and exclusivity. 'The concept of 'professional' in all societies is not so much a descriptive term as one of value and prestige' writes Hughes (1958:44). George Bernard Shaw's famous definition of the professions in Act One of the Doctor's Dilemma as 'a conspiracy against laity' (Shaw 1906:36) was not the generally respectful and accepting view of the professions that was typical of his era or in the intervening years.

What is a profession? : Historical background

In the past, the defining characteristics for the early model of professions were probably derived from the medieval guilds, the learned professions of the clergy, doctors and lawyers. One of

the key features was that the professions were self-regulating (O'Day, 2000) and so set and enforced guidelines for those who could enter the profession and also those who should be disbarred because their work did not meet the established requirements (Freidson, 1984). Thus acceptance as a member by a professional body was crucial to gaining professional status just as exclusion from it due to 'misconduct' usually barred the ex-member from holding professional status and therefore practising legitimately. In this way the professional bodies tried to preserve the respect, privilege and credibility derived from membership by exerting discipline over their members' behaviour and limiting the general understanding of outsiders about the way their practices and services work (Harding and Taylor, 2002). Goode (1957) explains that 'colleague criticism is rarely permitted before laymen, and the professions justify the rule by asserting that such criticism would lower the standing of the profession in the larger society' (p. 199). By protecting positive expectations of the professions and passing on their exclusive knowledge and values to new members, professional bodies ensured that entrants were guaranteed respect, privilege and credibility.

Traits and attributes approach

Early academic studies of the professions identified lists of 'traits' to distinguish them from other occupations. Dingwall (1976) called the lists of 'traits' 'the attributes approach' (p. 331). The approach was founded on the belief that it was both possible and desirable for a 'profession' to be clearly defined. Clarity would enable strict control over who was and who was not in a profession and thus maintain its exclusivity so that each profession could uphold the high market value of the benefits derived from membership (Atkinson and Delamont, 1990).

There are recurrent similarities in lists of the attributes of a profession. Abraham Flexner's view (1915) was that six traits set professions apart from other groups of workers. They:

involve essentially intellectual operations with large individual responsibility; they derive their raw material from science and learning; this material they work up to a practical and definite end; they possess an educationally communicable technique; they tend to self organization; and they are becoming increasingly altruistic in motivation (p. 156).

Approximately 50 years later, Millerson (1964) noted a range of 23 traits being used to define the term 'profession' in academic literature (p. 5). The use of such a checklist of characteristics was considered a credible process to evaluate the potential or actual professional status of groups of workers (Rice and Duncan, 2006). However, one obvious problem with the 'attributes approach' to describing and identifying a profession is that it relies on a backward-looking analysis of the characteristics of already established professions which means that, at any one time, it may not fully reflect the current realities of professions, be responsive to change or inclusive of new professions. Another problem is, where there are consistently positive views of professions, they are often viewed as having a mixture of objective characteristics, for instance, specialist professional knowledge and qualifications and subjective qualities such as, having a 'noble work ethic' (Popkewitz, 1994:3), 'safeguarding our well-being', 'trusted' (Dent and Whitehead, 2002:1) and being 'honorific'. The inevitable lack of precision of the subjective qualities makes them impossible to turn into clear criteria. This undermines the purpose of the checklist.

Functionalist views

Functionalists accept the valorisation of professions and professionals because they view the professions as stabilising society and providing an essential, beneficial function that keeps it functioning in equilibrium. Talcott Parsons (1954), a leading functionalist, writes: 'it seems evident that many of the most important features of our society are to a considerable extent dependent on the smooth functioning of the professions' (p. 34). In his view the exclusivity of the professions rations success in society and thus plays a part in maintaining its stability.

Parsons' work has no sense of resistance to 'mainstream' values or dissent and tends to ignore social conflict and change. Parsons(1954) thinks that 'our received traditions of thought' (p. 48), that differentiate between professionals and non-professionals on the basis of altruistic and egotistic motives, involve a false dichotomy that is simplistic. However, he still finds himself underwriting the construct of a profession with trust, as well as the functional knowledge and competence he would prefer to use to identify it. While arguing that this focus on altruistic and egotistic motives obscures other important elements of the meaning of 'profession', Parsons (1939) argues for an alternative version of professional 'trust' based on the qualities of reliability and consistency, rationality (evidence based thinking), universalism (knowledge and skills applied according to rules or standards that are applied generally) as well as the functional specificity and disinterestedness he sees as distinctive in a profession.

Both the 'attributes approach' and functionalism are illustrations of a discourse which does not challenge 'our received traditions of thought' about professions. Both take for granted that

qualities of being honorific and trustworthy with a consistent service ethic are part of society's expectations of members of a profession. There is a lack of critical evaluation of the narratives that describe and legitimise the evolution and status of professions. The gap between the rhetoric and ideology of professions about trustworthiness and the service ethic on one hand, and the reality of the ordinary, human self-interestedness of many professionals on the other tends to be ignored.

Profession as an ideology

Eraut uses the word 'ideology' to suggest a more critical approach to the professions and their exclusivity and power. Eraut (1994) argues that: 'three central features of the *ideology* [author's emphasis] of professionalism are a specialist knowledge base, autonomy and service' (p. 223). Eraut's use of the word ideology suggests a system of ideas about professions that corresponds to the needs and aspirations of professionals and professional bodies as well as other parties who have a vested interest in them. At the same time, the term ideology suggests that this system of ideas derives from the political, economic, or social system of which the professions are a part. Eraut's view of a profession as ideological raises questions about whose interests professions serve (1994: viii) and their likelihood of being outmoded (1994: 4) because they serve the status quo.

Recent views of professions

There is some evidence that the professions are beginning to be viewed more sceptically. Geison (1983) argues that:

Benign and "attributional" models of the professions have lost some of their appeal, among both academics and the wider public.' because 'Examples of demonstrable corruption or

ineptitude on the part of some certified professionals have become more widely publicized' (p. 5).

Geison explains why there is growing awareness in society of the gap between the valorisation of professional ethics and codes of practice and the motivations and fallibilities of the members of professions. Some members of the public see professions as exercising undue social control over others, being unresponsive to change, guarding their specialised knowledge from those outside the profession, using jargon to mystify their work, putting the interests of the profession above those of the client or user and resisting being held to account. Perhaps this explains why there continues to be a move towards making the professions more accountable.

Geison (1983) also argues that the existing constructs of a 'profession' fail to mirror the diversity and range of what is seen in modern society:

Whether they conceive of professionalization as the emergence of benign, apolitical, 'non-economic,' and homogeneous 'communities of the competent,' or whether they see it as a conspiratorial, stratifying, and exploitative process in tune with the needs of capitalism, the existing models are simply unable to account for the richly diverse forms and distribution of professional groups as we meet them in actual historical experience (p. 6).

Some professional bodies also challenge the traditional views of the professions. The Royal College of Physicians (2005), for instance, one of the professional bodies that has fiercely guarded the medical profession in the past, reports:

The idea that a profession is a bounded group – bounded by a discrete body of knowledge, a monopoly of service, autonomy

over conditions of work, and a unique code of ethics – is outdated (p. 21).

In recognition of this disconnection between the *traditional* models of the professions and current experiences of them, McCulloch et al. (2000) argue against an attempt to capture an agreed definition of a profession and for a definition that is less fixed. They do not go quite as far as Hanlon who represents recent sociological thinking about a profession as whatever individuals and groups think it is at any particular time (Hanlon, 1998), but argue for a 'profession' to be viewed as socially constructed and thus to become more responsive to social change and pliable. McCulloch et al. (2000) propose that different conceptualisations should arise in response to changing expectations for professional groups. The nature of a particular profession: 'represents judgements that are specific to times and contexts' (p. 6).

In this section the historical tendency towards an unquestioning approach to professions and a recently evolved more critical view of professions is noted. 'Profession' is no longer viewed as a received, definitive, generic construct or agreed-upon Weberian ideal type (Weber, 1949:90). Instead it may be possible that members of each occupational group contribute to the construction of their own unique, self-defined and situated, and therefore potentially a more meaningful and workable view of profession. If so, this may release professionals from attending to uniformity and compliance *inside* their profession i.e. what makes us similar in order to sustain exclusivity. It may shift the attention of professionals, academics and professional bodies onto similarities *between* professions, so that they cross and bridge boundaries rather than create them and are able to pay

more attention to working with others in order to promote the best possible life chances for children and families. At the same time this is also a chance for such groups to construct their own professional identities in relation to, but not in imitation of, other professions and therefore establish new concepts of 'profession' and 'professional' that could meet current demands in roles working with children and families.

In the next section new thinking about professions and professionals is noted that questions traditional expectations of being a professional working with children and families and proposes more active, questioning and responsive approaches to being a 'professional'. As examples of this shift of perspective, the recent constructs of democratic, dialogic and active professionalism and 'workers as researchers' are reviewed.

Section 2: Professional and Professionalism

In section 1, problems with concepts of 'profession' were noted: they tend to be unrealistic, outmoded, virtually unchallenged in society and vague in common usage. The concept of 'professional' is even more problematic. Defining it has proved so difficult that Watson (2002:104) suggests replacing the term 'professional' with the phrase: relating to an 'expert occupation' or 'knowledge-based occupation' .

The word 'professional' holds at least three meanings in general use. Used as a noun it can mean someone who belongs to a profession but alternatively it can mean someone who is paid for their services, that is, in contrast with an amateur. Used as an adjective it describes behaviour that is appropriate for a member of a profession. It is sometimes argued that there is one unifying behavioural and ethical code common to all professions (i.e.

across all professions) when different professions more usually have distinct codes. A doctor, for example, is bound by the Hippocratic Oath as in:

What I may see or hear in the course of treatment or even outside of the treatment in regard to the life of men, which on no account one must spread abroad, I will keep myself holding such things shameful to be spoken about (Edelstein, 1943).

However, a social worker knows that promises of confidentiality to clients are curtailed by his or her code of practice and the constraints of child protection law.

Professionalism as an 'ideology of control'

Although codes of practice and professional ethics vary between professionals, other types of controls on their behaviour and performance exist that are similar. Freidson (1994, 2001) argues that one form of occupational control of work that is unique to professionals is professionalism. Similarly, Evetts' (2003:411) view is that professionalism can be seen as a 'normative value system' but also an 'ideology of control'. Identifying professionalism as an ideology of control is important in this study. If its participants create a professional identity for the new role of Children Centre leader, the control exerted by constructs of professionalism and the pressure on them to comply with existing ways of being a professional will play a part.

Recognising professionalism as situated in western epistemologies, Carlina Rinaldi (2006) problematises some of the dualities that influence the concept of a 'professional' and identifies some of the systems of thought (ideologies) shaping it. In arguing for her proposal for a dialogic professional, which is discussed later, she draws attention to the cultural relativity of

perceived dichotomies such as between mind and body; academic and vocational learning, and masculine and feminine discourses that shape traditional concepts of a professional. In particular, these dualities highlight differences between the 'rational male professional' and the 'caring female nonprofessional' as influences on the professionalism of practitioners who work with children.

Nearly half a century ago Etzioni (1969) wrote about a strong and enduring gender discourse that describes the teacher as a nurturing, maternal figure, arguing that while it persists it ensures that teaching remains a semi-profession. Perhaps this now applies to childcare professionals like Children's Centre leaders who are mainly female and drawn from the caring professions. If so there are likely to be tensions in the UK government's attempts to professionalise practitioners working with young children. Professionalisation may exert ideological and socio-cultural pressure on this new professional group to reject qualities associated with feminine discourses in western culture such as intuition, informality and expressiveness, in order to gain recognition as full professionals. Rinaldi (2006) recognises this dichotomy and argues that a different professionalism is needed to safeguard more fluid, individually constructed features.

Professionalism as a bargain with the state

In everyday use professionalism is seen as the conduct, expertise, competence or skill that characterises or identifies a profession or professional person and the sets of values, behaviours, and relationships that underpin the trust they are given. Whilst professionalism sustains the recognition and status bestowed upon professions or professionals by society, it also

constrains them and can be imposed rather than emerging and developing from within a profession. Whitty and Wisby (2006:44) identify the increasing control of the professions by the state: 'now a major stakeholder in defining professionalism in modern societies'. They point out the 'professional mandate' or kind of bargain that professionals have struck with the government of the day that is granted by the state rather than assumed as an inalienable right by members of a profession. For Whitty and Wisby (2006:46) this is 'steering at a distance'. This professional mandate and the consequent sense of being controlled may be even more difficult for Children's Centre leaders to avoid than other professionals because their professional status was designed and funded by the state.

Both managerial professionalism and audit-based professionalism cede control to external agencies, mainly the state. Clarke and Newman (1997:78-80) describe 'managerial professionalism' as 'accountable, it has rules and outcomes and it is still continuing to be written. It is as if professionalism is being written by governments because the trust that was afforded to 'gut' feeling can no longer be trusted'. Judyth Sachs (2003¹) characterises managerial professionalism as 'management is the answer to everything', 'only the private sector provides the best model of practice' and where the professional must take up their designated role in: 'contributing to the school's formal accountability processes' (Brennan, 1996: 22)

The 'audit based professional' is legitimated by the call for 'quality' (Dahlberg et al., 1999, 2007; Urban, 2005). According to Dent and Whitehead (2002) the move to 'audit-based professionalism' requires that trust, credibility and respect are

earned by professionals, not acquired through status, qualifications, expertise or traditional expectations. The work of an 'audit based professional' is evaluated when it is measured through outcomes achieved against performance indicators and objective external criteria (Furlong, 2003:15-21). This works as a mechanism to hold professionals in agencies and organisations involved in the education and care of children to account by measuring progress and performance and enforcing a regulatory framework for all work with them. Its purpose is to ensure high quality provision or services. Woods and Jeffrey (2002) describe the effect of audit-based professionalism on teachers as:

From a notion of the 'good Teacher' based on personal qualities, the emphasis is now on teacher competencies, such as subject expertise, coordination, collaboration, management and supervision (p. 105).

Managerialism and audit-based professionalism have contributed to the destabilisation of perceptions of 'professionalism'. They sit uneasily with the professional autonomy which many studies have identified as the defining feature of being a professional both in the mind of the incumbent and also in the mind of society (Atkinson, 2003; Furlong, 2003; Dent and Whitehead, 2002; Freidson, 2001; Hoyle and John, 1995; Hall, 1968). Katz (1985), for instance, is one of many scholars who view having autonomy as an expectation of a professional. She includes autonomy in her list of eight criteria of professionalism in the field of working with young children. It is usual to justify working with autonomy because lengthy, specialised training validates professionals to be able to use their discretion in the relevant area of expertise and to be trusted to behave altruistically in the best interests of clients and society. However, this expectation of autonomy may cause conflict when professionals work in

organisations that try to standardise or change their ways of working. Freidson (2001) is sceptical about the degree to which professionals have been autonomous in the past, arguing that, whilst professionals may 'police' themselves on a day to day basis, in reality they have always been broadly held to account by clients, colleagues and their professional body. It is possible to sidestep this debate about professional autonomy, whether it has ever really existed and whether it characterises existing models of professional and professionalisation by exploring other views of the nature of professional autonomy.

An alternative view of professional autonomy

Commenting on Hoyle and John's (1995) list of knowledge, responsibility and autonomy as the three traditional dimensions of professionalism, Furlong (2003:16-17) notes that 'The questioning of one has led progressively to the questioning of the others'. However, another way to conceptualise professional autonomy is to see it as choosing the values and principles by which decisions and actions as a professional are taken and being aware of the process of learning from experiences as well as the ability to make critical judgements (Chene, 1983). In this version of working with autonomy professionals have the capacity, freedom, and responsibility to make choices concerning their own way of working. Autonomy is seen as the ability to determine how to work rather than what to do, what is right and wrong for oneself rather than independence in decision making. A positive feature of this view is that it appears to reflect reality. Amongst Children's Centre leaders the phrase 'strategic non-compliance', defined by Campbell et al. (2003: 680) as 'the thoughtful and selective application of medical advice rather than blind adherence to it' is used to describe dilemmas in which professional autonomy, as defined above, is needed and

decisions are taken using one's own professional expertise and local insight rather than following established practice guidelines or external directives. As members of a values-based profession they resist external constraints by exercising agency, efficacy and autonomy to determine how to work and also how to define themselves as professionals.

Some features of being a professional are subject to challenge and change not least how to work with autonomy in a context where accountability and external constraints are increasing. Whereas the traditional model of professional relied on long training and accreditation of specific knowledge to bestow a mandate to work with autonomy, Chene's revised concept of autonomy described earlier is taken rather than given and requires reflexivity, agency and self-efficacy and also clarity of vision, values and identity to operate. The question that is relevant here is how can professionals in newly developed roles acquire these underpinning qualities to facilitate their professional autonomy.

In the next section some recent reworking of the notion of 'professional' are explored. These novel ideas were all developed with work with children and families in mind and align themselves with a values-based rather than a managerial or audit-based concept of professional.

Section 3: Recent concepts of 'professional'

Alongside the uncertainties about being a professional that have surfaced in organisational contexts, there have been a number of attempts by scholars to define what kind of 'profession', 'professional' and professionalism are 'specific to times and

contexts' (McCulloch et al, 2000:6) and which fit with current work with children and their families.

The democratic professional

Oberhuemer (2005), for instance, proposes a 'democratic professional' for those working in the field of early childhood education and care. She characterises the democratic professional as a reflective practitioner who deals with complex situations and relationships, who recognises and acknowledges adults and children alike as social agents who are: 'participating in constructing and influencing their own lives' and who forge:

...participatory relationships and alliances and foregrounds collaborative, cooperative action between professional colleagues and other stakeholders ...engaging and networking with the local community... (p. 13).

Democratic professionals portray and communicate their work openly and have an inclusive attitude to entry into their profession. They are participative in their approach to others and strive to engage and empower clients, community and colleagues (Australian Union of Teachers, 1991) rather than comply with the rules that govern the discourse – in this case the discourse of professionalism and the 'closed shop' protectionism of the traditional construct of professional. For Oberhuemer, this non-traditional version of autonomy is a significant feature of democratic professionalism. A democratic professional recognises and resists the 'regimes of truth' and power 'inscribed' in everyday reasoning (Foucault, 1980). He or she opens up opportunities for debates, encourages others to ask questions rather than accept received traditions of thought and encourages critical thinking in their area of work.

The democratic professional has some similarities with Hoyle's concept of extended professionalism in which professional work is placed in a wider context, is collaborative and also explores theories of practice and engages in professional development (Hoyle, 1980). Evans (2002) argues that this type of position is more fundamental than a mere variety of the more traditional professional. Her view is that it represents:

an ideologically-, attitudinally-, intellectually-, and epistemologically-based stance on the part of an individual, in relation to the practice of the profession to which s/he belongs, and which influences her/his professional practice (p. 6-7).

As an idea linked to the democratic professional, Sachs foregrounds agency as fundamental to professionalism. She proposes the construct of 'activist professionals' (Sachs, 2001, 2003²: 181) who are moving from being 'victims of change' to being 'agents of change' (Johnson and Hallgarten, 2002). Day and Sachs see opportunities for a practitioner in a changing role to be encouraged to find ways of repositioning his or her professional identity and professionalism and believe that this can be best achieved in a collaborative culture and in the spirit of democratic professionalism (Day and Sachs, 2004).

The 'worker as researcher' and dialogic professional

Moss, however, goes further than Sachs and rejects the traditional construct of a 'professional' entirely. He argues that it is 'bordered and exclusionary' (Moss, 2006: 38) and tainted with its old values. He questions whether it can ever be cleansed of its disempowering characteristics so he proposes a new construct of 'worker as researcher' whose values are 'border crossing, uncertainty, subjectivity and inclusionary democratic practice' (Moss, 2006:38). He sees the 'worker as researcher' as co-

constructing learning, values and identities and believing that they have the efficacy to do so.

Whilst Moss eschews the construct of a professional entirely, Rinaldi (2006:126) proposes the 'dialogic professional' in her search for a viable professional identity for practitioners working with children and their families. Like Moss's 'worker as researcher', Rinaldi's 'dialogic professional' researches and co-constructs meaning, identity and values but does it always in relation to others (Rinaldi, 2006). This construct of a dialogic professional draws on thinking from Mead (1962), Vygotsky (1962) and Dewey (1916) that holds that social interaction and active participation in learning and thinking are crucial. Rinaldi's much quoted depiction of the ethics of an encounter by a dialogic professional (below) proposes that active listening, verbal interaction, responsiveness to others and respect for their autonomy are key qualities of professional behaviour and essential features of professionalism. For Rinaldi (2006) professionalism is relational. It is:

built on welcoming and hospitality of the Other – an openness to the difference of the Other, to the coming of the Other. It involves an ethical relationship of openness to the Other, trying to listen to the Other from his or her own position and experience and not treating the other as the same. The implications are seismic for education (p. 15).

The open-hearted, outward-facing version of professionalism proposed by Rinaldi offers a sharp contrast to that of a professional as a member of an (exclusive) 'community within a community' engaged in self-protectionism (Goode, 1957).

Rinaldi (2006) sees the dialogic professional as a new way of working with children and their families in which there are opportunities to learn in change and uncertainty:

[Uncertainty is a] quality that you can offer, not only a limitation. ..You have to really change your being, to recognise doubt and uncertainty, to recognise your limits as a resource, as a place of encounter, as a quality. Which means that you accept that you are unfinished, in a state of permanent change, and your identity is in the dialogue (p. 183).

Rinaldi sees the value of recognising one's own knowledge as partial and under construction and argues that it needs to be part of the way that the dialogic professional makes sense or meaning from their experiences. She views the research element of her concept as a stance or attitude with which the professional makes sense of life and creates meanings from his or her experience.

These reconceptualisations of a 'professional' constructed by Moss (2006), Rinaldi (2006), Oberhuemer (2005), Sachs, (2001, 2003²), challenge the received concept of the traditional 'closed shop' professional in a particular way. They offer alternative views that promote self-efficacy and agency in subjective self-conceptualisation associated with the professional role and the autonomy derived from professional reflexivity. They also view being professional as requiring agency, self-efficacy and autonomy in actively constructing their own professional identity. In addition they recognise that professionals who currently work with children and families must do so in relation to others. Common elements of these concepts of professional, the dialogic, democratic, activist professional and 'worker as researcher', are that they are: agents of change not victims; collaborative; participative; outward facing; relational;

autonomous in terms of working within their values and beliefs; questioning and enquiring. It may be that, as they have been developed concurrently with the development of Children's Centres and their leaders and with people who work with children and families in mind, they offer the closest, most current, matches to the role of Children's Centre leaders.

Conclusion

Diverse approaches to key studies reveal how some writers and researchers model these ideas in a traditional way, focussing set knowledge and skills for which professionals can be judged publicly accountable. Others see them as more fluid and uncertain, able to adapt to pressures from disparate individuals and groups whose needs and expectations differ according to their workplace roles and areas of expertise. As argued, the latter are perhaps the most appropriate for Children's Centre leaders.

However, the complexity of views about what it means to be a member of a profession might still translate into unclear expectations built into any course of professional development, such as the NPQICL. Further, it is quite possible there will be a conflict of expectation between those embodied in the course, born from public demand, and participants' context-specific needs, perceptions, views and expectations linked to their professional backgrounds and current ways of fulfilling their role. The interface, or interaction, between publicly shaped expectations and the particular needs of those becoming professional people although difficult to explore clearly should be researched. Collecting and analysing participant perspectives on their developing professional identities is perhaps the most obvious way of researching this area.

CHAPTER 3: Becoming a professional: basic processes and orientations

In this chapter I look directly at what is implied in becoming professional and developing a professional identity, from the viewpoint of relevant literature, in order to pin down how best to explore the potential 'battleground' between public expectation and the actual needs, capabilities and role expectations of NPQICL participants. I intend also to establish some perspectives on these concepts that are relevant to this research and consider how far these concepts suggest certain courses of action regarding data collection, analysis and interpretation. I focus directly on the *processes* engaged in developing a professional identity, hoping to explain why these key processes of professionalisation are usefully judged co-constructed.

In section 1 of this chapter a rationale is offered for conceiving professional identity development as potentially co-constructed with others. Section 2 seeks to pin down a concept of professional learning as a starting point to explore NPQICL participants' perceptions of the impact of the programme on their roles as Children's Centre leaders.

Section 1: Professional identity

Chapter 1 explains that one of the motives for this research is to understand the dynamics in the NPQICL that enable participants to gain more clarity and confidence in their professional identities. According to Elman et al. (2005) there is no agreed definition of professional identity and it remains vague. Some theorists believe that a professional identity is not fixed, that it can change or shift according to context (Egan-Robertson, 1998; McCarthey, 2001) and individuals form and reform who they are in a constant process (Holland et al., 1998). In contrast Parker

Palmer (1998: 13) argues for a partially essentialist, static view of identity in which individuals have a 'true self' which is both fixed and fluid and combines an inner being with an 'evolving nexus' of personal experiences. Instead of adopting one or other of these views on the fundamental nature of 'identity' this research will focus on perceived changes to identity. It was my perception as a tutor-facilitator that the NPQICL participants started their course without clarity and confidence in their professional identity and then made much progress in resolving this issue. I hope to see whether the data confirm this change and if so why it happened.

Professional role uncertainty and ambiguity

The term 'professional role uncertainty and ambiguity' is used here to describe this issue faced by Children's Centre leaders as they started the NPQICL. Their role is named and loosely described in information published by the National College for School Leadership but is at best ill-defined and is sometimes non-existent except for a title (i.e. uncertain). As a result NPQICL participants' appear to experience dilemmas about what they should do, how they should do it and how they should behave.

The earliest contribution to the debate about role ambiguity is made by Kahn et al. (1964) who argue that role ambiguity creates stress for the role holder and engenders a predisposition to underperform at work. Jackson and Schuler (1985) explain that role ambiguity influences performance by undermining motivation because role incumbents do not know where to put their efforts or what positive outcomes will be achieved if they succeed. This suggests that if the NPQICL helps participants clarify their professional identity it may also raise their

performance. Kahn et al. (1964:94) identify two types of role ambiguity: one is task ambiguity which: 'results from lack of information concerning the proper definition of the job, its goals and the permissible means for implementing them'. The second is ambiguity and uncertainty regarding the consequences of role behaviours and their impact on others. A lack of clear information about what is expected in a role decreases personal self-efficacy related to related role behaviours (Beauchamp and Bray, 2001; Eys and Carron, 2001; Bandura, 1997; Kahn et al., 1964).

The interactions of publicly shaped views with professional identity

In Chapter 2 it was noted that Evans' (2002) concept of professionalism included the words 'stance' and 'in relation to the practice of the profession to which s/he belongs' (p. 6-7) indicating a position taken or view of self in relation to his or her profession. Similarly Bucher and Stelling (1977) emphasise the role of self-perception in professional identity defining it as: 'the perception of oneself as a professional and as a particular type of professional' (p. 213). As argued in Chapter 2 an individual's self-perception of professional identity is derived, at least in part, from the external agencies and institutions and from current social discourses and historical memories. Some of this influence is overt: for example, when professional learning programmes provide a process of screening, acceptance and legitimisation. These can take place on a direct and structural level defining the formal educational and entrance requirements for entry into the profession: for example, if good literacy qualifications are required the identity of the profession is shaped correspondingly as literate. Some of it is less obvious. Professional identities are also formed from social constructions: such as from the

language, culture and prevailing perceptions of professions and professionals in society as well as from the individual's espoused professional group. In so far as these influences relate to structural aspects of systems in society, they are ideological.

Personal, individual and context-specific interactions with professional identity

Bruss and Koploa's (1993) view includes the personal identity of the individual in the concept of professional identity. The formation of identity is seen as a dialogic process between a person's self-identification and their interactions with others. Knowles (1992) argues that self-image interacts with professional identity because concepts or images of the self determine the way people develop a particular professional identity for themselves. Conversely, for Gee (2004) the way individuals are perceived by others in their professional role plays a part in informing their conceptions of their own ways of being. Sarup's view is probably closest to the complexity of the reality of how professional identity develops. Sarup (1996) accepts socio-cultural, intra-personal and interpersonal interactions with professional identity which he argues is a sense of self constructed as 'a consequence of a process of interaction between people, institutions and practices' (p. 11). It is this view that equates to the orienting concept of subjective self-conceptualisation in the professional role used in this study.

Personal and professional selves

Sfard and Prusak (2005: 15) argue that the notion of identity can be a useful tool for understanding: 'how collective discourses shape personal worlds' and the: 'complex dialectic between learning and its socio-cultural context'. This is where the prescribed ideologically rooted expectations of professionalism

meet more fluid, uncertain factors specific to groups of novice professionals, already flagged up as a key focus of this research. Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) see professional identity development as a process by which an individual reaches an understanding of her or his profession in conjunction with their own self-concept, which is, in turn, shaped by societal and cultural expectations. It involves a continuing reflection and blending of both professional and personal selves. Their view suggests that if professional identity and its development are defined as wholly externally shaped and constructed from social, political, cultural and organisational expectations i.e. ideologies, a vital component of the concept is omitted, that is the reciprocal effect of professional and personal agency, autonomy and self-efficacy on shaping and constructing professional identity.

The multi-directionality of influences from self-identity with professional identity in professional identity development takes into account that incumbents of professional roles bring themselves, their ontologies, emotions, histories and cultures into the way they frame their professional identity. The effects of new values and views are derived, not just from society and culture and professional selves, but also from personal selves. Professional identities develop at two levels, external (requirements specific to a role) and internal. Where the levels meet is in subjective self-conceptualisation associated with the professional role.

Professional identity is constructed through self-awareness of personal values, beliefs, strengths, and weaknesses as well as awareness of own developmental needs, reactions, behaviour patterns. Higgins and Kram (2001) call the development of this self-awareness 'Personal Learning', a broad term that they use to

denote a process of increasing the clarity of one's professional identity. Higgins and Kram do not use 'Personal Learning' as a defining feature of being professional unlike the concepts of dialogic, democratic, activist professionals, and 'workers as researchers' discussed in Chapter 2. These concepts of being a professional emphasise awareness of individuals' situated, relative and relational positions as defining features of their identities.

The idea that there is such a thing as solely personal identity that could be conceived of separately from social or professional identity is not congruent with a constructivist perspective. On the other hand, the view that we are passive victims of socialization and without individual agency is deterministic and simplistic. Identity development is a reflexive project that has to be 'routinely created and sustained, explored and constructed as part of the reflexive process of connecting personal and social change' (Campbell, 1993: 43). Identity, whether characterised as personal, professional or social, involves constructing and reconstructing from one social situation to another.

Identity as learning

Wenger (1998²) links learning and identity by defining identity in terms of experience and participation in practice, that is, learning as becoming. For Wenger (1998²) an identity is constructed through engagement with others who are members of a community. Learning changes who a person is becoming and makes life meaningful: 'learning ...implies becoming a different person [and] involves the construction of identity' (p. 151) in a reciprocal, iterative, on-going learning process. This process is both individual and social and so is internalised and externalised during interactions.

The concept of professional identity used here refers to a sense of self as well as feelings about self and also: 'knowledge and beliefs, dispositions, interests, and orientation towards work and change' (Drake et al., 2001:2). The construction of professional identity is conceived as change at both external and internal levels that interacts with participants' perceptions of their personal selves as well as their professional selves. This happens through a mix of personal learning, professional reflexivity and subjective self-conceptualisation in the role which develops participants' self-awareness and the way they see themselves in relation to others.

This study could have pursued the notion that a professional identity is presented and is a form of performance shaped by the external agencies and an audience, constructed to provide others with impressions that are consonant with the desired goals of the actor (Goffman, 1959: 17). Alternatively it could have argued that professional identity develops to protect personal identity (Pitt, 2000; Sharkey, 2004) in order to maintain status and respect. It could have assumed that there is an 'essence of identity' that is 'fixed and assured' by genetic and personality factors but is concealed from view (Everett and Wagstaff, 2004: 38). Instead professional identity is viewed as fluid but changing in relation to contexts and the agency of individuals and groups. Its development is conceived as a process of continual blending of personal self with professional self that requires professionals to develop and sustain awareness of the situated, relative and relational positions of their own professional identity and practices.

This section reviews the concept of professional identity in order to arrive at proposals concerning it. Some particular proposals worth considering are that professional identity is:

The perception of oneself as a professional in relation to a particular type of profession or subjective self-conceptualisation in the professional role;

Typically shaped by an ideology of professions;

Constructed in a dialogue between and blending of personal and professional self involving self-awareness of own situated, relative and relational position.

Section 2: Professional learning

This section of the chapter discusses professional learning, especially in relation to recent changes in expectations of professionals who work with children. Some of these changes in expectations are exemplified in concepts such as the dialogic, democratic, activist professional and 'worker as researcher' outlined in Chapter 2. As I am asking NPQICL participants themselves about their perspectives on processes of learning in the NPQICL and to participate in triangulating the data and the analysis, i.e. an individual view, the relevant, prevailing discourses shaping learning for professional occupational groups need to be outlined, i.e. a socio-cultural perspective.

Why the term 'professional learning'?

The term 'professional learning' conceals many values and assumptions. It is used here rather than 'training', 'vocational' or 'work based learning' to reflect a wider view of study programmes than those which focus more specifically on social, economic or political need – i.e. as imposed by the skill requirements of an employer or vocational sector. The word

'learning' allows for the possibility of changes in individuals during their work experiences. In contrast, many ideas around work based learning tend to focus more on changes in work outcomes rather than the processes capable of transforming individuals in fundamental and, arguably, more beneficial ways'. Pedder et al. (2005) explain how in their view professional learning is 'the transfer of new or advanced skills, pedagogy, content, and resources into one's personal practice through reflection' (p. 209). This view appears to describe some aspects of professional learning but does not address how it can shape learners' priorities, perspectives and inferred meanings as well as how they see themselves. The aim of the rest of this section is to explore some of the key features of professional learning.

The term professional development or continuous professional development (CPD) could have been used. However the absence of an agreed definition of professional development has been identified in the literature as, 'one of the challenges to conducting research on the topic' (Maxwell et al., 2005: 236).

Another possibility would have been to have used the term professional education. However, in the discourses of the early 21st century, the word education sounds like it might be followed by the word 'system'. It suggests disregard of the importance of the employee's agency that is a prerequisite of taking up the 'affordances for learning' provided through the workplace (Billett, 2001:209) and the importance of his or her sense of commitment (Day and Gu, 2007). Day and Gu (2007) argue that professional learning for teachers develops agency and that: 'it will ... enhance their self-efficacy and commitment to quality of service'. (p. 425) Just in case the term education implies a system of learning that is imposed on learners: the word

'learning' is used to capture the element of active, agentic engagement that is appropriate to this research.

Despite a wealth of research showing that lasting and effective professional learning is participative and that knowledge is co-constructed (Boud et al., 2001; Gravani, 2007), it is important to question the view that professional learning should only be supported through facilitation. Even when tutors espouse a view that professional learning should be active and reflective they may use didactic approaches in which they see themselves as transmitters of knowledge or information and as experts who provide opinions and advice and identify what the student needs to learn and controls the learning process. Webster-Wright (2009) argues that this is caused by the way that professional learning is conceptualised by drawing on discourses rooted in workplace learning that are traditionally bound in didactic practices.

In any case, it is recognised that there is a role for learning through transmission. A teacher can organise information using their pedagogical skills to structure information and experiences to those previously acquired. This can provide some concepts and knowledge that help meaningful learning to occur and key ideas and facts that function as cognitive maps to help students structure their new learning. A transmission model of teaching is invaluable for communicating techniques but less effective in encouraging commitment and engagement to whatever is intended to be learned and developing learning dispositions (Carr and Claxton, 2002).

Although remaining open to the possibility that it might emerge as a factor in this empirical study, the emphasis here is on a constructivist view of learning. This is because:

1. The design of the NPQICL incorporated a constructivist approach to learning
2. There seems to be some logic in arguing that if professionalism is a way of working at a higher level that requires autonomy, agency and self-efficacy in applying existing knowledge, skills and understanding to unknown situations, the transmission model of learning to be a professional may not be enough alone.

What makes professional learning professional?

The view that some practitioners' areas of expertise and knowledge offer freedom and control through rationality (Saks, 1983) and so are superior to and more valuable than mere skills i.e. more professional, is rooted in a concept of learning that reflects Cartesian mind/body dualism rather than reality.

Pedder (2007:235) identifies four aspects of professional learning that make it *professional* learning for teachers: 'Inquiry'; 'Building social capital'; 'Critical and responsive learning' and 'Valuing learning', all of which are agentic rather than passive. Pedder's language resonates with Higher Education descriptors of learning. The higher education sector has long played a role in restricting or enabling access to the professions. 'The acceptance of a discipline or an activity [that underpinned the profession] within the university curriculum was often seen as the crucial stage in this process' (Geison, 1983:5). Because of this association the professions are influenced by the discourses and ways of working of academia: for example, it is not a coincidence that the professional body for nursing is called the Royal *College* of Nursing. Being linked to Higher Education is associated with *professional* learning rather than other forms.

Professional learning and knowledge

In Chapter 2 we saw that a professional is usually expected to have a large specialist body of knowledge about their work role gained from extensive formal, academic study and training (Quinn et al., 1996; Blaich, 1955) and that this is perceived as a defining feature of professional identity. Some have even linked the level and range of academic knowledge to degrees of professionalism: 'the medical profession is more professional than the nursing profession, and the medical doctor who does university research is more professional than the medical doctor who provides minor medical services in a steel plant' (Barber, 1963:672).

Eraut's view is that two types of knowledge are needed for professional work. One is codified knowledge, or what Eraut (1994) calls 'public knowledge or propositional knowledge' (p. 7). This is knowledge that is communicable, explicit and central to programmes of formal education and training that will eventually lead to a qualification. It would include declarative knowledge (knowing that), procedural knowledge (knowing how) and some explicit explanatory knowledge, Salmon's (knowing why) (Salmon, 1989) and is usually part of the formal curriculum. The other, called 'personal knowledge' is developed by a professional over a period of time and is 'highly situated and individualistic'. (Eraut, 2000:28).

The premise here is that differences between professional, vocational and work-based learning relate to implications for the *intentions* of each type of learning. Professional learning differs from the others because it is more concerned with an *individual's* learning and personal capacity set in a professional work context than solely fulfilling the needs of his or her current workplace.

There is typically emphasis on the whole person encompassing values and ethics, personal skills, awareness of wider issues and preparation for the unexpected and to take responsibility for developing the practice and research of the professional area. In addition, Eraut (1994:21) argues that professional learning should not just enhance the knowledge creation capacity of individuals and professional communities, but should prepare them for future learning and challenges by offering them the chance to: 'escape from their experiences in the sense of challenging traditional assumptions and acquiring new perspectives'. This is why, more than other learners, professional learners are: 'enculturated into authentic practices through social interaction and activity' (Brown et al., 1989: 37).

Professional learning and tacit knowledge

Fish and Coles (1998) use the metaphor of an iceberg to explain professional practice. The tip of the iceberg is the visible aspect of practice but it is the larger, submerged part of the iceberg, the invisible aspects, which shape and buoy up the visible aspects of practice. Under the waterline is tacit knowledge and also implicit knowledge. Eraut (1994) points out that one of the benefits of making tacit knowledge explicit is that working with others becomes easier because team members can communicate their expectations and assumptions effectively.

Another benefit of making tacit knowledge explicit is that self-knowledge and awareness helps professionals to monitor and control their behaviour better. Two assumptions are evident here which may be tested in the data from this research. Firstly, moving knowledge from implicit to tacit or explicit is a positive development for individuals and their practice; secondly, individuals have the capacity to move knowledge from implicit to

tacit or explicit. Although professionals can probably function as professionals without enhancing their self-knowledge and reflexivity, it seems likely that there are positive benefits which might be seen in the research data. Another point of interest is whether it is really possible for professional learners to move knowledge from implicit to tacit or explicit and what features of a programme facilitate it.

Professional learning as enculturation

Professional learning often offers an intended, informal curriculum to provide an opportunity for both new entrants and existing members of occupational groups to engage with a process of enculturation. Sometimes explicitly and intentionally, and also sometimes without being fully aware, tutors of professional learning programmes prepare participants for membership of their professional community through the attention to elements of professionalism and the values and practices of the relevant profession. This is a means by which ideological views of profession and professional can be transmitted. It has been thought processes of enculturation occur on two levels (Hall, 1968; Kerr et al, 1977). Firstly, there is an opportunity for a participant to acquire the skills, habits and attitudes of a certain profession and secondly, to change so that he or she has adopted an appropriate professional identity. The latter occurs when participants modify their social persona and self-concept to fit in with the perceived requirements of their chosen profession.

McGowen and Hart (1990) write:

Professional socialization and development is a social learning process that includes the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills that are required in a professional role and the

development of new values, attitudes, and self-identity components (p. 119).

However, this view of professional socialisation is only partially useful here because it draws on traditional concepts of profession and professional and so positions the professional learner as someone joining an existing or exclusive group by adapting their behaviour and persona in order to belong, i.e. it can be viewed as a feature of publicly shaped pressure on professionals. As such, except in highlighting what the expectations of a programme of professional learners might be, it may not offer insight into the experience of Children Centre leaders who do not have an existing group to join.

Professional learning as a change of world view or perspective

Törnebohm's (1986) perspective, however, is more relevant to the experience of Children's Centre leaders. He compares socialisation through professional learning to a process whereby students acquire a lens which filters their attention to selected features of the professional world and to think about it in particular ways. This affects the way they develop a world view which leads them to notice and narrate particular problems and to use particular methods for solving them, so that their observable professional behaviour is guided and shaped by their individual internal view of the world. In turn, their internal world view determines what they pay attention to and how they use their knowledge of theory and practice. The students' professional lenses calibrates their evaluations of what is good and bad practice and determines both the choice of destination and the route map of their goals and career path. Törnebohm's view of socialisation is agentic and explains how professional learning can develop a participant's capacity to learn, practice and respond to change. Importantly although he describes the

effect of the lens on the way participants narrate problems, he is rather vague about how the lens is acquired and whether narration *creates the lens* as well as being shaped by it.

Professional learning and 'judgment'

For Eraut (1994), non-professional education concerns itself with ensuring learners can repeat and apply their knowledge whereas professional learning requires associative and interpretative use of knowledge because it: 'involves something more...'judgment' ' (p. 49). Törnebohm's (1991) metaphor of a lens perhaps explains how professional judgment is developed. According to Eraut the development of this sound, professional judgment is facilitated by gaining experiential knowledge of 'authentic practices' (Lombardi, 2007). One way 'authentic practices' can be experienced is in conversations and problem-solving activities with other similar professionals in which understandings of facts, theories, intuitions and practices are combined.

Professional learning is complex. There is no one approach or means that works for everyone at all times. Approaches such as those that are didactic or facilitative usually provide enculturation for professional learners and shape the lens through which they see themselves and how they see their practice. However, 'evidence about professional learning from seminal educational research of the past two decades' (Webster-Wright, 2009:702) supports the value of authentic professional learning that aims to develop participants as active and autonomous learners. For the purposes of going forward in this study, professional learning is conceived as participative and engaging the whole person and so promoting agency, self-efficacy and autonomy. It is conceived as a means of enhancing an individual's personal and professional capacity for work-

related activity rather than solely fulfilling the needs of the workplace.

This section reviewed the concept of professional learning in order to arrive at proposals concerning it. Some particular proposals worth considering are that professional learning:

Is concerned with an individual's learning and personal capacity set on a professional work context as well as enculturation as a professional

Is the transfer of new knowledge and understanding into one's personal and professional practice through reflection and so develops professional judgment

Interacts with learners' priorities, perspectives and inferred meanings as well as how they see themselves

Develops codified and personal knowledge and the knowledge creation capacity of individuals and professional communities

Prepares learners for future learning and challenges by exploring own tacit knowledge, new perspectives and world views.

A review of studies of key processes involved in developing a professional identity again reveals a diversity of theoretical positions. These can be judged, largely, to reflect the dichotomy noted earlier between publicly shaped, often prescribed, views and those giving professionals themselves a more direct say in their own practices. As argued, an appropriate approach to professional learning and identity for NPQICL participants is believed to be one where professionals co-construct autonomous, flexible professional roles, albeit within a context of public expectation. On the basis of this conclusion, the territory of exploration for the research is confirmed. It is proposed to lie

where macro discourses interact with personal agency at a micro level, where publicly defined expectations, often ideologically driven, interact with individual views and perceptions, where public demands on novice professionals interact with their developing professional expertise and personal self-efficacy. This area of interaction between 'top down' and 'bottom up' processes does not receive a great deal of attention from researchers, largely because it is 'messy' and difficult to access. The approach adopted here is to involve NPQICL participants themselves in exploring this area. The next chapter begins the process of pinpointing some important conceptual tools for exploring it.

CHAPTER 4: Key orienting concepts

In order to explore participants' perspectives in ways relevant to professional identity development, able to throw light on the possibly confused and conflicting interaction between NPQICL expectations and participants' perspectives, some key conceptual tools are selected that should help explore this interface. These three areas of study have clear face validity as ways of accessing the interaction between public demands and individual capability relative to professional development. However, they also resonate with many of the distinguishing features of more recent versions of professionalism exemplified in the concepts of 'democratic professional' (Oberhuemer, 2005), 'activist professional' (Sachs, 2001, 2003²), the 'worker as researcher' (Moss, 2006) and the 'dialogic professional' (Rinaldi, 2006). These new ways of being a professional are open-hearted, relational, participative and involve questioning, researching and creating meaning with others and working as agents of change. All of these qualities are based on the will to act (professional agency), belief that goals can be achieved (professional efficacy) and self-conceptualisation in role (professional autonomy).

I am designating these as 'orienting concepts' because, although I expect them to be powerful in illuminating the individual and social processes at work during professional learning and the acquisition of professional identity, there is nonetheless the possibility that they might need discarding and/or modifying during analysis in face of the data I obtain, especially because the area of exploration is hard to access. Layder's (1998) Adaptive Theory notes that orienting and sensitising concepts are similar. Both types of concept suggest patterns in data and further lines of inquiry as they are elaborated and further

developed to capture and reflect features of emergent interest in examples found in the data. The orienting concepts here are being explored in order to research the links between professional identity and professional learning development, the territory where external, contextually located factors meet factors internal to individuals and groups.

There was an option to deploy Wenger's (2000) conception of identity as what we know, what is foreign and what we choose to know and how we know it (p. 239) and thus use his three modes of belonging and sources of identity formation (becoming) as key orienting concepts. Use of *engagement* i.e. mutual participation, *imagination* i.e. open-mindedness and *alignment* i.e. finding a common ground from which to act (Wenger, 1998²: 149) was considered and rejected as they did not offer either a means to explore the complexities of ideological interactions in identity development or a way to acknowledge what an individual brings in the way of personal history and beliefs to identity development. There are features of adherence to the status quo of functionalism in Wenger's conception i.e. in the end conflict and challenges can always be overcome by participation.

Ibarra's (1999) conception of identity development is of experimenting with "provisional selves," testing a "repertoire of possibilities" by observing role models to identify potential identities and evaluating experience against internal standards and external feedback until experience shows which fits best with the new situation. This is also rejected as a key orienting concept. Ibarra's concepts lean towards conforming, through *group* processes to *existing* constructs, rather than acknowledging how individuals can construct a different professional identity.

Professional agency, efficacy and autonomy are chosen as key concepts because they offer an opportunity to explore how individuals make sense of their learning and experiences and translate that into the way they see themselves and act as professionals. They are from the: 'adjacent.... literature.....[in this case social learning theory] from which one can borrow orienting ideas and concepts' (Layder, 1998:104) as a provisional means of sorting or ordering data that may suggest forms of explanation or what Layder calls 'slants'. They also serve as sensitising and sensitive concepts that have a provisional and 'always potentially revisable' (Layder, 1998:9) relationship with the data. Crucially they shape the data but are shaped by the data. Standard views and interpretations are sometimes revised or abandoned in the light of research findings and replaced by or supplemented by others more able to make sense of the data. Reformulations of concepts in response to data analysis may constitute theory creation.

The three concepts acting as both initial analytic units around which coding and analysis takes place and also as orienting concepts are professional agency, professional efficacy and professional autonomy. The interpretations used at this stage of the research are:

A concept of professional agency developed from the theories of Bandura (2000, 2001), Wenger (1998²) and Boaler (2002)

A concept of professional efficacy drawn from a modified version of Bandura's (1986, 1997) theory of self-efficacy

A concept of professional autonomy based on Wenger's (1998²) concept of negotiability and Chene's (1983) argument about the essential features of autonomy.

Although for the purposes of this discussion each concept is considered separately, in fact, they are interrelated. They are likely to be challenged and modified by the data.

Section 1: Professional agency

Bandura, (2001:1) defines the theory of agency as the: 'capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of one's life'.

There are four main features of his theory which is based on a concept of integration of thought and action: *intentionality* i.e. proactive commitment to bring about a future state of events; *forethought* i.e. expectations of outcomes based on known conditions and context; *self-reflectiveness*: reflection on own thoughts, feelings, actions and motivations in relation to own capacity to develop own agency; *self-reactiveness*: self control of motivation, affect and action in order to progress own standards and actions.

The interpretation of the concept of professional agency used here includes a sense of entitlement to act, a capacity to act and also ownership of the professional role in which one is taking an action. It builds on Wenger's (1998¹) definition of negotiability as having a say about one's own life and work and Boaler's (2002) argument that agency is collaborating with others or 'owning the negotiated meanings of a community' (p. 116).

Section 2: Professional efficacy

Bandura's concept of self-efficacy

Bandura (1986:391) defines the theory of self-efficacy as: 'people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives'. He argues that the two theories of human agency and self-efficacy are closely linked:

Efficacy beliefs are the foundation of human agency. Unless people believe they can produce desired results and forestall detrimental ones by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties' (Bandura, 2001:11).

According to Bandura (1994:3), an individual can be exposed to four sources of information about self-efficacy. They relate to: 'mastery experiences', seeing people similar to oneself manage task demands successfully, social persuasion that one has the capabilities to succeed in given activities, and inferences from somatic [physical] and emotional states indicative of personal strengths and vulnerabilities.

Bandura first formulated the theory of self-efficacy in 1977 and has continued to develop it to the present day. However, several criticisms of it have emerged. They are that self-efficacy theory is an explanation of a cause of behaviour, not just a predictor as argued by Bandura (Hawkins, 1995). An individual's interest in a task or subject, and also belief that success or failure depends on the effort exerted on a particular task rather than mere ability, may also have an effect on success. In addition, it does not address the issues that the necessary skills and equipment to undertake a task or activity realistically are also required, as well as a strong sense of efficacy (Eastman and Marzillier, 1984) and that, even when people have the skills and equipment and a strong sense of efficacy and so have the capacity to do something well, they may opt not to attempt it or choose not to succeed. Further criticisms are that Bandura's theory of self-efficacy is incomplete because it does not define 'unobservable variables' and processes (Lee, 1989:141) and that by focusing on cognitive processes, it 'deemphasises' 'the effect of the environment in determining behavior' (Biglan, 1987: 1).

Is self-efficacy task-specific?

A criticism that is significant here is whether self-efficacy is task-specific or whether it can be generic. In most studies using self-efficacy, it has been conceptualised as a situation-specific belief, that is, relating only an individual's judgment of his or her capability to perform in particular settings on a given task, skill or behaviour (Schwoerer et al., 2005). This means a strong expectation of self-efficacy regarding a task is not taken as a guarantee of a similar expectation of a different task or in a person's general engagement with the world. One of the criticisms of Bandura's theory is that it is limited as it reflects: 'an individual's momentary belief in his or her capability to perform a specific task at a specific level of performance' (Gardner and Pierce, 1998: 3) whereas self-esteem, for instance, is a constant attribute (Parker, 2000).

Can self-efficacy be generic?

In response to this criticism a concept of general self-efficacy has been developed (Sheldon, 1990). It is defined as 'individuals' perceptions of their ability to perform across a variety of situations' (Judge et al., 1998:170). Research studies (Schwoerer et al., 2005; Sherer et al., 1982) show that multiple experiences of personal mastery, that strengthen efficacy expectancies, have the potential to be sources of information that lead people to generalise their self-efficacy to a broader range of actions so that they gain a general belief in their ability to succeed. Despite Bandura's opposition (1997) to general self-efficacy on the grounds that it does not predict behaviour and does not have conceptual validity, Robbins et al. (2004) and Chen et al. (2001) have found it to be theoretically and practically useful. Use of professional efficacy is based on the concept of general self-efficacy.

Several studies employ narrow conceptions of professional efficacy in a limited range of applications. Chan, (2002:566) uses it to show that a sense of self-efficacy can be seen as a protective factor against work-place stress and that Taris et al., (2010); Brudnik, (2009); Jex et al., (2001) and Jex and Bliese, (1999) argue that lack of professional self-efficacy is associated with inability to cope with change, burnout and poor performance. Manz (1992) describes how anxiety and stress created by low self-efficacy affects the quality of individual job performance negatively. Some researchers define the concept tightly, for instance, using 'role-breadth self-efficacy' (Parker, 1998) and 'classroom management efficacy' (Ozdemir, 2007) or by specifying efficacy in relation to a particular occupation. However, research contextualising self-efficacy in wider job-related behaviour does exist (Wheatley, 2005; Greenglass et al., 2003). Gardner and Pierce (1998:3) argue that: 'high self-efficacious employees believe that they are likely to be successful at most of all of their job duties and responsibilities'. Pestonjee and Pandey (1996) found that role efficacy and self-efficacy positively correlated with general compliance.

Learning and professional efficacy

Although there is some research into the effect of self-efficacy on children's learning (Jonson-Reid et al, 2005; Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2003; Bandura et al., 1996), there is remarkably little research into the effects of learning on the professional efficacy of adult learners. Seider and Lemma (2004) examined perceived effects of action research on teacher's professional efficacy and found a positive correlation:

action research contributed to teachers' professional efficacy with specific regard to the probability of increasing student achievement and the belief in their own ability to bring about

desired learning outcomes. ...the belief in one's ability to bring about positive changes in student learning, professional commitment and willingness to try a variety of approaches...seemed to be associated with those engaged in action research (p. 234).

Professional efficacy is conceived here as the beliefs held by professionals that they have the capacity to fulfil the requirements of their professional roles to standards consistent with their constructs of professionalism. Whereas Bandura believed self-efficacy to be a predictor of behaviour (Hawkins, 1995), it is seen as a cause of it as well. The concept used here is one of generic rather than task-specific self-efficacy that has a reciprocal relationship with learning.

Section 3: Professional autonomy

Professional autonomy and Wenger's concepts of identification and negotiability

In Chapter 2 we saw that, whilst scholars argue that autonomy is a crucial distinguishing characteristic of professionalism, autonomy in its traditional form is unrealistic in a context of increasing expectations of accountability and direction, for instance, in audit-based or managerial professionalism. The orienting concept of professional autonomy used for this research draws on Wenger's (1998¹) concept of negotiability. For Wenger negotiability involves the degree to which individuals have personal and social power in the form of having a say, that is, the ability to negotiate meanings and shape practices of their community. In the case of professional autonomy the community with which they negotiate the meanings of what they do include their professional networks and reference groups and learning communities.

Professional autonomy and Chene's argument

Chene (1983) argues that autonomy is awareness of both the values, principles and norms with which decisions and actions are taken, awareness of the processes of learning from experience, an ability to make critical judgements and having the will to act independently. Professional autonomy may be legitimised by a social contract or bargain between professional, client and state.

The professional was someone trusted and respected, an individual given class, status, autonomy, social elevation, in return for safeguarding our well-being and applying their professional judgement on the basis of a benign moral or cultural code (Dent and Whitehead, 2002:1).

However the concept of professional autonomy deployed here is close to the concept of professional identity. It is awareness of and freedom to narrate and choose one's values, principles and approaches to practice.

Conclusion

Three orienting concepts have been introduced as aids to analysis and as potentially revisable in the light of data analysis. These are as follows:

Professional agency is summarised as: the capacity and commitment and sense of entitlement to exercise control over and have a say about the nature and quality of one's life and work. Professional efficacy is thought, essentially, to be the belief held by professionals in their own capacities to act and influence the outcomes, nature and quality of their lives and work, in order to fulfil the requirements of their professional roles to standards consistent with their constructs of professionalism as well as the cause of their choice to do so.

Finally, professional autonomy is considered most obviously to be the awareness of and freedom and ability to negotiate, choose, shape and narrate one's values, principles, meanings and approaches to practice in own professional community and context.

In the next chapter I deploy a further conceptual device recommended by Adaptive Theory, the conceptual cluster.

CHAPTER 5: A key conceptual cluster derived from constructivism

In order to explore the complex interface between individual perspectives and public expectations of Children's Centre leaders I have deployed another useful conceptual tool from Adaptive Theory, the conceptual cluster. Layder describes this as group of concepts that relate to, or are derived from, the same or related theories. They refer to a larger, wider reality than is likely to be found in research data. Their function is to develop the 'complexity and range of meanings to which a concept refers by its incorporation into an established group or cluster' (Layder 1998:160). A conceptual cluster facilitates links between the meanings of individual concepts and between individual concepts and 'a more embracing network of concepts'. This conceptual cluster is derived from theories of constructivism. Its elements correspond with provisional conceptions of professional identity and learning in Chapter 3 and also, with the view that people are 'agents of experiences rather than simply undergoers of experiences' (Bandura, 2001: 4) argued in Chapter 4.

The elements of the conceptual cluster are related by their social constructivist and social constructionist roots. Both social constructivism and social constructionism are theories of knowledge that draw on sociology, philosophy and symbolic interactionism. Knowledge is constructed socially, in relationship with others (Davis et al., 2008; Hruby, 2001; Schwandt, 2000; Dahlberg et al., 1999) and learning is active rather than passive, built on the foundations of previous learning, tied to language development and occurs more readily in learner-centred environments (Kanuka and Anderson, 1999).

The theory of social constructivism concerns itself with an individual's meaning-making and construction of knowledge within a social context and with the learning of individuals from interacting in groups (Vygotsky, 1978¹). The theory of social constructionism is closely related to social constructivism but focuses on the 'objects' produced by groups composed of individuals, acknowledging the importance of history, culture and language in learning. It engages with social processes in which an individual's mind is active in the construction of knowledge as part of his or her involvement in the world. This conceptual cluster is composed of concepts that are central to this research because of the conceptions of professional identity and professional learning established in Chapter 3. They are co-construction, reification, subjective self-conceptualisation in role, and learning community. What is missing is a concept that characterises how an individual professional learner exercises agency, efficacy and autonomy in the process of professional identity construction.

Section 1: Co-construction

The view of co-construction in the NPQICL

Co-construction is a process in which two or more parties involved in learning engage in interactive and equitable relationships to create shared knowledge and communally work on agreed upon goals and outcomes (Miller and Hafner, 2008). The NPQICL was designed co-constructively by stakeholders in the development of Children's Centres which included the Pen Green Leadership Centre and civil servants (NCSL, 2007). An espoused theory in the programme materials is that co-construction is fundamental to its pedagogical approach. However, there is very little evidence of the role of co-construction in the programme in either the programme

materials or the evaluative papers that have been written about it (Webster, 2008; NCSL, 2007; Williams, 2006; Formosinho and Oliveira-Formosinho, 2005). Moving from the theory of co-construction to its practice is challenging when the programme is necessarily standardised in order to be 'nationally recognised'.

The interpretation of the concept of co-construction used here is that it is a joint creation of culturally meaningful realities such as meaning, position, activity, skill or identity. The prefix 'co' in the term co-construction is used to indicate interactions that are collaborative, cooperative and democratic. Co-construction of knowledge gained from mutually shared learning is used to create something together. Although this results in agreed upon and shared processes and products, the term is not meant to imply only agreement. A disagreement can also be co-constructed. However, like professional negotiators, co-constructors have to be willing to give something up, in their case preconceived notions of the outcome of co-construction, in order to secure the gains from it.

Whilst the avowed approach of the NPQICL is to promote co-construction amongst participants it is difficult to see how the processes of accreditation and the *formal* curriculum allow it. However the data may show co-construction can occur as part of informal and non-formal learning so that narratives, identities and shared understandings impact on participants' professional identities. Key informal interactions in the learning community may construct the professional identity as participants narrate their identities to each other. The data may also identify the nature of these interactions.

In summary, co-construction is:

a process of joint creation by individuals involved in learning and who are engaged in interactive, collaborative, cooperative, democratic and equitable relationships to create shared knowledge and understanding of culturally and contextually meaningful realities.

Section 2: Reification

Reification and co-construction

Wenger (1998²) describes the learning process for individuals as the 'negotiation of meaning'. His explanation of this process is similar to that of Piaget (Satterly, 1987) as he believes that individuals experience and respond to experiences of the world and that these experiences create dissonance with their existing constructs which need to be resolved through modification. Wenger describes the process of reification as giving form to these experiences as part of the negotiation of meaning within a community of practice. The concept of reification is similar to Vygotsky's concept of social tools (Vygotsky, 1978¹) as both Wenger and Vygotsky view shared repertoires of ideas, symbols, vocabulary, routines, policies, procedures, rituals, memories and constructs as important in a social learning process. Wenger argues that the shared repertoire represents reifications of abstract, coded or hidden features of professional practice that help a community of practice to negotiate and renegotiate both ways to practice and their professional identities.

Participation, shared experiences and negotiations arising in social interaction within the community are opportunities to construct reifications. Pallas (2001:8) points out how participation and reification work together: 'Participation and

reification are complementary processes in that each has the capacity to repair the ambiguity of meaning the other can engender'. Developing reifications is not sufficient to negotiate and create meaning: in order for that to happen, members of the community of practice must be actively involved in reifications as tangible representations of their practices, such as tools, symbols, rules, documents, concepts and theories and engage in 'participation' (Wenger, 1998), so that there is continual exchange and interaction between the 'objects' of reification and participants that strengthens learning and understanding.

The concept of reification through participation is closely linked to the concept of co-construction. In Ainscow and Howes' (2002) view:

participation results in social learning that could not be produced solely by reification alone. At the same time, the reified products such as documents serve as a kind of memory of practice, cementing in place the new learning. (p. 11)

Wenger (1998: 68²) argues that the process of reification is not: 'a mere articulation of something that already exists...but [is] in fact creating the conditions for new meanings'. It offers an explanation of how new meaning-making and learning can be created within a learning community.

Reification, then, can be summarised as:

a shared repertoire of representations of abstract, coded or hidden features of professional practice that help a community of practice to negotiate new meanings of their learning, ways to practice and professional identities.

Section 3: Subjective self-conceptualisation in role

A concept is not just a way of classifying experiences: it is also a schema that retains learning from past encounters and so facilitates generalisation from one experience to another. Self-concepts serve the same function of providing guidelines for future actions and decision. According to Mead (1934), self does not exist at birth but is developed through interactions with others in which the individual takes on the role of the 'other' and internalizes the attitudes and perceptions of others. For Mead, the individual's self-conception and perception of how others see him or her combine to construct the self in an ongoing process. His view has similarities to that of Piaget (1952, 1957) that the development of cognitive schema occurs through an individual's experiences of the world. Vygotsky (1962) is more focussed on how social interactions affect individuals' schemas or concepts. His view is that meanings are enacted socially, internalised individually and then, in turn, internal conceptualisations shape social interactions.

Application of these views of subjective self-conceptualisation to the experience of people entering into a profession suggests they are subject to changes to their self-schema derived from both internal and external sources of information. Kuzmic (1994) spoke of this as the 'process of becoming', the reflective perspective that is an inner understanding from which new experiences are handled. McGowen and Hart, (1990) argue that 'new' professionals experience changes to their subjective self-conceptualization associated with their specific career role which shapes their self-awareness, the way they see themselves and their behaviour.

The NPQICL participants need to acquire knowledge, skills, awareness of the situated, relative and relational positions specific to Children's Centre leadership and a growing awareness of self to facilitate identification with the professional identity of the Children's Centre leader. However, because the role of Children's Centre leader is newly developed, ambiguous and uncertain, they do not have access to the usual context of sources of reference points, information and development. How the development of subjective self-conceptualisation associated with participants' roles as Children's Centre leaders occurs in these unusual circumstances is a central research strand.

In the light of the above, subjective self-conceptualisation in role can be seen as:

a process of changes that occur to a person's self-schema in relation to his or her particular role.

Section 4: Learning Community

The view of a learning community in the NPQICL

The NPQICL programme documentation uses the following conception of a learning community from Kemmis (1982): 'a self-reflective community of practitioners – theorists committed to critically examining their own practices and improving them' (NCSL, 2008: 8). It expresses an aim of facilitating a learning community composed of participants, tutors, work-based assessors and mentors (NCSL, 2008) in order to provide 'an opportunity to take a long deep look at yourself as a leader of a children's centre', 'allow you to further develop your leadership behaviours to bring about a positive change and a shift in your leadership' to help 'improve the outcomes for children and

families in the communities of your children's centre' (NCSL, 2008: 3).

Educators tend to use the concept of learning communities when describing social learning techniques (Wenger, 1998¹; Bielaczyc and Collins, 1999). Currently both of the terms 'learning community' and 'community of practice' are widely used in education and care, sometimes interchangeably (Samaras et al., 2008). One potential way to distinguish a learning community from a community of practice is that it exists with the purpose of sharing an interest in *learning* through interaction of its members whilst a community of practice exists to share practice, skills or understanding. Wenger's (2008) view is:

In a nutshell: communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn to do it better as they interact regularly (para 1).

Scholars interested in examining the dynamics of learning communities and communities of practice frequently use a constructivist lens (Swann, 2005; Huysman, 2002; Huang, 2002; Orey et al., 2006). DuFour and Eaker (1998) suggest that learning communities construct knowledge through interpersonal interaction. Like Vygotsky (1978²) and Bandura (2001), Lave and Wenger's view (1991) was that learning is derived from social participation and is socially constructed when learners actively participate together in negotiating knowledge and understanding.

Both the concept of a learning community and a community of practice are relevant to this research because the data collected encompasses a time period beyond the duration of the professional learning programme. During the programme the prime intention of the learning community is based on sharing

responses to learning on the NPQICL but members also engage in it as a community of practice, i.e. sharing practice. After the programme the NPQICL participants appear to form an on-going community of practice, for example, to exchange information and contacts so, when the programme is over, the learning community moves closer to the community of practice defined by Wenger (2008).

A learning community, in summary:

Is 'a self-reflective community of practitioners – theorists committed to critically examining their own practices and improving them' (Kemmis, 1982 cited in NCSL, 2008: 8).

The conceptual cluster above is rooted in social constructivism as the concepts share a view of the world that human beings create the meanings that they attribute to experiences of the world.

As previously indicated, an important feature of Adaptive Theory is that concepts are provisional and 'always potentially revisable' (Layder, 1998:9) by their relationship with the data. They shape the data but are shaped by the data and standard views and interpretations are sometimes revised or abandoned in the light of research findings. According to Layder (1998:100-101) 'thinking theoretically involves tacking to and fro between different levels of reality and analysis- the general and the abstract and the concrete and the particular'. He describes this as shuttling between 'the formal definition and particular instances' (1998:101). Using an Adaptive Theory approach to 'thinking theoretically' key orienting concepts and a conceptual cluster interacted with the data as a provocation to theorising. Reformulations of concepts in response to data analysis may constitute theory creation. The table below summarises some

key features of the orienting concepts and conceptual cluster selected in anticipation of applying and/ or revising these as part of data analysis during its 3 stages.

Figure 1: Summaries of 'thinking theoretically' (Layder, 1998:100)

Orienting concepts	Key features
Professional identity	<p>Is the perception of oneself as a professional in relation to a particular type of profession or subjective self-conceptualisation in the professional role;</p> <p>Is typically shaped by an ideology of the professions;</p> <p>Is constructed in a dialogue between and blending of personal and professional self involving awareness of own situated, relative and relational position.</p>
Professional learning	<p>Is concerned with an <i>individual's</i> learning and personal capacity set in a professional work context as well as enculturation;</p> <p>Is the transfer of new knowledge and understanding into one's personal and professional practice through reflection and so develops professional judgment;</p> <p>Interacts with learners' priorities, perspectives and inferred meanings as well as how they see themselves;</p> <p>Develops codified and personal knowledge and the knowledge creation capacity of individuals and professional communities;</p> <p>Prepares learners for future learning and challenges by exploring own tacit knowledge, new perspectives and world views.</p>

Professional efficacy	Is the general belief held by professionals in own capacities to act and shape the outcomes, nature and quality of their lives and work in order to fulfil the requirements of their professional roles to standards consistent with their constructs of professionalism as well as the cause of their choice to do so.
Professional agency	Is the capacity and commitment and sense of entitlement to exercise control over and have a say about the nature and quality of one's life and work.
Professional autonomy	Is the awareness of and freedom and ability to negotiate, choose, shape and narrate one's values, principles, meanings and approaches to practice in own professional community and context.
Constructivist conceptual cluster	Key features
Co-construction	Is a process of joint creation by individuals involved in learning and who are engaged in interactive, collaborative, cooperative, democratic and equitable relationships to create shared knowledge and understanding of culturally and contextually meaningful realities.
Reification	Is a shared repertoire of representations of abstract, coded or hidden features of professional practice that help a community of practice to negotiate new meanings of their learning, ways to practice and professional identities.
Subjective self-conceptualisation in role	Is a process of changes that occur to a person's self-schema in relation to a particular role that they are in.
Learning Community	Is 'a self-reflective community of practitioners – theorists committed to critically examining their own practices and improving them' (Kemmis, 1982 cited in NCSL, 2008: 8).

Juxtaposing the above features of the orienting concepts and conceptual cluster suggests some interesting lines of enquiry. Perhaps:

- participants construct a personal narrative of self (McCarthy and Moje, 2002) through interactions with other participants (in the professional learning community)
- stories need to be seen as co-constructions that become reified as symbols of professional identity
- participants connect their past experiences to future goals (Eisenhart, 2001) in a way that develops their sense of rightness in their roles (subjective self-conceptualisation in the professional role)
- by presenting a particular identity story (reification) to the outside world (other members of the learning community), participants try to behave in ways that support this sense of self (Holland et al., 1998)
- participants reflect on their learning experiences together (in learning stories) and adopt shared understandings of what it means to them (reifications), both personally and professionally
- co-construction of stories and shared understandings (reifications) make an impact on their subjective self-conceptualisation associated with the professional role of Children's Centre leader and develops their professional identities (McGowan and Hart, 1990).

Stories are a feature of many elements of the conceptual cluster. They may play a role in facilitating professional identity development on the NPQICL. A story is constructed and told by an author as an intentional communication. It usually involves some sort of transformation and is told as a sequence of events within a defined time period. Stories are everywhere: 'We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, plan, revise, criticize, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative' (Hardy, 1968:5). A story or 'a personal narrative'

(Quinn Patton, 2002:116) is itself a construct as well as a means for the teller to construct their version of reality. The story will be shaped by the need to respond to the question 'so what?' 'What is the point?' As Sacks (1992) argues telling a story is not just emptying out the contents of the mind but is organising a tale for an audience as a designated 'teller' using 'the voice of our culture – its many voices, in fact' (Crotty, 2009: 64).

Stories are part description (how things are in the view of the teller) and part prescription (how things should or might be in the view of the teller) (Ricoeur (1992)). As stories are interpretive constructions through which people represent themselves and their worlds to themselves and also to others they may be a means through which tellers interact with the subjective self-conceptualisation in role of others and also themselves (as they listen to themselves think).

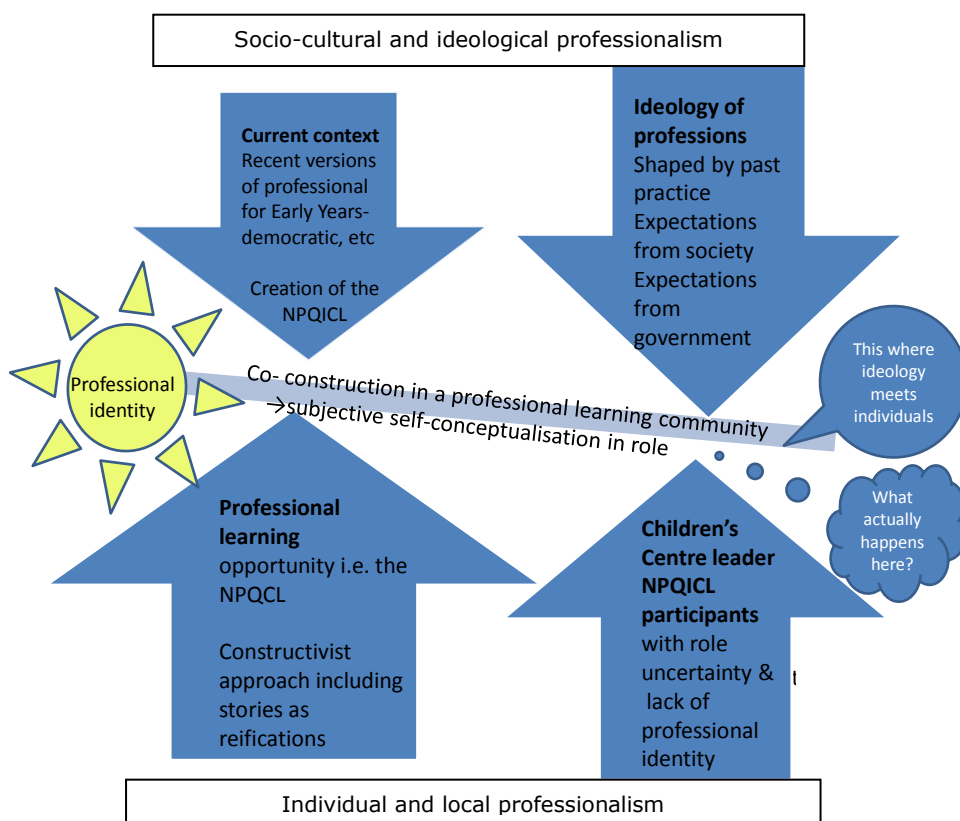
Conclusion

The construction of professional identities by NPQICL participants is explored in order to answer research questions concerning participants' developing professional identities and how the NPQICL might better support these. There may be a number of ways that professional identity development happens if learning is internally constructed based on prior experiences and shaped by social interactions where the individual adjusts his or her learning to accommodate new experiences (Bandura, 1977). The research investigates some of these ways from the perspective of NPQICL participants.

Further, the research 'territory' within which these constructions and co-constructions occur has been concluded as the complex area where publicly shaped views meet individual expectation,

capability, ambition and so forth. The diagram below (Figure 2) presents this interaction or interface, remembering it is being studied from the diverse perspective of NPQICL participants – i.e. where it appears most fluid, uncertain and ambiguous. To stress, this area is hard to research simply because participant views are likely to be diverse and unpredictable. This is why a fairly open ended approach is being taken to data collection and analysis albeit aided by orienting concepts derived from earlier theorising.

Figure 2: Relationships between key concepts in the study



The next chapter discusses the methodology and methods used to gather and analyse the data.

CHAPTER 6: Research Approach and Methodology

Section 1: Research Approach

A qualitative approach has been chosen to explore the dynamics between the participants and the programme mainly through the self-reported experiences of a sample of NPQICL participants in the East of England. Only a qualitative approach is thought likely to allow sufficient flexibility and depth to address the complexity of the issues examined and to enable the feelings and beliefs of participants to emerge so that the study can discover the meanings they attach to experiences of the programme.

Furthermore, the aim is to discover patterns or findings embedded in the data relevant to research aims, rather than to seek empirical proof of some preconceived hypothesis through experimentation. This is one of the reasons that Adaptive Theory is used since, as pointed out, no data can be analysed in a wholly open ended or open minded way. A degree of open mindedness has to be combined with theoretical guidance.

Layder (1998) states that Adaptive Theory:

endeavours to combine the use of pre-existing theory and theory generated from data analysis in the formulation and actual conduct of empirical research' (p. 1).

Adaptive Theory:

both shapes and is shaped by the empirical data that emerges from research [and that it] allows the dual influence of extant theory (theoretical models) as well as those that unfold from (and are enfolded in) the research (p. 133).

In the early stages of this research the use of grounded theory was considered. Grounded theory originally developed as a quantitative method using an inductive approach to theory

development: it is now widely associated with qualitative research. It is sometimes used in constructivist studies although according to Charmaz (2000) most grounded theorists are objectivist in orientation. Its attraction is that it offers 'disciplined and procedural ways of getting the researchers biases out of the way' but it adds 'healthy doses of creativity to the analytic process' (Quinn Patton, 2002:128). Because of the way it requires immersion in the data and its focus on behavioural concepts, it is also a good way to get close to the lives and experiences of participants.

One problem with grounded theory is that it does not seem realistic to claim that a researcher can begin to conduct research without being influenced by any pre-existing theory or models in the way grounded theory generally proposes. Layder (1998) criticised this feature arguing that avoiding theory means that; 'there is no real discriminating factor which can arbitrate between 'decorative additions' to a conceptual framework' (p. 154). In addition, trying to 'obey' the procedural guidance and strictures of grounded theory could be inflexible and limiting.

The rationale for using Adaptive Theory

The rationale for adopting an Adaptive Theory approach arises primarily from a constructivist paradigm that allows for both objectivism and subjectivism. It 'endorses an epistemological position which incorporates both the 'internal' subjective point of view of social interaction while simultaneously appreciating that such activity always takes place in the wider social settings and contextual resources' (Layder, 1998: 140). Adaptive Theory has the distinguishing feature that it: 'simultaneously privileges (prior) theory and research data in the emergence of new theory' (Layder, 1998:27). As a result it uses an iterative approach that is 'continuous in character' (Layder, 1998:174) moving

- from a review of literature that identifies themes (orienting concepts) and links (conceptual clusters) for inclusion in the data collection process
- to an analysis using processes of comparison and regrouping to identify emerging themes,
- to a further review of literature linked to emerging themes
- to comparison of findings with existing theory to the development of new theory and concepts.

Theory is created from: 'some sort of dialogue with all the kinds of resources available: general and substantive theory, theory-testing types, sensitizing concepts, and empirically emerging theory' (Layder, 1998:43). According to Layder (1998:100-101) 'thinking theoretically involves tacking to and fro between different levels of reality and analysis- the general and the abstract and the concrete and the particular'. He describes this as shuttling between 'the formal definition and particular instances' (1998:101). Using an Adaptive Theory approach to 'thinking theoretically' selected concepts interact with the data.

Why not use Modified Grounded Theory?

Charmaz (2006) argues for constructed grounded theory as a modified version of Glaser's original approach, which has its own set of strict rules outlined in the 'Journal of Grounded Theory' (Atkinson et al., 2003). Constructed grounded theory acknowledges that theory creation and research are social and can be guided by some general principles and practices but must remain flexible. Whilst Charmaz's version of grounded theory is much closer to the approach in this research than pure grounded theory, the issue remains that grounded theory of any type precludes pre-existing conceptualisations from influencing the

creation of analytic codes and categories which must be developed from data and not by theoretical sensitivity.

Grounded theory researchers are required to begin to research with a 'general sense of wonderment' about what is happening but without a 'problem' or research question (Glaser, 1992: 22) and should avoid allegations of imposing their own agenda or 'pet theory' on the data (Wilson and Hutchinson, 1996). As a result, a grounded theory approach was rejected because it is not possible to begin to research believing that pre-existing orienting concepts have not shaped early decisions in the research approach.

Adaptive Theory, however, offers many of the strengths of grounded theory, not least that it is anchored in the data, but is more realistic and flexible because it is open and explicit about being theoretically inclusive. Using Adaptive Theory gives the researcher freedom and flexibility to access a range of theoretical ideas and approaches and use them in an inquiry.

Narratives

Narratives can be used as devices to bring data together into a story for each participant and portray perspectives on their experiences holistically. Because narratives are storied they are: 'part of a reflexive process of identity construction allowing us to explore our ontology and our epistemology of the self' (Haynes, 2004:400). Whilst recognising that each story is constructed by each individual participant, in line with a social constructivist perspective, interactions with others and broader social narratives also play their part (Somers and Gibson, 1994). For example, participants are likely to hold tacit, implicit and explicit views related to the expectations of professions (outlined in

Chapter 2) in their stories. Bruner acknowledges social narratives when he argues that autobiography has a role in 'negotiability' (Bruner, 1995: 169) when individuals story their experience and thus present themselves in 'social acts that are negotiated interpersonally' (Kehily, 1995: 28). Each story is a sample of participative actions in words that may yield elements of participants' identities as Children Centre leaders.

The status of the stories as participants' influential realities

The methodology of this inquiry is to seek to understand the experiences of the participants. It assumes that participants' reported perceptions are their influential realities. The data about their perspectives were gathered through interactive situations in the natural settings of their work as a Children Centre Leaders. The focus is on participants' reports of feelings and beliefs about their experiences of the NPQICL programme and the meanings attached to them. The analysis process enables the stories to be co-created by the participants and the researcher by building in opportunities for revisiting the accounts of individual experiences of the programme by participants. The process allows for some negotiation and co-construction of realities in line with a 'subjectivist epistemology' (Lincoln and Denzin, 2005: 24). It aims to give participants ownership of their own stories wherever possible. This requires a certain amount of mutual trust between the researcher and research participants to facilitate it and to ensure that participants' voices are heard. It is important to make every effort to ensure that they are able to report what is important to them and their roles, not what they think the researcher wants to hear.

Acknowledging both participants and researchers as authors

A potential issue is to clarify who 'authors' the individual narratives – the participant, the researcher or the research methodology. The approach here is that whilst each story is a negotiation between all three, validity will be sought from getting as close as possible to the participants' perceptions of the experience of the NPQICL because as Hughes (2001) argues: 'knowledge is valid if it is the authentic and true voice of the participants' (p. 36). However, the findings are drawn from an interpretive rather than a positivist research tradition, so the aim is that the researcher's fundamental familiarity with the world of the NPQICL will be brought to reflexive consciousness through the work of interpretation in: 'a qualitative approach to emphasize the researcher's role as an *active learner* who can tell the story from the participants' view rather than as an 'expert' who passes judgment on participants' Creswell (1998:18).

Richness of data through individual stories and a holistic view

A qualitative, constructivist, participatory and interpretative methodology needs to aim for richness of data rather than a great number of respondents. This is assisted by grounding it in the individual voices of research participants so that meanings drawn from the data are co-constructed. Although the individual stories of 15 participants are analysed as individual units they can also be considered as a collective whole. Taking a: 'holistic approach assumes that the whole is understood as a complex system that is greater than the sum of its parts' (Quinn Patton 2002:59). The 'whole' is a qualitative study of the NPQICL. The intention is that this holistic approach will give rich data of more depth than alternative approaches because, although it explores the experiences of individuals, it moves between the particular (individual stories) and the general (commonalities in the

stories). This approach accords with social constructivism because it does not assume that everything resides in the individual.

Transferability or extrapolation

An aim of this research is to produce a transferable, working thesis concerning professional learning and professional identity that is worthwhile and useful to others. However, there is a need to be cautious about the generalisability of its findings. Harvey (1989:122) also issues a warning to researchers against 'the tyranny of the local', cautioning them against generalisation from narrative sources and noting the difficulties of critical evaluation of the data provided from individual accounts. However, Cronbach (1975) argues that a researcher in a qualitative paradigm is right to pay attention to individual features in the data, that is, observable differences as well as commonalities. Although generalisation may not be: 'the obvious criterion of usefulness', (Säljö, 1986: 119), research designs that balance depth and breadth, realism and control allow extrapolation to occur (Cronbach et al., 1980; Säljö, 1986 and Alasuutari, 1995). Quinn Patton (2002) defines such extrapolations as:

Modest speculations on the likely application of findings to other situations under similar, but not identical, conditions.

Extrapolations are logical, thoughtful, case derived and problem-oriented.... (p. 584).

Both Cronbach (1975) and Stake (1995) emphasise the value of analysing data embedded in their context. Cronbach (1975) states: 'When we give proper weight to local conditions, any generalisation is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion' (p. 124-25) so the 'transferability' of results, for example from one setting to another can be based on estimated similarities

between different contexts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:6). In a proposition that helps to defuse some unease about generalisation, Lincoln and Guba (1985:124) suggest that where there is 'fittingness' or 'similarity between two contexts' the concept of 'transferability' may be substituted for generalisation. Thus, in a qualitative, constructivist tradition any extrapolations are highly context dependant which is why Appendix 4 presents the research context.

In sum, Adaptive Theory offers an opportunity to acknowledge and use pre-existing theory and concepts whilst taking advantage of many of the strengths of grounded theory. Narrative analysis offers rich data grounded in the perspectives of participants as well as a holistic view of the effect of the NPQICL on participants' learning and identities. Using and acknowledging participants as co-authors in the study and paying attention to the role of context of the NPQICL may ensure that the findings of the study can be extrapolated by researchers and practitioners who are interested in professional learning and professional identity in other programmes.

Section 2: Methodology

In this part of the chapter the research methodology is outlined with greater precision and detail. First each element is outlined noting issues that arise and the strategies used to try to resolve them. Finally, there is a consideration of any impact of the research approach and methodology on the validity and trustworthiness of the findings.

As introduced, this is qualitative study researching how participants' perspectives on how a professional learning programme influences their professional identities as Children Centre Leaders. It explores first-hand descriptions from

participants in their own words. Narrative stories from 15 individual participants are composed. Each story is created from data obtained from semi-structured depth interviews conducted with 15 former participants from a NPQICL programme from the East of England and data drawn from the two assignments they submitted during the programme. Notes from a researcher-practitioner log are added. The resulting sets of data or participants' stories are analysed using an Adaptive Theory approach (Layder, 1998).

Participants and participant anonymity

Every attempt was made to ensure that risks to participants were minimised and that there were some anticipated benefits of the research to them. Although it was important to try to benefit these research participants, it was very important to 'do no harm'. For example, even with the naturally occurring data from assignments, participants could feel constrained by the different purposes of the two types of audiences; readers for assessment purposes and readers for research purposes. Each participant was offered both a copy of the transcript of his or her interview and later a copy of his or her participant story. The purpose of this was to offer each participant an opportunity to reject the transcript or story, a chance for reflection, to confirm with each participant that the interpretation that is being made of the relevant data set is satisfactory and if so, to gain validation of the data.

A number of safeguards were in place to protect participants: pseudonyms were assigned to the interview participants in order to protect their identity as research subjects; all data stored on the computer were kept in a password protected file; some explanatory information for participants, that they received prior

to offering to be participants in the study, was developed (copies of this and proformas used to gain written permission are in Appendix 1). This was to ensure that participants were giving informed consent. After the implications of the timing of data retrieval and gathering had been carefully considered, participants received clear assurances about the intentions of the research. The assignment samples were analysed once their programme was completed. The intention of this was to create and communicate a clear barrier between assessment processes and the research.

There are many difficulties in researching in one's own context. A particularly difficult issue relates to the power relationship between tutor and participant and how that might place the participant in a position of conflict between his or her perceived own best interests and the need to respond openly to research enquiries. First and foremost, the aims of the research should not overwhelm or be in conflict with the prime aim of one's practice which was, in this case, to offer a high quality learning programme that is meaningful and developmental to the participant but also meets rigorous national standards. In all aspects of this research, there was accountability for maintaining ethical standards through approval by the University of Hertfordshire's Faculty Ethics Committee and both its ethical safeguards and validity were monitored through academic supervision.

Sampling

Although the data were constructed into individual stories, it was important to try to sample a range of participants because the stories would also be analysed as a data set. To achieve a balance of participants that is broadly representative of the

programme demographics, purposive sampling was considered an appropriate technique for participant selection. Fifteen participants were identified as an initial group with the intention of increasing the sample if needed. The aim was to continue gathering stories until data saturation was achieved and no new information was emerging. As the study uses an Adaptive Theory approach the data was analysed throughout the study not just towards the end.

Initially naturally occurring data were used which is primarily from the sets of programme assignments but, in addition, notes from a researcher-practitioner log (created as one of the tutor-facilitators of the NPQICL sessions) were also used. The focus is on the assignments of 15 participants, 5 from each cohort for 3 consecutive years. Students invited to participate in the inquiry were broadly representative of the composition of the three NPQICL student groups so the 15 participants includes:

- 3 males
- 2 people from ethnic minorities

and people

- from a wide range of ages from participants in their early thirties to those in their late fifties
- with varied professional backgrounds
- from different types of Children Centre
- drawn from all of the counties in the East of England government region
- in a range of the most senior roles within the Children Centre
- who found the qualification difficult to achieve as well as those who found it relatively easy

- who had felt coerced into undertaking the NPQICL as well as those who had sought to do it

As a result 5 participants from volunteers from each year group were selected. The sample of 15 NPQICL participants was taken from a potential number of 118. This represents approximately 1 in 8 of NPQICL participants. One student, who would have been a particularly interesting case because of her professional background and the circumstances associated with her work context, was unable to be interviewed during the relevant time period so another student took her place. The process of gathering sets of data from the remaining 14 students occurred without any major problems.

Spreading the sample across three cohorts had the benefit of diminishing the effect of particular circumstances specific to each cohort as intended. However, over the three year period there were changes to the circumstances of Children Centre Leaders, such as, the introduction of a mutual support network for all Sure Start Children's Centre leaders across England, the Children's Centre Leaders Network (1), during the final phase of the data gathering period. These changes may have shaped the perceptions and feelings of participants in the study and so affect the findings. Being a participant, in the sense of working alongside the Children Centre Leaders on the NPQICL as well conducting research, was helpful in becoming aware of and judging the effect of such changes on the views of participants so they could be watched for during the analysis of findings.

Depth Interviews

Intensive individual depth interviews with a small number of participants were conducted as a qualitative research technique. They are designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's

perspective on the research topic. During depth interviews the aim is for questions to flow as naturally as possible based on the responses by the participant. The interviews enable the researcher to explore complex topics and allow for ideas that have not been predetermined by the researcher to emerge (Berg, 2009; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Warren and Karner, 2005). This feature is conducive to the provisional approach required by Adaptive Theory.

Once the naturally occurring data from the assignment samples were gathered, but before they were analysed, semi structured interviews with the same 15 participants were conducted. They were face to face and recorded and transcribed for analysis. The interviews were open-ended with a general focus on the participants' lived experience both during the NPQICL programme and since it ended. There were no references made to any interpretations gleaned from the assignment samples unless the participant brought up something they had written in an assignment. The aim of interviewing the now graduated Children's Centre leaders was to elucidate their perspectives on the impact of the NPQICL on their professional thinking and practices. All interviews were carried out within a 6-12 month period after completion of the NPQICL. The interview transcripts show that the interviews must be recognised as a co-constructed creation by the interviewees and the interviewer and as a discourse that holds loosely to the stimulus questions used. This can be seen from the ratio of interviewee talk, i.e. the major part of the conversation, to interviewer talk, i.e. a very much more minor part of the conversation. Sometimes the interviewee asks questions. As Mischler (1986) writes:

...the research interview is no longer seen as a tool only for 'information gathering. It is a site where partners meet and

converse, and through their conversations they jointly construct meaning (p. 29).

Before beginning the interviews there were many decisions to be made about how and where they took place and how they were captured. There is a great deal of advice available about preparing and constructing an interview schedule, use of types of questions and interview probes (Quinn Patton, 1990). An interview that is too tightly scripted restricts the construction of meaning being sought and would not correspond to the open-ended Adaptive Theory approach of the research. In this data gathering strategy a list of questions was followed (see Appendix 2), but rather than constraining the conversation, they were intended to act as markers to follow through the dialogue.

Whether to use an audio recorder was another difficult decision. Lincoln and Guba (1985) warn against the use of an audio recorder as it is likely to be intrusive and may break down, whereas Quinn Patton (1990:348) says it is 'indispensable'. In this research the intrusiveness of audio recorders was weighed against the way use of them sets the interviewer free to interact with the participant and two audio recorders were used in case one broke down. Each participant was interviewed in their Children Centre, usually in their office. The participant tended to show the researcher around the Children Centre before the interview, explaining the services and provision available and making introductions to colleagues. Although Lincoln and Guba (1985:241) predict that there will be an 'overtly inhibiting effect' from recording the interview, it was obvious with only one participant, who immediately said several relevant and significant things once the audio recorder was switched off.

However, an issue like this may be mitigated to some extent by sending a copy of the transcript of the interview to each interviewee for corroboration and comment before it is analysed. This enabled the participant to add some of the things she said after the recorded interview. However, it could not lessen the effect of her inhibition due to the interview being recorded on an audio recorder. All participants responded typically saying that they accepted that the transcript is a true record of what they said. Four participants said that they wanted to clarify the meaning of what they had said and emailed a replacement sentence and one participant telephoned to say he 'was fine with the transcript' but he had thought of an additional way that the NPQICL course could be developed to be even better. As a result the transcripts of the interviews are validated by participants as trustworthy enough to proceed.

The programme assignments

Copies of the assignments, written for assessment purposes for the NPQICL from the 15 participants were examined. There were two assignments from each participant: one submitted after 5-6 months and the other submitted after 8-9 months of the programme, just before it ended. Although whole assignments were read there was a focus on two particular sections of each of the two assignments. In total, this yielded 4 sections to focus on for each participant. The assignment tasks for these sections require a 'self-evaluation report analysing your learning during the module (1500 words)' and a 'report of your leadership work as recorded in your journal (1500 words)' (NCSL, 2007) in both assignments. In these assignments NPQICL participants select excerpts from their journals that they think are relevant to their leadership development and that they are comfortable about sharing with others.

The assignments were written for assessment as well as to facilitate a reflective process and integration of course materials and participants' experience. As such the narratives are both presentational and performative and so, when reading each assignment the following questions were asked,

What does this participant want the reader to know and think about his or her leadership practice and experience of learning on the NPQICL?

and

How has the participant related his or her assignment to the published criteria used to judge this assignment?

The fact they were written for purposes other than for the research could be seen as strengthening their validity, especially as the sections that were the main focus of the research contained content that aligned with the research purpose i.e. what the participant learned and what difference being on the course made to their leadership role. Participants were only asked for their permission to be interviewed and for their assignments to be used for this study when the second assignment had been submitted and after the course has ended. This was done to protect participants from undue pressure from the research process as they undertook the programme. However, it also minimised the observer effect of the research process on the data in the assignments.

Other sources of data

The data from the initial interviews and naturally occurring data from the 30 assignments were contextualised and triangulated with 3 other sources of data.

1. A researcher-practitioner log completed by the researcher

The log includes notes:

- completed about the sessions as a normal process of self-evaluation and reflection as a tutor-facilitator of the NPQICL
- of interactions with members of the 3 NPQICL cohorts
- about the process of undertaking this research.

There is a tension in gathering data for the log between needing to be honest and clear with colleagues and participants that research is being done that draws on the programme of which they are members, i.e. gaining informed consent, and creating self-consciousness and unease amongst everyone because their actions could be recorded for research purposes i.e. 'doing no harm'. The best option seemed to be to explain at the beginning that, just as participants' reflections and journals might include records of interactions with others, the tutor-facilitators will be keeping similar reflective journals. Then permission was sought from each participant whenever it is decided to use something that they had said or done. In fact this was easier than anticipated because the majority of entries used related to the 15 participants who gave signed permission for use of data linked to themselves. Where a feature of the data related to other participants was used, it was shared with them and specific permission requested before use.

Overall it does not seem that the data gathering process for the researcher-practitioner log 'harmed' the NPQICL participants. However, it appears from anecdotal reports that participants tried to be more careful about the ethics of their own research in

subsequent programmes as a result of becoming aware of potential issues that their tutor-facilitator was managing.

2. External evaluations of the programme on behalf of or by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL)

Evaluations undertaken and published on behalf of or by the National College for School Leadership, Pen Green Research Base, Henley Management College and reports from external evaluators provide valuable contextual and sometimes corroborative information about the NPQICL but, in addition, they provide some clarification of the formal aims and objects of the programme by showing the criteria against which the programme is evaluated.

One of the main issues with this element of the data gathering process is to strive to ensure that the selection of information from the reports is not arbitrary. For this reason the external reports are used only to contextualise the themes that emerged from the assignments, the depth interviews and the researcher-practitioner log rather than as data of an equal status to them. A further issue was to maintain a critical stance on the perspectives of both the commissioners and authors of the reports and their purposes when preparing and publishing them.

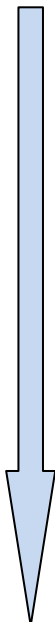
3. The NPQICL programme materials published by the NCSL

The data obtained from programme documents serve to represent its philosophies about learning and aims as well as to contextualise the participants' learning. There is further detail about the programme materials and research context in Appendix 4.

Conclusion

The final research approach and methodology used in this inquiry are portrayed in summary in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Research approach and methodology

<p>A qualitative study constructing 15 narratives NB: * means participant consultation/confirmation occurs</p>		
<p>Purposive sampling of 15 participants through →</p>	<p>semi-structured depth interviews *</p> <p>data drawn from the two assignments submitted during the programme</p>	
<p>Contextualised by →</p>	<p>Notes from the researcher-practitioner log</p> <p>External evaluations of the programme on behalf of or by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL)</p> <p>The NPQICL programme materials published by the NCSL</p>	
<p>Analysis strategy</p> <p>Participants' stories are analysed using an <i>Adaptive Theory approach</i> (Layder, 1998)</p>	<p>Process:</p> 	<p>Stage 1:</p> <p>Construction of 15 participants' stories *</p> <p>Exploring the use of figurative language in the 15 individual stories</p> <p>Stage 2:</p> <p>Open coding of stories involving a process of sorting, grouping and naming</p> <p>The construction of descriptive themes using emic naming of themes</p> <p>Grouping the descriptive themes together in relation to the key and orienting concepts and the conceptual cluster</p> <p>Stage 3:</p> <p>The emerging analytical themes are explored in further interviews with 7 participants</p> <p>The analytical themes are constructed in relation to the key and orienting concepts and the conceptual cluster</p>

CHAPTER 7: The analysis strategy (STAGE 1)

This chapter is concerned with the construction and initial analysis of the participants' stories including examples. The aim is to explore participants' perspectives on their experience of a professional learning programme so their 'voices' are the central focus of the analysis. By this means, the research aim to reach a fuller understanding of the developing professional identities of NPQICL participants with a view to improving support for these should be fulfilled. Below is part of an interview with Elaine (a Children's Centre Head in the East of England who completed the NPQICL in 2008) that illustrates the challenge for leader-managers of Children Centres of creating and defining their role and its associated behaviours in a context when even their line managers may not yet understand the work of the Children Centre and in which national and local expectations in which funding and targets are ever-changing.

Interviewer: I remember during the programme, we spoke and you shared with me a sense – I think we focused on your word 'mandate' – and it had triggered some thoughts for you about you in your role, and I was wondering if you can remember any of that.

Elaine: What we were talking about was me finding it in myself to say I wasn't going to go to meetings because it wasn't a good use of my time, and we talked about who was telling me I didn't need to go to the meeting, where the permission was coming from, and there was a dawning realisation that it was something within me that was doing that, and so that then triggered an awful lot of thinking for me around my lovely childhood that I'd had, which when we did our journeys about our lives, and our learning, and everything, I had very happily shared with others

my trouble-free childhood with a lovely mum and dad, where I was a good child, and I worked hard at school, but I realised that all of that being good has always had an impact on how I live my life. I've thought about this so much, and where I've ended up now is this realisation that until two years ago, [when Elaine did the NPQICL] there was always somebody telling me what to do, be it a parent, or a teacher, or a boss, or someone at college, whatever part of my life, and then all of a sudden I was on this job, where I've got bosses but I know more than they do, and nobody was telling me what to do, so if I said to them, 'I think it would be a good idea to have an elephant for a pet in the Children's Centre', they would say 'okay, Elaine, do it'. So that on the one hand, is really exciting because I'm literally making it up as I go along, but on the other hand it is absolutely terrifying, so I think to counteract for that terrifying feeling, I had almost made these rules up for myself of what I needed to do, to be seen to be doing the job properly. I can still remember clearly, 9th October 2006, when I started this job, I sat at a tiny little desk at the Junior school, and I thought, 'blimey this is it, what do I do?' and I sat and wrote on files for half a day, and planned where I needed to go, and then I went out and started building those relationships. I don't know if that makes any sense....

Elaine explained that the degree of autonomy and responsibility that she now had as a Children Centre head was 'terrifying', especially as her life had been lived as 'a good child' where there had always been 'somebody telling me what to do' and by implication she did what she was told. She explained that she started her headship without guidelines or clarity about what should be done and she found herself 'literally making it up as I go along'. During the rest of the interview she went on to describe her experience on the NPQICL and its impact on her

personal and professional life and, in particular, the part that participation on the NPQICL played in supporting her professional agency and efficacy and diminishing the effect of the role ambiguity that was a feature of her post. This can be viewed as a transition in Ecclestone's sense:

Transition depicts change and shifts in identity and agency as people progress through the education system (in Field et al., 2009: 10).

However, Elaine's transition is also an example of changes and shifts in identity and agency as she progresses *through* (meaning *because of* rather than *moving through*) professional education.

Section 1: The construction and analysis of the participants' stories including examples

The aim of the analysis was to build explanations and match patterns, by documenting how participants think their learning from the NPQICL happened and their perceptions of the worth of that learning to themselves and their work as Children Centre leaders. Analysis in earlier studies suggested that any themes formed solely from theories and concepts may only partly fulfil this aim and may impose a straightjacket on the analysis of findings. Instead Strauss and Corbin (1998) argue for theoretical sensitivity that shapes what is noticed and can be viewed as giving: 'insight into, and being able to give meaning to, the events and happenings in data' (p. 46).

The methodological stance of this research, Adaptive Theory (Layder, 1998), acknowledges sensitisation to concepts and theories but recognises that the data suggest their own themes as well as modifying and elaborating on the orienting concepts and theories framing the research. Therefore, despite being orientated and sensitised by pre-existing concepts and theories,

there was no conscious attempt to shape accounts around them, especially because as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) warn:

foregrounding one or another aspect may make other aspects less visible or even invisible (p. 93).

The danger is that closing down the options in the research too soon would be likely to mean that the findings and interpretations of the data would be limited.

The tension between using orienting concepts and theories on the one hand and the theories emerging from the data is mitigated by the 'accretive' approach of Adaptive Theory (Layder, 1998:27). Layder (1998) argues that the latest stage in the elaboration of theory is 'always potentially revisable' (p. 9) in an interweaving of 'objective and subjective life' that accepts prior theory but: 'takes into account the layered and textured nature of social reality' (p. 27). The approach of Adaptive Theory aligns with the theory of learning as assimilation, accommodation, equilibration and exploration (Piaget, 1972; Athey, 2007).

The concepts and theories identified in Chapter 2 and 3 of this research illuminate and modify the emergent 'theories', stories and constructs of participants. At the same time the data from participants illuminate and modify those same orienting concepts and theories. As the approach used is interpretive, it seeks to discover the meaning the participants find in their learning and present it in themes. Data were sorted and re-sorted from heaps into sets, until patterns (described as themes from now on) emerge. The hermeneutic-interpretative spiral or circle (Kvale, 1987; Forster, 1994) requires that links between the context, purpose and content of the communications that form the data are held in mind. In practice, no item of experience is

meaningful in its own right. It is made meaningful through the particular ways it is linked to other items. 'Linkage creates a context for understanding.' (Gubrium and Holstein, 2009:55).

The themes were coded by recognising resonance between statements and connectivity between meanings. An iterative process in repeating hermeneutical circles was followed until the themes are clearly defined by the data. Eisenhardt (1989) suggests: 'the iteration process stops when the incremental improvement to theory is minimal' (p. 545). That is, when nothing new is emerging from it. This process of sifting, sorting and re-reading gradually reconstructs the data from a meaningless, chaotic heap into sets of data that are grouped together in interpretative themes that reflect their contents.

Construction of 15 participants' stories

The research methodology produced a wealth of 'thick description' in the form of narratives from participants and data from the researcher participant log and external evaluations. Stake (1995; 2000) and Cronbach (1975) maintain that the researcher must ensure that he or she really knows, understands and portrays each case in a study. Stake (1983) calls this 'particularization' that should offer 'vicarious experience' to the reader. Only then should the researcher widen the focus to consider broader patterns. In order to provide some 'vicarious experience' (p. 30), the data sets that follow are constructed to form a story that represents the experience of each of the 15 participants in the study. (See Appendix 5)

Both of the main data gathering approaches use personal narratives from firstly, sections in participants' assignments and secondly, the transcripts of the depth interviews with the same participants. These narratives are both descriptive and

explanatory. Although the constituent parts of each set of data are created by the participants at different times and for different purposes they are brought together in a focus on participants' experiences of the NPQICL and the meanings they make of them that are narrated in their assignments and interviews.

Once the participant has signed the required ethical permission form and agreed to participate in the study both of their assignments for the programme are read from beginning to end. Next, two specific sections in each assignment (the reflective account of learning on the programme and the account of leadership learning drawing on journal entries) are read and annotated. In the first reading of these sections (four per student in all) anything that is strongly expressed or unusual is highlighted and then the assignment sections are reread and notes are made in the margin where there are statements related to orienting concepts and theories drawn from the literature review.

The process of constructing the participants' stories requires immersion in the data whilst holding the orienting concepts and theories in mind and thus allowing themes and their meanings to emerge. The 15 interview transcripts, assignments and selections from the research-practitioner log are blended and constructed into 15 stories, one for each participant. The intention is to develop these accounts as narratives of individual participants' experiences on the NPQICL course and since. Each one is presented in a narrative form, as a story, thus offering the reader an 'inside view' of the perspective of the programme. This format has the value of being both a unit of analysis and also a way of communicating the data coherently and holistically.

At this stage, themes in the assignment samples are linked to themes in the interviews using the interview transcripts as structures for the individual stories. The interview themes take a stronger priority in the data because they relate to a later time phase than the assignments. They occur when the participants have completed their course, have been back in their centres for a while and have had time to reflect on the impact of the NPQICL. However, the assignment data emphasise and corroborate themes in the interview transcripts and illustrate a base line for changes. Because the interview questions are non-directive and open ended and the assignment samples are taken from naturally occurring data, the set of data from each participant does not address each research question in the same detail (see Appendix 5). Each report or story is organised using two principles: firstly the information is presented chronologically and secondly, aspects of the reports are brought together in themes, for instance, all comments about belonging to a learning community are linked wherever possible.

The credibility of each story is safeguarded by applying the following protocols: data are not included if they are: repetitious; obviously unrelated to the NPQICL, the role of the children centre leader or the participant's identity and self-perception; could cause harm to the participant or others. Where there is content that presented ethical problems it is eliminated, although all deletions are saved in a separate folder in case they become useful or important in later stages of analysis. The process of editing of the stories is as 'light touch' as possible being mainly a process of deleting repetitions and where the meaning is unclear and structuring the content into related themes. Particular care is taken when deleting sentences that were unfinished in case the fact they are not finished is in some way meaningful.

Care is taken to use the participants' own words whenever they said something in an idiosyncratic and distinctive way or indicated that statements were significant to them as individuals. In addition, the rest of the stories are the participants' choices of words. Where words are added they are indicated as such. In this sense, the approach advocated by Atkinson (1992:21) of working to compose 'readerly accounts' from raw data while keeping faithfully to the essence of participants' meanings is used. Writing in the third person: 'represents a shift to the researcher's point of view' (Ely et al., 1997: 209-210), so each story is written in the third person in a story genre to indicate to the reader that it is no longer raw data but a blend of data that have been gathered and reconstructed by the researcher.

The process of constructing the stories is recognised as a formative aspect of the research because it involved making choices about the raw data even though each story was subsequently read, approved and validated by its author-participant.

Furthermore, the credibility of each story is safeguarded through enhanced self-awareness and learning from reflexivity. The themes foregrounded through reflexive engagement (Appendix 3) are reviewed and held in mind. These highlight a predisposition towards using certain concepts and theories as lenses to explore the data, for example, reasons are surfaced for noticing the particular themes of agency, autonomy, self-efficacy and 'betterment' in research. In addition, previous studies, the literature review and my practice experience suggest that certain theories and concepts help to explore the key questions already identified regarding NPQICL participants' perspectives, that is,

- How their professional identities for their new roles are developing
- How their developing professional identities can be supported (giving special attention to agency, efficacy and autonomy in new roles)

The data in the assignment documents, interview transcripts and notes from the research-practitioner log are analysed and re-structured using an approach which aims to create a trustworthy representation of the experience and point of view of each participant in an individual story. Reissman (1993:64) urges researchers to seek 'trustworthiness' not 'truth' from 'narrativization'. Whilst 'truth' assumes that there is an objective reality, trustworthiness corresponds to socially constructed realities by people for people. Reissman suggests four criteria for validity in an enquiry drawing on narratives;

- persuasiveness (is it reasonable and convincing?)
- correspondence (can it be taken back to the researched?)
- coherence (does it provide a coherent picture of the situation described?)
- pragmatism (to what extent can it be acted on?)

Against these criteria the process of constructing the stories looks trustworthy: for example, criterion 2 is met because participants review their own stories and indicate acceptance of them as a fair representation of their experiences. The participants create meaning from their experiences and narrated stories that are perceptive and sometimes moving and thus, criterion 1, persuasiveness, is met. Creating individual stories from the sources of data helps to ensure a coherent picture of the data about each participant and of the participants as a

group, thus meeting criterion 3. Criterion 4 will be applied in the final chapter.

At this point two different workings of the data have been presented.

1. Key points have been identified from the interview, assignment material and the researcher-practitioner log for each individual participant in the form of an account or story.
2. Each story has been reconstructed in the third person.

An annotated example of part of this process from section 3 of assignment 1 (written by Elaine) is below:

Figure 4: Construction of 15 participants' stories: an example

<p>Many times I have recalled <i>the uneasy situation at induction</i> as detailed in my learning record. As I have journaled my thoughts and feelings, I have reflected on my childhood which I have happily described to many people as blissful and contented. I still hold this view. However, I now find myself highly conscious of how private we were as a family and I have discussed this with my parents recently. It was simply not acceptable to admit to others if we had any problems: I grew up knowing that my mum and dad would defend my brother and me to others whatever we might do.</p> <p>I now realise that although I have successfully sought to be much more open in my personal life, this has not always been the case in my</p>	<p>Dissonance leading to reflection and self-awareness.</p> <p>Reflects on the origins of her leadership approach</p> <p>Records a sense of being guarded/lacking</p>
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<p>work life. <i>I find it hard to admit when I am struggling with something and the thought of admitting this to peers or superiors is difficult for me.</i> However, my journaling has allowed me to enter into deep thinking around this issue. I now recognise that <i>engaging with like-minded, supportive people in a learning community</i> can only help and support my leadership. As Stephen Kemmis (1982) says: ‘.... <i>A self-reflective community of practitioners – theorists committed to critically examining their own practices and improving them.</i>’ Kemmis, S. (1982) cited in NPQICL Book 1: 21</p> <p>I am also interested in Eden Charles’ (1994) view that a more holistic and balanced approach to leadership and management is necessary. He argues that certain processes would be involved which are <i>not traditional in many western cultures</i>, one of which is: ‘Supporting each other to change in <i>small groups</i> while drawing strength from the knowledge that you are part of a <i>much larger group</i>’. Eden Charles, (1994) cited in NPQICL book 4: 39</p> <p>For me, this sums up the very essence of the learning community I am now a part of.</p> <p>My sessions with my mentor have resulted in pages of <i>pictures, doodles, writing and questions for myself</i>. My mentor has challenged me in a</p>	<p>authenticity in her role. Recognises the person she is= the CCL that she is.</p> <p>Recognises the importance of the learning community in learning and leadership. (identity?)</p> <p>Community of practice?</p> <p>Sees role as situated.</p> <p>Yes, can see small groups point but what about the ‘much larger group’.</p> <p>Is this a sense of identity of the Children’s’ Centre Leader?</p> <p>What are these and why does Elaine mention them? She owns them. Creative</p>
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<p>constructive way and after both sessions I have come away with clearer thinking and clear on actions I need to take following our discussions.</p>	<p>acts? Response to engagement.</p>
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Notes of the highlighted sections are made and then grouped and regrouped both as an individual participant and with the highlighted sections from other participants' assignments. Some themes begin to emerge. A similar process is followed once the depth interview has been transcribed whilst paying attention to themes that have emerged from the assignments and also holding in mind the orienting concepts that have emerged. An example of this process from an excerpt from Elaine is below:

<p>So then you'd had your leadership symposium, can you remember your thoughts on that?</p> <p>.....when we did the little sessions ourselves, I talked about the fact that <i>for the first time in my life nobody was telling me what to do</i>, but that I'd almost gone through a stage of being a rebellious teenager, I would say to people, 'well I'm not doing that, I haven't got the time', and wait for the reaction. The reaction would be 'okay, that's fine Helen', and <i>the growing confidence</i> that I would then bring to next time saying 'no I'm sorry I can't do that at the minute', instead of trying to chop myself up into so many little pieces, but then the thing I realised as well was that <i>I couldn't have it all ways</i>, and I recognised I had been quite happy to say no to big strategic meetings, because I</p>	<p>Sense of autonomy</p> <p>Sense of self and confidence. She said no and it was alright – the sky did not fall in!</p> <p>Ethics of the role</p>
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<p>didn't like them, because I feel very strongly that my job is on the ground, I need to be here for my families, in this area, but going to big meetings that involve half the professionals in Stevenage, I was quite happy to say 'no I'm not doing that', but <i>actually there is a balance, and some of that is needed</i>, so that was another thing I learnt as well really. <i>Nobody was telling me what meetings to go to, and what not to go to</i>, and so I went to a big strategic meeting where they were writing the children and people's plan for Stevenage, <i>and I was able to input my area's needs into that</i>, where as I know that twelve months previous I wouldn't have gone, and then I would have moaned about the plan.</p> <p>What was it about your engagement with that opportunity of the NPQICL that supported you, to be able to do that?</p> <p>I think that it was the huge growth in confidence to <i>trust myself</i>, and to trust my own instincts about things, and to sometimes take a step back and say '<i>I need to think about what I need to do here</i>', or '<i>I need to think about whether I'm the right person to do this</i>', <i>that sort of thing</i>, instead of almost having – well not a knee jerk reaction, but sometimes just getting caught up in it really, actually the confidence to say 'well I'm going to have to think about that', or 'that's not one of my areas priorities at the minute', and</p>	<p>It isn't about self-interest.</p> <p>Autonomy deciding values and principles for herself</p> <p>Sense of making a difference – agency Sense of identity – <i>my area</i></p> <p>Authenticity in role. Knowledge in practice. Capable.</p> <p>More strategic.</p> <p>Confidence = efficacy</p>
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<p>'somebody else might be doing it, but actually I'm not, we can't do it all at the same time', and I think if I had to choose one word <i>it would be confidence actually</i>, and yet the amount of people who say to me, 'but Helen you come over as so confident', but I know a lot of it is learned behaviour, but I think now in a very quick twelve months, less is learned behaviour than the real me, I feel like I'm <i>absolutely bringing myself to the job now, rather than doing what I think somebody else would do</i> – who that somebody else is, I don't know, <i>there is this pretend idea that somebody has already carved out what the job should be, and nobody has</i>, and I would meet with another children's centre manager who has come from health, <i>and she would be doing a lot of things that I wasn't doing</i>, but I realise now that I was doing a lot of things that she wasn't doing, because we were all in our comfort zones. <i>Things like 'stay and play sessions' are easy for me, because that's what I've done, childminding for years, those are easy-peasy for me, whereas running a support group for parents with post-natal depression is way out of my comfort zone</i>, so I would rely on somebody else to do that, so there is a real acceptance for me now that actually we're all just doing it differently. <i>I will ask for help now when I need it</i>. The frustration then is when I want to provide a service or further something that isn't something I can do by myself and I</p>	<p><i>Herself in the role.</i> <i>Confidence</i></p> <p>Creating own way of working – own identity?</p> <p>Role ambiguity and uncertainty.</p> <p>Awareness of lack of standardisation of the role. Derived from ideology of profession</p> <p>Sense of moving on from previous professional heritage</p> <p>Asking for help – confidence</p> <p>Interesting figure of</p>
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then can't get the partnership working going, that's the frustration, but that's <i>another story really</i> .	speech!
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Section 2: Analysis of the use of figurative language in the stories

Once the stories are formed, the figures of speech, metaphors, analogies and similes (all called items of figurative language from this point) by the participants in the study are noted and analysed to identify whether the creation and use of figurative language are acts of meaning making and examples of co-constructed reifications by participants. The decision to do this draws on my own experience of using visual metaphors to gain reflexive understanding as well as an interest in understanding why NPQICL participants appear driven to develop a shared culture, language and understanding, a tendency noted in the researcher-practitioner log. The process enables attention to be paid to individual perspectives before the stories are considered together in order to identify commonalities amongst them as well as offering potential 'slants' on the data (Layder, 1998:104).

Human beings often use figurative language such as metaphors, similes or analogies as a way of making sense of their thoughts, experiences or actions (Strauss and Quinn, 1997; D'Andrade, 1995; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). It is part of the way they create meaning and a choice made when using a figurative language such as a metaphor may reveal thoughts and feelings. Attention to my own reflexivity (Appendix 3) showed me how metaphors can support metacognition. In my case the figurative language and metaphors were chosen consciously and intentionally but in the data from the 15 participants they are

probably chosen unselfconsciously simply as a means of saying what they want to say, using the discourses arising from their shared experiences and work contexts and backgrounds.

In this part of the data analysis the figurative language used is considered to see whether it offers further insight into key background and orienting concepts and theories.

- Professional agency, efficacy and autonomy
- The nature of professional learning
- Professional identity
- Role clarity and certainty

The figurative language identified in Appendix 6 is a sample from the participants' stories. It is selected firstly, when it is used creatively not just as a habit of speech and secondly, because it seemed to be used when the participant had something heartfelt to say i.e. as a vehicle for emotion. The interviews and assignment samples show that learning on the NPQICL incurred some strong feelings. As Hayes (2012) argues: 'Learning resides as much in the heart as the head' (p. 6). Sometimes the 'heartfelt' nature of a statement is evident in the written record but additional notes taken during interviews are also used to identify selections of dialogue from participants that is said emphatically or emotionally. Each sample is reviewed for its meaning and for its relation to the themes above, whilst cautiously bearing in mind Weber's view that: 'There is no one to one relationship between our understanding and our actions' (Silverman, 2007:126) and that the individual participants are recounting their experiences to themselves and others in a self-conscious way.

Paying attention to the individuality of participants

The following brief summaries from the data include numbered comments on each participant's use of figurative language (See Appendix 6)

John:

John is head of a number of Children's Centres. He does not have an undergraduate degree and worked in a very different context before joining a national children's organisation. His previous experience of education was not at all positive and he is open about his lack of self-esteem.

- (1) Outcome of NPQICL: A different way of working. A different professionalism similar to the democratic professional
- (2) Indicating greater resilience and sense of capacity. Professional efficacy. A capable identity.
- (3) Perspective change – seeing things differently. Also records a different reaction to learning/professional education. Sees it a nurturing and restoring.
- (4) Another statement suggesting that his NPQICL learning was transformational for John.
- (5) Here John is valuing the respect he and his experiences were given by others.
- (6) John uses this to explain how this experience of professional learning gave him the agency and efficacy to create his own way of working as a Children's Centre leader (autonomy) which created his professional identity.

Liam:

Liam is head of a large, ground-breaking Children's Centre. His previous career was in health service administration and supporting special needs. Liam already has undergraduate and post-graduate qualifications.

- (7) Liam uses this expression to explain that he thinks becoming aware of one's own professional thinking and sharing it with others is important (autonomy), part of becoming more professional and part of the way identity is created. He identifies the habit of reflection as important.

Dee:

Dee is the new head of a small Children's Centre attached to a school. She is just about to complete an undergraduate degree. Her background is in Early Years provision. Dee was rather reluctant to undertake the NPQICL but was required to start it as part of her new contract.

- (8) Dee is showing she is aware that she was not always whole-heartedly engaged in the NPQICL. The statement implies that her ideal is that she would have been.
- (9) Dee's use of maverick shows how she feels that CCLs are unregulated, without guidelines and outside the usual parameters of being a professional.
- (10) The lion's den indicates how unprotected, unprepared and unrecognised she thinks CCLs are.
- (11) The NPQICL seemed to have changed Dee's perspective on her range of influence and also given her the security and confidence to act in a wider context.

Katy:

Katy was a midwife before becoming a Children's Centre leader. She is now the strategic lead for Children's Centres in a large industrial city. She has overcome many challenges in her life and believes they help her to understand those of children and parents in her centres.

- (12) Home and heart are metaphors that align to the people based approach expected by a CCL. They also imply a transformational approach impact from the NPQICL.
- (13) The self-awareness of talking to yourself links to the idea of tacit and implicit knowledge that is better to be known and acknowledged than hidden.

Elaine:

Elaine is a new Children Centre Leader of a small centre attached to a school in a large new town in the East of England. Her background is in Early Years nursery nursing. She does not have an undergraduate degree. Elaine has several Children's Centre colleagues from her town who are undertaking the same programme with her.

- (14) Elaine's tea drinking expression suggests that in her view Children's Centre leadership is not a highly theoretical technique but a principled response to other humans of listening and sharing. This resonates with Rinaldi's dialogical professional (2006)
- (15) This suggests that the NPQICL was a perspective transforming lived experience for Elaine that was destabilising and immediate.
- (16) Elaine is explaining an identity shift that seems to be linked to agency and autonomy

- (17) This expression originates from a children's story about Chicken Licken (Ross, 1999) where the main character believes the world is ending because an acorn drops on his head. It seems to indicate a new sense of her resilience and capacity/ a changed expectation of herself/ a change to her professional identity.

Sue:

Sue has a background in Early Years and community development. She had nearly completed an undergraduate degree but had had to withdraw because of family commitments. Her Children's Centre is situated in a large new town attached to a community centre.

- (18) The journey metaphor is a frequently used one in education. Here Sue is saying that it was an uncomfortable experience that she is aware of changing her.
- (19) Sue's use of tools implies ways of working. They may be linked to changes regarding her professional identity. She seems to value being able to apply them to her work as CCL.

Ann:

Ann has an HNC in Early Childhood Studies. Her background is in child care. Her centre is attached to a child development centre, church child care provision and an infant school in a large new town. Ann was reluctant to undertake the NPQICL but was required to do it as part of her contract.

- (20) Ann's use of pretender links to the imposter phenomenon.

- (21) Space may be Ann's way of indicating professional identity. The space occupied identifies the professional area of work
- (22) Her use of vision implies that her inability to see clearly and her confusion about her role were depleting her capacity for her work.

Jackie:

Jackie has a background in retail management and community development. She has an undergraduate degree. Her Children's Centre is in a large conurbation attached to a school. Jackie acknowledges that her ambitions have always been thwarted by circumstances.

- (23) Jackie's idea of a negative script is probably acquired from other training. Still she applies it to herself accepting that the story you tell yourself and others affects behaviour, values and expectations. It acknowledges a social constructivist view of her experience and relates agency and confidence to each other bi-directionally.
- (24) The 'chandelier moment' is about co-construction of ideas. There is a sense that the group can create something more exciting than an individual.

Rashid:

Rashid trained as a teacher and then worked in community development. He is deputy manager of a group of Children Centres in a large industrial town. Rashid is open about finding interpersonal engagements the most challenging part of his job.

- (25) Rashid is expressing how differently he experienced the NPQICL. He is saying that it felt more experiential and immediate than previous courses.
- (26) Kindred implies belonging and identifying with a group. Rashid's identity creation is enabled by interactions with the learning community/community of practice.
- (27) In the zone is about the immediacy of his experience on the NPQICL. It sees the NPQICL as an experience and a process where he could be centred in his activity.
- (28) Measuring implies building efficacy by seeing and measuring his success – This links to one of Bandura's sources of self-efficacy.
- (29) The expressions he uses are active and agentic. They portray him as taking charge to make things happen.

Henk:

Henk has an undergraduate degree and a post-graduate degree. He manages a large, established Children's Centre offering a wide range of services in a wealthy town with pockets of deprivation. His background was in business management before managing services for children for a local authority. He feels confident about managing his Centre.

- (30) The use of stealth suggests that he was surprised by his perspective changes and portrays a view of learning as open-ended and not always as intended by the learner.
- (31) This suggests that Henk's change of perspective from leader as individual to leader as a team was learned from membership of the NPQICL learning community.
- (32) Henk's view of the isolation and lack of support for a CCL is clear. He is implying a critique of the way CCL roles have been developed.

- (33) This is an endorsement of active learning. It is an example of how role-taking and empathy are explored in the programme and also infers a democratic-activist view of the professional being defined in relation to others.

Ursel:

Ursel has a background in science and in childcare. She has an undergraduate degree and during the course moved from a position of being the deputy manager to becoming the manager and then to managing a group of Children's Centres in a University town.

- (34) Ursel uses the rollercoaster expression to explain her feelings about the programme
- (35) This portrays the need for the CCLs to be active in creating their roles. It also suggests that the theoretical job description needs to be connected with the experience of being a CCL

Viv:

Viv has a background in Early Years care. She has an undergraduate degree. Her centre is in a large new town and is attached to a school. She appeared to become much more expressive and assertive during the programme.

- (36) Viv's sense of transformation caused by her learning is evident in this metaphor. She is drawing on her Early Years heritage like the earlier links to the Chicken Licken story did.
- (37) An interesting point about the value of the learning community in professional learning i.e. that the impact

lasts longer. She seems to be suggesting that learning from interactions with others is deeper.

- (38) Viv illustrates the part played of reflection in bringing out hidden (tacit) values. She seems to be suggesting that she can see herself more easily (and likes what she sees)

Millie:

Millie has a degree and a further nationally recognised professional qualification. Her Centre is attached to a school in a 'leafy' town that has few services for families in a county that has been slow to develop Children's Centres. Millie's background is in child-minding.

- (39) Millie is matching her professional identity with her children centre. She seems to feel closer to it and accepts that she is the right person to be the CCL.
- (40) She is suggesting that certain approaches, concepts, ways of working and speaking distinguish an ex-NPQICL participant from others and equating that with an identity of CCLs.

The analysis above is useful as an orientation in the rest of the analysis. It is also a cautionary reminder that underpinning any generic themes that emerge are individuals and their perspectives and experiences.

Key features of concepts at the end of Stage 1

A feature of Adaptive Theory is that concepts are provisional and 'always potentially revisable' (Layder, 1998:9) by their relationship with the data. They shape the data but are also shaped by the data and standard views and interpretations are sometimes revised or abandoned in the light of research

findings. Reformulations of concepts in response to data analysis may constitute theory creation. The figure below tracks any reformulations as a result of Stage 1 of the analysis.

A question which emerges from this first stage of the analysis is to what extent participants' thoughts about their experiences of the NPQICL and their roles as Children's Centre leaders are storied drawing on their everyday and common sense realities in the absence of an established discourse of Children's Centre leadership. Although it is not possible to pursue this here, the everyday and common sense realities appear to be individual responses mediated by publicly shaped views.

Figure 5: Summaries of 'thinking theoretically' (Layder 1998:100) at the end of stage 1

End of stage 1 of the analysis		
Orienting concepts	Summaries (with revisions in bold)	Case for revision after stage 1
Professional identity	<p>Is the perception of oneself as a professional in relation to a particular type of profession or subjective self-conceptualisation in the professional role;</p> <p>Is typically shaped by an ideology of professions;</p> <p>Is constructed in a dialogue between, and blending of, personal and professional self involving awareness of own situated, relative and relational position;</p> <p>Is portrayed to self and others in stories and shared language.</p>	<p>There is a great deal of evidence of a lack of clarity and confidence in being a Children's Centre leader, e.g. Katy learns ways to convince herself she is capable i.e. tells herself stories.</p> <p>It is interesting that Elaine brings her personal self into her first actions as a Children's Centre leader i.e. to go out and drink tea. She also recognises that the history of her family life is shaping her approach to being a Children's Centre leader. Rashid's example highlights the drive to</p>

		have a sense of belonging is part of professional identity. Millie's final example suggests that shared language or vocabulary is an aspect of a shared identity
Professional learning	<p>Is concerned with an <i>individual's</i> learning and personal capacity set in a professional work context as well as enculturation;</p> <p>Is the transfer of new knowledge and understanding into one's personal and professional practice through reflection and so develops professional judgment;</p> <p>Interacts with learners' priorities, perspectives and inferred meanings as well as how they see themselves;</p> <p>Develops codified and personal knowledge and the knowledge creation capacity of individuals and professional communities;</p> <p>Relates to cognitive and emotional learning;</p> <p>Prepares learners for future learning and challenges by exploring own tacit knowledge, new perspectives and world views.</p>	<p>Emotions: In several of the examples of figurative language there are examples indicating the emotional aspects of learning on the NPQICL e.g. examples from John's story. It suggests the conception needs to include a reference to the capacity of professional learning to engage emotions. Sue refers to a journey metaphor to describe her NPQICL experience. It suggests she sees learning as both incremental and developmental. Viv also uses a journey metaphor to signify change.</p>
Professional efficacy	Is the general belief held by professionals in own capacities to act and shape the outcomes, nature and quality of their lives and work in order to fulfil the	Resilience seems to be a feature of professional efficacy. Both John and Elaine say they have learned the sky or ceiling will not fall down.

	<p>requirements of their professional roles to standards consistent with their constructs of professionalism, as well as the cause of their choice to do so;</p> <p>Includes an individual's belief in own resilience.</p>	<p>Sue notes that gaining new professional 'tools' promotes professional efficacy.</p>
Professional agency	<p>Is the capacity and commitment and sense of entitlement and responsibility to exercise control over and have a say about the nature and quality of one's life and work.</p>	<p>Dee mentions coming out of the cocoon to signify a more outward facing view of her work. She seems to feel she has become more responsible for what is happening in her professional context. Jackie mentions acquiring a negative script i.e. her words are provided for her. Dee describes the helplessness of being thrown in the lion's den of her context.</p>
Professional autonomy	<p>Is the awareness of and freedom and ability to negotiate, choose, shape and narrate one's values, principles, meanings and approaches to practice in own professional community and context;</p> <p>Is rooted in and sustained by a habit of reflection.</p>	<p>This is confirmed in the examples from Liam's story. Liam mentions the role of the habit of reflection in gaining insight into his decision making and professional knowledge.</p>
Constructivist conceptual cluster	Summaries	Revision/relationship
Co-construction	<p>(as a verb) Is a process of joint creation by individuals involved in learning and who are engaged in interactive, collaborative, cooperative, democratic and equitable</p>	<p>Millie refers to a shared language/discourse as marking out NPQICL participants.</p>

	<p>relationships to create shared knowledge and understanding of culturally and contextually meaningful realities;</p> <p>(as a noun) Is a shared language or thought or association created or adopted and then can be maintained or evolved by individuals.</p>	
Reification	<p>Is a shared repertoire of representations of abstract, coded or hidden features of professional practice that help a community of practice to negotiate new meanings of their learning, ways to practice and professional identities.</p>	<p>Viv draws on a children’s story to represent the changes she experienced. She used this as a basis for a presentation to the other Children’s Centre leaders and was confident that they would find it understandable and acceptable. Reification seems to include recycling stories and ideas to stand for features of professional life.</p>
Subjective self-conceptualisation in role	<p>Is a process of changes that occur to a person’s self-schema in relation to a particular role that they are in, that are visible in their actions.</p>	<p>Henk’s example illustrates that when a self-perception changes it follows that actions change too.</p>
New concept; A story	<p>Is told as an intentional communication and is an interpretive construction through which people represent themselves and their worlds to themselves and to others;</p> <p>Is told in order to link self to the professional role and the professional self to own view of self.</p>	<p>All of the figurative language appears to be a way of telling stories about themselves as Children’s Centre leaders and linking that to personal selves or owning the narratives NB: A story is the link between all of the elements of the</p>

		conceptual cluster
Learning Community	<p>Is 'a self-reflective community of practitioners – theorists committed to critically examining their own practices and improving them' (Kemmis, 1982 cited in NCSL, 2008: 8);</p> <p>Supplies cognitive, emotional and social support.</p>	<p>John's metaphor suggests that the members of the learning community have a role to play in helping each other recognise their learning and think about thinking. Rashid refers to his learning community as kindred folk conveying a sense of the significance of his learning community as support for who he is and what he does.</p>

CHAPTER 8: Development of descriptive categories (STAGE 2)

In the previous chapter the individual stories of each participant were constructed from data from assignments, interviews and the researcher-practitioner log and contextualised by programme materials and external evaluations. They were analysed to identify figurative language used to represent the emerging feelings, perspectives and potential identity stories of the 15 participants. In addition, they were examined to determine whether examples of figurative language from the stories offered any insights or potential modifications to the orienting concepts and the conceptual cluster.

In this chapter descriptive categories are formed drawing on the use of figurative language and sensitised by the orienting concepts and conceptual cluster and earlier theories in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Explicit links between them are to be made later in the analysis. At this stage 'the aim is to use the data to think with' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:178; 2004). Descriptive themes are named using the words of participants as far as possible. The analysis is conducted recognising that all 'products' are 'potentially revisable' (Layder, 1998:130). A process of moving between key orienting concepts, the conceptual cluster, the data, the figurative language and back to the orienting concepts and conceptual cluster is continued. The aim is that by deploying 'the theoretical imagination' (Layder, 1998:110) 'explanatory enhancement of data by employing aspects of general theory' (Layder, 1998:128) will occur.

Section 1: Open coding of stories

The stories were coded for themes found in the use of figurative language as acts of meaning making about experiences of the NPQICL and the background concepts, orienting concepts and conceptual cluster identified in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Recording the development of the descriptive themes

The themes needed to be defined and developed as precisely as possible. It was recognised that there would need to be further modifications as the data were configured differently so a system to note and date the changes made was set up. Using the assignment samples and the interview transcripts from the fifteen participants, the themes were refined and developed and the changes made were noted and dated. Notes were made of the whereabouts of the data that underpinned each theme so that they could be expanded later.

Noting the incidence of the descriptive themes

In order to keep a check on how much data there were for each theme and how widely they were distributed amongst the sample of participants, simple charts were created to record the number of times each type of theme was included and these were noted under a particular descriptive theme. The purpose of this was not to quantify the data but to note the coverage of the data, their absences in relation to the descriptive themes and relative frequencies. Charting the incidences of data to support each theme was a way to check that there were sufficient data to support each theme and so safeguard the research as far as possible from the particular interests of the researcher that were identified through engagement in reflexivity. (See Appendix 3) It was appreciated that giving equal weight to every incidence of a theme in the stories is rather arbitrary when some themes are

expressed more explicitly than others and some themes are expressed as more significant to the participant than others. It was decided that if the participant mentioned something during the depth interview or in a NPQICL assignment, they were paying attention to it and that would be taken as a rationale for including the statement in the data to be analysed.

Negative cases

As part of the process of analysis the stories were reviewed to look for absences from the descriptive themes. As Ely et al. (1991) write, 'Negative case analysis is the search for evidence that does not fit into our emergent findings and leads to re-examination of our findings' (p. 98). This proved to be very useful. For example, whilst one participant had reported that he felt very confident and comfortable in the role of Children Centre Leader from the start, and so was atypical of the sample of participants, he also reported that, as a result of his learning from the NPQICL, he now saw his role completely differently and was working differently as a leader. He explained that the change in his practice as a result of a change in his view of himself had considerably alleviated the stresses and strains he had been experiencing in his role. What this highlighted was that not only were most participants without a sense of professional identity as Children Centre Leaders, but that some participants carried misperceptions of their role that were incongruent with their context. This showed that, rather surprisingly, even when participants presented themselves as confident in their role, they too were uncertain about aspects of their professional identity. As Eisenhardt (1989) comments:

In replication logic, cases which confirm emergent relationships enhance confidence in the validity of the relationships. Cases

which disconfirm the relationships often can provide an opportunity to refine and extend the theory (p. 542).

Constructing the descriptive themes

During the analysis of data, patterns began to emerge and it became possible to create descriptive themes, which were labelled to construct a broad structure of themes that aligned to the data. As the descriptive themes were sorted and re-sorted into different groups, relationships between them were found. In accord with Layder's Adaptive Theory approach (1998) the data were sorted in order to explore the orienting concepts of professional identity, professional learning, professional agency, efficacy and autonomy, co-construction, reification, subjective self-conceptualisation in role and learning community. This process involved reviewing the data for similarities, contrasts, patterns, topics or relationships that captured meanings.

In order to connect the orienting concepts and the conceptual cluster with the data, the words or phrases derived from those used by the participants in the assignments or interviews or recorded in the researcher-practitioner log were used to name the themes emerging from the data wherever possible in order to honour and stay close to the language used by participants. This is congruent with an approach that is exploring participants' perspectives and so should attend to what they say and how they say it closely. It also fits with research that is interested in the conflict (if any) between an ideology of professionalism and an individual's view of their professionalism. In particular, the labels of themes were chosen if notes in the researcher-practitioner log showed the phrase had been adopted amongst groups of participants. The aim was that the descriptive and analytical themes would capture statements of meaning that

were found in most of the data and crucially would be recognised by all participants.

When everything was collected together, the themes represented the participants' perspectives on their experience of the NPQICL. Woven into their views were stories portraying their lives, values, attitudes, feelings and potentially changes in their professional identities. Coding had revealed approximately twenty one broad descriptive themes that were later developed into nine analytical themes related to the key background and orienting concepts in the study. Appendix 7 contains an example of the open coding of a story.

Section 2: Descriptive themes

During this stage of the analysis, 21 descriptive themes were created using emic naming of themes and grouped together and then the interim findings and emerging analytical themes were explored in further interviews with 7 participants.

The descriptive themes were derived from the analysis through a recursive process using the interview transcripts and notes, assignment samples, researcher-practitioner log records including critical incidents and issues foreshadowed in an analysis of figurative language used in the stories. The aim now is to look for responses linked to the orienting concepts and the conceptual cluster whilst remaining open minded about significant topics that appeared to matter to the participants (Ely et al., 1991; 1997). This is in order to discover Children Centre Leaders' perspectives on the development of their professional identities through participation in the NPQICL and also any implications for professional learning especially when participants are in newly developed roles.

Over a period of time repeated readings of the stories identified clusters of similar data. The headings of each descriptive theme evolved during each reading in order to make it inclusive of the data it was representing. For example, Theme 10 was entitled simply 'Crisis' until it became clear that participants were also identifying something that was important and meaningful to them for their learning. At that point it was renamed 'Significant incident leading to learning'. Towards the end of the 'reading for coding' process it became clear that the codes did not capture all of the data so two new ones were added. To denote statements exemplifying participants' sense of increased capacity and activity a theme entitled 'Making things happen. I can do it. Agency' was created. Another was 'Interprofessional awareness' to capture expressions by participants linking the course to interprofessionalism.

In order to be secure that interpretations of the data did not reflect my enthusiasms or predispositions to certain ideas, the rate of incidence of the particular themes in the 15 stories was identified. This was done by reading each story for coding, line by line, 5 times. Where there was no incidence of the theme in a participant's story the absence was scored as 0. Apart from the safeguard above, there was a point of interest arising from this process to see how widespread each theme was amongst the participants. It also identified some negative cases amongst the sample, explored later in this chapter: sometimes when a high proportion of participants brought forward a theme in their assignments, exploring the data relating to those who did not do so offered some valuable insights too. The total rate of incidence for each theme needed to be treated carefully. Sometimes a participant mentioned a theme only once but it was clearly especially important to them, for instance, in his story John tells

of an NPQICL group session in which he was offered and accepted feedback that was very significant to his sense of being affirmed and validated (descriptive theme 15). The significance of this incident, to John, is evident in his story and his assignment but it was also evident when he referred to it during the interview. As a result a note that was made during the interview about the emphasis he placed on the incident was retained in the researcher-practitioner log and used later to interpret and evaluate the data.

Because this research is framed by a participatory and constructivist ontology and epistemology, participants' words are used to name the descriptive themes. The thinking behind this approach is drawn from anthropological studies which argue that insider knowledge, understanding and experience are frequently linked to a specialist use of language. (Grenier, 1998; Milner, 1994) Quinn Patton (1990) identifies this as developing 'indigenous categories' (p. 393-400) rather than themes developed by the researcher. Similarly Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe this process as, 'in vivo coding' (p. 61-74). Another benefit is that the participants' voices are heard as clearly as possible despite obvious constraints and also helps the reader keep as close as possible to the participant's meanings by minimising mediation by the researcher. My insider-researcher status proved useful when making judgements about the names of codes. The following criteria were used:

- the name selected for each theme had to be an apt representation of the perceptions clustered in each analytical theme
- it had to be in common use in the NPQICL learning community

The 21 descriptive themes

The 21 descriptive themes that emerged were reordered and grouped together in 4 tables according to the central ideas in these questions and the orienting concepts and conceptual cluster:

Confidence, capacity, efficacy and agency (Table 1)

Characterisation of the nature of professional learning (Table 2)

Professional identity: from outsider to insider (Table 3)

Professional identity: role clarity and certainty (Table 4)

In this way, these groupings took account of the orienting concepts and conceptual cluster and offered a means to connect them with the data from participants. The aim was to explore the participants' perspectives through the sensitising and sensitive effects of the concepts. Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 can be found in Appendix 8 and are discussed below.

Table 1: Descriptive themes from coding: Confidence, capacity, efficacy and agency

The coding for theme 3 'Useful at work or in job role' code refers to any occasion when the participant identifies something that he or she has taken from the NPQICL to use in a work or job role related context. The analysis shows that it is the most frequently occurring theme of all, with 80 instances noted. In all cases the participant is identifying something that has been useful and successful in their view. Every participant identifies at least two things they have taken and use successfully in their work as a Children's Centre leader. This is surprising because there was little work or role specific content in the NPQICL during the time that the research was completed. Although the NPQICL is designed as a nationally recognised qualification for Children's

Centre leaders as a parallel to the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), it is not intended to train participants how to be a Children's Centre leader but to give them:

the opportunity to collaborate across the community and provide seamless, high-quality services for babies, children and families'
NCSL (1).

As Lynda Davies says in a NCSL case study, it was intended to prompt [Children Centre Leaders]: 'to reflect on the practice within the centre and [their] role as manager' ((1) NCSL, 2009:2).

Several participants express initial confusion and disappointment on realising that the NPQICL will not be showing them how to manage their budgets or teach them about employment law. They came with an expectation that gaining greater knowledge and skills would mean they would become more professional. Bearing this in mind, it is interesting that each of the 15 participants said they took so many 'tools' from the course to use in their centres. The question arises why an expectation of gaining professional skills and knowledge such as budgeting and personnel management occurred. In order to explore this further in the data the orienting concept of *professional knowledge* is introduced at this stage of the analysis.

Coding of theme 2 'Expressions of gain in job confidence' refers to instances in the participants' stories where they express awareness that the NPQICL has increased their confidence in their work and job role. Although not as frequently seen as data coded as theme 3 'Useful at work or in job role', there are 39 instances of this with no absences, suggesting that there *might* be a potential link between the themes 2 and 3.

The other coded theme that occurs frequently is theme 7, 'Making things happen. I can do it. Agency.' The title for this code is an amalgamation of words used by participants. It refers to occasions when participants expressed either awareness that they could now act to initiate change or that they had already done so as a result of the NPQICL. There are 56 incidences of data for this code with no absences so every participant is included.

Another striking characteristic from table 1 is that the theme coded as 'Expressions of gain in job confidence' shows 39 instances while the theme coded as 'Initial expressions of lack of job confidence' shows 26 instances. Whilst it is not possible to claim that this shows change from a state of less confidence to more confidence due to the NPQICL, it is safe to say that the participants' perception is that they lacked confidence at the time they started the NPQICL and that they ended the course feeling more confident (about their confidence that they could do their jobs). Theme 8: 'I now feel that: what I think is OK; I am OK; I am OK to do the job' (another amalgamation of words used by participants) denotes feelings expressed by participants after doing the NPQICL and attributed by them to their experience on the programme. With only one absence it suggests that increased job confidence and, perhaps, a sense of authenticity in the role of Children's Centre leader might be one of the outcomes for NPQICL participants.

Table 2: Descriptive themes from coding: Characterisation of the nature of professional learning

Theme 12 'Growth in self awareness' is defined as an incidence of a participant stating that he or she had learned something previously unknown about him or herself. The analysis produces a count of 47 incidences with no absences so all 15 participants

were included in this data. The NPQICL sets out to promote growth of self-awareness so this is not surprising, but what is interesting is that the participants are, firstly, aware of their growth in self-awareness and how engagement with the NPQICL promotes it; and secondly the participants' stories show how much they value this and how clearly they feel it has strengthened their leadership capacity, for example:

The impact was that Sue had a greater awareness of herself, her behaviour, the way she presented herself particularly and the effect that those things might have on others especially reluctant partners (Sue's story).

The fact that participants brought this to the interviewer's attention as well as wrote about it in their assignments so frequently shows how significant they appear to think it is and perhaps how unusual they think it is as an outcome of a professional learning programme. All but 3 participants recount at least one significant issue that occurred on the programme leading to new self-awareness, learning or insight (Theme 10 'Significant incident leading to learning'). Just over half of the participants refer to a 'light bulb moment' as an outcome of the 'Significant incident leading to learning', using a specific metaphor in common use in the programme to capture, express and acknowledge their experiences.

Only one participant does not comment on perceptions of the experience of an unexpected, unusual (for the participants) pedagogy (Theme 13 'Observations on *different* pedagogy'). This theme appears 31 times in the data. It is common for participants to express feelings of initial frustration, anger, even bewilderment, that a didactic method of learning was not used. Eventually, in all but one case (see Sally's story) the participants

indicate how they value the approach used as the course proceeded and prefer it to a more 'traditional' approach. This is interesting because the new concepts of professional outlined in Chapter 2 are participative, suggesting that professional learning that is participatory and active rather than passive would be most suitable for similar roles. Sally's story challenges any view that constructivist pedagogy should always be privileged. It is a reminder that there are many routes to professional learning and that individual participants have preferences about how they learn most effectively.

Much emphasis is placed on reflection in the NPQICL and time is allocated within the programme's hours to ensure there are opportunities for participants to write in their journals. Theme 9 'Reflection identified' refers to explicit references to recognition of reflection as a beneficial process in the programme. One participant in the study does not refer to it in his interviews, only using the word 'reflective' as an adjective in his assignment, for example: a reflective account or reflective journal. However the participant (Henk's story) who does not mention reflection explicitly *demonstrates* significant reflection in his interview and assignments. He reflects on how, after being challenged about his expectations of leadership, he changed his approach, albeit reluctantly during the course. He explains how the change enabled him to survive in his role.

Table 3: Descriptive themes from coding: Professional identity: from outsider to insider

Theme 17, 'Value of the learning community' refers to the incidence of expressions of value attributed to membership of the NPQICL learning community for the cohort or a smaller group that was part of it. This theme is expressed 55 times in the data and is the second most frequently mentioned of all. Not only

that, but there are several very strong statements of 'advocacy' of the importance and power of membership of the learning community made. For example:

There was something intrinsically reassuring about being with people who were in the same situation as him – 'the purest example of empathy'. (John's story)

What did work for him was the ability to learn with, and in and through a supportive and contained learning community... (Liam's story)

...she had not seen the Children's Centre as a learning community before the NPQICL. (Katy's story)

The one participant whose story does not include this theme (Jackie) is clear from the start that learning in groups did not suit her:

She enjoyed the assignment process as she enjoyed research and a traditional style of teaching and learning. She preferred the assignments to the community learning group activities. (Jackie's story)

Despite this, the significance she places on being part of the learning community group who create the concept of the 'chandelier moment' is at odds with this stated preference.

12 of the 15 participants express a sense of beginning the course as an outsider in relation to the rest of the Children's Centre leaders. (Theme 14: Feeling like an outsider at start of the course). This is a characteristic of participants in the NPQICL that was something that the tutor-facilitators recognised straightaway in the first cohort and thereafter. As a result, a paper on the Imposter Phenomenon (Clance and O'Toole, 1987) is introduced for use as prompt for reflection. Notes from the researcher-

practitioner log show there is a highly charged, emotional response to the paper as most participants, first of all, recognise and put a name to their own feelings and then realise that their colleagues feel similarly:

Now this is interesting. The coffee break after that session was buzzing about the imposter phenomenon. One person told me she felt 'liberated' by knowing about the 'imposter syndrome' and thanked me repeatedly. It seems to have struck a chord with them. (Researcher-practitioner log, October 2006)

Table 3 shows that Jackie and Henk's stories do not indicate that they sought (or appear to gain) validation, inclusion and identity confirmation from the learning community. Both show 4 absences out of 5 in these descriptive theme codes. Jackie remains wary and ambivalent about being in groups:

She realised that incidences of bullying and feeling different that she had experienced as a child had influenced her. (Jackie's story)

She acknowledges that her sense of being an outsider has shaped her choice of work context: that is, she has chosen to work to increase opportunities and inclusion for children and build social cohesion. In Henk's case he has had very significant and lengthy experience in leadership and management roles as well as having an unusually high level of qualifications. His story shows that he thoroughly appreciated working within a learning community but his perceptions of the gains it offered are social and practical rather than affirming, validating or role defining.

Theme 15 'Feeling affirmed and validated' refers to instances when the words such as 'affirmed' or 'validated' are used by participants rather than parts of stories that can be interpreted as experiences of affirmation or validation. This is because a first

attempt at coding in a more interpretative way produced such a high number of instances of this theme that it subsumed most other statements. As a result, its apparently low frequency in the data may relate to lack of familiarity with counselling vocabulary rather than its rate of occurrence in the data. Where it is expressed explicitly it is said emphatically:

His view was the course gave participants permission to lead by confirming and affirming who they were and validating what they did. (John's story)

Similarly the data coded as Theme 16: 'Experiences of empathy & role-taking' is probably a subset of Theme 17: 'Valued the learning community' as the participants' stories explain how their interactions with members of the learning community and experiences of gaining understanding of groups and individuals were enabled by hearing others:

Part of it came from realising that other people had the same fears and worries that he did and were doing fine proving that you could survive. (Rashid's story)

and also watching group dynamics:

Sue felt that 'we were creating an experience between us where we were learning by watching others'. (Sue's story)

Theme 8: 'What I think is OK. 'I am OK. I am OK to do the job' indicates data that express one of the most moving characteristics of this research, that participants felt isolated and lonely as leaders in their new centres and had doubts about themselves and their ability to do their jobs:

The course gave him the space for safe reflection and enabled him to understand that other people across the country were experiencing similar issues, issues which because the posts were

*very new were framed around basic loneliness in practice.
(Liam's story)*

Once participants come together with others in a similar role they gain in self belief and confidence:

Without that [the NPQICL], I feel that without that I would not be where I am – without having had that process. I feel I wouldn't feel like I do now. I don't know what it is exactly about it. It's almost like it lifts you unconsciously...Viv's story

As a tutor-facilitator I am conscious in each year of the programme that participants really value opportunities to talk to others in a similar role. This was particularly powerful in the early years of the programme when each centre manager had hardly ever met another because so few centres were open. When NCSL instituted the 7 hour visits to each others' centres for learning groups in the redesigned version of the programme, the innovation was very well received by participants. It seems to satisfy an even deeper need, that is, not just to hear how another centre head is leading but to see it.

Table 4: Descriptive themes from coding: Professional identity: role clarity and certainty and interprofessional working

Theme 18: Role ambiguity/uncertainty refers to expressions of concern by participants made at the start of the programme that they did not know what the expectations of their role as a Children's Centre leader were. As table 4 shows it is present in all participants' stories. 49 instances of it are noted in the data. As Henk says in his interview:

The role of children centre head was starting to become slightly clearer. Initially children centre heads were thrown into a centre in a community and everyone stood back and saw what came up. (Henk's story)

The data for Theme 8: 'I now feel: what I think is OK; I am OK; I am OK to do this job' shows that only one participant (Jackie) feels less able to go forward with her current job role:

In a way the course had had a negative impact on Jackie's link with the lead agency because she now knew how she was NOT happy to be treated. She knew how she treated her staff team and would have liked to have been treated the same way. The course left her in a frustrated state. She thought it was often the way with other Children Centre heads who had done the NPQ. 'I lacked awareness of what the role could be. I have moved from a manager to a leader.' (Jackie's story)

However, even though Jackie indicates in her interview that she thinks she needs to seek a different post in a different role, her statement suggests that her perceptions do match part of the theme i.e. 'I now feel: what I think is OK; I am OK;' but not the part indicating 'I am OK to do this job' [my emphasis]. The other 14 participants' perceptions are that they are more comfortable and confident in their roles at the end of the NPQICL:

It had meant that she knew she should be at the centre and 'therefore I can stand quite confidently at the door of the children's centre fronting it as a manager, compared to thinking oh I am just a children's centre manager and should it really be me'. (Millie's story)

As expected with a leadership programme participants report changes to their leadership approaches. The data for Theme 19: 'Change in leadership approach' indicates that all participants think that they have made positive changes to their leadership as a result of the NPQICL. There seems to be two aspects to this. One is that they have learned to trust their colleagues more and feel able to delegate and adopt a distributed leadership style,

meaning leadership distributed through an organisation, or servant leadership style, meaning leadership to promote the growth and talents of others, (Greenleaf, 1970, 1991). Sometimes this lifts a heavy burden from them and they recognise that their new way of working is much more sustainable:

He was the follower in the sense that he was leading the people by facilitating their movement from behind rather than ahead. He had become quite exhausted in his previous attempts to lead and so this was a massive revelation for him and he, 'just felt such a weight off my shoulders that actually my job was to facilitate others and that I didn't have to be the shining light ahead of everyone else, trying to move quite a big children's centre and a health service forward pretty much on my own. I felt relieved'. (Henk's story)

The second aspect is that participants recognise that they have become more authentic in their leadership roles, meaning that they feel able to act: 'in accord with the true self. Empowerment is derived from:

Expressing oneself in ways that are consistent with inner thoughts and feelings' (Harter, 2002: 382).

One participant expresses this as:

She became aware that she had built up layers of learned behaviour rather than being herself, being authentic. She realised that being herself was good enough and was the best way to work. (Elaine's story)

This feeling is also reflected in the data for Theme 8: 'I now feel: what I think is OK; I am OK; I am OK to do this job'.

Themes 20: 'Wider or more strategic view taken' and 21: 'Inter-professional awareness' reflect aspects of the role of Children Centre leader where the role incumbent looks beyond the here-and-now and extends their perspective beyond his or her centre to embrace the wider social and political context. These aspects have parallels with Hoyle's distinction between restricted and extended forms of professionalism. (Hoyle, 1975:318)

Interprofessional awareness and understanding are among the aims of the NPQICL. Theme 21 which relates to this has 26 instances of this in the data and 3 absences. It is important to note that the theme of assignment 2 on the NPQICL is interprofessional working so every participant had to discuss the theme in that assignment. I chose to exclude those instances from the data to try to identify how much each participant foregrounds interprofessional awareness themselves after the course had finished. Only instances where participants mention data related to this coding theme in their interviews are included. There are 10 instances where participants mention Theme 20: 'Wider or more strategic view taken' as a result of the NPQICL. Seven participants do not mention it as an outcome. Of these 5 (John, Liam, Katy, Sue and Rashid) are already working as either the strategic lead for a group of children's centres or have recently moved to a broader developmental role and may take such a perspective for granted. The remaining two participants (Ann and Millie) are amongst a cluster of participants who were very new in post when they began the NPQICL. Unsurprisingly they were focused on their roles in the Children Centre rather than regional or national developments:

In some ways she would have liked to have done it [NPQICL] in two or three years later, when she had felt that she had got to grips with the job and its challenges. (Ann's story)

Millie was slightly apprehensive beforehand because she was in a new post.

It was not like you were doing some continuation learning in the post you were in. Neither was it proving what you were doing. It was a new journey. (Millie's story)

The 5 strongest (most frequently and widely expressed) themes in the descriptive themes analysis are ranked below in descending order:

- Something from the course - useful at work
- Valued the learning community
- Making things happen - agency
- Role ambiguity/uncertainty
- Growth in self-awareness

Professional knowledge

As a result of the analysis at the end of stage 2 showing the significance participants attributed to 'professional tools' they could take back to their centres, there is a need to introduce an orienting concept that allows further exploration of participants' initial expectations of the knowledge they should gain as a result of the NPQICL. Before introducing professional knowledge as an orienting concept it is helpful to clarify it and associated concepts theoretically.

Adaptive Theory suggests that the researcher should introduce a new concept where it is needed at any stage of the research process and also allows the flexibility of disregarding an orienting concept that does not resonate with the data. In Chapter 2 it was noted that some commentators perceive what professionals should know as one of the distinguishing features of their status and identity (Rice and Duncan, 2006; Royal College of

Physicians, 2005; CILIP: Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, 2004 Parsons, 1939). The data suggest that acquisition of 'professional tools' is perceived as significant by participants. This newly introduced concept will allow for exploration of the importance that participants attribute to knowledge from the course that is useful in their role as a Children's Centre leader. It may also offer potential as a means to identify how the ideology of the professions can interact with the professional identity of the NPQICL participants.

Professional competence, artistry and expertise

Quinn et al., (1996): Barber, (1963); Blaich, (1955) and Parsons, (1939) are amongst those who argue that what professionals should know and be able to do is an important distinguishing and symbolic feature of professionalism and professional identity. When professional knowledge is applied in practice it is often referred to as demonstrating professional competence (Chinn and Kramer, 2007, Eraut et al., 2003). Professional competence, i.e. reliable behaviour and skills in work that meets a minimum set standard in employment (Kemp et al., 2005) is fundamental to the relationship between the professional and client. It is illustrated by individuals in relation to specific skills or outcomes and is recognised in what professionals produce in their practice not by the effort they invest or the knowledge they have. Sue uses the term 'professional tools' (Sue's story) as ways of working i.e. practice to characterise some of the knowledge needed by a Children's Centre leader.

One view of 'expertise' is that it is a well-organised body of accessible and useful domain specific knowledge which a professional draws on and adds to, in effectively solving complex

problems (Ericsson and Lehmann, 1996; Chi et al., 1982). Sternberg sees competence and expertise as placed on a continuum not as different or mutually exclusive.

One moves along the continuum, as one acquires a broader range of skills, a deeper level of the skills one already has, and increased efficiency in the utilization of these skills. (in Elliot and Dweck, 2005:16)

Similarly Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) and Benner (1984) have a sliding scale from novice to expert. An 'expert' no longer relies on rules, guidelines or maxims but uses an intuitive grasp of situations based on deep tacit understanding and also analytical approaches framed by an understanding of the wider 'picture'. Brockbank and McGill (2007) advocate a view based on the thinking of Schön (1983; 1987) that expertise is one form of professional artistry,

where professionals deal with the unique, unanticipated, the uncertain, the value conflicts and indeterminate conditions of everyday practice for which there was no text book response (p. 86)

A feature of professional artistry and professional expertise, then, is a high level of integration of knowledge and understanding with a sense of when and how to apply it and dedication to creating the best possible outcome. The term professional artistry also suggests that the professional is frequently at an advanced stage of 'unconscious competence' of the four stages of the Capability Learning Cycle (Schratz and Walker, 1995:106) where he or she is able to apply knowledge and understanding to problem solving without deliberate attention to the techniques involved. Professional expertise may be viewed as something different and additional to knowledge

and understanding. It arises from a productive interface of these elements with experience, reflection and praxis, a form of personal action research.

Schön (1987) argues that the ability to access 'reflection in action' distinguishes master professionals with professional artistry from merely competent practitioners. For Schön (1987):

The artistry is in the action. We reveal it by our spontaneous skilful execution of the performance and we are characteristically unable to make it verbally explicit (p. 25)

He is suggesting that professional artistry is tacit, unconscious and inaccessible. For Schön, professional artistry is not just the knowledge of how to do one's job. It goes further than just demonstrating expertise by doing one's job to a high standard. Professional artistry is demonstrating expertise while 'in the moment' and in conditions of uncertainty.

Maintaining professional expertise and artistry is an on-going professional responsibility. The 'unconscious competence' of professional expertise and artistry may quickly become 'unconscious incompetence' (Schratz and Walker, 1995:106) unless it is regularly refined and updated by learning. Langer (1997) argues for 'mindful learning' for professionals (p. 4) in which there is continuous creation of new categories, openness to new information, and an implicit awareness of more than one perspective.

Professional judgment

Eraut (1994) argues that alongside gaining knowledge creation capacities, professionals need to be prepared for future learning and challenges. In his view professionals need a chance to, 'escape from their experiences in the sense of challenging

traditional assumptions and acquiring new perspectives' (p. 21). He uses a typology (Broudy et al., 1964) to explain that professionals need to develop professional judgment so they are able to use their knowledge associatively and interpretatively not just to replicate and apply it. Professional judgment is a type of 'personal knowledge' that is developed by a professional over a period of time and is 'highly situated and individualistic'. (Eraut, 2000:28) It is what a person brings into new situations that enables them to think and act in those situations and tends to be tacit. It is when personal and professional knowledge i.e. facts, theories, intuitions, practice beliefs, ideals, values, schemata and mental models which are deeply ingrained in us and which we often take for granted and shape the way we see the world, are combined that professional judgment is used.

Certain features of professional knowledge originate from a particular ideology of professionalism and tend to constrain who can be a professional and what they should do as a professional. For example, the recently introduced Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) requires candidates to have achieved a grade C or above in GCSE English and Mathematics. It is arguable that the requirement of GCSE English has a rationale in the need for EYPs to communicate effectively with young children under five years of age, parents and colleagues but it is less obvious why, for example, the EYP needs to pass an examination that requires them to 'find and describe in symbols the next term or the n th term of a sequence, where the rule is quadratic' (AQA, 2007:83). The reasons given reference research that shows that higher qualifications engender higher quality settings for young children and the needs for EYPs to hold equivalent qualifications to teachers if they are to hold equivalent status (DfE and DoH, 2011; Nutbrown, 2012).

In effect, requiring such qualifications even when the requirements are not necessary to work as an EYP is a means to constrain who may gain this professional status. Rinaldi (2005) argues that this is part of a process of reshaping the area of work so it is more rational, de-feminised and cast in a traditional mould. Rinaldi (2005) acknowledges the duality of the ideology of the rational male professional underpinning audit based professionalism and the caring female non-professional linked with values based professionalism. There are tensions between them as exemplified in the current process of professionalisation (by the state) of practitioners who work with young children who are mainly women. Rinaldi warns that the process may require these new professionals to reject professional qualities associated with feminine discourses in western culture such as intuitive responses, informality and expressiveness in order to be perceived as full professionals.

By formalising and specifying the professional knowledge for a particular profession, ideological pressure and constraint is exerted on individual professionals that may be visible in the data from this research.

In summary, the concept of professional knowledge refers to the competence, artistry, expertise and judgment as well as the technically specific formal knowledge and accreditation that enable a professional to meet the expectations of clients and society.

Figure 6: Summaries of 'thinking theoretically' (Layder, 1998: 1000) at the end of stage 2.

End of stage 2 of the analysis		
Orienting concepts	Summaries (with Stage 2 revisions in bold)	Case for revision after stage 2
Professional identity	<p>Is the perception of oneself as a professional in relation to a particular type of profession or subjective self-conceptualisation in the professional role;</p> <p>Is typically shaped by an ideology of professions; Is constructed in a dialogue between, and blending of, personal and professional self involving awareness of own situated, relative and relational position;</p> <p>Is portrayed to self and others in stories and shared language.</p>	<p>There are several expressions of self-identification with the Children's Centre e.g. Viv standing at the door of the Centre</p> <p>Personal self linked to and accepted as part of professional self and developing professional identity</p>
Professional learning	<p>Is concerned with an <i>individual's</i> learning and personal capacity set in a professional work context as well as enculturation;</p> <p>Is the transfer of new knowledge and understanding into one's personal and professional practice through reflection and self-awareness and so develops professional judgment; Interacts with learners' self-awareness, priorities, perspectives and inferred meanings as well as how they see themselves;</p> <p>Develops codified and personal knowledge and the knowledge creation capacity of individuals and professional communities;</p>	<p>Taking useful professional tools from the NPQICL programme seems significant.</p> <p>The growth of self-awareness seems important to participants as both an <i>outcome</i> and a <i>process</i> in the NPQICL.</p> <p>There are several expressions of valuing the acquisition of the habit of reflection in order to cope with the demands and challenges of the role.</p>

	<p>Relates to cognitive and emotional learning;</p> <p>Prepares learners for future learning and challenges by exploring own tacit knowledge, new perspectives and world views and developing the habit of reflection.</p>	
Professional efficacy	<p>Is the general belief held by professionals in own capacities to act and shape the outcomes, nature and quality of their lives and work in order to fulfil the requirements of their professional roles to standards consistent with their constructs of professionalism, as well as being the cause of their choice to do so;</p> <p>Includes an individual's belief in own resilience;</p> <p>Is encouraged by a sense of validation of self by the learning community;</p> <p>Has a positive relationship with growth of belief and trust in others with whom they work.</p>	<p>There are several expressions of a sense of validation of self by the learning community leading to increased self-efficacy and job confidence.</p> <p>For some participants the growth in own self-efficacy is linked to a more distributed style of leadership. The growth of belief in self develops growth of trust in others and more collaborative leadership.</p>
Professional agency	<p>Is the capacity and commitment and sense of entitlement and responsibility to exercise control over and have a say about the nature and quality of one's life and work;</p> <p>Is facilitated by a sense of authenticity in role.</p>	<p>Acceptance of self in the role (increased authenticity) linked to growth of agency and empowerment to act.</p>
Professional autonomy	<p>Is the awareness of and freedom and ability to negotiate, choose, shape and narrate one's values,</p>	<p>A sense of being authentic and 'good enough' facilitates</p>

	<p>principles, meanings and approaches to practice in own professional community and context;</p> <p>Is rooted in and sustained by a habit of reflection;</p> <p>Is encouraged by bringing self into the professional role.</p>	<p>bringing own values into the professional role.</p>
<p>Newly introduced orienting concept Professional knowledge</p>	<p>Refers to the competence, artistry, expertise and judgment as well as the technically specific formal knowledge and accreditation that enable a professional to meet the expectations of clients and society.</p>	<p>As a result of strong representation of 'taking skills that are useful into work' in the data as well as evidence that participants came with expectations of acquiring skills and knowledge related to their roles, this new orienting concept has been introduced in order to explore the effects of the NPQICL on participants' professional identity</p>
<p>Constructivist conceptual cluster</p>	<p>Provisional summaries</p>	<p>Revision/relationship</p>
<p>Co-construction</p>	<p>(as a verb) Is a process of joint creation by individuals involved in learning and who are engaged in interactive, collaborative, cooperative, democratic and equitable relationships to create shared knowledge and understanding of culturally and contextually meaningful realities;</p> <p>Also involves the creation of experiences that provide learning;</p>	<p>'Learning by creating an experience between us' is expressed, i.e. participants create an experience and then can learn from it.</p>

	(as a noun) Is a shared language or thought or association created or adopted and then can be maintained or evolved by individuals.	
A story	<p>Is told as an intentional communication and is an interpretive construction through which people represent themselves and their worlds to themselves and to others;</p> <p>Is told in order to link self to the professional role and the professional self to own view of self.</p>	No further development of this orienting concept
Reification	Is a shared repertoire of representations of abstract, coded or hidden features of professional practice that help a community of practice to negotiate new meanings of their learning, ways to practice and professional identities.	No further development of this orienting concept
Subjective self-conceptualisation in role	<p>Is a process of changes that are visible in own actions that occur to a person's self-schema in relation to a particular role that they are in;</p> <p>Is also visible in the way that the participant portrays self in the role.</p>	<p>Expressions of moving from a manager to a leader.</p> <p>Comfortable being identified with and representing the Children's Centre.</p>
Learning Community	<p>Is 'a self-reflective community of practitioners – theorists committed to critically examining their own practices and improving them' (Kemmis, 1982 cited in NCSL, 2008: 8);</p> <p>Supplies cognitive, emotional</p>	<p>The learning community is the 'purest example of empathy'</p> <p>Participants came to the course feeling like an outsider with the imposter syndrome.</p>

	and social support, and offers opportunities to identify with others in the learning community.	Belonging to the learning community changed that. Participants were learning by watching others who were like them.
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CHAPTER 9: Analytical themes STAGE 3

This chapter reports on stage 3 of the analysis when 9 analytical themes (sensitised by the orienting concepts and earlier theory) are developed from the 21 descriptive themes and the data. Comments on the 9 analytical themes from further interviews with seven of the fifteen participants are also included.

The nine analytical themes that follow emerge as outcomes for participants from the NPQICL that they see as significant and influential. They are taken from the most widely and frequently mentioned descriptive themes and thus are a representation of the perspectives of participants. This process involves more than numerical representation: reviewing each occasion an analytical theme occurs 'in situ' in participants' stories enables a more detailed interpretation of its meanings. Where a potential theme is absent it is because it was:

- Not represented in the original data from participants or
- Did not emerge strongly in open coding that led to the descriptive themes or
- Was easily subsumed into an broader analytical theme

From Table 1: Descriptive themes from coding: Confidence, capacity, efficacy and agency.

These descriptive themes were

- Initial expressions of lack of job confidence
- Expressions of gain in job confidence
- Useful at work or in job role
- Expressions of lack of academic confidence
- Expressions of gain in academic confidence
- Gained general self confidence

- Making things happen. I can do it. Agency
- I now feel: what I think is OK; I am OK; I am OK to do this job

Analytical theme 1 (below) emerges from descriptive theme 3 (Useful at work or in job role) which is mentioned 80 times.

'Being empowered with professional tools': Refers to-Taking something useful from the course or from the learning community to use in the work role.

Analytical theme 2 (below) emerges from descriptive theme 7 (Making things happen. I can do it. Agency) which was mentioned 56 times and also descriptive theme 2 (Expressions of gain in job confidence) which is mentioned 39 times.

'Developing a capable identity': Refers to: The participant gaining confidence in his or her own intuitive response, contextual knowledge and future resilience.

Analytical theme 3 (below) emerges from descriptive theme 5 (Expressions of gain in academic confidence) which is mentioned 27 times.

Measuring and recognising own success: Refers to: The participant experiences credible endorsement of his or her academic standing that he or she transfers to his or her capacity to succeed in the job role and expectations of parity of esteem with professional colleagues in related fields.

From Table 2: Descriptive themes from coding: Professional learning

These descriptive themes were

Reflection identified
Significant incident leading to learning
Identification of 'light bulb moment(s)'
Growth in self-awareness
Observations on *different* pedagogy

Analytical theme 4 (below) emerges from descriptive theme 12 (Growth in self-awareness) which is mentioned 47 times and descriptive theme 6 (Gained general self-confidence) which is mentioned 22 times.

'The ceiling will not fall down' Refers to: Confidence in own resilience following risk taking and difficult experiences and engagements with others that had developed confidence that the participant could both survive and cope.

Analytical theme 5 (below) emerges from descriptive theme 12 (Growth in self-awareness) which is mentioned 47 times and descriptive theme 9 (Reflection identified) which is mentioned 20 times.

'Moving from cable to wireless connection' Refers to: Tacit knowledge becoming explicit knowledge, the participant knowing more about the influence of previous experiences on his or her work, what he or she knows, needs to know and how to find out more. Knowledge in action becoming knowledge in reflection

Analytical theme 6 (below) emerges from descriptive theme 13 (Observations on *different* pedagogy) which is mentioned 31 times.

'Learning like a grown up': Refers to: the professional learning approach of the NPQICL felt significantly different to education and training generally experienced.

From Table 3: Descriptive themes from coding: From outsider to insider

These descriptive themes are

- Feeling like an outsider at start of the course
- Feeling affirmed and validated
- Experiences of empathy & role-taking
- Value of the learning community
- I now feel: what I think is OK; I am OK; I am OK to do this job

Analytical theme 7 (below) emerges from descriptive theme 17 (Value of the learning community) which is mentioned 55 times.

'Reflecting while scaffolded by a professional learning community': Refers to: Clarifying professional goals and 'professionalism' in dialogue with fellow participants, tutors and mentors

From Table 4: Descriptive themes from coding: Role ambiguity, professional identity and interprofessional learning and working

These descriptive themes are

- Role ambiguity/uncertainty
- I now feel: what I think is OK; I am OK; I am OK to do this job
- Change in leadership approach
- Wider or more strategic view taken
- Inter-professional awareness

Analytical theme 8 (below) emerges from descriptive themes 18 (Role ambiguity/uncertainty) which is mentioned 49 times and 8

(I now feel: what I think is OK; I am OK; I am OK to do this job) which is mentioned 24 times.

'Recognising the impostor syndrome': Refers to: The participant feels their experience is validated by others. The participant's belief in his or her own self-worth and competence, understanding of his or her professional identity and the meaning of his or her job or role are restored and reinforced through a variety of activities and interactions.

Analytical theme 9 'Emerging from the cocoon' emerges from descriptive theme 19 (Change in leadership approach) which is mentioned 29 times, descriptive theme 20: (Wider or more strategic view taken) which is mentioned 10 times and descriptive theme 21 (Inter-professional awareness) which is mentioned 26 times.

'Emerging from the cocoon': Refers to: the participant sees his or her role in a wider context including an inter-professional community and develops an understanding of strategic leadership of the work of the children's centre

Analytical themes and the stories

Analytical theme 1: 'Being empowered with professional tools'
Refers to: Taking something useful from the course or from the learning community to use in the work role.

This theme features very strongly in the data. It is not surprising to find that participants say they found some of the activities and practices from the NPQICL useful because that view has been written in assignments and reported in tutorials and other conversations many times. For example, my researcher-

practitioner log records what one head teacher participant says, in passing:

I was late getting to the staff meeting today and D had started it by doing a 'Check in'. When I started this process at the beginning of the year I didn't really expect it to go down well – but now it seems to be an expected and important part of staff meetings – Does it help staff feel valued? It does appear that way! (Researcher-practitioner log notes 2007)

Similarly Sue says in her interview, the NPQICL:

gave everyone a lot of tools and people might not have seen them as tools but ways of working with people (Sue's story)

The use of the word 'tools' by participants is interesting on two counts: one is its connotations of work-related implements or objects that can be used to create change, acknowledging that the programme is for work-related and work-based professional learning; the other is the impact of the various 'toolkits' supplied by the Department of Children, Schools and Families and linked government agencies for example the Parenting Academy Commissioning Toolkit (2). Participants include specific practices and activities in their notion of 'tools':

Millie particularly liked tablecloth exercise. She had used it last week. It did not matter how many powerful people were around the table, everyone had their moment to put down 'their two pennyworth'. (Millie's story)

They also include less tangible examples that they have developed from clarification of their role, philosophy and vision for the work of their centres:

One of the tools I have acquired is I am now listening for something different. (B speaking: Researcher-practitioner notes 2008)

It is clear from the stories that participants do not envisage tools as specific elements of management such as risk assessment proformas or understanding how to construct a budget. Their perception of 'tools' is of skills that extend and support their leadership roles and professional identities. When John says:

...the course offered him a portfolio of tools with which to construct his leadership vessel! (John's story)

he seems to be suggesting more than just the benefit of taking something useful back to his work context from the course. His use of this figurative language suggests that the 'tools' that he took away enabled him to develop or 'construct' his role. He implies that the tools empowered and defined him in his leadership role. When this 'constructive empowerment' is viewed in the context of the ambiguity and uncertainty of the role of Children Centre Leader reported by participants, its usefulness takes on a further dimension, that of contributing to role clarity and professional efficacy.

Some participants say that they were initially disappointed by both the pedagogical approach and curriculum of the NPQICL:

She was used to having her learning directed by other people and the approach of the course was something new for her. It frustrated her sometimes. (Dee's story)

...as Henk entered the programme [NPQICL]

he wondered what, as he already had a business management and leadership background, he was going to gain from of it. (Henk's story)

However, the descriptive themes analysis confirms that, at the end of the NPQICL, the sample of participants found that they could take something useful from the programme. Not only is there the highest frequencies in this descriptive theme but there are no absences from the sample.

What does the sample of seven of the fifteen participants say about the gain of 'being empowered with professional tools' when they were re-interviewed?

The seven participants said this was a valid statement and all of them endorsed this theme:

Yes. For me this was unexpected. (Jackie: second interview)

Some participants give examples of specific practices they saw as tools, for example:

I have used some of the tools for example the fishbowl exercise. I have used that to try and facilitate the team around the child approach with the different partners that work through my centre. (Henk: second interview)

The professional tools would be like keeping a learning journal. (Liam: second interview)

Yes, I think I would agree with that because there were a whole range of different tools and different approaches and different ways of tackling things that were tried out and discussed during the course, which do make a difference and do help in the sort of daily life in the children's centre. It is almost like it gives you the tools to do it and try it out... (Ursel: second interview)

Others identify theory as tools:

professional tools being the theories. The critical incidents... have been very useful. (Katy: second interview)

Well I have been thinking about the iceberg [theory] with what is going on underneath with people. I use that a lot since the NPQICL... I do agree with others who say that they have taken away tools and used them ...it is not a particular tool it is the thinking behind it that I find useful. (Sue: second interview)

the different theoretical aspects of the course ...enable you to see your particular predicament more clearly such as the Kurt Lewin's force fields theory or the JoHari window. I do not know if I would call them professional tools. I suppose they are theoretical tools. (Liam: second interview)

saying that colleagues use the theories:

in their own different way to suit their own needs within their leadership. (Sue: second interview)

Others see the tools as personal developments.

Can one of the tools be confidence? (Viv: second interview)

it gives you the confidence to do it and it is also the understanding that it is actually ok to try out different things. I think that is what is so empowering about all the different things that are happening on the course, but I think that is what makes the difference to your way of working as a professional. (Ursel: second interview)

Analytical theme 2: 'Developing a capable identity':

Refers to: The participant gaining confidence in his or her own intuitive response, contextual knowledge and future resilience.

This theme features consistently in the data. Participants mention the lack of job confidence they felt before they began the NPQICL 24 times in their stories (with 2 absences) but they unanimously express their gain in job confidence, after they have completed the NPQICL, on 39 occasions with no absences:

He liked researching his practice and felt it changed his view of what he was capable of and how to deal with some long term issues. (Liam's story)

My confidence developed through my newly discovered capabilities to follow my own plan. (C speaking: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2008)

The practical application from the course led to life changes and a new identity – knowing who I am. Now I promote an 'I can do' attitude amongst them [staff]. (J speaking: Researcher-practitioner log notes)

I now ask myself why not? (Viv speaking: Researcher-practitioner log notes, 2008)

The research has helped me to move onto conscious competence where I know I am performing well. This has been a difficult process and has been helped by the incident where my deputy was able to point out empirical evidence to show I was competent and prove that my impression was flawed. (Katy writing: Researcher-practitioner log notes, 2007)

The data analysis showed that only one participant does not express any view that could be categorised in the theme 'I now feel: what I think is OK; I am OK; I am OK to do this job' in their stories. There are 24 expressions of this theme amongst the remainder of the participants.

The course had made him feel more confident about his style, his personality and his ability to do his job. He had learned he had previously depleted his own potential. (John's story)

He felt everyone came out of the course feeling a force for change. 'I think we felt we could challenge the way things were a lot more,' (Rashid's story)

One of 'the things that came up a lot was kind of resilience and not giving up on things' She had been trying for ages to get a midwife clinic and had given up after several tries. She came away from the last module thinking she was going to sort this for once and for all and she was going to keep going and now the centre has a midwife clinic! (Sally's story)

The participants are expressing an increase in their professional efficacy or belief in their capacity to do their job and their increased resilience as an outcome of the course.

What does the sample of seven of the fifteen participants say about the gain of 'Developing a capable identity' from the NPQICL when they were re-interviewed?

One participant with lengthy experience in leadership roles does not feel that this theme aligned completely with his experience:

I have got to be honest and say that I have always felt up to the job. I didn't go into the programme feeling overwhelmed by the role or anything like that, but actually it has been, it was kind of a discovery that actually there was a better way, an easier way and a way that I could cope better. (Henk: second interview)

However, the remaining 6 participants endorse this theme as an outcome of the course:

Yes. Self-awareness leads to control so that I was able to move from the script i.e. from a proscribed role to individual role. (Rashid: second interview)

I agree with this I think! I found the courage to use the knowledge I had gained and the confidence that had developed through my newly discovered capabilities to follow my own plan. (Millie: second interview)

It's like that consciously competent theory, isn't it? The same thing really - knowing that you could do it, something would come up, be thrown at you but you have the confidence you can deal with it and you will survive. (Katy: second interview)

What really makes a difference is around how I feel about myself and how I perceive myself and I think that is where the NPQICL has made the real difference about how I see myself now as a capable and competent and confident leader, Children's Centre leader. (Ursel: second interview)

I thought I was projecting an identity where you would have thought that I knew what I was doing but I didn't think I knew what I was doing. I kind of felt very vulnerable and now I am continuing to project 'I am ok I can deal with whatever is thrown at me', but I actually believe it now, so I have developed an identity that matches the thing that I was always going around pretending to be. (Viv: second interview)

Analytical theme 3: 'Measuring and recognising own success'

Refers to: The participant experiences credible endorsement of his or her capacity to succeed in the job role and expects parity of esteem with professional colleagues in related fields.

One aspect of the issue is explained by a NPQICL participant, who was new in her post:

I feel uncomfortable because I don't feel successful. I can't feel successful if I can't measure success. Can't measure success if I don't know what I am supposed to be doing. (J speaking: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2008)

Sometimes participants are referring to measuring themselves against academic qualification standards, as when Rashid says:

He was very pleased with his mark on the first assignment and that spurred him on to do better in the second. Measuring

himself against academic standards was an affirmation, a confidence-builder. (Rashid's story)

Sometimes they mean that they feel that recognising that they have been successful in completing the programme has increased their self esteem and confidence:

It gave her the confidence to feel she should be in that role and what she thought and believed in. Sometimes when you are working with other people, you start to doubt yourself. It gave her confidence in her own worth because she completed it. 'At the end of the day I've done it.' (Ann's story)

It is not always the case that academic success is the criterion used for measurement of self-worth. At other times participants say that it is the award of a *professional* qualification that increases their self-esteem in their role:

She had 'got the piece of paper that says that you are competent to do the job really.' 'If someone, or if in a meeting you know if somebody was pressurising you or putting down the role and that sort of thing, not that I would be saying, I have got the NPQICL, but yes, in that respect it sort of gives you the confidence that no, actually this role is important and I do know what I am doing with it, most of the time!' (Sally's story)

I wanted to have the security of a professional qualification that signified my capability to lead an integrated Children's Centre. (Millie writing: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2008)

An element of measuring their own success relates to comparing the status of a Children Centre Leader to other roles. As in:

My friend, P, who is a head teacher, says she wishes the NPQH had been more like this [NPQICL]. How many Master's credits does the NPQH get? (O speaking: Researcher-practitioner log notes, 2008)

Of course, other factors such as pay, conditions and especially recognition of the role of the Children Centre Leader in the community also play a significant part in the comparisons participants make. In Chapter 2 we saw that an expectation of being professional is that one's role is valued, respected and recognised by society. Lack of recognition of their role seems to be an area of sensitivity:

There was also a problem within his local authority because the course was not a valued qualification and not pushed. It did not appear in job descriptions. (Rashid's story)

There are more expressions of a gain in job confidence (39) (with no absences) compared with expressions of gains in academic confidence (27) (with two absences) suggesting that the work-related dimensions of the programme are more significant to the participants than its academic status.

In the most recent sample of participants from the programme the national standards for leadership of integrated centres (DfES, 2008) were much more explicit especially in the work-based assessment. Some participants feel that meeting those standards is an important endorsement of them and their practice:

Well it's a kind of charter mark isn't it? Everyone knows now I am up to my job – including me. (T speaking: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2009)

What does the sample of seven of the fifteen participants say about the theme 'Measuring and recognising own success' in the programme when they were re-interviewed?

Six out of the seven participants say this was a valid statement and endorsed this theme, but one says:

I can't say that that really kind of fits. I always have had enjoyed a lot of respect. (Henk: second interview)

Another response to the question, 'Was measuring and recognising own success an outcome from the NPQICL for you?' is to acknowledge the importance of its Masters' status:

Yes it was, I suppose you kind of, sometimes, you forget about it being Masters, but it makes you feel good when you do remember, so that is good, you do feel that the course is being recognised and taken seriously. (Millie: second interview)

Whilst other participants feel that having the qualification gives them similar credibility to that given other professions:

I think it definitely puts us on an equal footing, as you put it, with other professionals. I don't think there is enough understanding from other professions about the qualification and what it means but it definitely did do that I think, particularly with head teachers and colleagues who do similar roles. (Sue: second interview)

The NPQ has parity with the headship qualification the NPQH. It is easily related to that if you need to explain it to someone. Roles in the early years have suffered from a lack of respect. Now I feel I can put a relevant qualification on my applications. (Jackie: second interview)

However, one of the seven participants is much more critically reflective about this analytical theme, explaining that she has moved away from comparing her status with others - which is, in itself, potentially an outcome that demonstrates confidence.

I think that when I started on the NPQICL the thinking in hierarchies was very important to me, very much like a fundamental way of how I was thinking about people. Where are they in the hierarchy? Are they higher or lower than I am? But I

think partly through the mentoring, by journaling and self reflection and so on, I have distanced myself from that view and I am trying to think not so much around people's positions within structures but actually much more around people and what they bring to a team or what sort of work we can do together. I look at what skills they bring, rather than their positions within structure or hierarchy because I find that is actually is quite restricting. It restricts them and it restricts me so I am trying to move away from that way of thinking. (Ursel: second interview)

Analytical theme 4: 'The ceiling will not fall down'

Refers to: Confidence in own resilience following risk taking and difficult experiences and engagements with others that had developed confidence that the participant could both survive and cope.

When participants refer to experiences linked to this theme they appear to mean that they have learned to feel more secure with the outcomes of their actions when they do not choose the safe option. This sense of security is probably one of the developments that encourages participants to feel that they are good at 'Making things happen. I can do it. Agency' (Descriptive theme 7 which occurs 56 times in the stories) Elaine finds that taking risks on the programme has developed her courage:

Elaine thought that taking risks and being out of her comfort zone had extended her learning not least 'because the sky wasn't falling down'. From taking the risks came a sense of daring that she felt she had never had before perhaps because her mother was very cautious and very protective of her. Elaine felt that she had to push herself to take risks recognising that it not natural for her to be like that but also recognising that she has had to push herself to achieve things for the families using her centre. (Elaine's story)

Liam names this new found courage as resilience and he links it to better problem solving:

What the course did do was provide him with a sort of resilience to be able to operate in these awkward untested frameworks so he had the strength to be able to negotiate his way around these barriers and be creative. (Liam's story)

Jackie explains that she has become less preoccupied with being right,

There has been no change in her confidence in being the head of this children's centre but she was more comfortable with taking risks and allowing herself to be wrong. This shift had been derived from 'the ability to 'trust the process', and not to be focussed on the outcome or target of a task'. (Jackie's story)

Three participants (Liam, Ann and Millie) do not identify specific incidences during the programme that were challenging but led to new learning. However Liam is clear that the programme has developed his resilience and Millie identified 2 occasions that she calls a 'light bulb moment'. Ann says she was not enthusiastic about the programme before it began:

...she did not feel it was something she 'wouldn't want to do'. Her approach was the best strategy was 'getting it over and done with....' (Ann's story)

and remained more detached from it than other participants:

Ann found the first two residential days 'quite intense' because there were people getting upset and angry and rushing out. She was a bit bemused and began to feel,

Maybe I should be feeling like this, maybe I'm not giving enough.' 'Am I'm not taking it seriously?' 'Maybe I'm not being

reflective, maybe I'm not being as honest and open with the group. (Ann's story)

What does the sample of seven of the fifteen participants say about the theme 'The ceiling will not fall down' in the programme when they were re-interviewed?

Ursel does not think that just getting through a difficult or intense experience ensures that understanding is gained:

I don't know, just surviving from my point of view does not necessarily indicate that you have actually learnt an awful lot. No, I can't get on with that one. (Ursel: second interview)

Other participants think they have become less risk averse because they have begun to believe dissonance can bring learning:

Yes I did learn about the benefits of living with discomfort and this has changed me. I accept discomfort and risk because I know I will learn from it. I have a clearer focus now. (Jackie: second interview)

and can see the same pattern away from the course:

Moving into a newly created job role and coping creates resilience and efficacy. (Jackie: second interview)

Other participants link the change to being more courageous to developing outcomes for their colleagues in their roles as children centre leader:

I saw for example, one of the children centre managers who had been feeling very subjected to the will of her school as a lead agent who were directing everything in an educational direction and during the course of this programme, she did an about turn and by the end of the programme she was actually guiding them

and she had become quite strong in standing out for what the children's centre had to deliver. (Henk: second interview)

I think it does, I mean it is quite well known isn't it that challenge makes you stronger. I helped her [another participant] to look at the fact that actually she might have felt that they were not right, she might have felt wronged by them, but what learning she got out of it... (Katy: second interview)

Not all difficulties lead to resolution though. Sue feels glad to have been challenged having gained confidence in the sense of her capacity but feels she has been:

left with questions that I will never have answered...I feel that it has left me dangling kind of thing with my own learning about myself ... that has been particularly difficult for me. (Sue: second interview)

Liam links this experience to some of the theory from the programme as well as the approach to learning:

The course itself does enable participants to reflect on cognitive dissonance or disequilibrium (Liam: second interview)

Analytical theme 5: 'Moving between wireless and cable connection'

Refers to: Tacit knowledge becoming explicit knowledge, the participant knowing more about the impact of previous experiences on his or her work, what he or she knows, needs to know and how to find out more. Knowledge in action becoming knowledge in reflection.

The data derived from the participants' stories related to this theme describes how they become more aware of what they know and how they use that knowledge in professional practice situations. This underpins their sense that they are qualified and

appropriate to lead the children centre. The criteria that they use to make this judgment are likely to be derived from publicly shaped expectations of being a professional. Some of this greater awareness of what they know comes from interactions with other participants. Reflection has led to awareness of why they have been successful in becoming leaders:

He realised that reflexivity or constantly being aware of how he was practising and how he was leading was the key to his development moving between wireless and cable connection. It was that agency that was invaluable and still was. (Liam's story)

Both my mentor and I have recognised that I have grown in confidence over the last six months, which I put down to participating in the course alongside work, and notably the act of journaling, reflecting and relating my experiences to theory. (A speaking, researcher-practitioner log 2007)

Katy had fought for her family's rights, been to tribunals, met with council officers, educational psychologists and welfare officers and in the process learned all sorts of useful skills as well as recognising some skills and strengths in herself. (Katy's story)

The leadership learning journey activity [on the NPQICL] enabled him to think about his leadership antecedents. (Liam's story)

My husband has started teasing me saying 'There you go again - thinking about thinking and questioning the question.' (G speaking: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2008)

From the self awareness comes growth in confidence:

He had been trying to find 'some kind of validation' for the things he thought were important and it enabled that to happen. (John's story)

...her experience on the NPQICL developed a 'huge growth in confidence to trust myself.' (Elaine's story)

Self-awareness leads to control. I was able to move from the script i.e. from a prescribed role to an individual role. I found the courage to use the knowledge I had gained. (C speaking) Researcher-practitioner log notes 2008)

It gave her the confidence to feel she should be in that role and what she thought and believed in. (Ann's story)

I know more about what I know, I know more about what I need to know and I know how to find out more. (T speaking: researcher-practitioner log 2007)

Participants go further in explaining how they develop their knowledge between a wireless and a cable connection. They are aware that not only do they know more about what they know but they have also gained views that are authentic and their own:

The support and co-construction helped me to develop my own thinking. (G speaking: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2007)

Understanding why she works in children centre and why she leads as she does, gives Katy a powerful sense of authenticity in her role:

The development of the [CC] team and their progress has to some extent been due to the progress that I have made in understanding my leadership behaviour. ...I realised this was important when on the final Research Day the tutor looked at my data and helped me draw out some connections. This moment was quite overwhelming. Feelings and situations I had had to deal with in the past, that I thought I had put away in the cupboard were still underlying. They were still affecting me and I realised that in order to move forward I needed to understand

these feelings, bring them out in the open and deal with them. Having written my learning journey I woke up the next morning with tears rolling down my cheeks. It was the first time that I had consciously associated my background with what I am doing now. I suddenly understand my motivation for my work. (Katy writing: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2007)

In a similar way Jackie begins to recognise the worth of her previously hidden knowledge and she also realises that she needs to move from her post as Children's Centre leader:

In a way the course had had a negative impact on Jackie's link with the lead agency because she now knew how she was NOT happy to be treated. She knew how she treated her staff team and would have liked to have been treated the same way. The course left her in a frustrated state (Jackie's story)

What does the sample of seven of the fifteen participants say about the theme 'Moving between wireless and cable connection' in the programme when they are re-interviewed?

This theme resonates with 6 out of 7 participants. Jackie has a different view to other participants because she sees this process not as self-knowledge but about being more aware of hidden dynamics in meetings:

This did not apply to me but it did help me figure out partners. I started to ask myself 'what's going on there?' It had a big impact on my work with the Health Visiting team. I was able to move to a place where all the animosity has been removed and we work together really effectively. (Jackie: second interview)

Ursel feels that this is an important process:

Yes. That really sounds just right for me. Because one of the things that I took away from the NPQICL was trusting yourself

to know and trusting yourself to be able to do things and be able to find the answer with this sort of knowledge and action.. actually you have the knowledge just you have to find it, it is just there, it is just not explicit, but once you hit a problem and you sit down and you start thinking about it, you actually have this reservoir of understanding, of skills and knowledge that is in you and that through the self reflection you can make that explicit and then actually start using it. (Ursel second interview)

Another participant, H, uses the JoHari window model (Luft and Ingham, 1955) and the capability continuum (Schratz and Walker, 1995) to explain how she has become more self-aware of the personal resources she uses in her decision making as a children centre leader. However Henk sees strength in being:

more explicit about one's own knowledge as a guard against complacency: I think that that does actually fit in with what I was saying about my understanding of leadership. I thought that I knew and so I had, in a way, become a bit complacent I suppose and had not thought to further sort of evaluate and it was actually only during this process that I realised that actually even when you think you know something, it really is helpful every now and then to be able to step back and with others actually, to evaluate that and to see whether there is any additional insight or a different perspective and so yes, that has been immensely helpful. (Henk: second interview)

Analytical theme 6: 'Learning like a grown up':

Refers to: the professional learning approach of the NPQICL felt significantly different to education and training generally experienced.

Observations that indicate that participants thought the pedagogy of the NPQICL is different occur 31 times in their stories. Only Ursel does not comment on it directly although later

on in her second interview she does describe the NPQICL approach as 'special'.

I think one of the key things around that is [the approach of] listening to you and engaging with your thoughts. It is about having your thoughts and comments validated by other people saying 'yes that is essentially interesting' and then starting to work with it. I think that is where all the discussion and dialogue and so on comes in and I think that makes the NPQICL in many ways quite special, because there is always the time to discuss and share with other what you are thinking and then pick that apart as well.the concept and the ethos of the NPQICL was so much around exploring what people bring and working with that, I think that is the key bit that helps you to develop trust in yourself and in your own ability.(Ursel: second interview)

As already noted several participants say they felt initially disappointed or frustrated that the learning and teaching approach of the programme was not more formal with lectures and note-taking as substantial aspects of it:

I know it is a Masters level course, but once in a blue moon I think we were crying out for someone to just tell us something. (Sally's story)

Many participants seem to expect a style of teaching and learning reminiscent of a nostalgic film set in a University:

Do you wear one of those gowns to teach in when you are back at the university? (T speaking: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2007)

Most participants grow to recognise that the benefits from the approach used in the programme:

Eventually she realised that she could gain a lot from the course. She was used to having her learning directed by other people and the approach of the course was something new for her. It frustrated her sometimes. (Dee's story)

Understanding that there is theory underpinning the approach is aided by course materials and plenary themes that identify and explain the concept of 'andragogy' (Knowles, 1984¹). John explains his experiences of the 'different' style eloquently:

Another key moment was where his smaller group in the cohort had a particular reaction to one particular tutor's style of delivery when they had suddenly realised they were not being taught but being 'asked to learn'. They had challenged it at first but it had made the whole experience so much better - not passive.He felt very much treated like a grown-up, that actually his knowledge and experience was as important to the course and to everybody else, as the written materials were, and the tutors' knowledge and experiences were. The culture of the course meant he felt he had permission to challenge the tutors, colleagues and himself. It was a 'very respectful way of learning', different from sitting in a room and someone telling you things that you may or may not already know. (John's story)

Some participants like the approach so much that they resent any perceived changes,

....when we got to the second module I felt it seemed more dictated to us. It was as if we were on a more usual course where it was done to us and not with us and it lead to a feeling of dissatisfaction and lack of empowerment during that second module week. (B speaking: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2008)

What does the sample of seven of the fifteen participants say about the theme 'Learning like a grown up' in the programme when they were re-interviewed?

Despite making positive statements about the gains from the course two participants are clear that the approach does not suit them best:

*I felt the opposite of this. I prefer the traditional pedagogy.
(Jackie: second interview)*

This is it, I like to hear the theory and I like to see the examples and the case studies because then it tells me that, you know, I understand and I can, I suppose everyone has different learning styles but for me, that works for me. (Henk: second interview)

Another participant values the andragogical approach but thinks that the claim that the programme is co-constructed as part of it was false:

*I think the co-constructive element is a red herring. The course was not co-constructed. It was constructed by the Pen Green and the NCSL. The learning community and tutors should enable a sense of co-constructive collaboration as far as possible.
(Liam: second interview)*

The remaining four participants make positive statements about their experience of an andragogical approach to learning, for example:

I never ever felt that anybody was telling me what to do. I always felt that I was supported but actually it was about my learning not about their teaching. (Katy second interview)

The whole course clicked with me then in the second module and I felt that the uncertainty of where we were going in the first module...I didn't know where we were going, it was like

fumbling around in the dark and when we got to the second module it all came into place and then I could understand why we had done all the things I mean the order that we had done them in..... (Sue: second interview)

Analytical theme 7: 'Reflecting while scaffolded by a professional learning community'

Refers to: Clarifying professional goals and 'professionalism' in dialogue with fellow participants, tutors and mentors.

The value of the learning community is mentioned 55 times amongst the 15 participants' stories. Participants value it as a safe, supportive context in which to reflect:

What did work for him was the ability to learn with, and in and through a supportive and contained learning community that was professionally facilitated by knowledgeable and respected deliverers of the programme. (Liam's story)

Working in a learning community was very important because it was supportive and it gave you a safe environment to look at tricky issues. (Viv's story)

Not everyone had entered the course enthusing about the idea of belonging to a learning community:

Sue thought the very thing that she was really afraid of (the learning community) was where she learnt the most. (Sue's story)

All participants feel that being amongst people who understand the challenges being faced is really positive for their learning and their practice:

Being involved in a community of people in similar situations with similar work histories to him was really powerful.....There was something intrinsically reassuring about being with people

who were in the same situation as him – ‘the purest example of empathy’. Even now when he speaks with members of the group about work challenges and they say, ‘I know’, they really do know (John’s story)

She got to know people better and felt building ‘trusting relationships in the learning community’ was really good.

Sally thought that definitely the learning community and learning from each other was a real benefit of the course and she is still in touch with her learning group and she felt knew more people. The impact had been that she had got ideas from other people that she could put into practice herself. It had been good to tease out issues in a group of people that understand and were in a similar place to where she was in terms of her professional work. (Sally’s story)

Some participants explain how being in a learning community helped them learn. Sometimes it was vicariously:

Other people’s experience is the most powerful learning experience. (B speaking, Researcher-practitioner log notes 2008)

Sometimes the learning from being in the learning community is observational in nature:

What really worked for her was working in the groups and the reflections she had on the group dynamics. She applied that learning to partnership working at the centre and interacting with her line manager. She noticed such a big shift in terms of her work role. She was aware of transactional analysis and how people influence and impact on other people. That was one of the most powerful things of the course. (Dee’s story)

Sue felt that:

...we were creating an experience between us where we were learning by watching others'. She watched how others reacted and noted her thoughts and feelings about that. In the process she learned a lot about why she had become the leader that she was today and why everyone had different behaviours. Sue found it 'a real big eye opener'. (Sue's story)

Some participants report that they are using the model of a learning community in their centres.

The empowerment and engagement with her team had brought them together as the team so they were working together living the idea of being a learning community. People felt valued and so it meant that they were able to achieve more..... However, she recognised that she had not seen the Children's Centre as a learning community before the NPQICL (Katy's story)

What does the sample of seven of the fifteen participants say about the theme 'Reflecting while scaffolded by a professional learning community' in the programme when they were re-interviewed?

It is rather surprising that none of the 7 participants who are re-interviewed endorse this theme wholeheartedly. The most clearly positive comment is:

I did not like working in large groups – they don't suit me but I did get a lot from reflecting individually, then talking to another participant and refining my thinking and then applying what I learned here in the centre. I particularly valued the critical incident analysis. I still work on these 1-2-1 type conversations with another NPQICL participant when I feel frustrated or at a loss. (Jackie second interview)

While there is a unanimously positive reaction to the experience of being and learning in a learning community, it was the nature of what it offers that seems to be the issue. The following statement is typical of a view that 'a problem shared is a problem halved':

Yes, definitely. Because that reflecting on things yourself by yourself, you are on your own all the time and it is not as useful as that shared talking it over with other people that we did. (Viv second interview)

However participants find it harder to recognise that they have supported each other's learning:

Erm. 'Scaffolded by a professional learning community'? It helped, but I am not quite sure exactly what people are trying to say with that. (Ursel: second interview)

I think that is true. If you are in a room with like minded people and you are able to interact with them over particular issues you do have more of a sense of belonging to a professional group. (Liam: second interview)

I understand what you are saying. I have got to say that for me personally, that wasn't such a much of a gain, I have got to be honest that I felt professional before... (Henk: second interview)

When participants hear the question about this theme and what it means there seems to be two reactions: firstly the words 'professional' and 'professionalism' dominate the way participants hear it; secondly participants can recognise the emotional support, validation and affirmation that the learning community gave them and they can recognise that members of the learning community helped them solve problems in the workplace but they do not recognise that they have supported each other's thinking or reflecting. This is all the more surprising because 2 of

the 7 participants, who are re-interviewed, happen to be members of the group who have created the statement:

Individuals have light bulb moments, but a team can create a chandelier moment. (Critical incident 4)

Only Rashid seems aware of co-construction by the learning community:

*We [the learning community] identified the continual renegotiation of the answer to the question 'Who are **we**?' (Rashid: second interview)*

Analytical theme 8: 'Recognising the impostor syndrome':

Refers to: The participant feels their experience is validated by others. The participant's belief in his or her own self-worth and competence, understanding of his or her professional identity and the meaning of his or her job or role are restored and reinforced through a variety of activities and interactions.

There are 49 expressions (with no absences) of feelings of role ambiguity and uncertainty at the beginning of the NPQICL in the participants' stories. Alongside uncertainty about their roles as children centre leaders, participants also held beliefs that they were unworthy of being in their roles or doing the NPQICL. This is seen in widespread feelings of being an outsider (20 expressions) and lacking confidence in their jobs or academic ability (60 expressions in total). As tutor-facilitators we offer participants a short input on the imposter phenomenon theory (Clance and O'Toole, 1987) early on the NPQICL. They identify with this straight away:

The imposter syndrome captured exactly how I felt. It was one of the first things that made me think this course is right for me. As time went on I recognised myself as an incremental learner

and so my self-perception changed. (J speaking: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2007)

On arrival on the NPQ. Am I up to this job? I was good at my last job – I feel so out of my depth now. (R writing: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2007)

There have been times when I questioned my own right to be a Children's Centre Manager, which has led to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. Had I been appointed by mistake? (Millie writing: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2008)

Kay thought she 'had the impostor syndrome' for about half the course, feeling she should not be there and she was different. (Kay's story)

her own fear of dropping her guard was linked to the 'impostor syndrome' of believing she was not good enough to do her job well or to be undertaking the NPQICL Masters level programme. Early on in the programme Elaine realised that most of the other NPQICL participants felt the same way. (Elaine's story)

A related perception is that participants felt like outsiders at the onset of the course (20 expressions) but change their view as they feel accepted by the learning community:

You see before I came on the NPQ I wasn't anchored by a professional background – I suppose I was adrift. (O writing: researcher-practitioner log 2007)

I've moved from being outside looking in to inside looking out. (J speaking: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2008)

When he talked about his NPQICL cohort he often said 'we' showing how much he identified with them. (Rashid's story)

The issue of the role ambiguity and uncertainty experienced by participants has many causes and symptoms, including a time

lag between the creation of the National Standards for Leadership of Integrated Centres (DfES, 2008) which became embedded in the course and their relevance to the kind of centres most recently opened. Rashid explains:

The problem was with Phase 3 Centres, and even more diverse job roles, some people would never be able to meet the national standards because their roles would not allow it. At the most recent national meeting, the head teacher sitting next to him had left after the first session because she was not getting anything out of it. (Rashid's story)

It is difficult to define a CC [children's centre] so it is difficult to define a CC leader. (Sally writing: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2008)

In this children's workforce the different titles that people have got were very confusing,

Even for the children's centre manager, leader, co-coordinator, head of centre, programme manager, you know, which are pretty much all the same thing but could be perceived as different.' (Sally's story)

The role still seemed to be very contested by different groups and agencies throughout the country. (Liam's story)

As participants gain confidence they feel able to be more authentic in their work roles:

My home person and my work person are becoming closer. (F writing: researcher-practitioner log 2008)

It enabled him to focus on a type of ontological leadership that was at the core of his vision for leadership now. It relied on the sense of being yourself, having an awareness of how you are as

a human being so that you can understand how you practice as a leader. (Liam's story)

What does the sample of seven of the fifteen participants say about the theme 'Recognising the impostor syndrome' in the programme when they were re-interviewed?

Even Henk, who is a participant who does not say he felt like an outsider in his job, affirms that this applies to his experience:

It is difficult to give examples but what is coming to mind is I can recall that almost daily throughout the programme when you had to talk about your own situation whether it was your own learning journey or whatever it was, I felt that people actually listened to my input and reaffirmed or affirmed at least what I was already thinking and saying and it did actually make me feel quite sort of positive and confident. (Henk: second interview)

Two participants explain how they saw the change in their sense of being validated in their role:

The way this worked for me was I felt I had no professional heritage so as a result I would spend time being defensive about that in applications etc. On the NPQ I learned to value what I had done. However the NPQ also played a part in helping me realise that this job is not for me. I want more. I want to make more impact. I feel I have more to give than I am able to in this role. I do believe that the qualification is a stamp of approval for my skills and allows me to be 'on level' with the head teachers and education colleagues who know of the NCSL courses. I believe it will bring validation to our unique skills and experiences. (Jackie: second interview)

It is like that saying about the glass being half full and not half empty. It was definitely seeing my glass, me, that way and

thinking I was the right person with the right stuff. So that was through the N pickle actually. (Viv: second interview)

Ursel agrees with this theme and explains that her own experience has shaped her approach to her work:

I wouldn't describe myself as a person very low in confidence and self esteem beforehand but my confidence certainly increased, that is where the NPQICL has been very important for me, but I think also the experiences of having my own views validated and my own self worth enforced have also made me actually work differently with other people. I want my team to experience this sort of validation of where they are coming from, what their experiences and their views are. If they have the same experience as I have, they can develop and I am hoping that they will then pass it on to the families that they are working with. (Ursel: second interview)

Analytical theme 9: 'Emerging from the cocoon'

Refers to: the participant sees his or her role in a wider context including an interprofessional community and develops an understanding of strategic leadership of the work of the children's centre

Each of the participants in the study expresses awareness of a change or changes in their leadership approach (29 statements are recorded in the participants' stories). 7 participants do not indicate a move to a wider or more strategic view and only 10 incidences are found in the data. There are 26 occurrences of expressions of interprofessional awareness but 3 participants make no mention of this at all. Development of leadership and interprofessional working are part of the rationale for the programme so frequent occurrences of related themes would be expected. Dee expresses the descriptive theme of 'a wider or

more strategic view taken' in terms of moving out of her comfort or safety zone:

She had seen herself in a little cocoon of her children's centre and her area but now she saw her role as much wider. She did things at county level because she thought children centre managers needed to feedback every perspective about their children's centres. Her role was more strategic now. (Dee's story)

She had had a very closed view of her centre and the course led her to look at things more strategically and beyond her centre. (Kay's story)

Jackie adds more detail about the wider view she now takes:

The biggest gain I made was the move from manager to leader and into a more strategic role. The NPQ gave me permission to be a leader.' It changed her view. She engaged much more with what she called the big thinking work based in theory and developed by reflectiveness. (Jackie's story)

What does the sample of seven of the fifteen participants say about the theme 'Emerging from the cocoon' in the programme when they were re-interviewed?

Henk explains that not only is he more aware of needing to develop a more outward facing approach but he is now more inclusive in his leadership approach:

...yes I did understand that we needed to do sort of self evaluation and we needed to show that we reached targets etc but the fact that I even at any point could have believed that I could have just simply put together a self evaluation myself, showed you how flawed my thinking was, whereas during the actual NPQ, it dawned on me what actually was being asked of me. It dawned on me that actually I needed to show what the

collective partnership was doing across the whole of the community... (Henk: second interview)

Katy sees the wider view differently:

...it has made me want to actually focus much more on the child, child development and actually understanding their learning and that probably came from the NPQICL, it actually gave me a wider view of the role of Children's Centre leader. (Katy: second interview)

Liam explains why he thinks participants achieve a wider view through the course:

The learning communities are actually set up from different people, different leaders, different settings, and different areas across the regional and you do get a broader perspective. (Liam: second interview)

However, 4 participants who are re-interviewed point out that although the learning community is composed of people from a wide range of professional heritages everyone on the NPQICL is doing a version of the same job, that is, as a Children's Centre leader. Ursel explains:

people do not necessarily think about the other people on the NPQICL as being from different professions, they all see themselves as being in the profession of children's centre managers. So I think we all learnt a lot by talking to people who are now children's centre managers but who came from social care, health or wherever, but I don't think we saw each other as different professionals. (Ursel's story)

This is surprising because it suggests that the NPQICL participants notice what they are motivated to notice about other participants, i.e. the similarities to themselves rather than the

differences. It runs counter to the view expressed by Rinaldi (2006:15) of looking for otherness and welcoming the 'Other'. In these circumstances participants are sensitised to look for likenesses in the roles and identities of other Children's Centre leaders.

Minority and counterintuitive themes

Amongst the aspects of the research that have been unexpected are a number of minority and counterintuitive themes. They are of two types: either they are significant themes that are found in the data related to a single participant or a minority of participants, *or* themes that are not present when a literature review or other studies suggest they should be.

Creating new knowledge

There was little or no mention of one of the themes identified in an early version of the literature review i.e. empowerment from creation of new knowledge for the professional domain. Ursel's view, like the other interviewees, is that creating new knowledge for your professional area is not something that a participant would expect to do on a professional learning course:

I think when people embark on the course I think they are seeking knowledge, they are not necessarily going there to create knowledge. I think people are creating new knowledge through their research while they are on the course – but this is not why they come or what they are expecting, hence they may not mention it. (Ursel: second interview)

However Sue remembers her sense of empowerment when she was a member of the group that created the 'chandelier moment thought':

Well, I do agree with that because I was part of the task group that came up with the 'individuals have light bulb moments but a team can have a chandelier moment' idea and I am very proud of that. I don't think that I had ever thought that I even would go to university let alone be part of something that would come up a new idea or a new concept so yes I did think it was very empowering. (Sue: second interview)

These two views are representative of the views of the other 5 participants who are also re-interviewed. Participants say they are pleased with and proud of their research especially when it is useful in their workplace:

Doing my research project definitely helped me get promotion. (Katy: second interview)

the knowledge that we gain from the course wasn't conveyed directly to us but it was something that we held collectively within the learning community and created between us. It just had to be surfaced and recognised. That was exciting. (Liam's story)

However, they do not see themselves as creating new knowledge for the field of children centre leadership. It is not their expectation to do so, perhaps because they bring a traditional didactic view of learning with them: that the teacher holds the knowledge and gives it to the learner rather than one in which learners and teachers create knowledge together. In addition, participants do not see their research or ideas as contributing towards a professional discourse or domain for children's centre leaders.

Their views seem to be that any new understanding and knowledge gained from their assignments and discussions are mainly for them and in relation to their practice and that they

expect to gain (but not create) the understanding and knowledge required to be a Children's Centre leader from the NPQICL. Their views appear to contradict an important thesis emerging from this study i.e. that the NPQICL was used as an opportunity to co-create an identity for the newly created role of a Children's Centre leader. Despite researching both leadership and also interprofessional working in their Children's Centre as part of the NPQICL participants still expected to acquire existing, pre-specified understanding and knowledge. These expectations may be derived in part from prior experiences of didactic learning and teaching. They may be rooted in the prevailing sense of 'unworthiness' expressed in participants' espousal of the imposter phenomenon (Clance and Imes, 1978; Clance and O'Toole, 1987). Underpinning both of these expectations will be the publicly shaped discourse of 'profession' and 'professional' outlined in Chapter 2, in which access to existing, sometimes closely guarded, understanding and knowledge is a way that entry into a profession remains exclusive by defining who is and who is not to be a professional.

Shared reifications or representations

A second theme that is surprising is revealed in both the stories and critical incidents. It is a process of collaboration of participants and tutor-facilitators to make explicit, identify, share and name learning experiences on the NPQICL as group reifications or representations of metacognition. The representations appear to be held and used as a shared repertoire of understanding that becomes part of their professional identities as 'Children's Centre leaders with the NPQICL'. This appears in Millie's 'throw away' statement:

*You know when you meet a group of previous N-picklers - we all come out with the same phrases. Yes, we have been N pickled.
(Millie's story)*

Three of the critical incidents, 'professional community'; 'chandelier moments' and 'strategic non-compliance' that are identified from my researcher-practitioner log, are about the process of creating a new way to identify and talk about shared meaning. They emerge from dissonance and challenges experienced within the programme and in their work. However, not all of the metacognitive representations are created from scratch by participants and tutor-facilitators. Some other instances of shared meaning are derived from the course materials. They exist in the course materials but are 'adopted' as imbued with shared meaning by the participants and tutor-facilitators. Rashid explains how it appears to him when he recognises his experiences in the course materials. During the course he responded to the theory which gave him confidence from:

being able to reason why I feel the way I do. It was a vocabulary from the theory that 'allows you to make changes, because it gives you cause and effect. That's what is quite empowering about theory. (Rashid's story)

Sally explains how she sees the application of some of the course materials in her own learning experience on the NPQICL. She:

felt finally, yes this is all really coming together. The tutors and mentors had kept saying 'trust in the process' and earlier on she had thought 'where is this going?' (Sally's story)

There is some evidence of representing and storying their experiences by the participants:

*I'm looking for what I can be and become from the NPQICL.
Leader – vision? Facilitator – engaging others? Animateur – on a
journey? (F writing: Researcher-practitioner log notes 2008)*

His advice was

*plunge down into the learning environment - immersing self –
giving up control – letting go – trusting the trainers etc and the
process' and be ready to help others up out of it so they take
with them what they have learned. It was like diving – if you
come up too quickly, you get the bends. (John's story)*

John explains that he now feels he is communicating differently:

*he had had to learn a new way of communicating, not his usual
one of writing in prose - in stories and pictures. The 'co-
construction element of the course was very, very powerful'.
(John's story)*

Another participant connects the use of imagery and figurative
language to:

*a need to find a way to say stuff when there is no off the shelf
'speak' for us to use as Children's Centre leaders. I tend to think
up things like that when I am journaling... (R speaking:
Researcher-practitioner log notes 2008)*

Sally recognises that there is still a need for 'naming' to happen
outside the group of NPQICL participants:

She did not think she had,

*come to a nice kind of pat answer [about what a children's
centre is], you know, a little paragraph that I can say because
how you explain things to people depends on the person as well,
on their prior knowledge, their level of understanding, but you
know there is definitely a need (Sally's story)*

What is interesting about these two 'minority and counter-intuitive themes' is that while it seems that participants do not usually enter the programme with expectations of creating new knowledge for the children's centre sector and while, as Liam says, the notion of participants co-constructing the curriculum is 'a red herring' as it was [already] constructed by the Pen Green and the NCSL (Liam: second interview), participants seem to be driven to adopt or create representations of shared meaning and metacognition in the context of learning alongside fellow Children's Centre leaders in a learning community. Belonging to an identifiable group appears to be an expectation held by participants. There is a high conversion rate from curriculum experiences into 'tools' that are useful in the workplace found in the data. It is an aspect of the same drive to acquire an identity and knowledge that are less ambiguous and more easily visible and communicated. Rashid's awareness that, when he used the word 'we' in a job context he meant his NPQICL learning community, is an example of how the participants saw the learning community and its shared representations of meaning as a reference group that defined their identities.

The NPQICL was offered in the context of powerful publicly shaped views of the identity of a profession and a professional. As such the publicly shaped view of professionalism outlined in Chapter 2 interacted with participants' expectations of themselves in the role of Children's Centre leader. However, they are not passive recipients who are enculturated into this a particular view. At the level of the NPQICL course, individual actions count. The data show that the opportunity to learn through an active and experiential approach and in a learning community develops their personal confidence and professional efficacy, agency and autonomy. Together, and as individuals,

they narrate an identity for Children's Centre leaders that works for them as a group and as individuals. The participants draw on their personal experiences of learning, concepts and theories from the course, co-constructions developed in the learning community that become reifications of their professionalism and their internalisations of publicly shaped views of being a professional. They blend personal and professional selves in narrations of practice in an *autobiography of their professional identity*.

Conclusion

The 21 descriptive themes have been developed and regrouped into 9 analytical themes that have been endorsed, questioned and modified in follow-up interviews with 7 of the original participants in the research. Data in the stories have been used to corroborate the themes or add detail to or modify understanding of them. At this point the analysis suggests that participants:

- increase their confidence in their role and resilience as a potential outcome of professional learning that acknowledges what they bring with them and encourages them to take charge of their own learning;
- close the gap between their personal selves and professional selves;
- define their identities through the 'tools' they take back from their programme but do not recognise themselves as creating new understanding and knowledge for Children's Centre leaders;
- narrate or story their professional identities through having conversations occurring between participants as members of a learning community;

- co-construct a series of reifications that represent their professionalism as in the excerpt that follows;
- develop an *autobiography of professional identity*

Interviewer: Yes, I haven't asked anyone else this question but it is just interesting for me as I am coming to the end of the interviews to ask this question. Are things you have described like the iceberg theory, the light bulb moment, letting the tentative be tentative, something from the NPQICL? Is there something about the NPQICL that sometimes gives people a language to talk with? I am interested whether you thought that some of the learning was that of a certain language that came into being through the course?

Sue: I do use 'dialogue' quite a bit and I have noticed other Children's Centre managers who have done the NPQICL using NPQ language too. I don't think I have been aware of myself doing it but I am sure that that is the case and I think, certainly when I have been talking to head teachers, I think that they recognised language that I have used. I feel that I have had a different relationship with the heads since I have done NPQ than I did before.

Interviewer: In what way?

Sue: I don't know. I don't know if it is a respect for the course, or for the level of the course or because of different behaviour or language that we use. I don't know.

The next chapter considers the 9 themes and minority themes in relation to related to the orienting concepts and the conceptual cluster looking for at least one of Walsham's (1995) four types of potential generalisations: 'the development of concepts, the generation of theory, the drawing of specific implications, and the contribution of rich insight' (p. 74-81).

CHAPTER 10: Developing conclusions from themes and concepts

In this chapter the analytical themes emerging from the stories are discussed in relation to orienting concepts and the conceptual cluster in an Adaptive Theory approach. The aim is to use the participants' stories to construct an inductive-deductive weave of theory and data and so draw conclusions in response to the aims of the study which are to explore the developing professional identities of NPQICL participants from their own perspectives by asking how their professional identities are developing and how their developing professional identities might be better supported than at present.

Section 1: Professional learning and learning like a grown up

One of the themes that emerge from the data is that for many participants, the learning experience of the NPQICL feels different to education that they have previously experienced. John describes his experience as learning 'like a grown-up' and these words have also been used by other participants so they are used to identify the theme. The espoused 'philosophy' of the NPQICL is one of adult learning (andragogy) defined in its programme materials as: 'professional practice relating to the learning and development of adults' (NCSL, 2007:6). However the meaning that John and others attribute to the phrase 'like a grown-up' needs to be explored in order to identify their perspectives on a feature they think was distinctive in their learning.

Participants characterise their perceptions of this difference as a shift of power from the tutor-facilitator to them as learners and

sometimes identify a tendency for their learning to be perceived as more important than the prescribed objectives of the programme. Other differences that they identify are a sense that firstly the experience they brought with them to the NPQICL is valued and secondly of mutual responsibility for learning.

Although several participants describe their initial unease at the interactive, participative approach to learning of the programme, most became enthusiastic about it later. However, three of the fifteen participants retain an ambivalent attitude to the approach throughout and after the programme. While these three participants feel they learned a great deal or could see how the approach to learning would suit colleagues in their centres, they feel that a more formal approach suits their own needs best.

Although the programme process and content is tightly prescribed, it is common for participants to report that they *feel* that they are collaborating in leading the learning and shaping the content of the programme, even if they are not sure (in the case of three participants mentioned earlier) that it suits them best. An explanation of this disjuncture is found in the participants' stories. Although some participants recount an initial reaction of surprise and discomfort about the content and approach of the NPQICL because of a preference for and familiarity with more didactic pedagogies, they go on to describe their learning as powerful and, crucially, owned by them and their responsibility. For example, Dee describes how her initial reaction changed from expecting to be taught, to expecting to be an active agent in her own learning:

She was used to having her learning directed by other people and the approach of the course was something new for her. It frustrated her sometimes. She got frustrated with the sessions and did not participate with some of the group activities and

things because she wanted to be taught but she had since changed her opinion and realised that she was not a passive learner. (Dee's story)

Participants recognise that their learning is their responsibility. For example, Rashid tells how he realised that:

you could take control of your own destiny—that's what this was about. And I was probably hooked from that point on really. (Rashid's story)

He goes on to explain that he feels in charge of his response to learning opportunities:

Even the tasks I hated were great [laughs], because by that second week I had the confidence to think, 'I really don't like this I'm not going to invest much of myself into it. I won't scupper it but I can make that decision for myself—I feel grown up enough about this,.... So that felt quite good. (Rashid's story)

Elaine explains how through reflection she has learned that she is responsible for her own learning:

The opportunity to reflect aloud on the learning from the programme enabled Elaine to acknowledge that for the first time in her life nobody was telling her what to do. There was no more experienced 'expert' leading her. (Elaine's story)

The characteristic that these participants are identifying as 'like a grown up' is taking responsibility for one's own learning and having a sense of agency and empowerment about it. John describes how this felt to him:

He felt very much treated like a grown-up, that actually his knowledge and experience was as important to the course and to everybody else, as the written materials were, and the tutors'

knowledge and experiences were. The culture of the course meant he felt he had permission to challenge the tutors, colleagues and himself. It was a 'very respectful way of learning', different from sitting in a room and someone telling you things that you may or may not already know. (John's story)

Liam realises that he has:

learned that the one thing he had control of and could change was himself. (Liam's story)

Rashid explains that he feels everyone comes out of the course:

feeling a force for change. I think we felt we could challenge the way things were a lot more, (Rashid's story)

What he says suggests that he feels better able to resist publicly shaped pressures to conform and that his perception is that, when they left the NPQICL, participants had developed more professional agency, efficacy and autonomy.

Some participants recognise that members of the learning community are creating the learning between them.

Sue observes that:

we were creating an experience between us where we were learning by watching others. (Sue's story)

Henk sees other members of the learning community as both a resource and as important in the development of his thinking:

He felt that he was learning and gaining from listening to other people's experiences. When they talked about a concept or a theory he had a view on it himself but then listening to others he found he modified his view. The more he reflected on the approach the more he thought it was very clever. (Henk's story)

John's view is that whilst one was responsible for one's own learning there is a mutual responsibility for learning held by everyone:

His advice was plunge down into the learning environment - immersing self - giving up control - letting go - trusting the trainers etc and the process' and be ready to help others up out of it so they take with them what they have learned. (John's story)

Some participants describe other ways that they think the NPQICL is different to previous learning. Ursel appreciates an approach that is different to others she had experienced:

the sculpt activity was a huge success from her point of view and very much changed her perception of the incident that she was portraying. The experience gave Ursel a taste of how much more creative ways of exploring the problem could work rather than formal, traditional logic driven ways of exploring things. (Ursel's story)

Despite having initial misgivings about the learning and teaching approach of the NPICL, Dee sees that the way the NPQICL facilitated individual responses is the only appropriate one in the circumstances:

She realised that no Children's Centre is the same. It was not possible to say 'you're going to need this skill in your Children's Centre, or you going to need that,' each participant has to tailor their own learning to what he or she needs at work. (Dee's story)

Whilst Henk's view is that the learning process challenged his expectations so fundamentally that he has not been aware of all he has learned until after the programme ended:

he realised what he had gained through the NPQICL programme to date, almost by stealth. (Henk's story)

Although the programme structures- for example, the materials; curriculum; activities and sessions - were largely pre-determined by NCSL so could not be co-constructed, participants did co-construct their responses and were able to generate and tailor their learning according to their needs within the programme. This suggests that when adult learners take responsibility for their own learning and become aware of it, they can be actively responsible for choosing what to learn, how to learn and the pace of the learning, a finding that confirms Yazici's research (2005).

There seems to have been interplay between agentic participants and the prescribed curriculum that facilitated a dialogue about aspects of practice (Gordon, 2004; Knowles, 1984¹, 1984²). The stories suggest support for Vadeboncoeur's view that professional agency, in this case demonstrated as co-construction of own learning, may be facilitated through interaction in what Vadeboncoeur, (1997) calls an emancipatory-constructive learning and teaching environment. She argues for the importance of the effect of the classroom culture and the broader social context and, in particular, of power issues related to knowledge production in creating emancipatory constructivism. In this kind of learning and teaching environment participants are able to support each others' developing understanding of professional practice and critical reflection by facilitating the kind of dialogue that Gordon (2004) and Knowles (1984¹, 1984²) identify as such a positive feature of adult learning.

Theories of situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) propose that the authenticity of the method and context in which professional learning is encouraged can make it distinctive. In this context the term authenticity means relevance, credibility and realness, the latter in a sense of genuineness (Rogers, 1967). The NPQICL teaching team did not seek to *instruct* participants, in part because the ambiguity and uncertainty of the role affected them also. Instead, the programme offered broad themes in response to and around which participants *co-constructed* learning content that was drawn from their practice and their experiences and interactions in the programme. As a result participants made the programme authentic and this also explains why they feel in charge and agentic in their learning despite the programme's standardisation as a nationally recognised qualification. Carl Rogers (1967) argues that learning requires authenticity and realness from facilitators too and as co-facilitators and co-constructors of each other's learning, all participants needed to be authentic and real in order to avoid learning 'from the neck up' (Rogers: 1983:19).

Authenticity and realness also stem from the trust and acceptance participants feel from the rest of the learning community. It was not inevitable that this would be the case. Something predisposed participants to positive relationships in the learning community, but the scope of this study means that was cannot be explored. Like several other participants Rashid explains that the quality of these relationships:

made them all feel very safe about sharing quite personal experiences. It was really important to be able to let himself go with it and give himself the freedom to think what he thought. He did not have to banish certain thoughts. (Rashid's story)

Authenticity develops from participants feeling able to be open and real because they feel accepted and understood by their fellow students who are Children's Centre leaders. They report feeling they can be themselves in their leadership role instead of conforming to both their own expectations and their perceptions of the expectations of others of how to perform as a professional:

Elaine recognised that others already thought of her a confident person but that was because she learned to project confidence she did not feel. She felt that the programme had now enabled her to bring herself to the job. (Elaine's story)

He realised he had been 'leading in the way I felt I should, rather than the way I felt I wanted to, which turned out to be a more effective way'. His view was the course gave participants permission to lead by confirming and affirming who they were and validating what they did. (John's story)

In Chapter 2, the origins of such expectations are outlined and a contrast is drawn between traditional concepts of 'profession' and 'professional' that fail to mirror the diversity and range of what is seen (Geison, 1983) with recent concepts of 'professional' applicable to people working with children, such as the activist (Sachs, 2001, 2003²) or democratic (Oberhuemer, 2005) or dialogical professional (Rinaldi, 2006) or worker as researcher (Moss, 2006). It is likely that participants' feelings of lack of authenticity, clarity and certainty in their Children's Centre leader roles may be exacerbated by the mismatch between their experiences of being Children's Centre leader-professionals and traditional and ideological concepts of professional derived from 'our received traditions of thought' (Parsons, 1954:48).

For some participants, 'learning like a grown up' means learning authentically, that is, in ways that are connected with their chosen work realities and enable them to accept responsibility for their own learning. Their stories show that learning like this is linked to gaining a sense of authenticity and agency in ambiguous and uncertain roles as Children's Centre leaders. Participants appear to have transferred the authenticity and agency gained whilst learning into a capable professional identity.

Drawing on the three theories of human agency outlined in Chapter 4, section 1 (Boaler, 2002; Bandura, 2000; 2001; Wenger, 1998¹), a new 'slant' (Layder, 1998:9) on the concept of professional agency is suggested from the themes that emerge from the participants' stories. This is a concept of professional agency as controlling one's own story in *an autobiography of professional identity*, that is, by negotiating meaning and generating, shaping and taking responsibility for practices that matter to oneself and, where applicable, the professional community in which one is invested. It appears that for the NPQICL participants professional learning supports the development of professional agency. This, in turn, offers protection from and even counters the effects of working in uncertain and ambiguous roles.

Section 2: Developing a capable identity and professional learning

Participants' stories indicate that they are concerned about establishing their professional identities as Children's Centre leaders because of a lack of clarity about the role. As Henk explains, this is likely to be the case throughout England because:

Initially children centre heads were thrown into a centre in a community and everyone stood back and saw what came up (Henk's story)

Kahn et al., (1964:94) and later King and King (1990:50) argue that it is best to consider role ambiguity as a multi-dimensional construct composed of *task ambiguity* i.e. lack of information about the job, *what is required*, whose expectations to meet and behaviours needed and also *socio-emotional ambiguity* about the impact of decision and actions. There have been a range of studies exploring role uncertainty or role ambiguity. Several studies conclude that role ambiguity is associated with 'negative affect' (Beauchamp et al., 2002:229). Kahn et al. (1964) argue that role ambiguity has an even more detrimental impact on an organisation when workers are working in a highly complex and strongly interdependent network of roles and relationships both within and outside their Children Centres as the participants were. The study by Beauchamp et al. (2002:240) concludes that role ambiguity predisposes people to a lack of self-belief and poor role efficacy, which in turn has a negative impact on role performance. However, this is not inevitable: it will vary from individual to individual and depend on his or her ability to thrive and be resilient in uncertain situations.

The findings are that participants report a wide range of ways in which they felt uncertain about their roles and responsibilities including: the behaviour that was expected of them in their roles; the qualifications and background they needed to do the job and the expectations of them in terms of outcomes from their work. Several participants say that they had worked hard to 'pretend' they were confident in their role. They are motivated by wishing to be the trusted, knowing professional that they think society expects. Participants report that the NPQICL

brought them to a closer match between the appearance of being confident in their role and the reality of how they felt. They report that they gained self-belief during the programme and now feel more confident both in their work and academic capacity. Sometimes, this view is expressed by drawing on elements of Schratz and Walker's capability continuum (1995) adopted from the learning materials in the programme. Nearly all participants interviewed a second time about the emergent analytical themes agree they have constructed a more capable identity for themselves (the one who does not agree does not disagree either). A capable identity can be viewed as being confident in own intuitive responses, contextual knowledge and future resilience.

It appears that participants see professional efficacy and professional agency as components of a capable identity for Children's Centre leaders. Theories of 'agency' and 'self-efficacy' beliefs (Bandura, 2001) discussed in Chapter 4 offer an explanation of why and how participants may develop a capable professional identity with increased *professional efficacy* and *professional agency* during the NPQICL. It is not clear from the stories whether this is a general professional identity for Children's Centre leaders or solely the professional identity of an individual Children's Centre leader. Wenger (1998¹) argues that, in a community of practice associated with professional learning, [learning community?] individuals have the capacity to construct both their own professional identity and also participate in constructing a shared professional identity. It may be that a more general professional identity becomes established over time.

In Chapter 4, section 2, the prevalence of narrow conceptions of professional efficacy in a limited range of applications was noted. The themes that emerge from participants stories suggest that professional efficacy is a generic rather than a task specific concept. Success in one domain appears to transfer into another in the context of the NPQICL. Professional efficacy also transfers from specific incidents to general expectations, for example, co-construction of the application of some theories and constructs to areas of work (naming) diminishes anxiety about future success.

In the next part of this chapter the aspects of the seven remaining analytical themes are linked and explored using Bandura's capability beliefs. The orienting concept of efficacy, identified in Chapter 4, is drawn from Bandura's theory. The four sources of self-efficacy beliefs are used to review the emerging themes in order to identify whether participants think the NPQICL, as a professional learning programme is linked to their development of *capable* professional identities. The themes are sequenced, in part, to mirror the general sequence of participants' experiences on the NPQICL and to sustain a storied approach.

Section 3: Somatic and emotional states and professional learning

Of Bandura's 4 sources of self-efficacy beliefs, feedback and inferences made on own emotional and physiological states is said to exert the least influence over an individual's self-efficacy (Pajares, 2007: 4). The physical symptoms of anxiety, stress, fatigue and fear, for example, warn the individual that he or she is 'out of the comfort zone' and under threat of failure. The symptoms also give individuals feedback about their level of confidence and efficacy beliefs with regard to a specific task or

activity. A strong physical or emotional reaction to an activity can tell someone whether he or she expects to fail or not. Although this is useful information a negative reaction may work to further undermine the individual's confidence and may ensure that they do not perform to an optimum level. Positive efficacy beliefs are likely to mean that participants accept some uncomfortable feelings of anxiety or nervousness as 'usual' or even beneficial, whereas negative efficacy beliefs are likely to lead a participant to expect to be undermined in the task or challenge because of overwhelmingly uncomfortable feelings and so portend potential failure. Bandura (1986) argues that it is the perception and interpretation of the physical and emotional sensations engendered by a task or challenge that are the significant influences on self-efficacy and capacity, not their intensity. The question here is: can negative perceptions and interpretations be diminished by professional learning in order to develop a capable professional identity? Two themes, 'learning like a grown-up' and 'the ceiling will not fall down' are used to explore this question.

Learning like a grown-up

It is an expectation of adulthood that the adult is accountable for his or her actions, responsible for his or her life (Cullen, 1999; Pratt, 1988) and has freedom to act (agency) with some independence (autonomy). Self-directedness and experience is the most significant characteristic of adulthood (Knowles, 1984¹).

Knowles believed that the role of experience in adult learning was crucial because adult learners could use their experiences as schemas upon which to build new learning and control of their lives. One participant, Rashid, felt an outcome for him of the

NPQICL was that he could give himself the freedom to think what he thought and be in control of himself by making more deliberate, autonomous and informed choices.

You could take control of your own destiny—that's what this was about. And I was probably hooked from that point on really. (Rashid's story)

I really don't like this. I'm not going to invest much of myself into it. I won't scupper it but I can make that decision for myself—I feel grown up enough about this, that I'm not getting out of this. (Rashid's story)

There are several accounts in the participants' stories of re-examination and reflection on past and very recent or ongoing experiences that provided these adults with the opportunity to re-interpret them. Some participants described how they applied this learning to new situations, thereby creating new knowledge and understanding for themselves and often resulting in a new view of themselves and how to practice (Berger, 2001). Katy, for example, explained that she:

actually really looked very deeply into her leadership and why she was the way she was. 'It was the first time I had consciously associated my background with what I am doing now. I suddenly understood my motivation for my work'. When she got her assignment back she felt it was something that she could not share with other people to help them because it was too personal. She had used what she learnt in her work but she could not use the actual document. (Katy's story)

Although participants reported that these 'light bulb moments' of using and building on their experiences brought valuable self-understanding and insights about the origins of their knowledge, feelings and values, they also reported that they experienced

and then overcame uncomfortable disequilibrium when their existing perspectives were challenged by new theoretical information or observational evidence. What they were describing is a form of resilience, defined by Luthar et al. (2000) as: 'a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity' (p. 543).

According to Knowles (1990) 'learning like a grown-up' means using own life experiences as a context for learning. However, it also required participants to risk and if necessary overcome uncomfortable feelings. For Mezirow (2000) this as a quality associated with transformational learning:

Transformational learning, especially when it involves subjective reframing, is often an intensely threatening emotional experience in which we have to become aware of both the assumptions undergirding our ideas and those supporting our emotional responses to the need to change. (p. 6)

The impulse to avoid the discomfort of this subjective reframing can be over-ridden by self-awareness and confidence in one's own resilience resulting in growth in confidence and professional efficacy.

The ceiling will not fall down

This theme is identified by the words of two of the participants in the study, John and Elaine. The phrase brings to mind a well-known children's story entitled Chicken Licken. When John and Elaine used this phrase they intended it to signify that an outcome from the NPQICL for them was that they had gained confidence that they would find a way to cope with any difficult situations that might occur. Rashid had similar feelings:

Part of it came from realising that other people had the same fears and worries that he did and were doing fine proving that you could survive. (Rashid's story)

The participants' stories portray their learning as deep learning: in the stories there are 19 incidents of 'significant incidents leading to learning'. Of these 19, 11 instances were likened by participants to 'light bulb moments'. What characterised these was a sense from participants that whilst several of the incidents to which they referred had been unsettling and sometimes troubling, they had brought them perspective changes that had contributed to significant development of self-awareness and reflexivity and also self-efficacy. Sue explained that reflection and discussion on the programme:

had led to her getting to grips with how her upbringing has had such an influence on her life and the way she was. She liked to think that she could perform better because she was aware of the way that she was and the way that she could be seen and the effect that had on other people. (Sue's story)

This formed part of a process of gaining control over circumstances in which she had previously felt powerless and uncomfortable and so contributed to her self-understanding.

Over a number of cohorts it was observable that when groups were at a very early stage of 'forming' there is often a sense of high stress. Although many people join groups for support, the paradox is that they can find them threatening and, at times, unsafe. At least initially participants felt insecure and worried by the risky feel of some of the experiences on the NPQICL and in each cohort some participants suggested that the group needed to have a safety net of mentors standing by in case participants became overwhelmed by their feelings. Participants referred to

taking risks, emotional reactions and needing to trust each other. John acknowledges that:

He had felt 'and still does' emotional about it. (John's story)

Despite efforts made by the tutor-facilitators to establish safe enough boundaries for most of the participants to be willing to engage in deep reflection, some participants told how they approached this aspect of the programme with a degree of apprehension mixed with cynicism and resistance. Anxiety in groups can be contagious especially in the 'forming' stage (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977:419-427). The feeling of uncertainty which the NPQICL approach triggered in participants was sometimes manifested in their relationships with other participants either individually or in a group.

Even when a sense of trust and acceptance was established, it was sometimes the first time such personal anxieties had been expressed to others (see Kay's story). Part of the process of containment required participants to be aware of the 'needs and attitudes individuals bring to any group they join' (John, 2000:423). The intention of the programme designers was that after a few days the learning community of the NPQICL begins to function to contain its members. It may be true that many of the participants had a strong sense of responsibility for the well-being and welfare of the other participants because of their professional heritage as a social worker, health professional, teacher or carer of young children and were thus predisposed to contributing to containment of others. Eventually participants would begin to feel safe enough to express their worries in the context of the learning community with positive consequences for their learning and self-awareness.

A process that offers a high level of support for practitioners enables them to take risks and to meet challenges with open minds and hearts, thereby making practice changes from emotional conviction (Manning-Morton, 2006:49).

In their stories, participants explained how the experience of containment by the learning community worked. They recognised that when a member or members of the learning community acknowledged, thought about, accepted and returned their feelings and thoughts to them in a form that was both accessible and detoxified, they felt empowered and were able to reframe their thinking and move their practice forward. Rashid described this:

It gave him confidence in his own judgment, as much as anything. He had realised that everybody made mistakes. The benefit was the time away in that safe place with kindred folk who could solve his dilemmas sometimes 'in a nutshell, with a facial expression, nothing more.' (Rashid's story)

For participants, the containment and support from fellow members of their learning communities helped them overcome anxiety and discomfort. Participants reflected on their own reactions to challenging situations thereby increasing their self-awareness but they also learned that they could deal with difficulty, change and emotional discomfort when supported by others thereby increasing their resilience and future capacity.

These two themes of:

'learning like a grown-up' so that self-awareness diminishes the effect of learned fears and anxieties associated with emotional and physiological symptoms of anxiety and stress and

'the ceiling will not fall down' where the effect of acquiring problem solving strategies such as talking with another Children Centre Leader develops confidence in one's own resilience,

illustrate Bandura's (1977) assertion that:

Perceived self-competence can therefore affect susceptibility to self arousal. Individuals who come to believe that they are less vulnerable than they previously assumed are less prone to generate frightening thoughts in threatening situations (p.200).

However the stories do not accord with ranking Bandura's emotional and physiological information (of the four sources of self-efficacy information) as having the weakest impact on self-efficacy. As Boud and Miller (1996) argue, our own emotional agendas can be put aside but not ignored permanently as we cannot learn if they are continually denied. The participants' stories endorse Vygotsky's concept of intersubjectivity (1978¹) where learning is a cognitive, social and emotional exchange between participants in learning.

Denial of emotional aspects of professional identities occurs elsewhere. Anning (2001) explores the dynamics of determining professional identity within a multi-professional context. There are similarities between Anning's study and this research: the challenges represented in some of the reflexive questions asked – Who am I? (here - professional identity construction) What do I know? (here - the search for professional knowledge for the Children's Centre role). However, one of the omissions in Anning's research is that it does not consider affective responses to destabilisation of professional roles and identities ignoring the interface between personal and professional domains. Noting the role of emotions in professional identity, Jansen argues that in the case of teachers it is how a teacher *feels* [my emphasis]

about him or herself 'professionally, emotionally and politically' (Jansen, 2001: 242) that is fundamental to his or her identity.

The participants' stories add an interesting dimension to Bandura's concept of the influence of emotional and physiological arousal on self-efficacy. They tell how cognitive learning can also diminish emotional and physiological arousal. For example, like many other participants, Rashid said he found that using theories and concepts to name and understand feelings, gave him comfort and a stronger basis upon which to go forward:

During the course he responded to the theory which gave him confidence from:

being able to reason why I feel the way I do'. It was a vocabulary, from the theory that 'allows you to make changes, because it gives you cause and effect.' 'That's what is quite empowering about theory. (Rashid's story)

Taylor (2001) makes a similar point when he criticises Mezirow's explanation of transformative learning of adults as being:

overly dependent on critical reflection, such that it minimizes the role of feelings and overlooks transformation through the unconscious development of thoughts and actions (p. 218).

However, the issue may be that Mezirow and Taylor have different understanding of 'transformative'.

It is surprising to note that participants report that understanding and knowledge diminishes their anxieties and tensions. It is not clear whether this confirms either Bandura's assertion that perceived self-competence is the key factor in this or Rashid's point about theory giving cause and effect and therefore a sense of control and empowerment. It is clear,

however, that the participants' stories exemplify professional learning as holistic, not compartmentalised into domains of understanding. Emotional, cognitive and social learning processes are inseparable. Participants move seamlessly between the three domains when explaining that social contexts and cognitive understanding diminish emotional and physiological arousal.

Section 4: Vicarious experience or observation and professional learning

According to Bandura another source of information that impacts on self-efficacy beliefs is derived from vicarious experiences. These occur when individuals observe others, at a perceived similar level of competence or of similar status to themselves, succeeding with tasks and so gain in self-efficacy beliefs in relation to similar tasks. The effect of this source of self-efficacy belief is strengthened if the observer aspires to completing the tasks that are modelled to them and respects those who model the task (Bandura 1997). Bandura (1994) concludes that,

Seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort raises observers' beliefs that they too possess the capabilities to master comparable activities to succeed (p. 72).

Because they had rarely met or worked alongside other Children's Centre leaders, NPQICL participants had not previously had access to this type of observational learning regarding the behaviour and tasks expected of someone in their role. In the participants' stories there were many instances of participants reflecting on how valuable it was to them to have the opportunity of learning alongside those in a similar role, for example:

It had been good to tease out issues in a group of people that understand and were in a similar place to where she was in terms of her professional work. (Sally's story)

Being with people who were doing similar work to the work she was doing, had very similar experiences and could sympathise when she was talking about problems was a new, important experience. (Ursel's story)

The participants' perspectives agree with Schunk's (1991) view:

Students acquire much information about their capabilities from knowledge of how others perform. Classroom models – teacher and peer – are important sources of vicarious efficacy information (p. 216).

In next part of the chapter the focus is on just two dimensions of vicarious or observational learning chosen because of their significance for the participants: 'Recognising the imposter syndrome' and 'Reflecting while scaffolded by a professional learning community'.

Recognising the imposter 'syndrome'

Invariably participants refer to this thread in their stories as the imposter syndrome rather than by its correct terminology, the imposter phenomenon. Perhaps this was because participants saw the 'imposter syndrome' as a whole set of behaviours and beliefs that depleted their sense of capacity and efficacy. Clance and Imes define the imposter phenomenon narrowly as: 'an internal experience of intellectual phoniness which appears to be particularly prevalent and intense among a select sample of high achieving women' (Clance and Imes, 1978:241). The imposter 'syndrome' or similar thoughts and feelings, however, were claimed almost universally amongst the participants. The experience of 'Recognising the imposter syndrome' was

important to participants because it named the uncomfortable feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty that they were experiencing and thereby normalised and neutralised them. Kay and Dee describe their experience of this:

She recognised the impostor syndrome in herself and looked again at herself and said, 'Well no, you do know a lot about what you're doing'. (Kay's story)

and

She knew—and she recognised this later as the Impostor Syndrome—there would be centre managers who would be much more experienced than she was and that concerned her too. Later however she saw this as a positive thing. (Dee's story)

It also formed a first shared experience for the participants. In addition some observational learning occurred when participants recognised the lack of realism in other participants' views of themselves as imposters and then realised that their own views of themselves as imposters were equally unsubstantiated. Clance and Imes (1978) explained this dynamic:

If one woman is willing to share her secret, others are able to share theirs. They are astonished and relieved to find they are not alone. A group setting is also valuable because one woman can see the dynamics in another woman and recognize the lack of reality involved (p. 245).

Clance and Imes argue that the imposter phenomenon applies mainly to women but the males in the sample of NPQICL participants used the theory to name their feelings just as readily as women. One male participant had made the imposter phenomenon the major focus of his first assignment.

The impostor syndrome i.e. 'everyone else was there on merit and that I was there by accident and at any moment someone was going to realise the mistake and send me home.' had been illuminating for him. He had written in his journal 'I am here in order to prove that I can be'. (John's story)

Several NPQICL participants extrapolated from their own feelings of being an imposter to those that would be experienced by the vulnerable families with whom they worked. After finding the imposter phenomenon personally relevant, one participant described how she applied her own learning to her work as a Children's Centre leader:

I do much more to welcome people into the Centre now and if someone is being a bit offhand, I have added 'feeling like an imposter' to the list of reasons and motives I flick through when I think now what is going on here? (P speaking, Researcher-practitioner log, 2007)

One way of conceptualising the imposter 'syndrome' is to view it as expectations of failure to meet expectations. The question arises, from where did these expectations originate? The stories suggest that participants felt outsiders, not members of a professional group and thus disadvantaged when interacting with other professionals. They arrived at this conclusion by applying publicly shaped views of being a professional to their experiences and finding a mismatch.

Reflecting while scaffolded by a professional learning community

There was a very strong incidence of participants describing the experience of being in a learning community as interacting with models with whom they identified. As Rashid noted, even after the programme was completed, when he said 'we' he meant fellow participants on the NPQICL. In the NPQICL course,

participation in the community of practice or learning community was reported almost invariably as a rich, meaningful experience by the participants. McDermott explains how learning changes when it is situated in a learning community. His view is that learning is usually:

...measured on the assumption that it is a possession of individuals that can be found inside their heads... [Here] learning is in the relationships between people. Learning is in the conditions that bring people together and organize a point of contact that allows for particular pieces of information to take on relevance; without the points of contact, without the system of relevancies, there is not learning, and there is little memory. Learning does not belong to individual persons, but to the various conversations of which they are a part. (in Murphy, 1999:17)

The idea of learning as relational accords with Rinaldi's concept of the dialogical professional outlined in Chapter 2. It is interesting that participants noticed that they reflected differently when they were able to do it alongside members of the NPQICL learning community and deserves further investigation that is not possible here. They valued the safety, acceptance and understanding of their role and its challenges it offered. In her interview Sally said she thought that:

definitely the learning community and learning from each other was a real benefit of the course and she is still in touch with her learning group and she felt knew more people. The impact had been that she had got ideas from other people that she could put into practice herself. (Sally's story)

Drawing on an Early Years discourse, participants saw the support they gained from the learning community as a version of

the scaffolding approach derived from Bruner (1983) used by Early Years practitioners in their work with children:

They [the learning community] scaffolded my understanding of the role of Children's Centre leader by being open about what they did and why they did it and why they did it that way. (W speaking, researcher-practitioner log, 2009)

and

The fishbowl [case conference role-play] reminded me of the play scaffolding that we facilitate in the centre. It was sort of sustained shared thinking at a high level. (P speaking, researcher-practitioner log, 2008)

The participants found that they were able to discuss their reflections about their professional and personal skills and experiences with each other in a space they felt was safe and supportive and thus there was an opportunity to learn from the experiences of others. Rashid and John describe the importance of the learning community for them:

Part of it came from realising that other people had the same fears and worries that he did and were doing fine proving that you could survive. He thought that, 'actually, I probably wouldn't have done anything different to how those people have dealt with it, in some circumstances.' It gave him confidence in his own judgment, as much as anything. He had realised that everybody made mistakes. (Rashid's story)

Even now when he speaks with members of the group about work challenges and they say, 'I know', they really do know. (John's story)

Reflective conversations and visits to each other's centres offered scaffolding opportunities to learning community

members. The learning community acted as 'effective efficacy builders' that:

do more than convey positive appraisals. They structure situations for others in ways that bring success and avoid placing them, prematurely, in situations where they are likely to fail. (Bandura, 1995:4)

Professional learning in the NPQICL draws on observational learning available in interactions with other Children's Centre leaders. Learning is a cognitive, social and emotional exchange between NPQICL participants in learning. The participants' stories portray learning as a member of a learning community as very significant in developing both their capable identities, and professional learning. These aspects of reported experiences of learning in a learning community from NPQICL participants are a strong argument for learning in such a context that go beyond access to debates and team work.

Section 5: Persuatory information and professional learning

A further source of self-efficacy information is derived from the messages received from other people. These can be both subliminal and explicit. As self-efficacy relates to people's belief that they are capable of an action (Bandura, 1997) information that is received that persuades them that they are indeed capable can strengthen self-efficacy (Noe, 1999). According to Bandura, however, sources of persuatory information exert a weaker influence than mastery experiences (Bandura 1986). Bandura warns that changes in an individual's self-efficacy only occur from powerful, 'forceful' messages and that it is easier to undermine, than increase, self-efficacy beliefs through this source of information. There is some evidence that the self-

efficacy of women, in particular, non-traditional female learners is more strongly influenced by information from verbal persuasion (Quimby and O'Brien, 2004). Zeldin and Pajares (2000) found that female mathematicians and scientists said:

it was critical that others have confidence in them and express that confidence to them so that the women developed confidence in themselves and developed resiliency to the obstacles they were sure to encounter (p. 239)

Bandura's view was that individuals can be led to believe they can cope successfully with what has overwhelmed them in the past through continuing encouragement and suggestion (Bandura, 1977). His research shows that:

It is easier to sustain a sense of efficacy, especially when struggling with difficulties, if significant others express faith in one's capabilities than if they convey doubt (p. 101).

Reflecting while scaffolded by a professional learning community

The NPQICL learning community was composed of participants, tutor-facilitators, practice assessors and mentors. Each of these had an option to reflect on a participant's past performance in his or her work role and to speculate about his or her future performance and thus persuade the participant of their future capacity to succeed. In the stories there were several expressions of the importance participants attributed to acceptance and approval of fellow Children Centre Leaders (John's story). It suggests that participants felt affirmed and validated by each other and, as a consequence felt more resilient and perceived themselves as more capable. Ursel, John and Liam expressed this as:

Her experiences and views had been validated through the course through discussions with others on the course. She felt she could do the assignment because actually what she had been saying had been accepted as a valid opinion worth having. (Ursel's story)

His view was the course gave participants permission to lead by confirming and affirming who they were and validating what they did. (John's story)

What the course did do was provide him with a sort of resilience to be able to operate in these awkward, untested frameworks so he had the strength to be able to negotiate his way around these barriers and be creative. 'It gave me the efficacy and the agency to be able to practice more securely in what was very much an emerging role.' (Liam's story)

For many participants, these affirming relationships with each other continued long after the NPQICL programme ended.

Another source of persuasory information, of which participants were aware, was from their mentors:

Much of what was positive from the course such as having her experiences and views validated came from the mentoring context as well. (Ursel's story)

The mentoring was good because she felt quite alone and that nobody was really interested in her work. She was struggling to 'define the role and I wasn't really sure where I was going or what the vision was'. The mentoring was non-judgmental and that helped her to find the answers. (Ann's story)

Support from their NPQICL mentors was greatly valued by participants. There is widespread anecdotal evidence that several participants set aside part of the Children Centre training budget

to continue the relationship with their mentors once the NPQICL programme was over.

This dimension of affirmation and support from other participants and mentors was reported as very important to gaining a sense of a capable identity. Participants told how they felt empowered and gained a sense of agency and self-belief from it. However, it is important to note that the participants emphasise that fact that the mentors and other participants were fellow Children's Centre leaders. It is doubtful whether a multi-professional group would have achieved the same positive impact for these participants.

Moving between cable and wireless connection

This theme was named using the Liam's words.

He realised that reflexivity or constantly being aware of how he was practicing and how he was leading, or moving between wireless and cable connection, was the key to his development. It was that agency that was invaluable and still was. (Liam's story)

For Liam, the sense of moving between cable and wireless connection related to the reflexive dynamic of making tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1967) explicit or, in other words, making knowledge in action (knowledge that is used and sometimes revealed in practice) into reflection in action (reflection and thinking that occurs in the midst of practice) and reflection on action (reflection and thinking that occurs after the event) (Schön, 1983). It also gave him a sense of trust in his own professional artistry (Brockbank and McGill, 2007).

As a Children Centre leader, Liam (and the other participants) were aware that some of the reports into high profile,

catastrophic failures to recognise children's needs have identified poor communication between professionals and practitioners as a cause. Although this may have occurred partly due to poor reporting structures mistrust, misunderstandings and failure to communicate between professional groups are also causes (O'Brien et al., 2003; Laming, 2003). As a consequence there has been a drive to develop an integrated response to meeting the needs of children and families better through high functioning multi-professional teams who can turn the differences between their members into advantages not disadvantages. Professional education for the people who work with and for children, therefore, is under pressure to incorporate learning that develops the skill of exploring tacit knowledge and understanding why such a skill is important. In order to achieve this it needs to include activities and materials that support sociological and philosophical understanding and awareness of paradigms and ideologies but also learning approaches that develop the habit and capacity to identify tacit knowledge and its importance in working with children and families. Liam found this invaluable in the NPQICL:

It enabled him to focus on a type of ontological leadership that was at the core of his vision for leadership now. It relied on the sense of being yourself, having an awareness of how you are as a human being so that you can understand how you practice as a leader. (Liam's story)

Some participants adopted the construct of the JoHari window (Luft and Ingham, 1955) to represent the way that they changed tacit knowledge to knowledge and reflection in action and reflection on action:

light bulb moments' were incidents 'where I realised or uncovered a 'blind' or 'unknown' element of the Jo-Hari window. (Jackie's story)

Moving knowledge from one pane to another through reflexivity and reflection was very important to Liam in developing his 'ontological leadership' but other participants recognised the same process as valuable in helping them to become more authentic in their role:

She became aware that she had built up layers of learned behaviour rather than being herself, being authentic. She realised that being herself was good enough and was the best way to work. (Elaine's story)

R. noted that the self-awareness she was gaining from reflexivity was helping her to be more autonomous and self-directed:

I am writing my own script now not working to someone else's (R speaking: Researcher-practitioner log 2008)

The catalysts for the gains in reflexivity and self-awareness seemed to come from thinking aloud alongside fellow participants in the learning community. Edwards and Usher use the term 'reflexive group' to identify the:

process which problematises the very categories of 'practice' and 'concern about practice' (Edwards and Usher, 1993: 22)

This type of social persuasion from the learning community, exemplified in the participants' stories, worked in two ways. Firstly, processes of group reflexivity appeared to embed persuasory information that participants had the capabilities to succeed. Secondly, persuasory information was important in convincing participants that, as a member of a learning community, they had professional resources and expertise above

and beyond what was immediately available to them because of their tacit knowledge, intuition and professional artistry. It was an important way that they learned: 'We know more than we can tell' (Polanyi, 1966:4)

The participants' stories tell how they gained more self-awareness and affirmation of their professionalism through learning with other NPQICL participants and how this developed their resilience and professional resources and engendered a professional efficacy belief and a story of a capable professional identity. In an earlier chapter another way to conceptualise professional autonomy was considered. The interpretation of the characteristics of autonomous professional behaviour that emerges from the themes from participants' stories relates to self-conceptualisation in the professional role. They are demonstrated when professionals:

- resist external control by exercising agency, efficacy and autonomy to determine how to define themselves as professionals in their roles.
- exercise their capacity, freedom, and responsibility to make choices and co-construct their own way of working with their learning communities and clients
- use self-knowledge and reflexivity to articulate and enact their professional and personal beliefs and values in their behaviour

The stories illustrate how valuable it is to think aloud and hear yourself think in order to develop greater professional artistry or expertise and move towards a kind of 'unconscious competence' (Schratz and Walker, 1995:106). This professional artistry or

expertise is evident 'where professionals deal with the unique, unanticipated, the uncertain, the value conflicts and indeterminate conditions of everyday practice for which there was no text book response' (Brockbank and McGill, 2007:86). The stories suggest that gaining such artistry and expertise is closely linked to processes where the values, principles and practices with which to work are surfaced and clarified suggesting the development of professional autonomy and professional artistry and expertise are entwined.

Section 6: Experiences of success and professional learning

The remaining source of self-efficacy information proposed by Bandura, enactive mastery experience, is based on the self-interpreted results of one's performance. Bandura's research showed that authentic mastery experiences (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Pajares, 2006) in the sense of relevant, credible and real, not artificially created experiences, of a certain task can promote a strong sense of self-efficacy and encourage future engagement with similar tasks. In addition, resilience is created with repeated successes so that occasional failures tend not to undermine the self-efficacy belief. However, performance of a task that is believed to be unsuccessful can lessen self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) noted that it is the individual's own assessment of performance that determines the impact on his or her self-efficacy beliefs. Bandura's view was that enactive mastery experiences had the strongest impact on an individual's self-efficacy belief of all the four sources he described, (1977, 1982). This was because they drew on direct personal experiences. Other studies have supported Bandura's view (Britner and Pajares, 2006; Fenollar et al., 2007) although Britner and

Parjares also noticed that gender influenced the strength of the impact of mastery experiences and Zeldin and Pajares (2000) noted that vicarious experiences and verbal persuasions had a greater impact than mastery experiences on the self-efficacy beliefs of female mathematicians, scientists and technologists.

The NPQICL participants recognised that success (mastery experiences) had changed the way they viewed their capacity so that they had developed a capable identity. Two themes emerged from the data. One was 'Being empowered by professional tools' and the other was 'Measuring and recognising own success'.

Being empowered by professional tools

The theme, 'Being empowered with professional tools' is expressed using the words of participants. The word 'empowered' is fraught with difficulty. First of all, if someone gives 'power' then it is possible that he or she or it can take the power back. This raises the question whether what was given was ever really power or whether it was permission. Bush and Folger's (1994) understanding of empowerment is that:

...empowerment means the restoration to individuals of a sense of their own value and strength and their own capacity to handle life's problems (p. 12).

Whilst there are a range of thoughts about the nature of empowerment, for example, as character education, personal growth, leadership development or taking responsibility for your own learning, the Bush and Folger idea captures the way empowerment is expressed in the participants' stories as restoration and reinforcement of identity. Rashid explains that it is the theory which gave him confidence from:

being able to reason why I feel the way I do.

It was a vocabulary, from the theory that

allows you to make changes, because it gives you cause and effect...That's what is quite empowering about theory. (Rashid's story)

Underpinning the empowerment was the support from the tutors.

Their view was 'we are here to support you to do the best you can'. (Viv's story)

Because of the isolation of participants from other Children's Centre leaders and the lack of reference points about the role and its required knowledge and understanding, participants particularly valued gaining some professional knowledge that helped them defined their professional identities. The characteristics of their professionalism such as knowing what, knowing how, knowing why (discussed in Chapter 3) and caring why, were referred to in their stories, for example, Sally explained how *knowing what* was linked to her confidence and efficacy:

it sort of gives you the confidence that no, actually this role is important and I do know what I am doing with it, most of the time!' (Sally's story)

She went on to explain the importance of *knowing how*:

the main thing that supported Sally in her role in the children's centre was the learning community. 'On a very practical level being able to email people, ringing people up and saying what do you do about this, you know I have got this problem that I have not come across before was good.' (Sally's story)

Ursel and Kay described a key moment of *knowing why*:

It was one of the key moments within the whole programme that had made a huge difference to her. She had suddenly realised by positioning two people in relationship to a third that is a much more complex relationship. It was a really strong and useful insight that had really made a difference to her work. She had been struggling to analyse the relationship with someone at work and had realised that all the other things that were going on were influencing the relationship. (Ursel's story)

She found the activity in which she reflected on her life learning journey powerful because she began to realise why she had certain fears. (Kay's story)

Katy discovered why her motivation for *caring why*:

During the sessions Katy became aware of some the origins of her drive to make things better for children and families. It was quite useful that actually it brought it home why it was so very important to her. She wanted to work with other people to make sure that children had the best experiences and did not go through the experiences that she recognised that she and her family had. (Katy's story)

Participants' stories told how they gained tools or skills and knowledge or 'artefacts of practice' (Ball and Cohen, 1999:14) that they could apply in their professional leadership role and on which they could reflect. The tools participants took from the NPQICL were not just useful but were symbolic of a participant's professionalism. This is a position that aligns with 'functionally specific technical competence' (Parsons, 1939:460) and the possession of specific competences and expertise (Royal College of Physicians, 2005:21) being the key to the identity of a profession. However, participants did not define professional

tools literally or instrumentally to mean skills or practices. For them professional tools included theories, strategies, perspectives and improved personal qualities, such as confidence gained during the programme. They saw 'tools' as a metaphor for the conceptual knowledge of Children's Centre leaders (Brown et al., 1989).

...conceptual tools ... reflect the cumulative wisdom of the culture in which they are used and the insights and experience of individuals (p. 33).

A shift of perspective from defining 'tools' as specific skills or practices to a *shared repertoire of understanding*, (Schön, 1983; Wenger, 1998²) was discussed earlier. The theme 'Being empowered by professional tools' as found in the stories, is closer to this view.

I have argued that the NPQICL participants were in emerging and ambiguous roles so they were not clear about what a Children's Centre leader should know. There was no specified body of knowledge, value base or set of skills that that could be acquired through the usual means of professional socialisation because the role of Children's Centre leader was not codified. Participants felt their role was defined and empowered by taking tools, aspects of their learning encounters with the NPQICL programme and fellow participants, back into their work places. They found that gaining role-related expertise was both empowering and role defining, for example: the 'check in' became a way of asserting a Children's Centre value of working with people holistically whilst holding a meeting; the 'tablecloth activity' became a way of leading interprofessionally; journaling defined Children's Centre leadership practice as reflective and

became a way of understanding and gaining control of own actions.

Measuring and recognising own success

This theme is well substantiated in comments in the stories. There seems to be two dimensions to this theme: one is that participants felt that achieving the Masters level status of the NPQICL confirmed their status as a member of a profession and put them on a par with other professionals with whom they worked; the other was that succeeding with a qualification that was established in the academic hierarchy helped them to acknowledge their success rather than deny it or denigrate it. Both dimensions are linked to the publicly shaped views and expectations outlined in Chapter 2. Participant R says:

*No-one can deny it can they? I have a Masters qualification now.
(Researcher-practitioner log, 2007: R speaking)*

Ann explained:

I gained confidence to do the role and that impacts on the confidence you have elsewhere and working with other professionals. (Ann's story)

In the absence of a shared domain of knowledge for Children's Centre leaders, participants used the opportunities available in the interactions in their professional learning programme to create tools that were part of their construction of professional identity. They gained role-related expertise that was both empowering and role defining. The stories tell how empowerment from gaining 'professional tools' and measurable and recognised success from the NPQICL was crucially important in developing professional efficacy and agency and defining a capable professional identity for the participants. Participants'

growth in self-efficacy due to the NPQICL programme is transferable in two ways: their growth in *personal* self-efficacy sustained growth in *professional* efficacy and, in relation to achievements on the programme, appeared to lead to wider, more general efficacy beliefs relating to aspects of their role as Children's Centre leaders that are not addressed in the programme. The 'tools' are identity-defining as they are one of the ways that participants develop subjective self-conceptualisation in their professional roles. The agency, efficacy and autonomy of 'choosing' or negotiating the tools is identity-developing as it is a way that participants create an *autobiography of their professional identity*.

Section 7: Professional learning and 'Emerging from the cocoon'

Several participants reported that after the NPQICL they saw their role differently, as more strategic and outward facing. Hoyle's view is that the restricted professional teacher focuses on classroom practice, bases decisions on their experience and intuitions and tends not to see his or her work in relation to others or the bigger picture. Hoyle argues that, in contrast, an extended professional teacher likes to place his or her work in a wider context, to collaborate with others and to explore theory and engage in professional development. Hoyle's (1980) 'extended' professionalism and professionalism requires professionals to stand back from their roles and develop their critical awareness of their cultural and social situations in a similar way to calls from Foucault (1987) and Brookfield (2005). Critical theorists argue that members of a profession need to seek to be aware of the bigger picture in relation to the profession within which they work and maintain a close focus on what they do and the means by which they seek to do it.

One aspect of this 'bigger picture' is interprofessional working. It is surprising that this is mentioned so rarely by participants given that the *raison d'être* of the NPQICL is to provide interprofessional education. The definition of interprofessional education from the Centre for Advancement in Interprofessional Education may provide a clue as to why this happened: 'Occasions when two or more professions learn with, from and about each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care' (CAIPE, 2005) [my emphasis]

Although participants reported that they gained confidence in facing the challenges of inter-professional learning and working, the impact of learning from other professions was rather diminished because the cohorts of students tended to put their previous professional heritages behind them and define and present themselves as Children's Centre leaders. Because of their lack of certainty about the role of the Children's Centre leader, participants were far more interested in the similarities amongst the cohort than the differences. The 'Other' (Rinaldi, 2006:15) to whom they were attending was someone like themselves rather than identifying differences between others and themselves.

Despite the programme design focussing on interprofessional education, participants created what they needed from the programme, i.e. understanding of the identity of a Children's Centre leader rather than understanding of professionals who work in other contexts. The reports of becoming more outward-facing are likely to be as a result of increased professional agency and efficacy.

Section 8: Professional learning and creating reifications

The notion of participants co-constructing the curriculum was 'a red herring' but they did co-construct their responses to learning activities. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) proposed that through using metaphors, analogies and figurative language it is possible that various 'personal hunches' and insights may be articulated and new ways of thinking –at least for an individual- may be developed. Participants seemed to be driven to adopt or create representations of shared meaning and metacognition whilst in the context of learning alongside fellow Children's Centre leaders in a learning community. Using the theories from the programme in tandem with the group activities and in collaboration with others in the learning community participants appeared to become researchers into the meaning of their own encounters and experiences.

Participants did not usually enter the programme with expectations of creating new knowledge for the Children's Centre sector. After all, the publicly shaped view is that attaining specialist, pre-existing understanding and knowledge is a condition of entry into a profession. However, there was some evidence of participants representing and storying their experiences to each other to create a shared understanding of their roles, perhaps because they did not have a readymade shared language available for use in their roles as Children's Centre leader. Not all of the representations were created by participants and tutor-facilitators. Some representations of shared meaning were derived from the course materials and general work with children and families and adopted by the participants and tutor-facilitators.

When they storied their experiences they made explicit, identified, shared and named learning experiences on the NPQICL as group representations of metacognitions. In a process of constructing a narrative, conceived here an *autobiography of professional identity*, participants selected representations that were important to them as reifications of their professional identity, for example: the 'chandelier moment' seems to represent valuing collaboration and participation; the 'imposter syndrome' seems to represent working for inclusivity; the mantra of 'trust the process' seems to represent being resilience in difficulties; 'strategic non-compliance' seems to represent holding on to autonomy in professional values and principles.

The representations participants created are held and used as a shared repertoire of understanding that has become part of participants' professional identities as 'Children's Centre leaders with the NPQICL'. The representations are reifications created in the learning community. They include shared constructs, figures of speech and vocabulary and are used integratively and as symbols of belonging to a profession group and being in their specific professional role. As such they help participants to clarify and confirm their identities as Children Centre Leaders as well as illustrate the theory that professional identities are stories.

Sfard and Prusak (2005) differentiate between actual (the current) and designated (the aspirational or hoped for) identities. They explain how interacting develops identities in a process of *narration* so that: 'the people to whom our stories are told, as well as those who tell stories about us, may be tacit co-authors of our own designated identities' (p. 10). This is because people convert the stories of other speakers about themselves into the first person particularly if the other speakers are what Sfard and

Prusak call: '*Significant narrators*, the owners of the most influential voices, ... carriers of those cultural messages that will have the greatest impact on one's actions'. (p. 11)

Defining identities as co-constructed narratives in this way suggests that, for professional identities, important stories describe a person's membership of, or exclusion from, a community. It emphasises the opportunity for personal agency and the dynamic quality of identity. Holland et al. (1998) argue that a person's control of his or her own story, the degree to which he or she takes responsibility for it and owns it, affects his or her sense of agency and autonomy. Sfard and Prusak (2005) explain that an identity narrative can entail telling oneself a story about oneself or in other words, reflective thinking. In their view stories about persons *are* identities, not separate entities described *by* stories. Drake et al. (2001:2) argue that identities can be: '*understood as and through* [emphasis added] stories'.

One way to understand this is as part of a process of narrating one's professional identity. The findings suggest that bringing oneself and one professional identity closer in stories of practice in a learning community promotes professional efficacy, agency and autonomy. Participants note that their self-perceptions are changed by acts of co-construction in a learning community. The 'personal' can be entwined with the 'professional' in changes in subjective self-conception in role. Because participants narrate their identities to others in order to hear the story and clarify it to themselves, the acts of co-construction form '***autobiographies of professional identity***' storied to others and selves. Amongst these stories are those that clarify the values, principles and practices that underpin decisions and actions as a professional are taken. Making these explicit,

holding them in mind and reviewing them (or exercising autonomy) is a way that professional identity is portrayed to others and developed in autobiographies.

The notion of an *autobiography of professional identity* is a theoretical concept that holds the potential to connect all of the orienting concepts to the key and basic concepts. It challenges a view of professional identity formation as simply the internalisation of publicly shaped perspectives. It signifies the agency of individuals whose subjective self-conceptualisation in the professional role involves acts of co-creation and reification as well as engagement with society's views of profession and professional.

Section 9: Professional learning and authenticity in role

Freire claims that teachers must reveal themselves in the act of teaching. He writes of a major preoccupation with: 'the approximation between what I say and what I do, between what I seem to be and what I am actually becoming' (Freire, 1998: 88) or, in other words, authenticity. Hilsen (2006) argues that in: 'making the ethical demand explicit in our actions and reflections on action..... so we shall be known by our deeds' (p. 34). Participants also learn to know *themselves* by their deeds. The learning approach of the NPQICL, the activities, experiences, reflection, focus on self and engagement with trusted others in the learning community lead to self-awareness, a revealing of self to oneself as well as others. Development of feelings of 'rightness' and 'realness' of themselves in their Children's Centre roles is key to developing participants' professional efficacy and professional agency. On feeling empowered and in a better fit with their roles participants engage with it to make it work for them in their context rather than worrying what they *should* be

doing. Another product of this sense of 'rightness' and 'realness' is a perception by participants of own authenticity in their leadership roles.

The participants' stories show there is a dynamic relationship between professional learning that encourages storying one's practice to others in an *autobiography of professional identity* and develops a sense of authenticity in role by closing the gap between the personal and professional self.

Figure 7: Summaries of 'thinking theoretically' Layder, 1998:100) at the end of stage 3

End of stage 3 of the analysis		
Orienting concepts	Provisional summaries (with Stage 3 revisions in bold)	Case for revision after stage 3
Professional identity	<p>Is the perception of oneself as a professional in relation to a particular type of profession or subjective self-conceptualisation in the professional role;</p> <p>Is typically shaped by an ideology of professions;</p> <p>Is constructed in a dialogue between, and blending of, personal and professional self involving awareness of own situated, relative and relational position;</p> <p>Is portrayed to self and others in stories and shared language;</p> <p>Has the potential to be changed or developed by learning and related</p>	Participants make a strong case for the role of the learning community in developing/establishing their identity as a Children's Centre leader.

	interactions in a professional learning community.	
Professional learning	<p>Is concerned with an <i>individual's</i> learning and personal capacity set in a professional work context as well as enculturation;</p> <p>Is the transfer of new knowledge and understanding into one's personal and professional practice through reflection and self-awareness and so develops professional judgment;</p> <p>Relates to cognitive and emotional learning;</p> <p>Can interact with learners' self-awareness, priorities, perspectives and inferred meanings as well as how they see themselves;</p> <p>Can develop codified and personal knowledge and the knowledge creation capacity of individuals and professional communities;</p> <p>Can prepare learners for future learning and challenges by exploring own tacit knowledge, new perspectives and world views and developing the habit of reflection;</p> <p>Has the potential to develop participants' professional agency , efficacy and autonomy;</p>	<p>Negative cases and absences from stories noted.</p> <p>Analytical themes suggest professional learning has the potential to develop participants' professional agency , efficacy and autonomy.</p> <p>Contradiction: Professional learning is complex. Although participants' stories foreground constructivist pedagogy as supporting their professional identity construction, some participants argue for 'traditional', didactic approaches to teaching.</p> <p>Contradiction: Participants report that they did not see themselves as developing new knowledge for the professional domain of Children's Centre leaders.</p>

	<p>The manner of learning and the culture in which it occurs affect dispositions in developing professional identities. In this case an emancipatory context and co-constructive approach predisposed participants to gaining a capable professional identity.</p>	
Professional efficacy	<p>Is the general belief held by professionals in own capacities to act and shape the outcomes, nature and quality of their lives and work in order to fulfil the requirements of their professional roles to standards consistent with their constructs of professionalism, as well as being the cause of their choice to do so;</p> <p>Includes an individual's belief in own resilience;</p> <p>Is encouraged by a sense of validation of self by the learning community;</p> <p>Has a positive relationship with growth of belief and trust in others with whom they work.</p>	Confirmed in the data but no further development.
Professional agency	<p>Is the capacity and commitment and sense of entitlement and responsibility to exercise control over and have a say about the nature and quality of one's life and work;</p>	<p>Participants' stories suggest that awareness of self and articulation of own values and principles of practice are linked to greater agency.</p> <p>Belonging to the learning community and</p>

	Is facilitated by a sense of authenticity in role, self-awareness and articulation of values and principles for practice.	development of professional identity seems linked to greater agency.
Professional autonomy	<p>Is the awareness of and freedom and ability to negotiate, choose, shape and narrate one's values, principles, meanings and approaches to practice in own professional community and context;</p> <p>Is rooted in and sustained by a habit of reflection;</p> <p>Is encouraged by bringing self into the professional role;</p> <p>Is closely linked to professional agency and efficacy.</p>	When conceptualised as Chene does (1983) underpins growth in professional efficacy and agency
Professional knowledge:	Refers to the competence, artistry, expertise and judgment as well as the technically specific formal knowledge and accreditation that enable a professional to meet the expectations of clients and society.	<p>'Professional tools' appear to function as reifications or symbols of professional identity rather than to meet the needs of clients.</p> <p>Contradiction: There is evidence that participants' expectations of acquiring profession specific understanding and knowledge are shaped by an ideology of the professions. They do not expect to be responsible for creating new understanding and knowledge for the profession. Acquiring specific understanding and knowledge is part</p>

		of entry into a profession.
Constructivist conceptual cluster	Summaries	Revision/relationship
Co-construction	<p>(as a verb) Is a process of joint creation by individuals involved in learning and who are engaged in interactive, collaborative, cooperative, democratic and equitable relationships to create shared knowledge and understanding of culturally and contextually meaningful realities;</p> <p>Also involves the creation of experiences that provide learning;</p> <p>(as a noun) Is a shared language or thought or association created or adopted and then can be maintained or evolved by individuals.</p>	<p>No further development of this orienting concept. Little awareness of this amongst participants with the exception of Rashid and Liam.</p> <p>Contradiction: Participants' view of this seems to be coloured by views of education as didactic rather than developing from interactions. They expected to come to be taught rather than create learning.</p> <p>As a noun it is very close to the meaning of reification with the difference that reifications may be purposefully created to facilitate shared meanings.</p>
A story	<p>Is told as an intentional communication and is an interpretive construction through which people represent themselves and their worlds to themselves and to others;</p> <p><i>Can</i> be told in order to link self to the professional role and the professional self to own view of self;</p> <p>Can empower the teller and develop autonomy.</p>	<p>When participants tell their stories of practice they are 'creating' them and are in control of them. Storying offers empowerment and autonomy (as defined by Chene, 1983).</p> <p>Emerging conception: An autobiography of professional identity</p>
Reification	Is a shared repertoire of	Acts of reification create

	<p>representations of abstract, coded or hidden features of professional practice that help a community of practice to negotiate new meanings of their learning, ways to practice and professional identities;</p> <p>Can be taken from the programme and used symbolically to represent professionalism or professional identity.</p>	<p>the conditions for new meanings as well as articulating existing implicit understanding. They seem to be readily adopted as symbolic of the professional role/identity.</p>
Subjective self-conceptualisation in role	<p>Is a process of changes that are visible in own actions that occur to a person's self-schema in relation to a particular role that they are in;</p> <p>Is also visible in the way that the participant portrays self in the role</p> <p>Is reciprocally tied into creation of an autobiography of identity</p>	<p>Connects other concepts in the conceptual cluster and explains how participants personalise social meanings. The other half of the process is to create an autobiography of meanings i.e. portray or represent personal meanings socially and internalise the reactions of others in a story to self.</p>
Learning Community	<p>Is 'a self-reflective community of practitioners – theorists committed to critically examining their own practices and improving them' (Kemmis, 1982 cited in NCSL, 2008: 8);</p> <p>Supplies cognitive, emotional and social support, offers opportunities to identify with others in the learning community and can promote agency and</p>	<p>Members of the learning community can be significant narrators who contribute to the autobiography of professional identity and can be the prime audience to whom stories of identity are told.</p> <p>Can develop the capacity to act with agency to choose the values, principles and terms of reference in professional practice i.e. professional</p>

	autonomy; Can act as a reference group and 'ghost' writers' of identity stories.	autonomy
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CHAPTER 11: Conclusion

The aims of this study are to explore the developing professional identities of NPQICL participants from their own perspectives, focusing on ways in which their professional identities are developing and how these might, correspondingly, be better supported on the NPQICL. In this final chapter, earlier discussion deals directly with the first aim while the second is dealt with directly later. However, often the two aims are realised together since to separate them out would be artificial and tedious.

In terms of its general organisation of material the study has four distinctive features:

1. It asks Children Centre leaders' for their perspectives on participating in a professional learning programme, the NPQICL.
2. Because the role of Children's Centre leader is newly developed it focuses on the development of professional identities for the Children's Centre leader-participants.
3. Whilst foregrounding the perspectives of participants it acknowledges the context with which professional identity development interacts i.e. publicly shaped views of profession, professional and professionalism.
4. It deploys Adaptive Theory and narrative inquiry.

Section 1: Ways in which participants' professional identities are developing

It was realised at the outset that the uncertain professional position of Children's Centre leaders meant it would be hard to predict NPQICL participants' main priorities and concerns. So key orienting concepts and a conceptual cluster were selected following theoretical analysis to interact with research data and help meet research aims. This interaction has been subject to cumulative, on-going scrutiny - an iterative process which has been called here 'thinking theoretically'. Layder (1998:100-101) The total accumulation of this process is identified and shown below.

Figure 8: Cumulative summary of 'thinking theoretically'
(Layder, 1998:100)

End of the study	
Orienting concepts	Summary (with all revisions derived from the data made throughout the study in bold)
Professional identity	<p>Is the perception of oneself as a professional in relation to a particular type of profession or subjective self-conceptualisation in the professional role; Is typically shaped by an ideology of professions;</p> <p>Is constructed in a dialogue between, and blending of, personal and professional self involving awareness of own situated, relative and relational position;</p> <p>Is portrayed to self and others in stories and shared language</p> <p>Has the potential to be changed or developed by learning and related interactions in a professional learning community</p>
Professional learning	<p>Is concerned with an individual's learning and personal capacity set in a professional work context as well as enculturation;</p> <p>Is the transfer of new knowledge and understanding into one's personal and professional practice through reflection and self-awareness and so develops</p>

	<p>professional judgment;</p> <p>Relates to cognitive and emotional learning;</p> <p>Can interact with learners’ self-awareness, priorities, perspectives and inferred meanings as well as how they see themselves;</p> <p>Can develop codified and personal knowledge;</p> <p>May develop the knowledge creation capacity of individuals and professional communities but is not an expectation of the participants from the NPQICL;</p> <p>Can prepare learners for future learning and challenges by exploring own tacit knowledge, new perspectives and world views and developing the habit of reflection;</p> <p>Has the potential to develop participants’ professional agency , efficacy and autonomy</p> <p>The manner of learning and the culture in which it occurs affect dispositions in developing professional identities. In this case an emancipatory context and co-constructive approach predisposed participants to gaining a capable professional identity.</p>
Professional efficacy	<p>Is the general belief held by professionals in own capacities to act and shape the outcomes, nature and quality of their lives and work in order to fulfil the requirements of their professional roles to standards consistent with their constructs of professionalism, as well as being the cause of their choice to do so;</p> <p>Includes an individual’s belief in own resilience;</p> <p>Is encouraged by a sense of validation of self by the learning community;</p> <p>Has a positive relationship with growth of belief and trust in others with whom they work.</p>
Professional agency	<p>Is the capacity and commitment and sense of entitlement and responsibility to exercise control over and have a say about the nature and quality of</p>

	<p>one's life and work;</p> <p>Is facilitated by a sense of authenticity in role, self-awareness and articulation of values and principles for practice.</p>
Professional autonomy	<p>Is the awareness of and freedom and ability to negotiate, choose, shape and narrate one's values, principles, meanings and approaches to practice in own professional community and context;</p> <p>Is rooted in and sustained by a habit of reflection;</p> <p>Is encouraged by bringing self into the professional role;</p> <p>Is closely linked to professional agency and efficacy.</p>
New key orienting concept: Professional knowledge	<p>Refers to the competence, artistry, expertise and judgment as well as the technically specific formal knowledge and accreditation that enable a professional to meet the expectations of clients and society;</p> <p>Has the potential to exert ideological pressure on individual professionals. There is evidence that participants' expectations of acquiring profession specific understanding and knowledge are affected by an ideology of the professions. This may be linked to evidence of the imposter phenomenon (Clance and O'Toole, 1987) and would warrant further research.</p>
Constructivist conceptual cluster	Summaries
Co-construction	<p>(as a verb) Is a process of joint creation by individuals involved in learning and who are engaged in interactive, collaborative, cooperative, democratic and equitable relationships to create shared knowledge and understanding of culturally and contextually meaningful realities;</p> <p>Also involves the creation of experiences that provide learning;</p> <p>(as a noun) Is a shared language or thought or association created or adopted and then can be maintained or evolved by individuals.</p>
New key	Is told as an intentional communication and is

<p>element of the conceptual cluster: A story</p>	<p>an interpretive construction through which people represent themselves and their worlds to themselves and to others;</p> <p>Can be told in order to link self to the professional role and the professional self to own view of self;</p> <p>Can empower the teller and develop autonomy.</p>
<p>Reification</p>	<p>Is a shared repertoire of representations of abstract, coded or hidden features of professional practice that help a community of practice to negotiate new meanings of their learning, ways to practice and professional identities;</p> <p>Can be taken from the programme and used symbolically to represent professionalism or professional identity.</p>
<p>Subjective self-conceptualisation in role</p>	<p>Is a process of changes that are visible in own actions that occur to a person's self-schema in relation to a particular role that they are in;</p> <p>Is also visible in the way that the participant portrays self in the role;</p> <p>Is reciprocally tied into creation of an 'autobiography of identity'.</p>
<p>Learning Community</p>	<p>Is 'a self-reflective community of practitioners – theorists committed to critically examining their own practices and improving them' (Kemmis, 1982 cited in NCSL, 2008: 8);</p> <p>Supplies cognitive, emotional and social support, and offers opportunities to identify with others in the learning community and can promote agency and autonomy;</p> <p>Can act as a reference group and 'ghost' writers' of identity stories.</p>
<p>New key element of the conceptual cluster: An autobiography of professional identity</p>	<p>Brings together the personal and professional;</p> <p>Characterises the way that individual participants are agents in the construction of individual and shared senses of an identity for Children's Centre leaders as well as recipients who internalise ideological and socio-cultural theories of being a professional;</p>

	<p>Names the way that participants both hear themselves think and co-construct their understanding and reifications of shared meaning of <i>being</i> a Children’s Centre leader in order to fulfil the role and <i>become</i> a capable Children’s Centre leader;</p> <p>Characterises the agency of individual professional learners who conceptualise themselves in the professional role drawing on socio-cultural and ideological conceptions of professional but also bring their personal selves to the role by creating professional identity stories for newly introduced Children’s Centre leaders.</p>
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The participants’ stories show that the NPQICL had an impact on their professional identities and their empowerment in their roles. Personal and professional changes feature as strong dynamics identified by them in their accounts. Participants recall their lack of clarity and certainty about their roles as Children Centre Leaders prior to the programme and offer their perspectives of how this changed during and after it. As the research unfolded a relationship between professional learning and professional agency, efficacy and autonomy and the development of professional identity emerged. The participants’ stories clarify the part played by co-construction in the programme and its role in their professional identity development. They also present gains in professional agency, efficacy and autonomy as outcomes of participants’ learning that help them co-construct their Children’s Centre leader professional identities. Such outcomes are particularly important for the construction of professional identities for this group of professional learners whose roles are uncertain and ambiguous.

Empowerment in role

Despite identifying themselves as 'imposters' (Clance and Imes, 1978; Clance and O'Toole, 1987) at the start of the programme, all participants tell how they have felt empowered in their roles, seeing themselves as more capable professionals since the programme. Even Jackie, who is planning to leave her centre as soon as possible, is doing so because she feels stronger and clearer about her professional autonomy. The main source and nature of this empowerment varies. For Rashid, Sally, Ursel and Kay their NPQICL learning communities are particularly important support networks that continue to enable them. For John, Ann and Kay experiencing success on the programme increases their professional efficacy substantially. Liam, Jackie, Henk and Katy find the challenges to their thinking and practice in the NPQICL change their way of working as a Children Centre Leaders and for Henk this change makes it sustainable. For Katy, John, Elaine, Sue, and Viv, what changes for them is a sense of validation and sense of greater authenticity in their roles. Dee, Viv and Jackie develop their professional agency in specific ways, Dee and Viv are taking charge and are working in a wider context and Jackie has decided to move on from her post to lead in her chosen way.

The stories show how participants were empowered to take actions in their roles (professional agency) by articulating and sharing their values and principles as Children's Centre leaders (professional autonomy) and by believing in their capacity to achieve tasks (professional efficacy). The pedagogy and culture of the NPQICL, especially the opportunities to engage in co-constructive dialogue and develop stories of their practice with fellow members of the learning community, predisposed them to developing a *capable* professional identity.

Professional identity

In their stories participants report that they are clearer about and more comfortable in their professional identities than prior to the NPQICL programme. Success on the NPQICL empowers participants to feel on a par with other professionals with whom they are engaged in their work. They tell how the learning approach of the NPQICL, the activities, experiences, reflection, focus on self and interactions with trusted others in the learning community lead to self-awareness and authenticity in their leadership roles.

NPQICL participants construct explicit responses to and meaning-making from the learning activities and curriculum. This is important to them because, as post holders in newly developed roles, there is so little to draw on beyond the programme and the learning community of fellow Children Centre leaders. While they are learning in this community, the participants co-create representations or reifications of their learning responses and meaning-making. They adopt these as symbols of their distinctive professionalism and metaphors for the conceptual knowledge of Children's Centre leaders. These distinctive symbols mediate and are mediated by a publicly shaped view of 'profession', 'professional' and professionalism as having exclusive knowledge and understanding. Participants report that the programme also offers them some professional 'tools' that can be used in their work-places. Their professional identities are strengthened and defined by these 'tools' which are not just useful but symbolic of their new profession. The representations and professional tools become a shared story that helps participants to create a shared professional identity that, in turn, diminishes their role uncertainty and ambiguity and promotes their sense of authenticity in their roles. Taking the shared story,

characterised by capability i.e. professional efficacy, agency, autonomy and resilience, back to their Children's Centres shapes their view of their professional identities.

Nasir argues: 'learning creates identity, and identity creates learning' (Nasir, 2002: 239). Participants' *learning* from the NPQICL creates the professional efficacy, agency and autonomy they need in order to work in ambiguous and uncertain roles. As a result they begin to conceptualise themselves in their roles as capable and *working* in a professionally efficacious, agentic and autonomous way. That 'story to work by' shapes their emergent professional identities. As participants become more self-aware and agentic, the gap between their personal and professional selves narrows.

The emerging story of their professional identity becomes an '*autobiography of professional identity*' in which they conceptualise themselves in their roles and then shape the stories that portray their own practice and the practice of fellow Children's Centre leaders. Part of the autobiography is 'written' by participants' emerging professional autonomy as they realise and articulate their personal and professional values and principles influencing the ways they worked. Another part is 'written' by participants' personal and professional agency and efficacy which empowers them to engage differently in their work by enhancing both their learning and their meaning-making from their practice and then use them in their practice.

Section 2: How might the developing professional identities of Children's Centre leaders be better supported on the NPQICL?

One way participants create their Children's Centre leaders identities is by constructing a discourse of concepts and

reifications, in effect, an emergent professional discourse for Children's Centre leadership. The pedagogical approach of the programme facilitates this. The shift of power from the tutor-facilitators to participants as learners is real, perhaps of necessity, when the area of work has been so recently developed and is largely unknown to tutors. Thus the dynamic in the learning community is authentic: tutor-facilitators and mentors are learning alongside the participants (Isaacs and Trodd, 2008).

Tutor-facilitators and mentors need to be alert to the possibility that professional learners may be in search of symbols of their professionalism. Sometimes these symbols may be adopted from programme materials and sometimes they may be co-constructed by participants. Sometimes they are drawn from publicly shaped views of what it means to be a professional. It is important that tutors are respectful and sensitive to the meanings that participants give to such symbols, support the processes in which they are negotiated and created, and also to seek to recognise the symbols and adopt them as part of the discourse of the programme.

Professional learning for these Children's Centre leaders

The discovery of the implications of this research for professional learning is a large part of its rationale. Some of the findings of this study could apply to any type of learners in any circumstances. However, the distinctive focus here is to identify any implications for professional learners in *newly developed roles*, in which post-holders are uncertain about their professional identities and have little or no clarity about what is expected of them and what they should expect of themselves.

Analysis of these stories suggests that participants created and exploited learning opportunities in the NPQICL to meet their

professional needs to construct professional identities for themselves as a Children Centre Leaders. This use of the programme for their own professional needs is evident when, because of their lack of certainty about the role of the Children's Centre leader, participants are far more interested in the similarities amongst the cohort than the exploration of interprofessional differences and understanding that was intended by NCSL.

The participants are able to co-construct their responses to activities and curriculum content and so ensure their learning is authentic and meets their professional needs. This suggests that both a constructivist pedagogy and facilitation of learning in a learning community can be an invaluable part of a professional learning programme for participants who are uncertain of or are undergoing a transition in their professional identity. When learners lead their own learning it makes it more likely that it becomes relevant to them and their work role. When they learn in a learning community there is an opportunity for them to 'write' shared stories to work by or *autobiographies of their professional identities* that become their professional identities.

Professional efficacy

Participants report experiences that show their professional efficacy has increased and they have begun to see themselves as capable and expect others to see them that way too. In particular, their professional efficacy has grown because they have learned that, with a professional network and increased self-understanding, they can overcome challenges and so be resilient in the face of challenges and changes. Affirmation, acceptance and support from other participants and mentors are

reported as very important to the processes of gaining self-understanding and developing a sense of a capable identity.

Learning from observing the problem-solving and coping strategies of other participants in the learning community has increased their professional efficacy. Through dialogue with other Children's Centre leaders, participants have learned that they know more than they had realised both individually and collectively. They learn to accept that through reflection and discussion in the learning community they can draw on some of the tacit knowledge, intuition and professional artistry needed in their roles. As Bandura states, 'The locus of perceived collective efficacy resides in the minds of group members' (Bandura, 2000:76).

For most participants, achieving their qualification confirms their status as a member of a profession and put them on a par with other professionals. It also serves as an objective measure of their capacity for their role. This is sustained by the way the programme offers participants 'mastery experiences' (Bandura, 1977; 1986; 2001) that confirm their knowledge and status.

Professional agency

The participants' stories do not invoke an 'unencumbered self' - one who, with adequate knowledge, is free and independent, entirely self-determining (Sandel, 1984) - nor a 'sovereign self', the self as an independent, isolated free agent thinking and acting independently of any and all influences (Richardson et al., 1998). Anderson's (1996) description of the 'activative' individual is closest to the meaning of professional agency threaded through the participants' stories. Anderson defines the activative individual as, 'an artful co-conspirator who materializes collective resources of action in local and partial performances within the

realm of his or her own agency' (Anderson, 1996: 90). Anderson sees agency as 'dialogic participation' (Anderson, 1996:91). In his concept of agency the self is neither a unity nor a fixed entity. It comes into being 'in action' and develops ontological and personal dimensions of the construct of professionalism. Anderson sees agency as fundamental to the professionalism which defines a profession's identity.

Participants report occasions on the programme and later in their roles when they are aware of taking charge, giving themselves permission to act and realising that there was no more experienced expert to call on. The co-constructive opportunities in the programme encourage them to be responsible for their own learning and the consequent growth in confidence in their own resilience adds to a growth in their professional agency.

Professional autonomy

The participants' professional autonomy may be diminished by experiencing mismatches with the publicly shaped expectations of professionalism described in Chapter 2. From engaging in the programme participants become persuaded that they have previously unknown professional resources and expertise and they become more aware of their tacit knowledge, intuition, professional artistry and expertise. They begin to realise that their existing publicly shaped concepts of professionalism, criticised by Geison as failing to mirror the diversity and range of what is seen (Geison, 1983), are predisposing them to the so-called 'imposter syndrome'. Through dialogue and reflection in the learning communities they start to see that their Children's Centre roles require a different professionalism, closer to new constructs of professional applicable to work with children, variously described as the activist (Sachs, 2001, 2003²) or

democratic (Oberhuemer, 2005) or dialogical professional (Rinaldi, 2006) or worker as researcher (Moss, 2006).

A view of professional autonomy as choosing the values and principles by which decisions and actions as a professional are taken, is used in this study. If this view is taken as a defining feature of professionalism, it will be closely allied to the development of professional identity. When participants express perspectives related to 'moving from cable to wireless', they are describing how they have grown more aware of their values and principles through self-awareness and are more aware of the values and principles of other Children's Centre leaders through learning in a learning community. Having the opportunity to narrate the values and principles upon which to act autonomously is associated with storying and so developing their professional identities.

Professional efficacy, agency and autonomy

In order to analyse the data professional agency, professional autonomy and professional efficacy are considered separately. However, Bandura argues against separating concepts in this way. His view is that such acts are: 'replete with contentious dualisms that social cognitive theory rejects' (Bandura, 2000:77). Although the three concepts are used in the analysis separately they are intertwined, inseparable, 'deeply interconnected and mutually defining' (Wenger, 1998: 5²) and this is confirmed in the multiple, reciprocal relationships seen in the data.

Should tutors consider promotion of personal and professional efficacy, agency and autonomy as a valid aim for professional learning programmes, it would require them to pay attention to:

- the type of feedback that they give to students;
- the balance of opportunities for group interaction versus teacher directed and led activities;
- opportunities for observational learning of peers;
- recognition of a holistic view of learners that acknowledges their learning as emotional as well as cognitive and social.

Professional knowledge

Adaptive Theory allows for an orienting concept or part of an orienting concept to be introduced or disregarded according to its resonance with the data. There is nothing in the stories that suggests functional competences and technically specific formal knowledge shapes the professional identity of the participants. However the concept of professional knowledge features in the data in relation to aspects of other orienting concepts, for instance, 'professional tools' that are so highly valued by participants and occur so frequently in the data, are identity-defining and symbolic of professionalism acting as reifications. Participants value the recognition that gaining the NPQICL and 60 master's level credits brings as an accreditation. Having it enhances their confidence and professional efficacy but they do not appear to recognise the course as having developed their competence or technical formal knowledge in a narrow sense.

Earlier in the study it was noted that formalisation and specification of professional knowledge and understanding can be a means by which pressure from publicly shaped views can be exerted on individual professionals. There is no evidence of any effect like that on participants with regard to competence or technical formal knowledge. However, there is evidence that participants associate professionalism with the acquisition of qualifications and that holding professional qualifications helps

them to be perceived and perceive themselves as having similar status to headteachers and other service leaders. The stories show that participants felt empowered by being able to take 'professional tools' back to their centres and that having the NPQICL as a qualification and also some distinctive approaches to their work set them apart as a member of an *exclusive* profession. In this regard participants are complying with a publicly shaped view of becoming and being a professional.

The constructivist conceptual cluster

The elements of the conceptual cluster: co-construction, a story, reification, subjective self-conceptualisation in role and learning community are used to interact with the data in order to explore the way that participants make sense of what they know about becoming and being a professional that is mostly drawn from a publicly shaped discourse of profession and professionalism. They internalise that discourse whilst adapting it and reconceiving it in their own terms. The concepts prove to be effective as a way of understanding this. Uncertainty and ambiguity about their roles as Children's Centre leaders predisposes participants to discuss them in the *learning community*. As they narrate *stories* to each other about their experiences in their roles they are seeking similarities in the way being a Children's Centre leader is being enacted and experienced by another. At the same time they draw on publicly shaped views of professionalism to interpret them.

When participants report that they feel less like impostors and of a similar status to other professionals such as headteachers, they are doing so by measuring themselves against other professionals using the publicly shaped discourse outlined in Chapter 2. However, because there are no readymade constructs

of the newly developed role of the Children's Centre leader, participants created one together as they interacted with each other. They engaged in a process of *subjective self-conceptualisation in their role* as a Children's Centre leader and *co-constructed* representations (*reifications*) from their experiences of the NPQICL, their professional tools (knowledge and skills) and of their role so that they had shared *stories* of how to be a Children's Centre leader. The participants' stories show that they were woven from publicly shaped views of *profession, professional and professionalism*, the specialist 'tools' of a Children's Centre leader and professional experiences and personal perspectives derived from their individual, experiences, histories and ways of being in the world. The resulting autobiography of professional identity is both a blended product and also ongoing process of synthesis, negotiation, conception and reconception of what being a Children's Centre leader is.

Personal and professional links

Emotional, cognitive and social elements of learning are inseparable in the stories. The participants' professional identities are intertwined with their personal identities. They do not recount any confusion between personal and professional boundaries when working with their service users (Pugh, 2007). Their stories show that they feel that their personal selves and their professional selves grow closer as a result of the programme, for example, they report that the NPQICL has brought them to a closer match between the appearance of being confident in their role and the reality of how they feel. Participants see development of feelings of 'rightness' and 'realness' of their personal selves in their Children's Centre roles as closely linked to their sense of having the capacity to do the job. Growth in *personal* self-efficacy sustains growth in

professional efficacy and achievements on the NPQICL appear to lead to wider, more general efficacy beliefs relating to aspects of their role as Children's Centre leaders and their personal selves beyond the programme.

The concept of an autobiography of professional identity brings together the personal and professional. It characterises the way that individual participants are agents in the construction of individual and shared senses of an identity for Children's Centre leaders as well as recipients who internalise publicly shaped theories of being a professional. Furthermore it names the way that participants both hear themselves think and co-construct their understanding and reifications of shared meaning of *being* a Children's Centre leader in response to real or internalised significant others in order to fulfil the role and *become* capable Children's Centre leaders. It also characterises the agency of individual professional learners who conceptualise themselves in the professional role by creating professional identity stories for newly introduced Children's Centre leaders drawing on publicly shaped conceptions of professional but also bring their personal selves to the role.

Section 3: Contributions to knowledge and practice

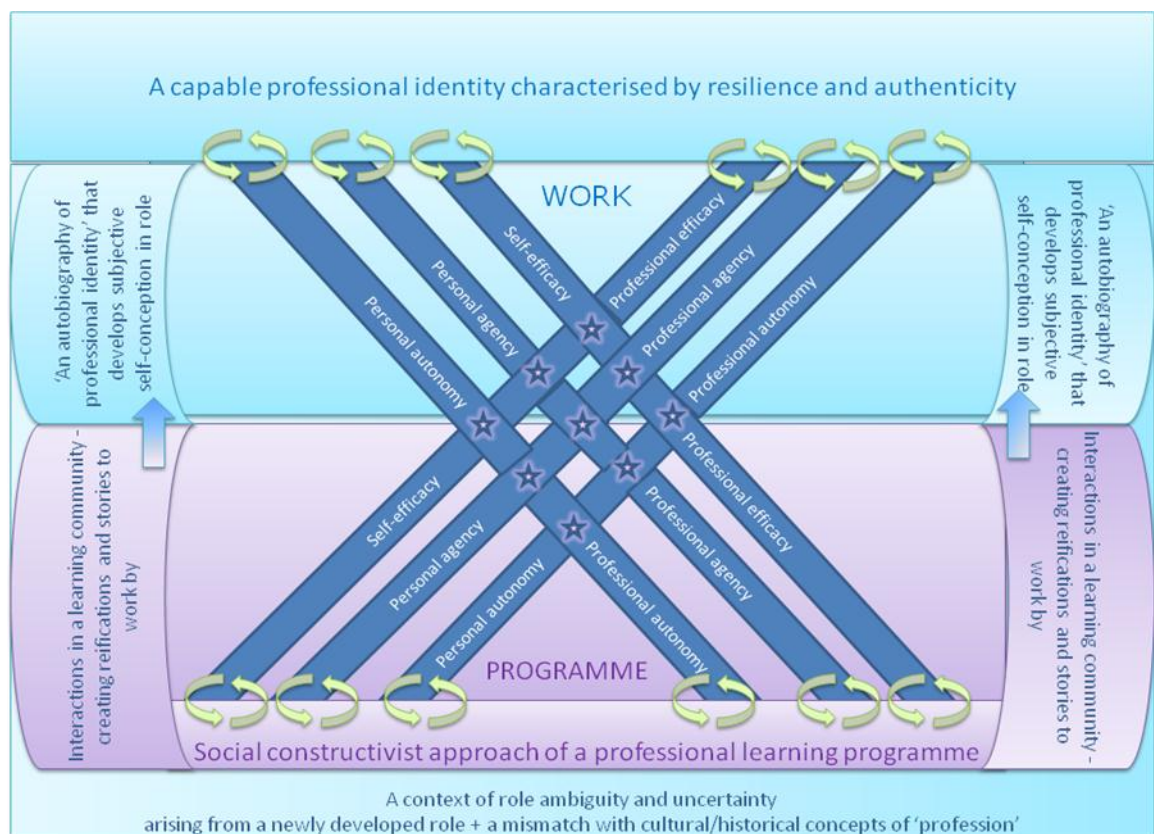
The aim of this study is to explore the developing professional identities of NPQICL participants from their own perspectives, focusing on ways in which their professional identities are developing and how these might, correspondingly, be better supported on the NPQICL. There are three contributions to knowledge and practice that have emerged from this research:

1. The relationship between professional learning and professional identity especially where there is professional

role uncertainty and ambiguity (portrayed in a diagram- Figure 9)

2. A concept of an 'autobiography of professional identity' 'written' as part of professional learning
3. Some implications for consideration by tutors who are working on NPQICL programmes especially when students are in newly developed roles and need support in developing their professional identities.

Figure 9: The relationships between professional learning and professional identity in the NPQICL



The relationships between professional learning and professional identity in the NPQICL

The participants' stories illustrate a link between professional learning and professional identity showing how access to a

professional learning programme that espoused a social constructivist pedagogy enabled participants to move from identities linked to their previous professional heritages to professional identities of leaders of Children's Centres. The circumstances were unusual because the participants had to create a shared professional identity for Children's Centre leaders in general whilst undertaking the role. In addition they had to create a professional identity for themselves as individuals whilst working as a Children's Centre leader. Participants developed personal and professional efficacy, efficacy and autonomy during the programme through their interactions in their cohort's learning community. Their stories document how this occurred. Figure 9 represents participants' views of those particular, dynamic relationships in their experiences that they think supported their identity formation as related by them in their interviews and assignments.

Resilience and a sense of authenticity are developed as participants tell their stories of practice and personal experience to fellow members of their learning communities and to themselves. As they develop reflexivity and self-awareness through telling their stories and reflecting-on-action, they are 'surfacing' and making more explicit the values and principles by which their decisions and actions as a professional are taken. This leads to increased professional autonomy as defined in this study. The stories of practice and personal experience are internalised (subjective self-conceptualisation in role) and re-articulated (in autobiographies of professional identity) and so prepare for reflection-in-action. This leads to self-beliefs in having the capacity and resources to fulfil and continue in the role of Children's Centre leader.

The concept of an 'autobiography of professional identity'

The development of professional identity in the NPQICL is named an 'autobiography of professional identity' 'written' during professional learning. It offers a way of building on the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1999) who argue for 'stories to live by' as formative in personal identities. The term, 'autobiography of professional identity', is useful in characterising the links between personal learning and understanding with professional learning, understanding and practice. It complements the concept of subjective self-conceptualisation in role by explaining the social dimension of how Children's Centre leaders co-construct a blend of their personal and professional selves. It acknowledges both the agency and self-efficacy of individual Children's Centre leaders and the role of publicly shaped views of professions and professionals in developing their professional identities. The autobiographies of professional identity are 'written' by drawing on both of these sources as participants tell stories of their practice in their NPQICL learning communities.

When attention is paid to the way participants convey their thoughts and feelings as well as what they say, their stories show how they explore the meaning of both their encounters with other Children's Centre leaders and their learning about the theory and practice from the NPQICL using figurative language, often creatively. They identify reifications and professional tools to develop subjective self-conceptualisation in their professional roles. Their stories of experience become both individual autobiographies of professional identity and a shared discourse of conceptualisation of the general professional identity of Children's Centre leaders. Both their success on the programme and the generation of specialist understanding and learning in

the learning community act as 'effective efficacy builders' (Bandura, 1995:4). Participants begin to create autobiographies of professional identities that are capable, resilient and authentic despite the indeterminate, uncertain nature of the role of Children's Centre leader.

Possible implications for NPQICL tutors

Some suggestions for consideration by tutors working on NPQICL programmes are offered below. They might be especially useful when students are in newly developed roles and need support in developing their professional identities.

Participants in a professional learning programme have the capacity to:

- create and exploit learning opportunities to meet their professional needs to develop professional identities for themselves when their roles are ambiguous or uncertain;
- co-construct their responses to activities and curriculum content and so ensure their learning is authentic and meets their professional needs when they are facilitated to
 - become aware of own learning
 - be actively responsible for and agentic in choosing what to learn, how to learn and the pace of the learning
 - experience a shift of power from the tutor-facilitators to learners
 - perceive the experiences they bring with them to the programme as valued
 - perceive own learning as more important than the prescribed objectives of the programme

- lead their own learning so it becomes relevant to them and their work role and so is authentic.
- 'write' shared stories to work by or *autobiographies of their professional identities* (when they learn in a learning community) that *become their professional identities*
- contribute to the development of a professional discourse. One way this can be supported is when tutors are respectful and sensitive to the representations of meaning that participants create and seek to recognise them and adopt them as part of the discourse of the programme
- diminish own emotional and physiological arousal through a process of naming (including learning about relevant theories and concepts) and so detoxifying challenges, anxieties and uncertainties
- generalise from task specific self-efficacy to wider professional efficacy

Tutors in a professional learning programme have the capacity to support the professional development of participants who are in indeterminate, uncertain roles by:

- being aware that conversations taking place between participants are contributing to an autobiography of professional identity

- considering promotion of personal and professional efficacy, agency and autonomy as a valid aim for such programmes;
- paying attention to the types of feedback they give to students so that they promote professional efficacy, agency and autonomy;
- paying attention to the balance of opportunities for group interaction versus teacher led activities and opportunities for observational learning of peers;
- adopting a holistic view of learners that acknowledges their learning is emotional as well as cognitive and social

Section 4: Reflections on this qualitative study

Use of Layder's Adaptive Theory (1998)

Approaching this research using Adaptive Theory offers several advantages. One is its capacity to acknowledge increasing complexity as Layder (1998) writes: 'social reality is variegated rather than uniform in nature' (p. 176). This is particularly important in a complex and fluid subject area concerned with ambiguous and uncertain professional roles and identities. Another advantage is because Adaptive Theory does not presuppose that 'social reality can be understood by reference to some single unifying principle or feature...' (p. 176), it allows the researcher the maximum flexibility and freedom to be concerned with 'a partly pre-constituted universe of objects as well as aspects of social reality produced by the active doings of subjects' (p. 177). In addition, there is an advantage in being encouraged to theorise at all stages of researching and to see all

theory as 'interim products' (p. 178) Finally, because Adaptive Theory encourages acknowledgement of prior experience and understanding of the subject in question on one hand whilst encouraging the generation of theory from the data on the other, researching has always felt authentic and real, not a predetermined game with a fixed set of rules. Consequently it has felt particularly worthwhile and exciting. As an approach it promotes the agency and creativity of the researcher.

I did not use Layder's (1998) Adaptive Theory slavishly but rather adapted elements and used it as a guide in this research. Using orienting concepts to adopt a sensitising function to shape the data gathering and analysis has proved fairly easy to put into effect but it has proved more difficult to identify clear ways that the orienting concepts have adopted the function of being 'sensitive' and so changed by the data.

Adaptive Theory was selected because it offered an approach that was as complex, fluid and creative as the perspectives of the participants in the research. Its appeal was that it was realistic because it did not bind the researcher into an ontological pledge but it allowed the research process to be honest about theoretical influences. The manner in which the theories and concepts are used acknowledges that they shape and are shaped by the world and that what is known is shaped by how it is known. However, the benefits it has brought as an approach are also some of its frustrations. Layder (1998) stresses the 'open-ended nature of adaptive theorizing' (p. 175). It is an attractive feature that leaves plenty of room for the perspectives of participants to drive the research. Nevertheless at this end point of the inquiry, it is necessary to come to a halt and take stock of what the application of Adaptive Theory has offered as an

approach. It does not bring about a sense of completeness of the research. Layder does not supply guidance about when the theoretical development is sufficiently developed. There is a strong sense of there being much more that could be realised from the data and further incremental cycles of analysis and revisions to the orienting concepts and conceptual cluster.

The nature of Adaptive Theory is to encourage changes of emphases or 'slants' (Layder, 1998:104) and to move between perspectives in what Weick (1995) calls 'ontological oscillation' (p. 35) and to generate multiple perspectives on the data. However this can be confusing and creates difficulties in developing a coherent, cumulative argument. Many lines of exploration have to be started and then abandoned. For instance, in this study the perspectives of participants do not yield a view of what makes professional learning professional except by implication. Although Adaptive Theory expects some lines of exploration to develop areas that strengthen and emerge unexpectedly, it is difficult for the researcher to prioritise and select a path through the plethora of opportunities that present themselves. The relationship between induction and deduction can be confused especially as Layder does not supply clear guidance on all aspects of the Adaptive Theory approach. Orienting and sensitising concepts are not clearly differentiated for instance. In this study they were deliberately conflated as a result.

As Layder predicts (1998:174) tracking the orienting concepts and conceptual cluster through the analysis offers some interesting if imperfect and incomplete theoretical insights. The first is how reciprocal the concepts are. This is particularly striking with regard to professional agency, efficacy and

autonomy but also in relation to co-construction of reifications and stories used to represent professional identities. Two smaller insights also relate to professional agency and efficacy: first, growth of professional agency is linked to authenticity in the professional role in the sense of closing the gap between professional and personal selves and also overcoming a belief of being unworthy or an impostor; second, an aspect of professional efficacy identified by participants is that it includes resilience or belief in own capacity to continue, even when there are difficulties.

Another insight is into the dynamics in learning within a professional learning community that can facilitate professional identity development. This concept of a learning community goes much further than that offered by Kemmis (1982 cited in NCSL, 2008:9). It includes co-construction of professional identity and can function as peer support and reference group long after a programme has officially ended.

One area of interest at the beginning of the research was to explore what happens when publicly shaped discourses of being a professional meet individual agency in professional learning. The research identified *autobiographies of professional identity* constructed from individual and group agency, efficacy and autonomy and publicly shaped discourses of being a professional as defining features of professionalism. Green (2006:171) referencing Bird, notes, 'in a setting where meaning and knowledge are jointly constructed among co-participants learning becomes social practice'. What the participants' stories relate is how they internalise and relate their professional role to their personal selves (subjective self-conceptualisation in role). They show how stories of personal and professional practice and

experience are told (autobiographies of professional identity) to others in order to revise and refine them with other significant narrators and listeners (members of their learning community) and in the context of publicly shaped discourses of being a professional.

Surprises and contradictions in the analysis

Amongst the surprises and contradictions found in the data are:

1. Rinaldi's notion of professionalism as relational holds true but these participants sought similarities rather than embracing and welcoming differences in the 'Other' as dialogic professionals in the way suggested by Rinaldi (2006:15).
2. Participants did not see interprofessionalism as significant in their experience of learning on the NPQCL because their need and first priority was to focus on what united the participants i.e. what it is to be a Children's Centre leader
3. Participants did not expect or recognise activities as creating new knowledge for the professional domain of Children's Centre leaders because they came into the programme expecting to be taught
4. Even when participants recognised the benefits of a more 'adult' experience of learning in which they took responsibility offered by the NPQICL, some of them longed for a didactic approach and felt it was more suited to their needs.
5. Bandura's (1982) argument that somatic (physiological and emotional feedback) information is weakest in its effect on efficacy development was not confirmed by the

participants' stories. Emotional aspects of learning were significant to participants. The reality for the NPQICL participants is that emotional, cognitive and social learning processes are inseparable and equally important. It is especially interesting that some participants report that learning about theories and concepts diminishes their emotional and physiological arousal through a process of naming and detoxifying challenges, anxieties and uncertainties. This strengthens the argument for including such knowledge in professional learning programmes. When tutors relate theories and concepts to the curriculum area, they are not just contributing to a working vocabulary and way of thinking that promotes problem-solving and shapes professional identities but such theories and concepts can create resilience in professional learners.

6. The high importance that participants gave to 'professional tools' (professional knowledge) in terms of shaping their professional identity and promoting their professional efficacy and agency was unexpected. What was defined as a professional tool was very varied, ranging from 'confidence' to techniques to manage groups of people in meetings to role-specific terms.
7. There is some evidence that developing their own professional efficacy is associated with growth of belief and trust in others with whom participants' work. It would have been interesting to pursue this theme but it was necessary to leave it for another time.

Trustworthiness

Reissman (1993:64) urges researchers to seek 'trustworthiness', not 'truth' from 'narrativisation'. Whilst 'truth' assumes that

there is an objective reality, trustworthiness corresponds to socially constructed realities by people for people. Reissman suggests four criteria for validity in an enquiry drawing on narratives;

1. persuasiveness (is it reasonable and convincing?),
2. correspondence (can it be taken back to the researched?)
3. coherence (does it provide a coherent picture of the situation described?)
4. pragmatism (to what extent can it be acted on?)

The research outcomes meet all four criteria. There is evidence for meeting the criteria of persuasiveness and correspondence because findings of the research have been checked with a sample of participants. There are grounds for confidence in terms of the criterion of coherence because, although the study was complex and explored a complex, fluid situation, in general the data and key background and orienting concepts confirmed and extended each other. The criterion of pragmatism can be shown as met because I am already using some of the findings in my own professional work, not least in the importance I give to facilitating a learning community and opportunities for students to narrate stories of their practice to each other.

Section 5: Suggestions for future research

This study is small in scale and leaves room for more research in this area. Additional qualitative studies could include a longitudinal study in which students are followed from entrance to exit of the programme and then for 2 to 3 years afterwards. What happens to these autobiographies of professional identities or 'stories to work by' beyond the time period covered by this study is not yet known.

This research could further clarify the impact of professional learning on professional identities and investigate whether the NPQICL has a long term impact (in the view of participants) and how long contacts between NPQICL learning communities last once the programmes end.

An important issue arose with regard to the effect of publicly shaped views of being a professional on participants' perceptions of themselves as 'impostors'. Further research should explore whether and how far these perceptions are caused by a gap between their self-perceptions and the wider publicly shaped views of being a professional.

Future research should also examine the impact the NPQICL has or does not have. Firstly, whether there is a difference in the retention and attrition of Children's Centre leaders who participate in the NPQICL versus those who do not. Secondly, research should discover whether the NPQICL has an impact on engagement of Children's Centre leaders in further professional learning and find out whether there a difference in engagement in professional learning for individuals who participate in the NPQICL versus those who do not.

In addition it would be interesting to explore the sources of the reifications created and adopted by professionals without an existing discourse for their professional domain. There is some evidence in this data indicating that such professionals use every day and common sense realities to symbolise professional meanings.

The importance of learning in a learning community composed of fellow Children's Centre leaders is clear in the participants' stories. Additional insight would be gained if further research

focussed on whether interaction in an online learning community of Children's Centre leaders supports professional identity construction in the same way or whether participants find it less easy to risk exposure of their personal experiences and views in such contexts.

72, 421 words

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APPENDIX 1: Ethical commitment and permission letters

APPROACH LETTER

University of Hertfordshire

Full contact details

Date

Dear

I am carrying out a research study into the kinds of learning and teaching that best develop and support Higher Education students who are working in new roles in the Children's Workforce. As you are someone who is working in a Children's Centre/Children's Services and are undertaking the NPQICL as a student, I am writing to ask you if you would be willing to take part in the research.

Naturally you will want to know what would be involved so that you can decide if you are willing to be a subject in the research. I have outlined the commitment below but if you email me (l.trodd@herts.ac.uk) I would be very happy to talk about it over the phone as well.

What would be required from you?

If you agreed to participate it would mean that I would

1. Meet with you or phone you to explain the research further
2. Ask you to allow me to reread parts of your NPICL assignments and analyse them in relation to my research interests
3. Interview you about your learning and record the interview
4. Check with you that the interview transcript and themes I note in your responses are correct in your view

Other matters for your consideration:

Participation in my research is entirely voluntary and can be ended at any time.

The research project would be developed as a dissertation in order to fulfill the requirements of a Professional Doctorate so it would be read by my supervisors, examiners and a wider audience. Confidentiality about your name and setting and other personal details would be maintained, your contributions would be anonymised and all data would be stored in the manner required by the Data Protection Act. However, I would be giving reports on the progress of my research to

internal and external research groups and if the research yields useful outcomes I would like to publish it more widely.

Every effort would be made to minimise the bureaucratic burden to you so that participation in the research did not demand undue amounts of your time and energy.

At no time would there be any prejudice to your study for the NPQICL. The processes of achieving the NPQICL and participating in the research would be entirely separate. One would not influence the outcome of the other.

Why you might like to consider offering to become a participant in my research study?

I hope that you would like to participate in my research because my aim is to explore the nature of learning that suits new roles in the Children's Workforce in order disseminate my findings to enable educators and trainers to respond to some of the current professional learning challenges faced by members of the Children's Workforce. There may be some more immediate benefits to you from being a participant in the research. For example, participating in someone else's research may support you in your own research that is required for the NPQICL and other courses, by making you more aware of the aims and processes of research. In addition, the focus on the reflection may support your professional development

Please would you let me know whether you are willing to offer to become a participant in my research project or not, by completing the attached form and returning it to me in the stamped addressed envelope by (date).

Thank you very much for reading this letter.

Yours sincerely,

CONSENT FORM (1)

Research into professional learning for Children's Centre Leaders

by Lyn Trodd

Name:

Contact address:

Contact telephone number:

Contact e-mail address:

I am willing to become a participant in the research as described in the information letter sent to me. YES/NO

I am not willing to become a participant in the research as described in the information letter sent to me. YES/NO

CONSENT FORM (2)

**Thank you for agreeing to be a participant in my research.
Please would you complete the form below.**

Please circle your answer.

I have read the Information Sheet and have had details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.
YES/NO

I understand I have the right to withdrawn from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions. **YES/NO**

I agree to provide information to the researcher[s] on the understanding that my name will not be used nor will my setting be identified unless I give permission for this to happen. **YES/NO**

I understand that information in the study will only be used for this research and for publications that might arise from this research project. **YES/NO**

I agree to the interview being recorded on a tape recording device so that it can be transcribed. **YES/NO**

I understand that I have the right to ask for the recording equipment to be turned off at any time during the interview. **YES/NO**

I confirm I am over 16 years of age. **YES/NO**

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet. **YES/NO**

Signed.....

Name.....

Date.....

APPENDIX 2: Semi-structured interview questions

I am at Children's Centre with XXXXXXXX

This is Lyn Trodd. It is the XX of XXXX in 20XX.

First question,

Would you mind naming your role in the children's centre?

How long have you been in the role?

How would you describe this children's centre?

Would you mind describing to me the circumstances around applying for the NPQICL?

What were you thinking and feeling about the NPQICL just before you started the programme?

Do you remember any other thoughts you had before the programme?

Would you mind in your own words, just telling me the story of your experience with the NPQICL?

So then you did your various assignments, do you have any comments about that process?

So then you'd had your leadership symposium, can you remember your thoughts on that?

What was it about your engagement with that opportunity of the NPQICL that supported you?

Looking back at the NPQICL, what didn't work for you?

Was there anything else that didn't work for you?

Anything else you want to say about what didn't work for you, and I'm thinking of your role here in the children's centre, anything that the NPQICL didn't help you to do?

Looking back, could you summarise what did work for you?

What was the impact of all those things?

Has anything changed about your understanding of the role of the children's centre head, over the period of the NPQICL?

Has anything changed about your confidence that you can fulfil the role of the children's centre head?

Is there anything else you would like to say to me about your experience?

Thank you very much for answering these questions.

Later theoretical sampling questions for 7 participants:

How far did your experience of the NPQICL creates professional self-efficacy, professional agency and professional autonomy through (NB: be ready to define these in simple language/answer questions)

1. Being empowered with professional tools: Definition-Taking something effective from the course or from the learning community to use in work role.
2. Reflecting while scaffolded by a professional learning community: Definition - Clarifying professional goals and "professionalism" in dialogue with fellow participants, tutors and mentors.
3. Knowledge in action becoming knowledge in reflection. Tacit knowledge becoming explicit knowledge: I know more about what I know. I know more about what I need to know. I know how to find out more.
4. Developing a capable identity: Definition - Confidence in own intuitive response and future resilience. Indwelling. 'Moving from cable connection to wireless'.
5. Validating own experience: Definition -is a process of restoring and reinforcing the sense of self-worth and the meaning of one's own job or role, personal and professional identity and competence through a variety of activities and interactions
6. Measuring and recognising own success: Definition - is when participants experience credible endorsement of their capacity to succeed in their job role and parity of esteem with professional colleagues in related fields.
7. Developing a more outward facing, broader perspective on work: Definition-

Now I see my role as much wider and I do things at county level because I think that we need to feedback every perspective about our children's centre.

Do you have any other thoughts to add to these?

How far did the following deplete your professional self-efficacy: Definition – Aspects of the programme that lessened self-efficacy and confidence in own capacity to fulfil the job role (as reported by participant-respondents). *See prompts below.*

1. Marking tutors not understanding the context. Marking tutor – 'helicopter view'
2. One issue that affected me strongly was that up until the second module the course had been co-constructed and we had felt that we played an equal part with tutors in deciding what aspects we would cover. The second module seemed far more dictated to us, and it was as if we were on a more usual course where it was 'done to us, not with us'. This led me to feel an amount of dissatisfaction and lack of empowerment throughout the week.

Do you have any other thoughts about what might have been depleting?

Later prompt: I took time to settle down into the course. I think if we had had a chance to understand what the course was going to be about it would have helped us to settle into it more quickly.

Do you have any thoughts whether your experience on the NPQICL had any impact on your professional efficacy through:

- creation of new knowledge for the professional domain i.e. the research and writing or thinking with colleagues?
- dealing with the challenge, coming through them and creating learning for self from it) e.g. resolving cognitive dissonance to create learning?
- working interprofessionally?

You have been really helpful, thank you ever so much.

APPENDIX 3: Reflexivity narrative self-study:

Phase 1 represents the time just before and just after I applied for and began the EdD:

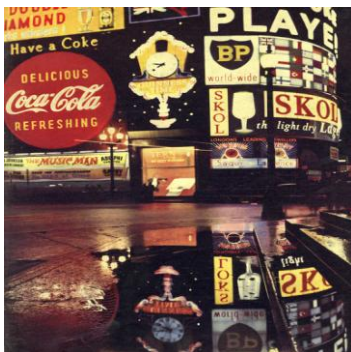
The stars in the sky and words up in lights.....



Dewey?

Anning? Fumoto?

Wenger? Brookfield?



Pedagogical isomorphism? Collateral learning?

Co-construction? Andragogy?

Agency? Inter-professional learning?

Children's Workforce?

During this phase I was excited, even dazzled, by an apparently random group of thinkers and writers (*stars in the sky*) and concepts and terms (*words up in lights*) without questioning their provenance or worth. Re-reading my statement of further support for an application to the EdD shows how clear and certain I felt about what I intended to research, that is:

Does pedagogy of co-construction support the development of professionalism and professional learning?

Another certainty was, having been involved with the NPQICL as a tutor for eighteen months, I had been very impressed by the 'rightness' of the way that the approach of the programme had been designed to mirror the work of the professional area for

which it had been designed. Formosinho calls this principle 'pedagogical isomorphism' (Formosinho and Formosinho, 2005). It seemed to me that as a result the NPQICL modelled dimensions of good practice and relevant problem solving activities for a Children's Centre and that the principle of 'pedagogical isomorphism' was one I should do my best to ensure that everyone recognised. However, my efforts to communicate the principle were completely unconvincing, sounding like the worst sort of jargon that was very difficult to explain when I was challenged about its meaning. Similarly, after reading a text by Dewey I was convinced and excited by the importance of his concept of 'collateral learning', that is, learning that enhances capacity for and enthusiasm for further learning:

Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned (Dewey, 1963:48)

I felt a strong resonance between collateral learning and my experience as an educator working with children and adults over many years. My practitioner experience had caused me to believe that learning is an active process that happens most easily when it is voluntary and driven by the learner's own purposes and owned by him or her. In a spirit of awe, respect and deference I thought that Dewey's words said just what I had always thought only much, much better. At this time I noted in my journal:

My head is crammed full of the loud, bright, sparkling, important thoughts of others. My bit seems to be the conjunctions and prepositions between them. (Journal 31st May 2006)

The first inkling that things were not as explicit, straightforward and clear as they first seemed occurred in one of my EdD tutorials. My supervisor and I discussed the links between

democracy and education and I began to appreciate a theme of power and agency in my pre-occupations (EdD supervision 6th June 2006). As a result I was happy and excited to read thoughts from Brookfield (2005) about power dynamics that are embedded in educative processes and recognised that I had grown up with a deep unease about education as social control and a passionate belief that education and debate are fundamental to democracy. Just before, I had visited the last remaining relative from the previous generation of my family. Describing the behaviour of one of her many great grandchildren, she described her as a "right little madam" who would have a tantrum and walk away if anyone tried to 'help' her with a difficult task. She asked whether this behaviour reminded me of anyone and then, when I failed to supply the right answer, told me that I had been just the same, perhaps worse. This was rather a surprise to me but later I reflected that it suggested that the attraction of the notions of agency in learning and self-efficacy might be rooted in my own life experiences. In my record of one of the EdD supervision sessions (6th June 2006) I noted that:

I have gained insight from my own experience – ("right little madam") but experience can also blinker the researcher. I need to delve more into my experiences in relation to my two lines of enquiry.

Initially reading some of the arguments of Brookfield (2005) did not cause me any problems with my long term assignment of myself as someone who believes that learners should participate in education by co-constructing learning, but it did cause me to pay attention to the reality of this in my role as a tutor on the NPQICL. This was because Brookfield discusses some of the thinking of Foucault, stating that it was Foucault's view that:

'Choosing whether or not to exercise power is....an illusion'
(Brookfield 2005:144).

Then he exemplifies Foucault's notion of "disciplinary power" using the practices that tutors encourage that they think give power to adult learners such as:

learning journals (introduced to honor adults' experiences and help them develop their own voices), the use of learning contracts (designed to cede to adults the power to choose, design and evaluate their own learning) (Brookfield 2005:145)

and arguing that can be seen as having a controlling influence over learners and even be seen as instruments of surveillance. He describes the pressure on students who are asked to write learning journals to demonstrate moments of transformation so that the reader knows "the inside of people's minds" (Foucault, 1982:214) Brookfield expands on Foucault's concerns that learning through a discussion means that powerful social codes for interaction on such occasions must be obeyed and that the teacher has a role in enforcing them even when the teacher believes that their pedagogy is in the best democratic tradition.

teaching through discussion (intended to avoid the tendency of adult educators to move center stage as didactic transmitters of content in the classroom). (Brookfield 2005:145)

The three particular practices that are identified above (learning journals, learning contracts and teaching through discussion) are three that I have always used in my teaching as I sought to pursue an andragogical approach (Knowles, 1984¹). From this time I began to pay attention to these three practices that I had intended to be beneficial, emancipatory and fulfilling and I became concerned that there was little realism in my aim of co-constructing learning with participants. Co-construction seemed to be merely rhetoric or a dazzlingly bright 'word up in lights'

that denoted something fictional. I realised that I would need to explore the reality of co-construction in the NPQICL programme.

Another 'star' for me at this stage was Etienne Wenger. Wenger (1998) describes "negotiation of meaning" as how we experience the world in response to experiences that create dissonance with our existing constructs. This seemed to sit comfortably with my understanding of Piaget drawn from studying and teaching child development over many years. Wenger's concept of communities of practice sets this negotiation of practice in the context of a group of individuals with a common interest or goal. Wenger explains how such a group reifies features of their relationship into a shared repertoire as a way of negotiating meanings and constructing identities. Reification is intended:

to refer to the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into 'thingness' ... With the term reification I mean to cover a wide range of processes that include making, designing, representing, naming, encoding and describing as well as perceiving, interpreting, using, reusing, decoding and recasting. (Wenger, 1998: 58-59)

This process of reification seemed to suggest that an important feature of professional education might be to develop professional identities by offering learning environments that facilitate reflective interactions between professionals and use 'objects' that explore perceptions and experiences in order that they can be made explicit, shared and negotiated.

This train of thought reminded me of a paper by Anning (2001) (another star for me) which explored the processes of improving the ways that Children's Centre workers from different professions work in and across teams. One of Anning's conclusions was that people working in the Children's Workforce, where integrated working is seen as a key tool for meeting the

needs of children and their families, need to develop the skill and habit of mind of making their assumptions, terminology and approaches explicit to others in order to work *effectively* in multi-professional teams and with other agencies. I have highlighted the word 'effectively' as it was thinking about this word that triggered a whole series of doubts and dissonances for me about what I was attempting to explore and why. In one of my EdD tutorials (5th October 2006), my supervisor suggested that I consider the question "Effective for whom?" Together we drew up a list of some different positions that might be adopted about effectiveness in my area of research interest which I developed a little further after the tutorial. At that stage there seemed to be six potential planes of intention or stake-holding in an effective NPQICL programme to analyse, depending on the particular focus: participants in the NPQICL; providers; for example, Universities; employers; instigators of social engineering such as the government and their agencies; children and families and tutors and mentors. (This last plane of intention evolved into a paper (Isaacs and Trodd, 2008).

This was an important moment of reflexivity because I began to realise that I was so immersed in my work context and imbued with the intentions of the wider context of national policy for Early Years and professional learning that I was not being critically reflective about the ideas and values with which I was working. I had been 'star struck'.

By this stage the continual linkage of different concepts and writers, apparently through happenstance and a random interest of mine, became too significant to ignore. It had surprised me that Brookfield had also written about the development of professionalism and professional identities: two more themes to which I had been drawn. When I had been researching a paper on the development of

professional identity for a conference I had come across a well argued paper by Fumoto et al. (2004) in which they posit a redefinition of 'teaching' that they suggest could alter the professional identity of teachers, and specifically, enable other people working with children in an educative role, for example, nursery nurses, to call themselves teachers. Fumoto et al. (2004:179-191) proposed a redefinition of teaching as "sensitive interventions in another's learning". This seemed to me to be an example of how an act of reification, in Wenger's sense of the word, (1998) could clarify and change relationships between professional groups in a way that would develop inter-professional working and multi-professional teams. I had to consider that there must be more to these connectivity's between the writers, words and ideas that attracted me than mere co-incidence and came to a tentative conclusion that the links were because

1. The 'starry' writers and authors could be grouped in a kind of solar system of ideas and values or a paradigm
2. The randomness of 'the words up in lights' was not random at all: my interests, beliefs and values were the common denominator and if I could name this common denominator, it would probably be the focus of my study and would certainly make my implicit ontological and epistemological perspectives clearer.

Phase 2 represents the time leading up to and immediately after the submission of the EdD Year 1 items of assessed work in March 2007.

The dog in the park...

Grounded Theory? Narrative
Inquiry? Profession?
Professional?



At the start of this phase I happened to visit the local park and whilst 'people watching' I noticed a couple with a dog. The couple proceeded sedately along a few hundred metres of the tree lined path through the park but the dog ran everywhere sniffing benches and bushes and running after squirrels and other dogs completing a probable journey of several miles. I had a sudden thought that: I am that dog!! This was because during this phase I would read about and discuss methodologies and methods and become interested and excited about them, noting in my research journal on more than one occasion that 'at last I had found the way forward' only to have my sense of direction and momentum disappear fairly quickly.

One such methodology was grounded theory, where a theory or hypothesis is developed throughout the research inquiry.

Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). In grounded theory the researcher does not begin the research with a preconceived theory. The theory emerges from the data the researcher collects.

Grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action. (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:75)

I thought this methodology would seem to turn my inability to determine a particular focus and approach for the research into a virtue and also maintain the option of 'new' insights into the area but as time went on these expectations did not seem realistic. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe a grounded theory approach as having no pre-conceived ideas or hypothesis. However, whilst writing one of the items of assessed work for the EdD, 'A Discussion Paper based on Small-Scale Research' March (2007), in tutorials and in encounters with other members of my academic community, I became concerned about the way that my views and commitment to a particular perspective would shape the interpretation of the data and may make it untrustworthy. This did not fit with the call for researcher objectivity for grounded theory (Quinn Patton, 2002:127) I also began to have doubts whether a grounded theory approach with its technique of developing codes would offer understanding of the relationships between individual and groups of respondents particularly in terms of the impact on students of a participating in a learning community. The final blow was when I read:

grounded theory focuses on the process of generating theory rather than a particular theoretical content. (Quinn Patton 2002:125)

At this stage it seemed that grounded theory would not be suitable for this new research so I turned to narrative enquiry. In the on-going inquiry that eventually led to the EECERA journal article co-authored with Patricia Isaacs, we analysed nine narratives to explore the impact of the NPQICL on a sample of tutors and mentors. Although I had subsequently developed

reservations about the truthfulness of the findings because of the construction of the sample of tutors and mentors from whom the narratives came, I was able to pilot an approach of using the reports of experience and learning from participants as texts in order to explore views of the learning processes and outcomes. I was aware that critics such as Philips express a need for caution in the use of narratives, writing that however interesting and credible a narrative is, it: 'tells me nothing – absolutely nothing – about whether it is true or false' (Philips. 1993:8).

However, I thought that the decisions and choices made and articulated by narrators could offer insight into the way they see themselves as professionals and learners, how they make sense of their relationships with other professional learners and also, crucially, the meanings they attributed to their experience of the NPQICL and its impact on their work role. As Judi Marshall has written:

It also involves seeking to pay attention to the 'stories' I tell about myself and the world and recognising that these are all constructions, influenced by my purposes and perspectives and by social discourses which shape meanings and lives. (Marshall, 1999:163)

I became convinced that if I was trying to glimpse processes that change learners' professional identities, agency and efficacy a narrative enquiry approach would be appropriate. In addition, it would offer an attractive feature to me that the narrative enquiry process that generated the narratives could have a beneficial effect for the research participants: telling their stories might encourage them to reflect deeply and see what it is they do from different perspectives. Another attractive feature to me was that narrative enquiry seemed to be already linked to study of

professionals and the construct of 'profession', for example, Connelly and Clandinin write that they:

view the landscape as narratively constructed: as having a history with moral, emotional and aesthetic dimensions. We see it as storied. To enter a professional knowledge landscape is to enter a place of story (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999:2).

They indicate the place of wider social narratives in the resources available for use in the construction of a professional identity and social change. Using stories in this way is similar to what Connelly and Clandinin refer to as 'stories to live by', that is, ways: 'to describe how the link between knowledge, context and identity can be understood narratively' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999:4).

Alongside the exploration of grounded theory and narrative inquiry we had talked in supervisions about my need to tackle the large body of writing about the concepts of 'profession' and 'professionalism' in a systematic way. Research for a paper for the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) conference on the expectations of Early Years practitioners of achieving the new Early Years Professional Status (Trodd, 2006) showed the contested status of the concept of 'professional'.

Once again there seemed to be a related framework of ideas that linked back to my original 'star struck' enthusiasms and emerged whatever the context or theme I explored: Lilian Katz (1984) is a constructivist and is usually identified as writing about Early Years practice yet she has also written about the professional; the views of Eraut (1994, 2000, 2003) are very influential on the theme of the construction of professional identities and he also writes about how interactions with others can develop 'tacit knowledge' as an educative and reflective process; many of the

writers in this area mentioned 'autonomy' (Berg, 1983; Kennerley, 1993; Barfield et al., 2001; Kasher, 2005; Singer, 2007) or 'agency' (Sharma, 1997; Clouder, 2003; Lasky, 2005; Turnbull, 2005) and sometimes together as in:

The concepts of autonomy and agency are crucial if we are to consider a process of continuing professional development that genuinely engages teachers in reflecting meaningfully on their practice (Forde et al., 2006:5).

as defining features of professionalism. Once again I was struck by the parallels between these foregrounded features to my experience of researching and was especially reminded of my new awareness of my own drive to ensure personal autonomy in all things. Dadds and Hart write:

that what practitioners chose to research was important to their sense of engagement and purpose. But we had understood far less well that how practitioners chose to research, and their sense of control over this, could be equally important to their motivation, their sense of identity within the research and their research outcomes (Dadds and Hart, 2001:166)

Looking back, this difficult process of 'losing my way' was very important because I had to let go of all my preconceived ideas about my inquiry. As time had gone on I had begun to lose all clarity about what I wanted to investigate and how it might be best to do it and consequently I lost any sense of momentum and direction. Although it was uncomfortable I reassured myself during this phase by repeating a quote from some advice to leaders from Judi Marshall that became my research mantra: 'Let the tentative be tentative. Sit with what emerges and don't hold on too tightly' (Marshall 1994:174).

This new approach began to spill over into other areas of my life. I could see how previously I had been the kind of controlling person who had rushed to find a 'quick fix' for any problem, to fill a silence and to get the job done. Whereas I had found it

intolerable to be passive, to let things unfold, to stand back or to live with uncertainty, I found I was now able to do all of these things, albeit with some conscious effort. In this way it seemed I really was 'living life as inquiry' in the way that Marshall indicates: 'And yet a key theme for me in living life as inquiry is that my learning is enhanced by articulating it to myself, and by opening it to comment by others' (Marshall, 1999:6).

In the same vein Gillian Bolton writes about a challenge in reflexive practice when we have to admit to ourselves that 'we don't know what to do here'. Her advice can be summarised as letting go of the expectation of certainty, looking for something when you do not know what it is, beginning to act when you do not know how to act:

an embracing of uncertainty as to what we are doing and where we are going; confidence to search for something when we have no idea what it is; the letting go of the security blanket of needed answers. (My emphasis) This kind of work will lead to more searching questions, the opening of fascinating avenues to explore, but few secure answers (Bolton, 2001:15)

Marshall's view seemed to endorse my efforts to find ways to articulate my thinking to others through visual metaphors in this chapter whilst Bolton's view returned my thoughts to the beneficial open-endedness of using a modified grounded research approach in this study which led to the adaptive theory approach (Layder,1998) (which eventually proved to be so useful).

Phase 3 represents the time from the summer of 2007 to the end of January 2008

The objects under the blanket.....



Although a framework of connections between concepts, methodologies and approaches began to emerge from the engagement with the proliferation of writing on professions and professionalism the nature of this framework was still not clear enough to ensure the quality of this inquiry. Flick writes: 'the analysis and reflexivity of the selected procedures and the presentation of results become relevant for assessing the whole research' (Flick: 2007:25).

During this phase I began to see consistency in the things to which I was paying attention in the research. At different times one or two themes or concepts would foreground themselves. For a short time it would seem that I had arrived somewhere and I felt secure that I knew the way forward but then my work would distract me and when I looked back the picture had changed again. One day in a telephone tutorial with a NPQICL participant I asked her to outline the rationale for her project and was spellbound as she narrated a story that linked all of the 'usual suspects' in my research. The story was so perfect I longed to write it all down as she spoke but it did not feel it was ethical to do so in a situation which was intended as academic support to meet her needs. I could not remember whether she was one of the participants who had agreed to be a

respondent/participant in my study. At the close of the tutorial I told her that what she had recounted was really interesting to my EdD study and she volunteered the fact that she had signed the consent form to participate. The moment had passed though and I knew I would have to interview her again to really clarify how self-efficacy, professional agency and professional identity linked to inter-professional learning and working and membership of a learning community in her narrative.

Two important things came out of this experience. Firstly, it revitalised my allegiance to gathering participants' narratives as a data gathering tool. Secondly, it struck me that although the links (objects under the blanket) were still hidden from me, the motivation for the attention that I had continued to pay them sprang from practice knowledge that I could *use in action* (Schön, 1983: 68) but that I did not know that I knew ('tacit knowledge'). In the same way Polanyi argues that: 'we know more than we can tell...' (Polanyi, 1966:4).

In this phase, then, I realised that the 'objects under the blanket' were part of my practitioner knowledge and that at least one of the obscuring factors was my inability to name the 'objects' of this knowledge. Just as members of the Children's Workforce might struggle to articulate the discourses derived from their professional heritages in order to work better in multi-professional teams, I was struggling to articulate my knowledge in action or tacit knowledge. I was becoming more aware of how my implicit and tacit knowledge and knowledge in action was embedded in and shaping this inquiry and I had begun to identify some of the *relationships* between personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity (Willig, 2001:10). What emerged from thinking about the 'objects under the blanket' was that it was not

just the identification, characteristics and uses of the ideas and concepts foregrounded by my tacit knowledge or knowledge in action that were interesting and relevant to this inquiry but also that focussing on the *relationship* of the ideas and concepts to one another would be helpful in terms of exploring the experiences of participants on the NPQICL programme and the meanings that they gave them.

Phase 4 represents the time since the EdD progression viva in October 2008 until November 2009.

Me, Myself and Eye...



Thematic analysis?
Role ambiguity?
Professional efficacy?
Professional agency?

I chose this image to represent a phase where, on the one hand this research was shaping my professional identity and, on the other hand I was experiencing my professional role as ambiguous and slippery. One way that my professional identity was being shaped was through articulation of my thinking and dialogue with others about it. In 2008 I gave a talk at a large conference entitled 'The Professionalisation of the Children's Workforce'. I felt confident enough in my EdD research knowledge and understanding to take risks, so I told a metaphorical story to make a point and spoke comfortably and freely with just a few words on a page as prompts. Then another University asked me to give a guest lecture the following month on the Professionalism. In 2009 I went to Malaysia to give an invited lecture on the link between professional efficacy and children's self-efficacy. It seemed well received by the large audience and I felt encouraged that I knew something and had something to say that people valued. I had started to give guest inputs drawn from themes from my research on other academics' modules and found it both exhilarating and developmental. The students always offered some sort of query, challenge or dissonance that shaped my ideas. The point is, each time this

happened I was hearing myself think (Knights, 1993; Bennett et al., 1997) and therefore seeing my ideas more clearly and gaining a stronger sense of what I was for professionally or my professional identity story.

When I sifted through the data analysing it into themes, I was not just more aware of the sensitising concepts that were shaping the analysis but knew much more about how the lens that was me (Me, Myself and Eye) was influencing and constructing the themes and could acknowledge that: 'Subjectivity in research can be transformed from a problem to an opportunity' (Finlay and Gough, 2003).

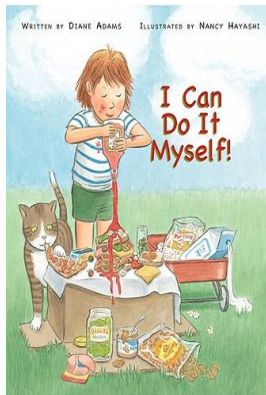
However during this time I experienced some of the professional role uncertainty and ambiguity that was reported by the NPQICL participants. The senior management team of a University School of Education where I work was undergoing restructuring. My role seemed ambiguous and ever changing without much to hold onto as a reference point. What I began to find was that the increasing clarity and awareness about who I was and what I was for that had come from the research and lectures, strengthened my resilience in managing my work role uncertainty and ambiguity and its related transitions. My more explicit knowledge of myself and my values gave me agency and more control over the only real sphere of influence and locus of control available to me; my own professional identity and actions and that outweighed any ambiguity (Organ and Greene, 1974). The sense of mastery (in Bandura's sense) that I was gaining from researching had an emotional dimension that sustained me. Williams reports similar findings in an inquiry she completed:

the teachers' mastery of the degree evoked positive emotions that created and strengthened their sense of personal self-

*efficacy that then contributed to changes to their practice.
(Williams, 2009:606)*

The parallels between the course of my professional life during this phase and the themes of my research were once again uncanny; however, at this stage they no longer surprised me as they had once done.

Phase 5 represents the time since January 2010 until the time of writing this. I can do this research using myself....



How are the professional identities of NPQICL participants developing and how these might, correspondingly, be better supported on the NPQICL?

This image represented the beginning of a phase where at last I felt able to bring the elements of this inquiry together in the dissertation writing process.

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APPENDIX 4: The context of the programme that is the research site:

A brief overview of the most recent NPQICL programme content offers another dimension of this study's context. When NCSL retendered the NPQICL programme in 2007 it was slightly revised. The modifications reflected efforts by the NCSL to cut the costs of programme delivery rather than any fundamental changes. The main changes were: the contact days and entitlement to mentoring were cut down; four leadership learning group meetings each lasting seven hours were introduced in mitigation of this cut; the National Standards for Leaders of Children's Centres (DfES, 2008) were made an explicit feature of the programme; the 'Research Route' and the 'Pre-assessment visit' to participants' Centres were dropped. However despite these changes most of the programme approach and content remained the same.

In the most recent version of the programme (at the time of writing in 2011) once applicants are accepted and before the programme starts, they receive a letter giving dates and explaining how to enrol with the university, log-on to the NCSL online learning site in order to join the learning community and explore the resources on the NCSL site for the NPQICL. They undertake an initial online self-assessment against the National Standards for Leaders of Children's Centres (DfES, 2008) and create their own personal learning plans to form part of the programme's first learning contract. The assigned mentors contact the participants and the first meetings take place. At this point each participant receives a box of support materials from

NCSL including 20 booklets of 40-75 pages written mainly by Pen Green Research.¹

In each module the tutors brief participants for their seven hour Leadership Learning Group meeting and refer participants to the PPDR (Participants' Professional Development Record) based on the National Standards for Leaders of Children's Centres (DfES, 2008) and used in the Practice Assessment visits.

Module 1 is a two day induction programme entitled 'Building the Learning Community' and has the themes of being a leader in a developing learning community and exploring the interpersonal world of leadership.

Module 2 is entitled 'Developing leadership in a research community' lasting two days. On the first day participants undertake a 'micro-project' where they work in small groups and use each other as participants in a day long, guided, research inquiry. On the second day participants present and evaluate their research data and then focus on identifying the study skills

¹ 1	Module 1: Building the learning community
2	Journaling for integrated centre leadership
3	Leadership mentoring guide
4	Online learning guide (available online)
5	Guide to assessment
6	Leadership Learning Groups
7	Module 2: Developing leadership in a research community
8	Module 3: Developing as a reflective leader
9	Leadership concepts and analytical tools
10	Outcomes matter most
11	Inclusive leadership
12	Module 4: Developing integrated centre leadership
13	Leading learning
14	Multi-agency working
15	Community development
16	Governance
17	Getting it all to add up (available online)
18	Developing practitioner research
19	Co-location of children's centres and extended schools
20	Leading in the commissioning environment

they think they need to improve to undertake the rest of the programme.

Module 3 is entitled 'Developing as a Reflective Leader' lasting three days. The themes of this module are to consider the impact of prior learning on values, principles and vision, explore leadership styles and approaches and to reflect on the challenges of 'making things happen' as a Children Centre Head. Before the next module the participant meets with his or her mentor and each participant researches and writes a 6,000 word assignment with a focus on personal leadership development and its impact.

Module 4 is lasts three days and is entitled 'Developing Integrated Centre Leadership. Its themes explore leading professional practice in multi-agency working, leading integration for children, families and communities and reflect on Children Centre Head's role in creating the future. There is another meeting between the participant and his or her mentor and the participant researches and writes another 6,000 word assignment, this time with a focus on the leadership of multi-agency working and its impact.

In the final stages of the programme an assessment tutor visits each participant in his or her centre in a day long visit and assesses the evidence that he or she has prepared against the National Standards for Leaders of Children's Centres (DfES, 2008). The programme ends with each participant preparing a short presentation on their leadership learning during the course which he or she presents at a leadership symposium day.

These details above demonstrate how tightly controlled by NCSL the NPQICL is, hardly surprising given that it is a nationally recognised qualification. As such it is deemed necessary by NCSL

that tutor-facilitators comply with an “80/20 rule” which means that a maximum of 20% of the prescribed programme material or activities can be substituted or changed at their discretion. This calls into question the reality of the NPQICL’s espoused principle of a co-constructive approach to learning.

The regional and local context:

When the national roll-out of the NPQICL was offered for tender by the National College for School Leadership early in 2005, the University led a consortium made up of the Eastern Leadership Centre (ELC) based in Cambridge and the heads of a number of existing Children Centres from the region attributed to the East of England Government Office. In the spring of 2005 the consortium heard that it had been successful in the tender.

The first cohort (2005-06) consisted of 24 participants. For most of the programme, tutors and participants stayed in a pleasant hotel where sessions ran from 9.00 a.m. until 5.00 p.m. in the conference suite. All participants were Children Centre Heads drawn from across the East of England. Most participants had degrees, some had postgraduate degrees but there were a small number without full undergraduate degrees who had been accepted onto the programme by providing the extra evidence required by NCSL so that they met the ‘graduateness’ criteria. At that stage the programme consisted of an induction, an introduction to study and research and then the cohort divided into a “Research Route” and a “Study Route”. The participants came back together at the end of the programme in a two-day leadership symposium. NCSL eventually dropped the Research Route from the programme as it proved to be uneconomic to run

especially as NCSL required there to be at least two tutor-facilitators present at every teaching session.

The first cohort was in a slightly different position to the cohorts that followed it. Firstly, the team of tutors, mentors and centre assessors were undertaking these roles for the first time. Although Pen Green design team had designed a wealth of materials such as a detailed facilitator handbook, participant reading packs, guidance on mentoring and assessing, the ways of working on the programme were substantially different to those that most of us had already used. (Isaacs and Trodd, 2008) The programme used an approach of cycles of engagement that began with an initiating action or stimulus followed by individual reflection followed by small group discussion followed by a plenary debate. Much emphasis was placed on developing a safe, supportive group culture. Most of the learning was experiential and involved reflexivity and self disclosure and professional trust. The tutor-facilitators were to assume a role of 'walking alongside' the participants rather than anything resembling lecturing role, which most tutors found difficult (Isaacs and Trodd: 2008). The programme had adopted Friere's view that:

The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with students who in their turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for the process in which all grow'. (Friere, 1972:53)

In other words, a power shift between tutors and participants was intended so they worked collaboratively in pursuit of learning for the whole learning community.

Secondly, the participants came onto the programme with no foreknowledge about what it was like. As the first cohort in the region they did not have access to either experienced peers or hearsay from earlier cohorts. The early evaluations by participants showed that most had expected to have formal lectures on different leadership styles and theories and that their responsibility as students would be to sit passively and take notes and then do any set reading. Calling for pedagogy in a leadership programme for Children Centres based on Ryle's (1949) distinctions of knowing, Williams argues for:

a programme that supports a leader to 'know how', rather than a course content that ensures participants 'know that' there are different models and theories of leadership' (Williams cited in Webster, 2008:70).

Williams may not go far enough: supporting leaders to 'know why' and to 'care why' is key in a *professional* learning programme.

Thirdly, another difference for the first cohort was that the teaching, mentoring, assessing team were from a teaching heritage with one exception. This illustrates an ongoing problem in Higher Education where, inevitably, there will not be academics with the appropriate experience to teach programmes for newly conceptualised roles simply because they are so new. Boud and Solomon call this: 'The increasingly important educational challenge of an era: how can we teach what we don't know' (Boud and Solomon, 2003: 220). The participants, who came from a wide range of professional backgrounds, began to recognise the team's largely educational professional heritage and became defensive, arguing that the team's composition demonstrated the dominance of education in the interprofessional world.

Fourthly, all of the participants were working in large multi-professional Children Centres where services were offered on the premises by a range of different professionals. They all line-managed quite a number of colleagues and worked in direct contact with other agencies and services. Later on, as new models of a Children Centre opened across the region, this changed. Later cohorts contained some participants who did not 'line manage' anyone, alongside some participants who lead a cluster of Children Centres, as well as those who were heads of Children Centres that were similar to the original Sure Start or Early Excellence model offering the full range of services and professionals in the same centre.

Lastly, another difference between the first and the later cohorts was that all of the participants in the first cohort wanted to do the programme. Later cohorts would always include a number of participants who had been required to apply for the NPQICL as part of their contract. Some of these would be resentful about attending the programme, at least initially. For subsequent cohorts although the central principles and ethos of the programme remained the same, the above features may have made some differences to their experiences of the programme. Although these differences of context applied to the participants from 3 cohorts sampled and were born in mind in the interpretation of the data there was no attempt made to factorise the effect of these differences in this study because the changes to the context of the programme came to light too late to construct the sample appropriately to explore their effects.

Contextualisation of the research

It is especially important to acknowledge the context of this research because detailed contextualisation makes the findings

more meaningful as well as making them more useful to others. Kincheloe and Tobin's view is that:

Knowledge is stripped of its meaning if it stands alone....Thus to be a critical researcher that takes the complexity of the lived world into account, we have to study the world 'in context'...we have to search for the interrelationships and contexts that give knowledge meaning while avoiding reliance on decontextualised study. (Kincheloe and Tobin, 2006:5)

Using an interpretative approach means the researcher must move from a whole, which includes the context, to the parts and back again. Klein and Myers explain the principle of contextualisation in an interpretist study as requiring:

critical reflection of the social and historical background of the research setting, so that the intended audience can see how the current situation under investigation emerged (Klein and Myers 1999:72).

Further discussion of the context of the NPQICL is contained in appendix 4. However, supplying contextual detail does more than communicate the study effectively to the reader in the way Klein and Myers suggest: holding its context in mind provides a helpful relativist perspective for a practitioner-researcher who is immersed in both the programme as practice and also the research as an enquiry. The aim here is to identify key areas of the context of the NPQICL in order to embed the data in a meaningful and trustworthy way.

The rationale for choosing the NPQICL as the research site

Undertaking this research whilst responsible for developing professional education programmes in a University department of education, offered an opportunity to look at the learning experience of participants who were part of my practice experience. A sample taken from one of the emerging

professional groups working with children and families was chosen because it would provide a context to explore the use of pedagogical features which made a meaningful difference to gains by participants who were new incumbents of newly developed professional roles or not. The chosen site of the research, a leadership programme for Children's Centres, the NPQICL in the East of England fitted these requirements very well. It was also chosen because of good access to both the rationale of the programme and also the participants. The context of the programme made it particularly interesting because as each phase of the development of Children's Centres occurred, new versions of the original model were opened, bringing about corresponding different iterations of the role of the head of a children's centre. As a result any consensus that had been achieved about the role of Children's Centre Leaders tended to be destabilised creating further role uncertainty and ambiguity.

The context of the programme culture: Reifications, concepts and language

Difficulties arise when universities and the programmes they offer dwell in different, even conflicting paradigms (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Formosinho, 2000). The Programme Leaders' Guide (NCSL, 2006) laid down some fundamental principles, values and practices of the NPQICL because its design was shaped by a belief in the benefits of 'Pedagogical Isomorphism' (Formosinho and Oliveira-Formosinho, 2005, 2006), meaning the alignments of the defining features of the NPQICL programme and its underpinning rationale to contemporary reality of leading integrated centres. Webster argues that pedagogical

isomorphism is 'a *generative* phenomenon.' (Webster 2008:72) and Isaac and Trodd confirm this:

Nevertheless, it is possible to say that this principled approach of pedagogical isomorphism tends to generate enthusiasm, coherence and meaningful learning for participants, mentors and tutors whilst challenging their existing practice (Isaac and Trodd, 2008:43).

The tools, procedures and language that reify some aspect of the practice of the NPQICL also form an aspect of its context. Its defining features operate like Vygotsky's 'tools' that develop from a culture, such as speech and writing, to mediate social environments. The internalisation of these tools can lead to higher thinking skills (Vygotsky, 1978). Wenger's process of reification (1998) takes this further. He sees it as crucial to participation in a Community of Practice because reification gives tangible form to abstractions and facilitates the negotiation of meaning amongst its members. He refers to the concept of reification as:

the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into 'thingness' With the term reification I mean to cover a wide range of processes that include making, designing, representing, naming, encoding and describing as well as perceiving, interpreting, using, reusing, decoding and recasting (Wenger, 1998:58-59).

The idea of tools for shared meaning-making in the NPQICL was based the programme designers' beliefs in transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000). Arguing that Bruner's model of four modes of making meaning (Bruner, 1996) is 'incomplete', Mezirow suggests:

a fifth and crucial mode of meaning making: becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation' (Mezirow, 2000:4)

in other words, transformative learning. This can be seen in the shared vocabulary or repertoire of the NPQICL used by the participants, assessors, mentors and tutors in the East Region when they refer to 'light bulb moments', denoting moments of new significant understanding, awareness or learning and when there is recognition of knowing something new. This extract from the researcher-practitioner log illustrates this point:

In the induction we [my co-tutor and I] mentioned our own learning from the programme to illustrate that we didn't see ourselves as the fount of all knowledge. We used the phrase 'light bulb moment' a couple of times. I noticed the woman nearest me writing it down and drawing a line under it as if it was important in itself (Log, October 2007).

The metaphor of the light bulb was important as a tool for and representation of metacognition.

Two other espoused tenets of the NPQICL are derived from the thinking of Paulo Freire: dialogue and praxis. Dialogue is seen as the antithesis of a 'banking' approach to learning and education where the teacher invests their knowledge in the student and learning dialogically means that student and teacher participate in a construction of understanding and knowledge. It underpins the principle of 'collective enquiry' (Whalley, 2005) which is enacted formally in the NPQICL curriculum in a micro project and is a fundamental approach to the programme. Praxis refers to: 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it' (Freire, 1970: 36) and is a means to be free by exercising agency rather than being determined by historical and social forces.

These ideas are very attractive as they portray education as a crucial, almost heroic dynamic in achieving individual freedom. Glass (2001) shows how the epistemological basis of Freire's

concept of praxis is contradictory whilst acknowledging that his ideas remain influential. Freire's thinking underpins one of the distinctive reifications of the NPQICL of 'pedagogical leadership', referring to a model of leadership similar to distributed leadership that promotes the education and development of everyone so that they 'activate their own learning resources' (NCSL, 2008:21). The writers of NPQICL were selective in espousing just some of the views of Freire. They detached key theories from Freire's radical, Marxist views and fitted them into the NPQICL attributing to them part of the meanings Freire might have intended and adding new meanings that they thought suited the programme.

Three other reifications link the participants, tutors, mentors and assessors together and draw on the commitment to co-construction in learning mentioned earlier: membership of a 'learning community' offering 'containment' to individuals and groups within it and believing that if participants 'trust the process' of working together they will achieve partnership and positive outcomes are strongly espoused theories in the NPQICL. A learning community contract drawn up in the first few hours of the programme and the time given to support the development of group cohesion, are ways of recognising the importance of learning as a collaborative, interdependent activity. The aim is for participants to find themselves in an empathetic environment that contains them. The tutor-facilitators encourage this by using a 'check-in' and 'check-out' process to encourage the opportunity for participants to voice their current pre-occupations and concerns.

Tutor-facilitators use the phrase 'trust the process' to re-motivate and comfort participants when they are disconcerted by

part of the programme or to remind them when they find themselves at odds with its purpose or process that a principled approach yields the best outcomes. This mantra has had a high profile in the characterisation of the programme, even being used as the title for an international research paper about it (Webster, 2008). However, the phrase implies passivity that contradicts Freire's call to action for praxis as liberation and use of dialogue in learning. Whilst the 'reifications' above are features of the NPQICL in the East of England they are likely to have been replicated in the NPQICL in other regions as they are explicit in the programme materials and training of tutors, mentors and assessors.

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APPENDIX 5: The 15 participants' stories and researcher's critical incidents

Each participant has been given a pseudonym to protect his or her anonymity. The participants' stories are grouped by cohort

2006-7 Cohort:
Kay's story
John's story
Liam's story
Dee's story
Katy's story
2007-8 Cohort:
Elaine's story
Sue's story
Ann's story
Jackie's story
Rashid's story
2008-9 Cohort:
Henk's story
Sally's story
Ursel's story
Viv's story
Millie's story

2006-7 Cohort:

Kay's story

Kay is the newly appointed assistant director in a large new Children Centre with an overview of ten other children's centres. It offers many services within the centre but also offers services out into community venues as well because it is one big centre for two areas. Kay says this is "kind of unique – it's kind of both really". Until recently she was the manager of a smaller Children's Centre, a post she had held for three years. Kay was originally the out of school coordinator for a large secondary school working with the 5 – 19 year old age group. The school was lucky enough to get the facilities for a children's centre quite early on. A member of the community team wanted to push her into becoming the Children Centre Manager. Her background was in early years, but she had gone into playwork for the last ten years. Kay thought it was "quite a big leap to go backwards".

She was quite unsure whether she would be able to do the job, but she was successful in the interview, and "was put into the post". She had had to make a quick decision about doing the NPQICL. She hoped it would give her extra confidence but she was frightened that she did not really deserve to do it because she "was only a level three nursery nurse". Her colleagues pushed her to do it (in a nice way, seeing the benefit for her) and she hoped it would lead to self discovery. She was very anxious because she knew that her writing ability "wasn't great". She thought she was borderline dyslexic having struggled with essays in her previous course. She also felt excited and surprised when she got on the course because she had heard how "stringent the application process was" so she was very proud to have been accepted.

She had no clear vision about what would happen on the course. It was new and exciting. She was “holding my own” and felt comfortable in the introductory days. She liked meeting new people and her confidence was boosted on the computer day because she felt quite good at computers. However she had struggled with journaling. Later on in the exploration of depleted potential when she had to let someone else read and critique what she had written, she had a “major wobble”.

*Critical incident 1 recorded in the researcher-practitioner log
Containing the can of worms
The NPQICL was designed with the assumption that individuals cannot learn to work interprofessionally in the complex, ever changing world of work of services for children and families without internalising the values and principles of interprofessionalism and gaining considerable self understanding. There are several devices used to enable participants to explore the influence of their life stories on their motivation and practice in work with children and families. This incident is fairly typical of many that have occurred. Participants were asked to write and then to share their writing with another participant. Perhaps because of her history of dyslexia, Kay felt very anxious about doing this. Eventually Kay dissolved into tears and left the room. Everyone felt uncomfortable especially as it was not clear what the issue was. One of the tutor-facilitators followed Kay to support her. Kay eventually re-entered the group and found the whole incident explanatory of her leadership approach. One participant from a mental health background challenged the tutor-facilitators saying that they did not have the expertise to deal with such distress and that it was dangerous to encourage people to explore their feelings without suitably qualified*

professionals on hand. At the end of the day after everyone had left, the tutor-facilitators debated what had been said. The issue represented something at the heart of interprofessionalism. Can work with human beings be compartmentalised along the lines of professional boundaries or can something more complex but practical be envisaged?

Once her issue was out in the open Kay felt very supported by her group. That set the tone for the whole "experience". Everyone bonded very quickly and made a very emotionally strong group that helped each other. They took the "process" very seriously and felt safe being upset and emotional with each other. She thought there was a real strength in that especially when giving and receiving feedback from each other. The group would consciously encourage each other to try to do things they had not done before or were anxious about. She realised that someone who comes across as very confident and very learned could be struggling as well. She learned the importance of bringing other people on the journey with her. She had not done that in previous jobs. She learned not to put up barriers. When she came to her new job she joked and told everyone not to ask her to check spellings as it was not her forte. She felt proud of where she was. The course had made her a more open leader. She found the activity in which she reflected on her life learning journey powerful because she began to realise why she had certain fears. She had hated the 'light bulb moment' metaphor but she realised why she was who she was. What worked for her was the teamwork in small groups and journeying with the same people through the learning. The group still had an email group and still saw each other.

Kay thought she “had the impostor syndrome” for about half the course feeling she should not be there and she was different. She was aware that her centre was a small one whereas some people had huge centres and teams. She was pleased, proud and relieved “when the first assignment was passed” and felt more relaxed about the second assignment. She found it harder to write the first assignment about herself as a leader and recognised that it required reflectiveness and honesty. She felt like she had grown in confidence and matured during the course. She became more assertive and at the same time empathised with others more. Her view was this was because of the emotional attachment to each other in the small group and the confidence it gave her to be able to talk openly. She had always been with people like her husband who knew what was right. She had had some lovely debates with him when she was on the NPQ because she would go back home and would actually know about something that she could debate with him. She felt that she had grown as a person and has continued to do so. They still have lots of debates and disagreements.

She did a very simple children’s storybook style presentation about her journey for the leadership symposium. Kay remembered being terrified of doing it thinking that no one would choose to come to her presentation but they did.

She really liked the check-ins as well and took that idea on board and brought it back to the Children’s Centre. The number of talking sessions and residential were important. The notions of the ‘impostor syndrome’ and depleted potential were an eye-opener. She learned from the people dynamics and has gone into more recruitment and people management now. She thinks that is where it started on the NPQ through watching people. The NPQ

was good for Kay at the time because she was moving into a bigger operation at the Children Centre and the focus on distributed leadership and bringing everyone along with her helped her “give away part of my baby”. Now she line manages four teams! She thought what worked for her was the course was not just taught lessons and writing notes. She remembered when everyone discussed Johari’s window she found it hard to visualise at first but not when it was explained in terms of the experience of people.

Her confidence and ability to learn grew. Because of her negative experiences at secondary school she felt that she could not learn, read in a learned way or research. On the course she had loved researching and finding quotes that fitted. She found out she was quite a methodical person in her approach. She had done the professional heritage work as training in both her centres twice since the NPQ and it had been powerful too. She wished she had been more open about her writing issues from the start. She did not like the sculpting. She did not get it and then she was worried that it was her fault. She recognised the impostor syndrome in herself and looked again at herself and said, “Well no, you do know a lot about what you’re doing”. She had had a very closed view of her centre and the course led her to look at things more strategically and beyond her centre.

John’s story

The course had affected John personally and professionally by giving him “an amazing amount of confidence”. He had applied for the course because it looked like the kind of thing he thought he should be doing. He had thought he would learn leadership theories. He had been pleased to have the opportunity to get a masters level qualification totally funded too. He had been trying

to find "some kind of validation" for the things he thought were important and it enabled that to happen. The course made him feel that he had "valid reasons" to be there so his insecurities were significantly reduced. The impostor syndrome i.e. "everyone else was there on merit and that I was there by accident and at any moment someone was going to realise the mistake and send me home." had been illuminating for him. He had written in his journal "I am here in order to prove that I can be". The course had made him feel more confident about his style, his personality and his ability to do his job. He had learned he had previously depleted his own potential. He had "relearned what I thought I already knew" and continued to put it into practice.

Being involved in a community of people in similar situations with similar work histories to him was really powerful. Learning with people doing the same job was probably the most important feature of the NPQICL for John. He remembered a moment during the course when participants were asked to tell each other how they saw themselves. He felt he could take a risk in the context of the learning community. If the risk paid off it might be powerful if not "the ceiling would not fall down". In his task group they "took a very brave decision" that each member would listen to feedback about his or herself from the rest of the group without interrupting. He had listened to four people describing a person he did not realise he was. It had been "an incredible moment". He had felt "and still does" emotional about it. He would usually have said "oh no, that's not me", but it was not allowed by the group. He wrote in his journal "I've never ever felt safe enough to let people do that". He had trusted the group to be honest. They had described him as he had always wished to be described. The group still met because of the

trusting, supportive relationship between them. There was something intrinsically reassuring about being with people who were in the same situation as him – “the purest example of empathy”. Even now when he speaks with members of the group about work challenges and they say, “I know”, they really do know.

The course offered an opportunity for deep reflection on his heritage, his childhood, and particularly learning experiences at school and how they had shaped his expectations of a course like the NPQICL. He had thought that he was not taken seriously in the sector because of a lack of relevant qualifications unlike the other professionals with whom he worked. The course challenged him because he was a non-academic. That aspect was far less threatening than he had expected. He had probably been the noisiest participant in his cohort about that because he had had to learn a new way of communicating, not his usual one of writing in prose - in stories and pictures. The “co-construction element of the course was very, very powerful”. Another key moment was where his smaller group in the cohort had a particular reaction to one particular tutor’s style of delivery when they had suddenly realised they were not being taught but being “asked to learn”. They had challenged it at first but it had made the whole experience so much better - not passive.

*Critical incident 2 recorded in the researcher-practitioner log
“What happens if we say no?” “Strategic non-compliance”
In a programme that claims to have an andragogical approach
and to co-construct learning with its participants it is interesting
to see what happens when participants refuse to “play the
game”. On one occasion a group in the first cohort of students*

were heard by an external observer to ask each other "What happens if we refuse to do it [the activity suggested by the tutor facilitators]?" Apparently there was a lengthy discussion about this and the group decided that they would refuse to do the activity and thus find out. When groups were reporting back to the plenary session, the "refusers" reported that they had not done what had been requested. The tutor-facilitators asked "Why not?" and "What did you do instead?" On being told that the group had discussed the option of refusing to do the activity, the tutor-facilitators had said enthusiastically "How interesting! What did you learn from that?" Out of the ensuing discussion emerged a term now used by each cohort of students. "Strategic non-compliance" It is used to denote an informed decision not to comply where one understands the consequences but offsets them against perceived benefits. I think the term resonated with the Children's Centre leaders because it represented a situation that they faced quite frequently and because it acknowledged the agency and professional knowledge of the Children's Centre Leader i.e. his or her professionalism.

On another occasion in a later cohort a group of participants refused to carry out an activity and many of the rest of the cohort experienced the refusal as a betrayal and criticism of what they had done. (See Sally's story) The refusal created division and bad feeling among the participants which took time to resolve itself.

Its significance was shown by the fact John still remembered those "light bulb moments, as they have become known". He knew he got quite evangelical about the course when people asked him. He wished he could do it again and get an extra layer of richness from it and also go back to high school again and

experience learning through different eyes. He would say -do not do it because you have to, do it because you want to- you will get much more out of it – i.e. whatever you put into it. His advice was “plunge down into the learning environment - immersing self – giving up control – letting go – trusting the trainers etc and the process” and be ready to help others up out of it so they take with them what they have learned. It was like diving – if you come up too quickly, you get the bends.

He felt very much treated like a grown-up, that actually his knowledge and experience was as important to the course and to everybody else, as the written materials were, and the tutors’ knowledge and experiences were. The culture of the course meant he felt he had permission to challenge the tutors, colleagues and himself. It was a “very respectful way of learning”, different from sitting in a room and someone telling you things that you may or may not already know. He was challenged [by tutors, mentors and participants] to look carefully at what he was doing, how he was doing it, what he knew about leadership and management and the difference with the commercial sector where he had started. As a result he had become acutely aware of his professional bias against colleagues working for health agencies within his centres. The course challenged him to open up to new things, and to allow his teams to see him in different ways not just as demonstrating “stereotypically male leadership” behaviour. He discovered that they already saw him as a family man interested in the community not just a manager-leader. It challenged him to relinquish his tight grip on leadership at work and let other people do things when he was not there. He had always been there from the beginning, solving all the problems and developing all the systems. It challenged his perception of what

leadership was. He realised he had been “leading in the way I felt I should, rather than the way I felt I wanted to, which turned out to be a more effective way”. His view was the course gave participants permission to lead by confirming and affirming who they were and validating what they did.

Almost everything he did in his Children Centre role was different since the course. The most tangible examples were the management and leadership structures in his centres (He was now running a cluster of children’s centres) based on the distributed leadership models where people were growing into leadership roles. His own behaviour was completely different, more visible, available and involved which was the kind of the stuff he loved doing, and thought he should be doing but had felt wasn’t appropriate to a leader role. The way he negotiated with partners had been affected. He used ‘check-ins’. Some professionals were not accustomed to anyone caring enough to give them time “to offload and get support”. Professionals would give support to families- nurture and contain them -but not each other. Now people had become used to checking in and would miss it if it was not done. If he worked in the commercial sector again, he would take those techniques with him. The course offered him a portfolio of tools with which to construct his *leadership vessel!*

Liam’s story

Liam was the Partnership Manager of a large Children Centre that was the first one in his county. It had been an Early Excellence Centre when it opened. He was asked to apply for the NPQICL. Although he was slightly daunted overall he was fairly keen and excited about a great opportunity to take on funded study. He had a “huge sense of the unknown”. He was daunted

by the idea of researching and being seen to be appropriate in his particular job role.

He arrived on the first day and felt fairly alien [different] to most of the learning community as the members were at least 10 to 15 years older than him and were all female except two other males. The process was one of slow induction and the learning style was not one with which he was familiar. It was easy to see it as superficial at the beginning but it enabled him to dialogue with other participants and to bond and feel secure and safe in expressing himself. The modules enabled him to reflect on himself and his leadership. It was based on the view that self reflection and awareness were the cornerstones of developing better practice.

It was daunting to do the assignments but he learned a lot from writing them. He liked researching his practice and felt it changed his view of what he was capable of and how to deal with some long term issues. He learned that the one thing he had control of and could change was himself. The leadership learning journey activity enabled him to think about his leadership antecedents. He had enjoyed playing at practice in an interagency meeting regarding a fictitious case to resolve differences over a child and family. It enabled participants to really perceive that they all have the same child and family at heart in their practice. The leadership symposium helped to crystallise his learning.

The course gave him the space for safe reflection and enabled him to understand that other people across the country were experiencing similar issues, issues which because the posts were very new were framed around basic loneliness in practice. Like the other participants he was practising in a sort of interregnum

between different practice directions and agencies and having line management or supervision issues because being in these new positions, that type of support structure had not been thought out. The mentoring aspect of the programme was really useful as well. The role still seemed to be very contested by different groups and agencies throughout the country. Sometimes it was seen as being administrative or co-coordinating but if the children's centre outcomes were going to be achieved, someone passionate and articulate about practice was needed and someone able to lead practitioners from different professional agencies to work together to achieve outcomes for children and families.

What did work for him was the ability to learn with, and in and through a supportive and contained learning community that was professionally facilitated by knowledgeable and respected deliverers of the programme. It enabled him to link theory to practice and think about new ways to practice after that. It enabled him to focus on a type of ontological leadership that was at the core of his vision for leadership now. It relied on the sense of being yourself, having an awareness of how you are as a human being so that you can understand how you practice as a leader. Most Early Years practitioners have the pedagogical aspect of leadership at the core of their principles for practice so it applied a sense of pedagogy or androgogy to the notion of leadership. It enabled him to maintain a reflective style in his own practice and also the way that he writes about learning and education. As a result in the children's centre, he changed the chairing of a particularly difficult meeting so that different agencies took turns in chairing the meeting. It gave people more ownership of it so there was more of a 'buy in' to some joint projects that the centre was trying to deliver.

The things it did not solve are not possible for a course to solve, for instance, some of the complexities around budget management or the big issues around confidentiality. What the course did do was provide him with a sort of resilience to be able to operate in these awkward, untested frameworks so he had the strength to be able to negotiate his way around these barriers and be creative. "It gave me the efficacy and the agency to be able to practice more securely in what was very much an emerging role." Generally the NPQICL gave him confidence, efficacy over his own role, awareness of how he fitted into it and awareness of the things he could solve and the things he could not solve. He realised that reflexivity or constantly being aware of how he was practising and how he was leading, or moving between wireless and cable connection, was the key to his development. It was that agency that was invaluable and still was.

Dee's story

Dee was a children's centre manager of a Phase 2 Type 2 children's centre meaning that it is not in the 30 per cent most disadvantaged areas in England. Her centre is quite small and it has to cater for a wide range of different needs in the area.

Dee had not heard a lot about the NPQICL before she came into post but the job advert specified that it would be a requirement of the successful applicant to undertake it so there was not really a choice. If she wanted to do the job she had to take the qualification and her lead agency were keen for her to do it sooner rather than later. Her view of herself was as a "perpetual student and a great follower of lifelong learning" believing it was important to keep studying. She did not think that *having* to study the NPQICL affected her engagement with the course but it

did affect some of her cohort. She had travelled with a colleague who had influenced her feelings negatively at the start. She too had had mixed feelings before she began as she was already studying a BA as well. She was still developing her critical voice and felt rather anxious about the fact it was M-level and whether the time away from the job and the pressures of the job would have an impact on her ability to be successful. She did not know about the course content at that stage. She found staying away daunting as she was a home person and was worried about leaving the centre. She knew—and she recognised this later as the Impostor Syndrome—there would be centre managers who would be much more experienced than she was and that concerned her too. Later however she saw this as a positive thing.

She went up for the first residential not knowing what to expect and was quite pleasantly surprised to find that there was a relaxed atmosphere and once the course started she realised that it was something that she *could* do. She only really got into it in the second residential. Earlier she had had to work really hard at seeing it as beneficial. Eventually she realised that she could gain a lot from the course. She was used to having her learning directed by other people and the approach of the course was something new for her. It frustrated her sometimes. She got frustrated with the sessions and did not participate with some of the group activities and things because she wanted to be taught but she had since changed her opinion and realised that she was not a passive learner. She hated the fact that she had to work with the same people in the group work. At the end of it she thought, "Oh, that was a good job that I did," because she was able to explore Tuckman and other processes and then relate

them back to her workplace. It had worked but at the time she had not thought it had.

She realised that no children's centre is the same. It was not possible to say "you're going to need this skill in your children's centre, or you going to need that," each participant has to tailor their own learning to what he or she needs at work. She could see it had to be like that. Early on, with a situation had occurred on the course with her colleague, neither had a professional team with whom they were working directly.

Critical incident 3 recorded in researcher's field notes

"I don't have a professional team never mind an interprofessional one!"

In 2006-7 on one of the induction days there was a discussion in a plenary in which some participants were talking about the different challenges they found in working with a team composed of diverse professionals groups within their centres to working with different professional groups outside their centres. These participants were asking how best to influence the work for children and their families that went on around their centre when they had no line management of those doing that work. The NPQICL programme had been written to encompass this difficulty so the discussion was a natural outcome of the programme materials and approach. Suddenly, one participant, T, spoke out angrily interrupting the debate. She said that the discussion was irrelevant to her centre and she thought that the course was a waste of her time. The room became tense and watchful. As the facilitator leading the plenary I felt torn between the need to argue for the credibility of the course (and myself) by challenging what she was saying and my responsibility to keep the session on track so that the 'curriculum' would be covered

for the majority of participants. Fortunately we were moments away from the break so I asked T to bring her coffee to a paper store room along the corridor so we could meet to discuss what she had said. T explained that she was upset because the discussion assumed that she had a "professional team" to line manage. Her centre was a phase 3 type that was being opened in one of the counties. That meant it was attached to a school and consisted of an office and small meeting room. The expectation for her centre was that the children's centre manager would influence and lead developments in the area around the centre but it would not offer any direct services and so the only member of staff T managed was her administrator. TM felt that every time facilitators, published programme materials and participants referred to a "professional team" it diminished and marginalised her work and her centre. When T and I joined the group for the next session I thought it would be best to acknowledge the incident that had occurred. Together T and I explained the disconnection between the reality of her centre and the assumptions in the programme. Four other participants from the same county spoke saying that they were in a similar position. One of them described how she saw herself working with service providers outside the centre in a "professional community" rather than a team. A new term was born! We agreed to use it instead of professional team. We acknowledged that we were moving the NPQICL on to keep it up to date. All of the participants seemed much happier and engaged. For a while there would be smiles when we used the phrase. Much later my co-facilitator and I reported the incident to NCSL asking for the phrase to be used in any rewritten materials and it was.

They realised there would be no point a tutor telling them how to work with health visitors and social workers and how to manage their budgets. Everyone's centre was at a different stage. The approach of the course was more self-directed and did not involve just looking at other people's research and analysing it but looking at herself as a leader. She found that quite hard because she had always tended to put on masks and not disclose herself very often. She found that sometimes she was "playing the game" throughout the course. It dawned on her eventually why she was doing the course and she decided "to go for it."

Both assignments were powerful because they looked at the way she worked and interacted with other people. The online learning did not work for her. To start with she was just going through the motions and doing lots of reading and then she realised that she had to use her reflections. She was disappointed with her first result but now thinks the mark was quite generous. The course was the turning-point in her relationship with her line manager. They now had a really good relationship and were very honest with each other. Their relationship was not always easy but the course had made a big difference. The tutors were really supportive because they were very approachable. Having her mentor made the biggest impact. What really worked for her was working in the groups and the reflections she had on the group dynamics. She applied that learning to partnership working at the centre and interacting with her line manager. She noticed such a big shift in terms of her work role. She was aware of transactional analysis and how people influence and impact on other people. That was one of *the* most powerful things of the course. She stopped wanting just to get a good mark, she wanted to learn and it affected the way that she wrote. She was quite surprised how emotional people got at the leadership

symposium. The course had not been as academically developmental for her as the BA but it had been very developmental for her as a person and as a professional. She was quite pleased with her second mark. Some colleagues were distressed. For some people, who had not had an academic qualification higher than a level 5 it was such an achievement. "It was lovely to see—it really was". One of the best things was her peers who were supportive, and they had stayed in touch. She would still contact them and ask "what should I do in this situation?"

The biggest learning was to realise that she was still developing, was not perfect yet and that it was ok to have difficulties and to admit that you have got a problem. It had helped her with her confidence to realise that you should find someone who can support you. She had realised that she was the same person but that she had a lot of knowledge and experience that other people could benefit from. It had helped her realise the qualities that she had that were good and highlighted things to work on. It was important to be open and honest with everybody. The reading, the mentoring and realising lots of others were experiencing the same issues were particularly important for that.

She felt it had been an amazing opportunity for her and it had come at the right time. The mentoring was an essential feature, "...it is important for mavericks such as ourselves to have that sort of support "because "sometimes you're just thrown to the lion's den really". The impact of the NPQICL has rubbed off on everyone that she worked with. She has become a mentor to several others. She could not pinpoint exactly what the course had done, but it had "just has been mammoth". It has made her look at how she affects people including the children with every

little thing she does. Whether she was working with the staff or the partners, it had an impact at the end of the chain on families and children. She had seen herself in a little cocoon of her children's centre and her area but now she saw her role as much wider. She did things at county level because she thought children centre managers needed to feedback every perspective about their children's centres. Her role was more strategic now. When she started it was very much as an Early Years practitioner. "I couldn't get myself away from the families and the children". Now she rarely worked with them. Now when she went to meetings etc she was much more likely to participate and speak out whereas before she would have sat and passively listening. The way she worked as Children Centre manager has changed "I'm doing it! And I hasten to say that I'm doing it well!" Before she was very doubtful and always thought that someone would come along and say, "Actually, no, we've changed our minds. We don't want you anymore." Now she was proud to speak about her role.

Katy story

First of all Katy had been a manager of a phase 3 Children's Centre and then she became manager of another larger multi-site Children's Centre which delivered services in the centre and community venues and in the home.

Katy had wanted to apply for the NPQICL. She had heard about at a workshop at Pen Green and became interested in doing it. She was keen to do it because she really enjoyed learning especially alongside other people as she found that you sparked ideas off each other. She was "quite keen to see what it would do really for me and for the Children's Centre". She did not really have any concerns about her capacity to do the course because

always found studying improved her practice. When she studied it was more about the studying than the end result of getting a qualification. It was not about - was she going to pass or not. Katy had been quite cross when a tutor with an education background visited the group and "spoke to us about how it [the assignment] had to be written."

Katy did the research route because she had never done a big piece of research before and she felt that she would rather go into something in depth than do something superficial. During the sessions Katy became aware of some the origins of her drive to make things better for children and families. It was quite useful that actually it brought it home why it was so very important to her. She wanted to work with other people to make sure that children had the best experiences and did not go through the experiences that she recognised that she and her family had. Katy had fought for her family's rights, been to tribunals, met with council officers, educational psychologists and welfare officers and in the process learned all sorts of useful skills as well as recognising some skills and strengths in herself. "People praised me for the way I coped [with her son's serious illness], the whole episode made me feel that I did have enormous strength to cope with anything that life threw at me." It had signposted both the sort of work that she wanted to do and developed a strong belief in her that parents should be empowered. It had made her feel she was equal to these professionals and that was quite helpful because in her Children Centre role she felt that she could express herself in a way that meant that she could get people to understand what was necessary to put in place. Her experiences as a parent and volunteer changed her career direction from midwifery to working within Children's Centres. She felt that she had learned

something valuable to pass onto parents that whatever their life experiences had been they could build on them and use them to move forward, to support themselves and their families.

Katy thought that the research route allowed her to be able to do quite a bit of work with her team, to be able to look at various parts of her leadership with them and about how they were leaders and what they wanted as leaders. She needed that time to be able to “engage the whole team and get them wanting to learn”. She thought the actual research was “a fabulous way of doing things” because “you don’t necessarily know what direction you are going to end up going in at the beginning” She liked being in a small group because she was able to discuss what she needed to discuss as well as discuss other people things and hear what they had to say. “It just really suited me and it was a good way of learning.”

Katy was quite happy with the assignment. To begin with she had found it very difficult to focus on her leadership and really wanted to talk about the team because that was much more comfortable. She really took it to heart, and actually really looked very deeply into her leadership and why she was the way she was. “It was the first time I had consciously associated my background with what I am doing now. I suddenly understood my motivation for my work”. There were a lot of moments within the research where she doubted herself and felt quite upset about the way her leadership was, questioning whether she was “doing it the right way”. “I needed to deliberately find strategies to convince myself that I am capable....” When she got her assignment back she felt it was something that she could not share with other people to help them because it was too

personal. She had used what she learnt in her work but she could not use the actual document.

However, during the course Katy had used ideas from the course with her team. There had been a sort of team building activity where everybody took turns in being leaders and there were groups. They looked at whether they needed a leader within the team or not and why they wanted a leader and then what they wanted from a leader and then whether they felt that what Katy gave them was what they wanted. It was really interesting. The team found it really interesting as well because it meant that they looked at whether a group worked alright without a leader when everybody was working together and how that worked and whether sometimes you needed a different leader for different things.

Katy felt the learning style of the NPQICL really supported her. "It was very very good." She really liked the group of people that she was with. One of the things that she found very useful was being able to talk to other leaders who were going through similar things and being able to share experiences. She thought that was really useful.

She would always "remember it as being a really good experience", "probably one of my most useful learning experiences that I have ever had". In her assignment she had noted that "There is evidence that I have suffered from lack of confidence, however I am working on being consciously competent." It had really got her engaging with those people that she was working with and that was very useful not only for the staff but parents and children. "I think, not only do I have a 'can-do' attitude, but the team does as well." "...it just makes a total difference and it fitted in so much with the work that I was

doing.” Katy’s current MA study was not quite as good because she was no longer in a role where her research could be directly with those people with whom she was working. The empowerment and engagement with her team had brought them together as the team so they were working together living the idea of being a learning community. People felt valued and so it meant that they were able to achieve more.

Katy would encourage anybody to do the NPQICL because it was such a good experience for her. It had made her very critical of herself which she thought was very important. Katy did not think that the NPQICL had clarified her role perhaps because she had been a children’s centre leader for quite a long time before doing the NPQICL. However, she recognised that she had not seen the Children’s Centre as a learning community before the NPQICL. In her current job she was now seen as a person who loved learning and who enthused everybody else about learning. She liked to take on new challenges because she thought of them as learning opportunities. She also believed that everybody could be a leader and different people could lead on different bits. Everybody had something to offer and no one was an expert on everything. “All of that probably came from the NPQICL.”

2007-8 Cohort:

Elaine’s story

Elaine is the manager of a phase 3 Children Centre attached to a primary school in a socially disadvantaged area. She describes it as a hub and spoke model, where there are a few services going on at the centre, but most of them are through partnership working out in the local area.

When Elaine applied for the NPQICL she knew it would be a professional requirement eventually but was keen to do it early because she felt less well qualified than her peers. She felt very aware that she did not have a degree and was apprehensive about studying alongside colleagues from the same town with whom it was a struggle to work effectively and also because she had heard that she would be exploring her innermost feelings in public.

During the programme Elaine began to make connections between her upbringing and her approach to her new role. She felt that she was managing to project a calm, effective persona to local colleagues and did not want to admit to having any weaknesses. Elaine had been brought up in a family where loyalty to the family was very important and it was not expected that a member of the family admitted that they needed any help to an outsider. Elaine realised that although she had had friends with whom she felt she could drop her guard she had adopted her family protocol of not admitting any difficulty to anyone in her work life. Fairly early on Elaine realised that there was a barrier between herself and a particular local colleague also on the course. During a course activity this person gave her feedback that she did not need to try to appear as if she knew all of the answers and should feel she could admit that she might be struggling with something. Elaine realised that this was true and began to appreciate the local colleague's honesty and openness following an incident early on in the programme where Elaine tried to be open and direct and the colleague "took issue" with what she said. Elaine realised that the colleague was much softer and much more vulnerable than she had realised and that her own fear of dropping her guard was linked to the 'impostor syndrome' of believing she was not good enough to do her job

well or to be undertaking the NPQICL Masters level programme. Early on in the programme Elaine realised that most of the other NPQICL participants felt the same way. She recognised that they were a diverse and supportive group of people from whom she could learn. On meeting her fellow participants she had not expected to learn from them but had gone on to learn a great deal from sharing different experiences.

She realised that because she had had a safe happy childhood with loving parents she had no need to be other than compliant and to accept direction from knowledgeable line managers. About halfway through the NPQICL Elaine realised that she was beginning to create her own way of working and to give herself permission or as she called it a "mandate" to opt out of things she would have previously expected to have been her duty. Finding this autonomy and agency in her role was at the same time exciting and terrifying. On her first day she realised that it was up to her what she did in her job and how she did it. One of her line manager reminded her that she had said something profound at the interview for the job that she would need to go out and meet people and drink lots of cups of tea to build important relationships in the community. He said her comment had stayed with him and he always remembered to go out and drink tea.

Elaine's view was that the programme was a "rollercoaster". As time went on she liked the fact that it was a rollercoaster but sometimes wished she could get off. Because she had invested so much of herself in the first assignment she felt bitterly disappointed with the grade awarded but accepted that the learning that had come out of it was most important. Elaine saw that the theme for the second assignment could be something

that she really needed to do in her work role and took this forward with good results. At the end of the course Elaine realised that she had passed while others had not. She felt proud of herself but uncomfortable for those who had not passed. The opportunity to reflect aloud on the learning from the programme enabled Elaine to acknowledge that for the first time in her life nobody was telling her what to do. There was no more experienced "expert" leading her. She felt she had almost gone through a stage of being a rebellious teenager refusing to do things and doing things her own way and finding that that was acceptable to others and they accepted her professional autonomy. On reflection she realised that she was giving herself permission to avoid things she did not like and that as the Children Centre Manager, part of her role required her to be strategic and professional about what she avoided. Elaine felt that her experience on the NPQICL developed a "huge growth in confidence to trust myself." Elaine had realised that she sometimes needed to take a step back and say "I need to think about what I need to do here", or "I need to think about whether I'm the right person to do this". Elaine discovered that staying away from home and cutting herself off from her work context during the course contact days did not work for her. When she returned to work after a series of days away her work felt out of control. Elaine saw that this was another situation where doing what you think you should do was not the best thing to do and that part of her continuum of change was that she was more centred in her own role and decided what to do instead.

Elaine recognised that others already thought of her a confident person but that was because she learned to project confidence she did not feel. She felt that the programme had now enabled her to bring herself to the job. She recognised that she had

begun her new role believing that someone had already “carved out what the job should be” but had realised that that was not the case and she needed to create her own role in the Children’s Centre. It was as if she stopped seeking permission or a mandate and created her own professional identity. Elaine observed that because the role of Children Centre Manager is so open-ended that managers were setting different priorities influenced by their different professional heritages. She recognised the influence of her own professional heritage of early years on her own priorities for development of the centre and also that she was likely to avoid things that were outside her “comfort zone” unless she asked for help and worked in partnership with others.

Elaine recognised that although “scary” and “painful” her learning was deeper because already she knew so many NPQICL participants. This was because it involved taking risks and engaging with the realities of work in the local context and because Elaine had felt that she had to be open and collaborative. Elaine felt that because her experience on the programme was so “raw” there were times when she would have benefitted from having immediate access to a NPQICL mentor. The chance to talk to someone one to one about her experiences would have deepened her learning. Elaine thought that taking risks and being out of her comfort zone had extended her learning not least “because the sky wasn’t falling down”. From taking the risks came a sense of daring that she felt she had never had before perhaps because her mother was very cautious and very protective of her. Elaine felt that she had to push herself to take risks recognising that it not natural for her to be like that but also recognising that she has had to push herself to achieve things for the families using her centre.

Elaine was aware of changing. She moved from being scared of reading to enjoying reading. She found that having a mentor, having the away days as spaced as they were, tutors that challenged her but also listened to her, allowed her to really explore herself and begin to understand how she became the person she is. She became aware that she had built up layers of learned behaviour rather than being herself, being authentic. She realised that being herself was good enough and was the best way to work. Elaine now accepted the limitations of what she could achieve and that doing as much as she could was sufficient. Her confidence in being herself has "grown hugely" rather than the person she thought should be a children's centre manager. She now feels that she has as much right as anyone to create her role as a Children Centre manager and that the way that she fulfils her role and the "feel" of the centre will influence the people who work at the centre. She has learned to recognise what the Centre has achieved as well as what else needs to be done and to allow herself to recognise what she personally has achieved so far which she has not been good at before. Elaine thought that if she had not done the NPQICL she may not have stayed in the job because it stopped putting so much pressure on herself to do everything straight away. Despite what she had said in her interview about building relationships and drinking tea she had still been anxious to see things starting to happen and working far too long hours. Her mentor had been invaluable because her line managers were not able to be sounding boards for ideas. The journaling that she started on the course really helped too sometimes just to get things out of her system and puts a perspective on things.

Sue's story

Sue was the Head of Centres in a town in the East of England. That meant that she not only managed her own stage 3 children's centre but also line managed the manager of another children's centre. Sue had to do the NPQICL because it was in her job description. She was quite keen to do it because there were 4 managers from the Borough Council children centres that were going to do it so it meant that they would have some time together where they could learn about each other and go through the experience together. It seemed it would be a good team building opportunity. She had always been really self motivated with regards to her personal and professional development so she was quite keen to do it.

Sue had felt a bit nervous because she did not really know a lot about the course. She was scared that she would not be able to work at a high level academically and she was aware that she got quite nervous about being around a lot of new people. She was also quite excited. She wondered what she was going to get out of it and the amount of time she was going to be out of the office and the amount of work that it was going to take to do the written work and the research as well. She liked spending the time away from home. It was the first time that she had ever been away from her children.

Sue found the first day quite overwhelming. The first half of the course "was a journey". It was not really until the second part of the course that "a kind of light bulb struck with me and I knew what it was what I was learning and I could see where we were going and why we doing certain tasks and it became a lot more purposeful".

Sue felt that "we were creating an experience between us where we were learning by watching others". She watched how others

reacted and noted her thoughts and feelings about that. In the process she learned a lot about why she had become the leader that she was today and why everyone had different behaviours. Sue found it "a real big eye opener". Sue found being reflective or reflexive was tricky because it did bring up a lot of things for her. Although not all of them were surprises it left her with questions to which she knew she would not be able to get answers. The course left her quite upset for a while afterwards. Sue was grateful to have done the reflecting because she thought before that she had done "a lot of surface reflection but not really that true deep reflection" that had led to her getting to grips with how her upbringing has had such an influence on her life and the way she was. She liked to think that she could perform better because she was aware of the way that she was and the way that she could be seen and the effect that had on other people.

Sue did not find the assignments very easy. The first one was easier than the second one. The first one was a lot more about experiences when she was growing up and the influences, particularly of her deceased father, on her life now. She found the timescales quite difficult but recognised that she was not very good at working to timescales. She did enjoy learning about herself and new skills and new ways of thinking but did find it quite difficult to get it down on paper in the assignment. Sue found the second assignment more difficult perhaps because she was going through quite a difficult time at work. However she enjoyed the second half of the course more than the first half. Sue thought she was one of those people who "needs a kick up the backside in regards to getting my work in on time". She felt she needed somebody to keep her on task but recognised it would have been inappropriate at master's level.

The leadership symposium was quite strange for Sue because when she presented somebody cried in the group because she had talked about the learning she had had and had been open about herself. Unexpectedly this person had said that she had seen Sue in a totally different light and had learnt something about her that had changed her perspective of who Sue was. It was not like Sue had been keeping her real self hidden. The real Sue was partly hidden from Sue too. In the symposium people could see the reasons why she was the way that she was and why she was so open and honest because that was the behaviour that she had learned.

Sue thought the very thing that she was really afraid of (the learning community) was where she learnt the most. She had learnt a lot from one particular person. She could see a lot of her behaviour in some of Sue's own behaviour and she could see the reactions from other people. It helped Sue to understand her own behaviour and leadership. This was especially true in the team tasks because usually she had always been dominant within a team, but in these tasks she was not particularly dominant within the team and that allowed her to see what it must have been like for other people in her own team. Sue thought the role play was good even though she did not usually feel comfortable with such things. She hoped the next cohort would still have it as it had been a real learning curve for her.

In her view, the NPQICL "gave everyone a lot of tools and people might not have seen them as tools but ways of working with people, especially when you are working in a multi disciplinary team especially with phase three where we are working in such a remote way that we are trying to pull together lots of different agencies and we are not under one roof". Some colleagues were

expecting more management skills in the course such as appraisals and time management but Sue was not expecting that. Sue particularly valued learning about other professions and becoming more respectful of other agencies and their resources or lack of resources. Sue saw herself as an enthusiastic person who used to think "that my enthusiasm would just drag everyone along with me". She saw now that it wasn't always the case. The NPQICL helped her to understand why and how she could engage with different professionals who were working for the same goal through understanding where they were coming from. The impact was that Sue had a greater awareness of herself, her behaviour, the way she presented herself particularly and the effect that those things might have on others especially reluctant partners. She felt she had been more successful and better at that in the role that she was in.

Sue did not know whether the NPQICL alone had taught her that being a children centre head was not a simple task and that heads needed to know lots of little bits of information rather than one specialism. Heads are expected to work with partners who are specialist in the different areas that they were working with.

Sue was still not confident in her role. She still doubted her ability to do the children's centre manager role as effectively as she thought she should or could. Something new and challenging came up on a daily basis. However she had felt more confident in being in new situations. In recent partnership meetings she had had feedback from partners saying that she had come across as really professional and they came away feeling very enthusiastic. She had felt more confident in that way and kept in mind the last thing that was needed was someone "coming in all guns blazing with their excitement and enthusiasm to try and get them

onboard". Previously she had not been a very emotionally intelligent person and had tended to see things in black and white which she probably learnt from her dad.

Sue was on a further Masters level partnership and leadership course but would not have done it if she had not done the NPQICL. Now she wanted to finish her Masters.

Ann's story

Ann was the manager of a Phase 2 type 2 children's centre based within a local authority nursery school which also shared the site with a NHS child development centre. The children's centre had no space of its own only office space so it did a lot of activities and services either jointly with other services and agencies, or it rented accommodation elsewhere in a hub and spoke approach. It was part of the agreement on accepting the post that Ann would undertake the qualification. Although Ann had not heard of the qualification when interviewed, she did not feel it was something she "wouldn't want to do". Her approach was the best strategy was "getting it over and done with...." In some ways she would have liked to have done it in two or three years later, when she had felt that she had got to grips with the job and its challenges.

She was apprehensive beforehand about the actual days at the training and the thought of trying to do academic writing again. She felt it was a risk and thought "Gosh, am I going to be a complete failure here, and not be able to do it?" She was also excited and was looking forward to it - seeing it as it as a really good opportunity to meet other managers from within the wider Eastern region not just her town. Ann had not realised the course was at Masters level. When she did her view was "Oh, my

goodness me!" She had not spoken to anyone who had done it so she did not have an expectation of what type of learning it would be. However she knew from the open event that it would not be about day-to-day management such as sorting her budget out or managing staff issues.

Ann found the first two residential days "quite intense" because there were people getting upset and angry and rushing out. She was a bit bemused and began to feel, "maybe I should be feeling like this, maybe I'm not giving enough." "Am I'm not taking it seriously?" "Maybe I'm not being reflective, maybe I'm not being as honest and open with the group." She decided that the upset was arising from what people had brought with them rather than what was happening in the group. Ann found these introductory days quite intense, but enjoyable. It was interesting to see different people and the whole breadth of their experiences. Sometimes, she thought, "How did they get to be a children's centre manager?" and "I wonder what sort of manager they make?" For some people, it was a really difficult experience but Ann found that she did not get "het up". When some people were saying "I don't want to be doing this, what's this stupid thing we're having to do now," she thought, "I'll do it, give it a go." Even if she did not see the point she did not feel strongly enough to storm out. She was in a very large group and found it difficult to get to know everybody and stayed within a safer group.

Ann had decided she would not do the research route "because I was useless at that". She knew she needed small chunks or nothing would have got done until the last minute and it would have put her under an awful lot of pressure. On the micro research days the atmosphere was like ice because there

had been an incident going on and again she felt out of step with the others but thought she might as well make the best of it. Ann felt under pressure when completing the assignments but enjoyed doing them. She did not think she was academic as she did not really enjoy reading and found it difficult to analyse what she had read and link it with what she was thinking and feeling. She wanted it to be useful to herself and the setting. She "didn't want to just bung together a piece of writing and pass". Ann was disappointed and upset by the outcome of the first assignment but eventually felt grateful she had passed. There was a difficulty with the feedback because she did not get it from people who she was ever going to meet and there was not a chance to get things clarified. She enjoyed the second assignment more and got a better grade for that. She was pleased to get the 60 credits at Masters level and might try for the whole MA in two or three years time once she has got her head around the job.

Ann enjoyed the course even when there were bits she did not really understand. It "was a real struggle for those of us that didn't even have a team and were a manager of... nothing, almost." Ann found it difficult to look at her leadership. She was relatively new into post, and not in a traditional leadership role not leading any of these people in a normal sense, although she was leading on the children's centre and its development. Sometimes she felt a little bit like a pretender, being there, amongst these other people who were managing very large settings or maybe were development officers of two or three children's centres. Ann thought "Gosh, I'm just sitting here in my little office, and haven't got anybody." But in other ways she could see how the course applied to the difficulties of sharing spaces with other agencies and working in partnership with them. How should she best engage with people when really they

were all there for the same reason - to support families? Ann felt it was difficult to be part of groups if she had to use her experiences when she did not have those experiences. She would think, "Well, what *am* I doing?"

Through the course she realised that a lot of the job was around building relationships and trying to get others to buy into and feel ownership of the children's centre and not, "we're the children's centre and we're coming to take over you," The message had to be "this is a children's centre, what can it do for you? What do you feel you would like? And how do you feel families could best be supported through the children's centre?" The second assignment was easier than the first and better for her because it gave her an opportunity to "draw those partners in and say, "This is the children's centre and what do we want from it?" She wondered if it might have been more meaningful to reverse the order of the modules. Ann enjoyed the leadership symposium. She did not feel there were any amazing insights from it but perhaps by then she was very tired.

Ann thought meeting other people was helpful because in the end she realised the challenges were the same. The exercises were helpful. She enjoyed "the opportunity to think about what I was doing, why I was doing it, why I behaved the way I behaved, why I was affected by certain things". She was aware she would not get that opportunity when she was not on the programme. She really, really valued the mentoring because she was very isolated and not having opportunities to share and talk with her line managers. She could remember thinking the first time "Three hours! What am I going to do for three hours? However the time flew by. The mentoring was good because she felt quite alone and that nobody was really interested in her

work. She was struggling to “define the role and I wasn’t really sure where I was going or what the vision was”. The mentoring was non-judgmental and that helped *her* to find the answers.

Ann thought having the opportunity to meet other people that were having similar experiences and to have had the experience of the tutors or the mentors to share little bits of their experience but also able to facilitate something with the group were one of the best features of the course. One of the main things from it was it allowed her to realise why people behave the way they might behave and think about the way *she* was and the way that *she* worked with other people. That led to a greater understanding that would improve you as a leader. It made her realise that her work situation was very complex and reassured her that good multi-agency working can be effective. People were struggling with the same things that she was struggling with. The journaling was hard work for Ann. She could see the purpose of it though and without it she would not have been able to make sense of things.

The NPQICL gave her confidence because this was a new role and because for Ann it was the first time she had gone into a management role. It gave her the confidence to feel she should be in that role and what she thought and believed in. Sometimes when you are working with other people, you start to doubt yourself. It gave her confidence in her own worth because she completed it. “At the end of the day I’ve done it.” Ann thinks she is more assertive within the team and the wider team as well. She was now much clearer about the difference between managing and leading and understanding that she did not have to be line-managing people to be actually able to lead them.

"I gained confidence to do the role and that impacts on the confidence you have elsewhere and working with other professionals. It was a positive experience for me. I'm glad I've done it. I wouldn't want to be doing it now! [laughs]"

Jackie's story

Jackie was the Children Centre Manager (although the Local Authority was considering changing the title of the role to Children Centre Leader) of a traditional centre in the style of a phase 1 Children's Centre in that it has multi-purpose spaces. When Jackie was appointed it was part of her contract to do the NPQICL. All newly appointed Children Centre Managers were expected to do the course within two years of taking up the post. Jackie was interested in doing it and ready for it. She thought the lead agencies and LAs were expecting the NPQICL to have more practical training for the role (such as financial management, setting up staff roles etc). That training was NOT being provided for centre leaders and a lot of the participants expected to get that from the NPQICL so the course was "a bit of a shock." She liked training and learning because of the knowledge she gained and then thinking how she would use it. She was aware that "you don't know what you don't know." She was expecting the course to be reflective and looking forward to it. She had concerns about the unknown and coping and she was concerned about being open in the company of other Children Centre Heads who were local to this centre.

The induction was a bit of a shock. She found it very emotive [emotional?] plus she felt guilty because at that point she was the children centre and she felt bad that there was no-one there. She realised that incidences of bullying and feeling different that she had experienced as a child had influenced her.

Feeling like she had had her opportunities limited by experiencing a negative script, she had understood why she was now working in a context which aimed to enable children to achieve their potential and why she was still supporting and writing references for staff she had worked with years before. She noted that "those leaders that I most admire have been those who have *actively* encouraged me to try new courses, techniques or take on new responsibilities".

She had liked the learning journal and the theories. It changed her approach. She had been a hands-on person but after the Christmas break she began to step back and be more strategic. She had new staff then and was very aware of the Tuckman theory and how it applied to the groups in her centre. She also liked taking back the theory to the centre. She enjoyed the assignment process as she enjoyed research and a traditional style of teaching and learning. She preferred the assignments to the community learning group activities. The mentoring and the one to one tutorials made a great difference to her. Another observation she made was that Centre leaders need supervision and mentoring support similar to that on the NPQICL. It was a useful tool which should be repeated within the LEA provision.

Her only concern was the time away from the centre at a key time of its development. She now believed the NPQICL should be undertaken once designation and opening had been completed successfully as it was too stressful to be doing these at the same time as the NPQICL. However she did think that children centre heads ought to do the NPQICL when they have achieved designation. That was the best time. Jackie could not attend the leadership symposium and the programme felt

unfinished. The distance was difficult. Whoever had driven from the car share was tired and less engaged. Sometimes it was difficult learning alongside other local colleagues because of the potential for cross-overs etc. Jackie thought the wide regional mix was as important as the multi-professional mix.

Jackie thought it was difficult to explore multi-agency partnerships or team dynamics when she was just starting out and there was a delay in gathering together a professional team in the Children Centre. At the time of the NPQICL she was literally the only professional member of staff and did not have a team with whom to work. However she had acknowledged that the centre's partnership working was weak and she used the multi-agency partnership theme in the course to think about how it could be developed. She had realised that the process on the NPQICL had developed her ability to lead discussions, form opinions and define a common theme. In the end it worked out well. "The biggest gain I made was the move from manager to leader and into a more strategic role. The NPQ gave me permission to be a leader." It changed her view. She engaged much more with what she called the big thinking work based in theory and developed by reflectiveness. For Jackie 'light bulb moments' were incidents "where I realised or uncovered a 'blind' or 'unknown' element of the Jo-Hari window". She was a key member of the group who designed the 'Chandelier Moment (Colderwood, Dee, Ketts, Longstaff, Phillipson, and Wills, 2008)' feeding back to the full group plenary that "*Individuals have light bulb moments, but a team can create a chandelier moment*"

Critical incident 4 recorded in the researcher-practitioner log
"Chandelier moments"

Towards the end of the programme participants were discussing the challenges of decision-making in an interprofessional meeting when representatives of different agencies might need to consider other agendas for their context or check back with their line manager before agreeing to something. In the plenary the group who always sat at the back suggested rather mischievously that clearly what was needed was that the team at the meeting would all experience the same "light bulb moment" or "a chandelier moment perhaps!" In a slightly playful way I wrote up the words Colderwood, S., Dee, K., Ketts, S., Longstaff, H., Phillipson, A. and Wills, J. (2008) Chandelier moment, Cambridge: NPQICL Publishers with the intention of reinforcing Harvard referencing just prior to participants handing in assignment 2. Everyone stopped in their tracks. At that moment, in that context, the phrase "chandelier moment" described for the participants the experience of learning and working with others where everyone was "in the zone" and it was impossible to know where one's own and other's thinking began or ended. The phrase was a metaphor for co-construction in learning.

In a way the course had had a negative impact on Jackie's link with the lead agency because she now knew how she was NOT happy to be treated. She knew how she treated her staff team and would have liked to have been treated the same way. The course left her in a frustrated state. She thought it was often the way with other Children Centre heads who had done the NPQ. "I lacked awareness of what the role could be. I have moved from a manager to a leader." She became able to take on a trial and error approach which she thought was derived from working with education colleagues. There has been no change in

her confidence in being the head of this children's centre but she was more comfortable with taking risks and allowing herself to be wrong. This shift had been derived from "the ability to 'trust the process', and not to be focussed on the outcome or target of a task".

Rashid's story

Rashid was an area manager for a City Council. He was in the centre leader role for two Phase 3 Children's Centres in a rural area being built at the moment. He was in a transition period to a strategic role as a leader of 6 centres each with a coordinator. At the time of applying his centre leader strongly recommended him to do it as he would really enjoy it and he did have some idea of what might be involved. He did it willingly as he was looking for some "professional development in a managerial sense." His role as a deputy leader at that time, "which wasn't a terrible well-defined one" meant he felt as though to get on a more formal qualification was what was needed. Rashid had shared an office with the centre leader. He felt like he had had a close insight into what the role was and was participating in the thinking and the conversations of the centre leader. His job description did not reflect what was going on in practice. He felt as though he had a job title that sounded quite important but was not realistic. "It was a very moveable feast and you could feel different from one day to the next." He hoped to clarify things in his mind and to gain the confidence to believe he could act as a centre leader. Prior to embarking on the programme, and only months before, he had done an ILM management course, a level 3, which had given him some quite interesting and useful tools to use, but it had not really addressed what it "feels like to live the role." Certainly during

and absolutely since completing the NPQICL he could see the benefits of it,

“in being able to deconstruct whatever role I’m doing, in a systematic way, and think about what is going on, what is my part in this centre or job or organization. So, it opened the senses, if you like.”

Rashid was very keen to start the course but had some apprehension about looking out of place with this group of centre leaders,” That stuck in his head throughout the programme and became a theme of one of his assignments. The first four days were quite “a sort of exhilarating, energising whirlwind”. There were lots of meetings, talking and lots of characters including “very important head teachers and centre leaders”. At the same time there was comfort in talking to the people whom he felt like had similar experiences to his. He felt somewhat bewildered thinking “where is this going?” In the next block of three days participants worked as a group to create research projects. There was a real bonding with the group from the residential and they happened to be a group that clicked really well. It made them all feel very safe about sharing quite personal experiences. It was really important to be able to let himself go with it and give himself the freedom to think what he thought. He did not have to banish certain thoughts. He remembered saying on the programme, “It’s finally clicked. I understand what we’re trying to do here.” He engaged with the fact that

“you could take control of your own destiny—that’s what this was about. And I was probably hooked from that point on really.”

Since that time he had used the group as a resource particularly when he went into his new role. He still uses them as a sounding-board for ideas, “because there is that trust that I have with those people.” He believed that they would only think about his best interest. He had respect for them and believed that they would be honest with him. Part of it came from realising that other people had the same fears and worries that he did and were doing fine proving that you could survive. He thought that, “actually, I probably wouldn’t have done anything different to how those people have dealt with it, in some circumstances.” It gave him confidence in his own judgment, as much as anything. He had realised that everybody made mistakes. The benefit was the time away in that safe place with kindred folk who could solve his dilemmas sometimes “in a nutshell, with a facial expression, nothing more.” He felt valued when he could solve other people’s problems like that and found it very confidence-building.

“Even the tasks I hated were great [laughs], because by that second week I had the confidence to think, “I really don’t like this I’m not going to invest much of myself into it. I won’t scupper it but I can make that decision for myself—I feel grown up enough about this, that I’m not getting out of this.” So that felt quite good.”

Some of this learning jumped out from the texts that he had read. Some of the texts and some of the theories really did resonate at that point. The leadership tools book “became the most thumbed book out of the lot.” He remembered,

“the flow - by the man whose name we can’t say [Czicksentmihaly]. And it seemed so applicable, in so many

situations, to think, "Why am I struggling or not enjoying this?"

He was probably 'in the zone' at this point. It was like a field trip. During the course he responded to the theory which gave him confidence from "being able to reason why I feel the way I do". It was a vocabulary, from the theory that "allows you to make changes, because it gives you cause and effect." "That's what is quite empowering about theory".

In study block one he was surprised at how well everyone worked as a team and engaged positively with the tasks. Just towards the end of it, there was pressure and anxiety about the assignment which started to kick in, but it was tempered by the excitement of being able to do an assignment about himself. A "lot of these light-bulbs" had gone on. In the second module there were more challenging exercises. He particularly hated the goldfish bowl but probably it was because of the feelings from people beginning to voice "this is the end." mid-week. There was a feeling of this impending sense of loss or ending that was affecting how we were performing in the task and our motivation and ability to learn. He went into self-preservation mode and became very selfish thinking "I want to get out of these tasks what I want to get out of them." He was happier to say "I'm not happy with this," or "I'm not getting a lot out of this." He was focussed on his own response to tasks.

The assignments were meaningful in several ways. The first one felt very indulgent and exciting because he was doing something about himself. It was enlightening and confidence-building. The hardest part was thinking "how do I engage other people in feeding back honestly about me?" He was motivated to do well because academically he had some regret that he had

underperformed at university. It was a chance to right a wrong. He was very pleased with his mark on the first assignment and that spurred him on to do better in the second. Measuring himself against academic standards was an affirmation, a confidence-builder. His view was "well, I'm going to milk this for everything I can get out of it, because we won't have this time again." He became much more confident after the first assignment and it revealed to him some things that surprised him. Although his team valued the way he kept himself to himself, they saw it as an allowable weakness. He felt that as centre leader he had to push himself to go out and go out connect with people and explain what he was doing. He had learned that his team were very clearly telling him, "We can help you do your job if you let us, if you let us know what's going on." It was a powerful lesson. With the second assignment doing well academically became the goal more than the exploration of issues. And there was more playing of the academic game at that point. However he did learn that if you went into a meeting with your own agenda some individuals, "would just suck the energy out of it", and it almost felt like you just couldn't achieve anything. He learned that the individuals who were saboteurs were really "just being defensive about what they felt was important". The assignment "surfaced a lot of that for us, if not totally explicitly within the group, but certainlyto engage with those people in a slightly different way." Following this, their engagement really did change.

The leadership symposium was like meeting up with far-away relatives at a family event. It did not feel comfortable. He remembered being very critical of parts of the programme, as well as the bits that "I had got a huge amount out of." And maybe that was because I thought, "well what now?" His instinct

was to deconstruct the course but at that stage he was unable to reflect on how the course acted as a springboard, some of the other pennies that have dropped later, the growth in his confidence or the benefits of the network he had now got to talk to.

There was also a problem within his local authority because the course was not a valued qualification and not pushed. It did not appear in job descriptions. The problem was with Phase 3 Centres, and even more diverse job roles, some people would never be able to meet the national standards because their roles would not allow it. At the most recent national meeting, the head teacher sitting next to him had left after the first session because she was not getting anything out of it. It is so difficult to provide something that that range of people would get anything out of. He had valued having the huge amount of time everyone had to reflect.

The most immediate impact and "legacy" was confidence. He had learned it was ok to make mistakes, and to trust his own judgment rooted in "there's theory behind it. That's what gives me confidence." The course made him feel like he could create change. Leadership felt less of a burden than it had been before because he realised how much trust and potential there were in his staff teams back in his centres. When he talked about his NPQICL cohort he often said "we" showing how much he identified with them. It was a special bond. He felt everyone came out of the course feeling a force for change. "I think we felt we could challenge the way things were a lot more," He now felt he could cope with any variation of the role. It felt

“all achievable, like we can do it. I think we’ve also got a sense of what isn’t do-able and feel able to say that—we feel able to challenge other people with what is realistic.”

He had been resilient and determined about taking his academic study forward. “I’m prepared to push a lot harder than I was before.” “It was a big kick, to get me going, and it did it. It probably came at the right time in my life.”

2008-9 Cohort:

Henk’s story

Henk was a manager of the original, first children’s centre in the county. The centre fulfilled the government’s aim at that time to have everything on one site so there was a big health presence on the site, a Sure Start centre and a school of 150 nursery children with the lead agency being the NHS. A week prior to be interviewed he had left that role a week for promotion. When Henk came into post it was a pre requisite to do the NPQICL. It was not mandatory though and as Henk entered the programme he wondered what, as he already had a business management and leadership background, he was going to gain from of it. However, as it was a requirement he was happy to do it. Just before the course started Henk had been a bit stressed because of the time constraints of his job role which spanned the children’s centre manager and managing the in-house services on the site. He was genuinely interested to see what the benefit was going to be and knew that he would be able to gain insights into different children’s centres in other counties and was looking forward to that.

Henk had been a bit disappointed by the signing up process for the NPQICL. He had expected something interesting

but it was a five minute admin process and nothing else and so it was a bit of an anti climax. However it was good to meet other participants some of whom he already knew. When he came back for the first block of teaching he knew where everything was so that was really helpful. He generally enjoyed the approach taken by the lecturers as it was very welcoming. He felt that although it was going to be an academic process it was a sort of a warm, inviting environment and he felt comfortable, got to know the other people quickly and realised that the programme was very much about developing opportunities for interaction with his colleagues on the course. He thoroughly enjoyed that. He had always been very much in favour of study or learning groups and so thoroughly enjoyed that.

The programme was interesting but although they were hearing about a lot of things and having a lot of discussions the participants did not really have to deliver much. He felt that he was learning and gaining from listening to other people's experiences. When they talked about a concept or a theory he had a view on it himself but then listening to others he found he modified his view. The more he reflected on the approach the more he thought it was very clever. He realised that there were a lot of people with whom he worked who would find the approach much more useful for them than the way or approach he would have used. "The whole action learning concept was really brilliant." When it came to the assignments he was a bit unclear what was required and worried about the time it would take. He came to the conclusion that the idea was that that the course wanted different outputs from each different "candidate". He was also a bit worried about the time needed but, in discussing it with both the mentor that was provided for him and his own line manager both of whom were very lovely and

supportive, it dawned on him that actually he could do what he was planning to be doing in his job anyhow and complete the assignment and job task together in one go. One "sort of facilitated the other" and it worked quite well as he had a legitimate time to give priority to this piece of work for which he had not had time. After the assignment was finished he realised what he had gained through the NPQICL programme to date, "almost by stealth". It dawned on him that he had made quite a few insights, and had arrived to a point of sort of enlightenment much quicker than otherwise. He felt much more positive because up until then he had been very stressed about time constraints. Now he had a plan of action that was actually going to give him more time to actually manage his job on a day to day basis and feel less stressed about it.

During the second assignment he was undergoing a lot of stress in his personal life. He found that the assignment was a getaway from his personal problems. While he was doing the second assignment some of the issues that he thought he had understood in the first assignment, became even clearer. He had had an imperfect view that leadership was all about himself rushing ahead being a good role model and everyone else following him and getting the things done together. He came out of the second assignment understanding that leadership was identifying where you are going but doing it with everyone else. He was the follower in the sense that he was leading the people by facilitating their movement from behind rather than ahead. He had become quite exhausted in his previous attempts to lead and so this was a massive revelation for him and he, "just felt such a weight off my shoulders that actually my job was to facilitate others and that I didn't have to be the shining light ahead of everyone else, trying to move quite a big children's

centre and a health service forward pretty much on my own. I felt relieved”.

Henk had loved going to the other children’s centres of his learning group out of county and seeing how they operated. He felt that just getting to know the other children centres managers in his learning group made the whole programme such a positive experience. They still kept in contact and shared information.

He was confused when he got his first assignment back and saw two different marks there and he found the leadership symposium rather low key. Henk would have liked more direct teaching on leadership theory and he thought that there was such a range of participants on the course that he thought some would have benefitted from a course on good management particularly managing staff. Henk managed 70 staff and then teams under that as well but some of the children centre managers have got 2 or 3 staff yet they were spending so much time micro managing staff problems such as ‘this one doesn’t talk to that one’ .

The biggest thing for him was a better understanding of leadership. He had held quite a few senior posts over the years and he had thought he was leading quite well. His overwhelming gain through the programme was to understand the real distinction between leadership and management and then the real definition of leadership as a facilitation of what works for the collective. One impact of that was that now the whole community is involved in the annual self-evaluation process. He was also now part of a larger scale evaluation with other centre managers in the region which was exciting.

The role of children centre head was starting to become slightly clearer. Initially children centre heads were thrown into a centre in a community and everyone stood back and saw what came up. An incremental process was happening and children's centre managers were starting to feel a bit more professional in their roles after feeling a little bit insecure, under confident and unclear about who they were and what they had to do and what they had to achieve. His first NPQICL assignment had particularly helped with that.

Children Centre managers have to hit the deck running and are constantly being assessed and evaluated and observed and having to feed back. As he had been head of the first children's centre which was a good practice model, every single pilot, every single simple government initiative, every audit was trialed there. Henk had gained confidence from the NPQICL because he had seen his leadership role differently and was able to do it with less stress. He felt confident because he understood that actually his new way of working was, in fact, right.

Sally's story

Sally is a manager of a small children's centre with four staff and with essentially everything on one site and outreach in community centres and other schools. The NPQICL was a condition of employment for her job but she was quite keen to do it for herself having heard "mostly good things about it". Although she had a little bit of anxiety about what the course would entail and how much time it would take up she was mainly looking forward to it. She knew some people that were doing it in the other cohort but she was looking forward to meeting lots of other people doing the job. She recognised it was a new job "you know - a new role for most of us" and it was nice to make

more links with people that understood. She had already had her initial meeting with her mentor who had explained and she had read some things about the course but there was still a little bit of anxiety about the unknown.

Initially it was lovely to meet lots of people and everybody was very friendly including the facilitators. The place was easy to find and park so it was all quite relaxed in that respect. In the first module she had a bit of a feeling of she wanted to "get on with it", rather like the first day of term at school when there are administrative things to do. It felt to her like it took a while to get going. She recognised that that was to do with her expectations and not necessarily anything wrong with the course. She found the next couple of modules generally good. She got to know people better and felt building "trusting relationships in the learning community" was really good. She had some frustration over the teaching method as it was quite repetitive. After three consecutive three days, by day three she had had enough of the same method. Her group had downed tools and said "We are not doing a poster". She was very surprised at other people's reactions to a group of people saying "actually we don't want to do that, it is not meeting our needs to do that." She felt that when adults were learning they needed to be able to say "Actually that is not working for us. We will discuss the topic if that is really important but we feel like we are wasting time designing a pretty poster." One or two people were really quite cross about it and made the group feel quite guilty. It was as if we were being accused of affecting somebody else's learning "whereas in fact what we had done is just taken ownership of it and for our group done what worked for us." For a quiet life if she had her time again, she would have probably not done it because it seemed the upset that it caused was out

of proportion with what we did. She had also noticed that sometimes people could not resist feeding back something that three other people had already said in the plenary. By day 3 the group she was in had had enough. They were probably very tired as well. It was quite draining.

As the modules went on the actual content became more and more useful. For some of it she was thinking she had got to write an assignment about this and she must write that down. She felt you could not get away from that when you were doing an academic course. Some of it she recognised as really useful in her everyday work which was obviously the point of doing the course. Sally did not mind doing the assignments and once she got down to them she quite enjoyed them especially reading deeper and looking further into subjects. She thought the guidance about the assignments from the beginning could have been a bit clearer although that did not concern some others. It was very, very different from what was expected of her in her previous Masters level course so that was quite difficult.

“Obviously different people learn better with different learning styles but I think also just to kind of energise you, you know, to have a little bit of variety and I know it is a Masters level course, but once in a blue moon I think we were crying out for someone to just tell us something.”

The tutorial support had been good. Then she had all the upset of being told that she needed to resubmit and then that decision was revoked in the national moderation. She found that all very difficult and was not looking forward to the last module expecting to have to resubmit again. She felt that whole process could have probably been managed a lot better. It did not affect her feeling of having the ability to do the job. One good thing

that came out of it was she realised she was not very good at failing having "moseyed through my life" and passed most things. You needed to be able to deal with setbacks and she could relate that to the experience of her families as well when things go wrong for them.

Sally found the experience of the second assignment, completely different. "It was all good". She really enjoyed the last module. She "felt finally, yes this is all really coming together". The tutors and mentors had kept saying "trust in the process" and earlier on she had thought "where is this going?"

The activities that she had done in that final module were really, really useful especially being able to role play situations in a safe environment. That was really, really good and quite powerful. Sally found it useful because she was able to see how people perceived one another and made assumptions and how it must have felt for the person that played the parent in particular. Everything was being thrown at the 'mother' and it was easy to forget how you can easily get into kind of firing questions and blaming parents. It was really important to not make assumptions.

In this children's workforce the different titles that people have got were very confusing, "Even for the children's centre manager, leader, co-coordinator, head of centre, programme manager, you know, which are pretty much all the same thing but could be perceived as different." When you were working with the much wider workforce she thought it was easy to assume that you knew what a social worker and a health visitor did and the rest of the roles that you came across and actually people probably did not know very much about them. That insight was not something she would never have thought of

herself but it reinforced her thinking and now in meetings now she had been getting people to explain their role and explain what it means for them. Sally was aware that she constantly had to explain her role. That had been one of the things in the earlier module with the micro research project that her group had looked at "How do you explain what a children's centre is, and what a children's centre manager is?" She did not think she had, "come to a nice kind of pat answer, you know a little paragraph that I can say because how you explain things to people depends on the person as well, on their prior knowledge, their level of understanding, but you know there is definitely a need"

Critical incident 5 recorded in the researcher-practitioner log "Pedagogical leadership. As usual teachers take over everything!"

One of the programme of sessions of the NPQICL was to consider the idea of "pedagogical leadership". There was a whole booklet devoted to this in the course materials provided to participants. It defined pedagogical leadership as leading learning for everyone in the organisation including children, parents and colleagues. Each year there would be grumbling amongst the participants along the lines that they did not understand "pedagogical leadership" and anyway wasn't it something for teachers only? Why was a group composed of social workers, community organisers, midwives, health visitors, playworkers and early years practitioners being asked to engage with such a thing. It was a case of the education steamroller flattening everything before it as usual etc. This was always difficult when as facilitators we were, at least in part, teachers by professional heritage and when the cohort included several school teachers too. Eventually we approached the topic by describing

pedagogical leadership without naming it as such and then asking participants to name it. This meant that the participants considered the approach of pedagogical leadership on its own merits and were not prejudiced by its educational sounding name. It also offered an opportunity to discuss the role of language in interprofessional dialogues, for example, we were able to identify the differences implied in the term "supervision" in a social work context to its meaning in a midwifery context.

There had been lots of individual exercises that made her think and made her come back and change even little things such as how you communicate with parents. It made her actually start having staff meetings and keeping notes and having a place people can write down that they want to discuss something. It was hard to think of all the changes she made. Sally had felt better for making the changes. From the course, she felt like she knew where the centre was heading. The staff team had not done things like talked about what their vision was and when they did that was a good feeling. One of "the things that came up a lot was kind of resilience and not giving up on things" She had been trying for ages to get a midwife clinic and had given up after several tries. She came away from the last module thinking she was going to sort this for once and for all and she was going to keep going and now the centre has a midwife clinic! Her view was if you really believe that you need some service, you will find a way to do it. There was protected time in the course to really think about what she was doing and she found that very hard to do that when she had all of the everyday things to cope with. Sometimes they got in the way of actually stepping back thinking where do I want to be or where do I want this children's centre to be in six months time or a

year. She thought the course gave her that kind of space really to do that.

Sally had felt that the first module and even perhaps part of the next module was covering things that she already felt comfortable with. It was not necessarily negative, but she had not moved on a lot during that phase. She did not quite get into the flow. The other difficult thing was having to have time out from the centre but by the end she noticed that whereas every coffee break and lunch break she had received messages from the staff at the centre, "What about this? What about that?" By the last module she had none. She thought the staff had started to take more responsibility. She had become more trusting of her staff. They seemed to enjoy it and feel more valued.

Sally found it had been nice to reconnect with people but she did not find the leadership symposium hugely useful. She thought let us just be finished now. However, the main thing that supported Sally in her role in the children's centre was the learning community. "On a very practical level being able to email people, ringing people up and saying what do you do about this, you know I have got this problem that I have not come across before was good." A lot of people used it like that. Sally thought that definitely the learning community and learning from each other was a real benefit of the course and she is still in touch with her learning group and she felt knew more people. The impact had been that she had got ideas from other people that she could put into practice herself. It had been good to tease out issues in a group of people that understand and were in a similar place to where she was in terms of her professional work. What was interesting about the job was that everybody

had come from a different background so they had a lot to learn from each other.

She now saw the role more clearly and saw it as strategic leadership. That was something she knew was there but she, "perhaps was ignoring more and now I am not, so I think the course did do that with me, makes you really look at and plan where you are trying to go". Sally had felt fairly confident in her role anyway but felt that, "having passed the NPQICL it kind of validates what you are doing". She had "got the piece of paper that says that you are competent to do the job really." "If someone, or if in a meeting you know if somebody was pressurising you or putting down the role and that sort of thing, not that I would be saying, I have got the NPQICL, but yes, in that respect it sort of gives you the confidence that no, actually this role is important and I do know what I am doing with it, most of the time!"

Ursel's story

Ursel was the Children's Centre Manager for two phase 2 children's centres. They operated on a hub and spoke model. She had started the NPQICL just after she became the manager.

Ursel knew about the NPQICL before she became children's centre manager, as she was the deputy manager in a sure start local programme and the programme manager there had been on it and recommended it. Ursel was anxious to gain a qualification in the area that she was working in. Ursel was "desperate to do it" because she wanted to progress in her field of work. However Ursel was in transition between posts at the time so it was rather stressful. She felt uneasy as her university qualification was from abroad so she was not sure about the

academic expectations of the course and she was worried about studying in English. She was also worried that she was only a deputy manager and was uneasy about how other participants would view her. She had concerns about starting something new and was aware that her manager had not completed the course and had reservations about it.

Ursel remembered the first block of course days as “really quite an emotional rollercoaster”. On the first course day she felt quite unsure whether she should or should not be there because of not yet being a children’s centre manager and then at the start of the second day she had had to miss the beginning because she had to go for her interview as the children’s centre manager. Although it was quite nerve wracking people were hugely supportive and willing her to get the job. That experience lived with her throughout the course. People seemed genuinely interested in her and what she had to say. One of the key things around the NPQICL was the experience and the knowledge that she was not alone in her role. Within her geographical area, there was no one who was doing the same sort of job as Ursel so sometimes she had felt quite isolated. Being with people who were doing similar work to the work she was doing, had very similar experiences and could sympathise when she was talking about problems was a new, important experience.

Ursel found it was an interesting experience to do an academic piece of work with a very strong emphasis on writing about herself. The self-reflection during course and the mentoring helped her to understand herself much better. Her experiences and views had been validated through the course through discussions with others on the course. She felt she could

do the assignment because actually what she had been saying had been accepted as a valid opinion worth having.

However Ursel found the later stages of the course quite difficult. Her own personal journey continued in a positive direction but the learning group or the task group that she was in, made the course days a mixed experience. The dynamics of the group were really difficult. The group could not find an effective way of working. In the sense of looking at multi disciplinary and multi professional working Ursel found the problem interesting but it was a painful learning curve.

Ursel had felt rather bewildered by the fishbowl day. However, the sculpt activity was a huge success from her point of view and very much changed her perception of the incident that she was portraying. The experience gave Ursel a taste of how much more creative ways of exploring the problem could work rather than formal, traditional logic driven ways of exploring things. It was one of the key moments within the whole programme that had made a huge difference to her. She had suddenly realised by positioning two people in relationship to a third that is a much more complex relationship. It was a really strong and useful insight that had really made a difference to her work. She had been struggling to analyse the relationship with someone at work and had realised that all the other things that were going on were influencing the relationship.

Ursel had a positive experience with the second assignment and it had had a very positive impact on her work place. The activity she had organised was an interesting interface between work and the course experience that had made a rewarding difference in the centre. It had brought people together and explored what everybody actually wanted from the

children's centre for children and how it could work. The away day "benefited hugely from the course engagement". Other people on the course were more reserved and hesitant about it but Ursel had decided to "give the course a go and just take whatever was offered, really explore it and see how I was getting on with it". Her openness allowed her to benefit from it and explore different things. She felt she had to take that risk and the very early experience within the first two or three course days knowing that people were very supportive, made her think it would be ok to take that risk with that group of people. She never felt let down as people "were with me". However, her task group was dysfunctional and did not work well for her.

Ursel was very interested in mentoring and how she could support other people to learn. Much of what was positive from the course such as having her experiences and views validated came from the mentoring context as well. The mentoring sessions were safe places where she could explore some of her much more personal issues such as understanding why she acted in her job the way she does because of how she developed and where she came from. Ursel found accessing the library and the NCSL online resources difficult. She was much more the sort of a person who prefers the direct face to face contact. She felt cross about the amount of work needed to prepare for the centre-based assessment which felt quite detached from the rest of the course. However, the actual visit and discussions were very positive, led to further learning and was a celebration of what had been achieved. Another difficulty had been that the lead agencies for managers had very little understanding of what the NPQICL was about and there was little understanding about what she was going through and why she wanted to discuss certain things. Ursel wondered if things might be a bit better now.

For Ursel the NPQICL “almost sort of shaped my understanding of my role rather than doing the children’s centre job first and then having to, or then reflecting on it and changing it, I was doing the two things almost hand in hand.” She felt the “NPQICL was forcing me in actually filling out the role of children’s centre manager”. She knew that sometimes people said it was better to be in post a little while before doing the NPQICL but her experience has been that it actually worked really well doing it alongside the new role. In many ways “children’s centre managers’ job descriptions were sort of a first stab at what the role could be and then you really had to make it work in practice and that is why I am talking about filling out the role, it is almost like bringing the words from the page and bringing them to life and actually making them work in practice.”

Ursel wondered if it was time to go back to the job descriptions and see whether they were still relevant and appropriate. Ursel had also changed her view of the role in terms of being a manager or a leader. She had thought of her role in terms of management but at the end of the course she felt much more that she wanted to be a leader. Her understanding of what the role was, changed quite a bit throughout the course. Instead of taking a hands on role working with families, running groups and so on she decided to step back and be much more of a person who facilitated the staff members. She was much more interested in looking at how the children’s centre would fit into the wider local authority context and took on a much more strategic role looking at the overall development of the centres, not just for the next year but in the five year period. That came out of the NPQICL.

There was a change in Ursel's confidence over the period of the course. She went into it feeling confident she could "do the management bit around the organisational stuff". Throughout the course her confidence in managing people and getting people on board to be engaged with the children centre increased greatly. At the beginning of the course she had been the sort of a person who would assume that something was either right or wrong, it worked or it did not work. The course had opened her up to thinking that there was "a whole range of stuff between working and not working. There is much more grey and I think that the course helped me to accept the grey and say well it is actually a case of being on the path to somewhere, it is not just about arriving, it is actually also about the fact of how we are going to get there and we might sometimes achieve useful things by just trying even if we don't achieve the final step."

As a manager satisfaction came from "everything being done or everything put into their cubby holes and everything neat and tidy." "As a leader you are much more open to living with things that are not quite finished, things that aren't (inaudible) always very clearly defined and I think the course helped me to do that."

Ursel would recommend it to everybody. "For me it has made such a difference. I was probably in the right place to take it on, so it was very lucky that it came along at that particular point in time."

Viv's story

Viv was a Phase 2 Children's Centre manager. The lead agency was a secondary school. Although there is no child care

or early education on site there were a range of health related activities. 11 primary schools, an ESCO, an outreach worker, and two other children centres were part of her professional community. She had deliberately chosen not to have an office but could be found sometimes with her laptop anywhere in the Children Centre.

She felt the NPQICL was a qualification that would help her in her role as a children's centre manager because it was "a new role and children's centres were very new." She had asked in her job interview whether she would be allowed to do the NPQICL. She felt strongly that she wanted to get it as a professional qualification as a step up the ladder. Part of her own desire to get the qualification was because she had not been successful on getting on the EYP training. She had been a preschool leader for 13 years and had a degree in Early Childhood Studies. She expected the NPQICL to give her practical underpinning training on how to carry out her role as a children's centre manager like an NVQ did. It soon became apparent that was not how it would be. She was excited to start as there would be a big group of country Children Centre managers doing the course and because it was residential. That made it seem more important.

To begin with she was disappointed and felt the course was not going to give her the tools she needed when she was worried about building projects and websites. Then she worked out that everybody was in the same boat and finding out what everybody was doing and networking with all the other children's centre managers was actually as valuable and that began to build her confidence a bit. She had empathy with those people that did not yet have centres. She had struggled with the group tasks because she always wanted to achieve the objective rather than

pay attention to the process. She had come to a common sense view that actually sometimes you trust the process and sometime you have to find an outcome. That was how she goes about her business now- sometimes she will say "Let's see how it goes and 'trust the process' and other times she says "No, we need to achieve this and this is how we are going to do it."

*Critical incident 6 recorded in the researcher-practitioner log
The check in dilemma.*

One of the features of the NPQICL is to "check in" first thing in the morning. The idea is that if participants have a chance to say what is uppermost on their minds they are better able to learn and that it enables them to be supported by their colleagues. As facilitators we had noticed that it had the added benefit of encouraging participants to speak in the learning activities, perhaps because they had broken the ice. However, the "check in" could be time consuming when there was a great deal to cover in each session and, very occasionally, someone would have something that would upset him or her significantly as they spoke about it but there would not be appropriate personnel such as a mentor on hand to offer support. The pressures to curtail the check in were greater than the pressures to keep it in the programme. However, the check in had its roots in some of the values and principles of the programme such as "trust the process". It supported the evolution of the learning community that was so valued by participants and it was reported by participants as an effective tool that they saw modelled and then took away to use in their practice. We realised that the dilemma we had a tutor-facilitators was the same as the one experienced by participants and so we discussed it with the student group using it as a case study. It was a case of a fascinating parallel

*between the course and the work of a children's centre leader.
This must be an outcome of pedagogical isomorphism.*

At the time she could remember feeling the group work was quite frustrating but now looking back now it had been helpful. Now when a meeting does not work she reflects on why it did not go well. She does not take it personally like she used to and think "Crikey that did not go well. Oh God, you are a terrible manager! She just ploughs on and learns from it because that is what had she learned to do on the NPQICL in "a safe environment".

Working in a learning community was very important because it was supportive and it gave you a safe environment to look at tricky issues. She had preferred the university tutor's style because it was more educational even though she was looking for practical rather than academic learning. She felt she needed to be educated rather than reflect on how to run a children centre. She liked to read around a subject and then form her own idea so she enjoyed writing the assignments. She had learned from some of the exercises on the NPQICL. "The fact that they were emotional made them so powerful." "Those opportunities are really good for me. Being a kinaesthetic learner I think I am ...I enjoyed those". She would definitely choose the same type of learning against any distance learning approach.

She had not felt confident as a leader and felt that she was a manager and did not need to be the "inspiring leader that I was being asked to be". In the first assignment she had the opportunity to question her lead agency about her role. At the time she was worried that she was doing too much managing and not enough leading. She had been reassured when they said, "you can be swan-like, a leader above the water." But "you

can't be a good leader if you're an incompetent manager," She still felt a little confused but reminded herself that she had a vision for the Children Centre and that perhaps she was leading without realising it. That was when she saw a purpose to the NPQICL.

The partnership event she had arranged for her second assignment took her out of her comfort zone. She got a really good response to the invitations. "That wasn't something I'd ever done before. And wouldn't have done it, I don't think, at all." She brought everyone including health partners, Home-Start and the midwifery team together, there was lunch and they decided that their focus was going to be defining the new outreach role. She started by inviting them "to define another group's role." The result was the midwives thought that Home-Start was a charity organization where nobody was paid and they did not realise it open to everyone. Those sorts of confusions were interesting. The midwives and the health visitors had only a slightly clearer sense of what each other's roles were. Everyone could see fault lines in the partnership. She was really encouraged by the fact that she had a good turnout of people at that event. When she stood up and presented or facilitated it she wasn't nervous at all. A bit of it was because as a Children Centre Manager she has to speak to anybody and everybody and a bit of it was because during the course she had had a personality change from being a quiet person to becoming a bit more gregarious.

She thought she was a more reflective person than she had been. She thought the reading and reflecting as part of the session time was helpful too. The meetings with her mentor had been very helpful to explore "critical incidents" and to get feedback from someone else who had been through the process

and had had children's centres was really good. The meetings helped her see things that were "staring you in the face." She had realised she was leading by example, even when she had had to go out to speak to a group. She saw mentoring as an aspect of her leadership role. She was using the skills of listening and putting another perspective on something and learning to think outside the direct problem to support her with the line management of people who were outreach workers. She now put more value on the time to sit down to think and talk about something. Her confidence had grown. She now felt people understood what she was trying to do and that was a really good confidence boost.

She felt a bit sad as the course drew to a close wishing she could go onto something else. She was now going the Eastern Region network meetings and had put her name down as a mentor. She had enjoyed being part of the NPQICL community and found it supportive because it was "to do with the everyday everything rather than the academic." She remembered that she had taken a risk and used the Hungry Caterpillar story as a metaphor for her new Children Centre leadership at the final Leadership Symposium. After the NPQICL she had given a talk about the different roles of Children Centre managers to the County HR department. She had had positive feedback and found it rewarding. She felt the NPQICL had "all worked". She could not single out anything in particular. Underpinning the empowerment was the support from the tutors. Their view was "we are here to support you to do the best you can". She thought people going along a path together made the course more successful for her and more long lasting than any one-off programme. She found the same effect in the children centre. The taster sessions do not have a long term effect like the other

programmes because it did not allow time for relationships to develop and a spiral curriculum to occur to ensure things are embedded.

“Without that [the NPQICL], I feel that without that I would not be where I am – without having had that process. I feel I wouldn’t feel like I do now. I don’t know what it is exactly about it. It’s almost like it lifts you unconsciously and it is not until you get to the end of it and you think back like with my journey of the butterfly. You look in the mirror and you are this person and then actually at the end of it you look back and think oh now I am this person. It is recognition of the journey you have made that has impacted on your personality and on how you feel about yourself and your role.”

Millie’s story

Millie was a Children’s Centre Manager in a rural setting. The programme of services offered includes centre based and outreach activities in partnership with another centre. There was quite a lot of confusion and overlap of areas. The requirement of doing the NPQICL was in the paperwork Millie received in the interview pack for the post a Children Centre head. Millie had been “doing lifelong learning anyway” and she looked on it as “another thing to go on to get something out of”. She had thought it was going to tell you how to become a children’s centre manager. In some ways it did but not in the practical way. The course was much more about self. It did tell you but a “completely different way around”. Millie was slightly apprehensive beforehand because she was in a new post. It was not like you were doing some continuation learning in the post you were in. Neither was it proving what you were doing. It was a new journey.

Millie was fairly confident about the course. It was nice to be able to go along with fellow colleagues in the same district as it was quite a large group of people. It was very positive to talk about it afterwards with the same colleagues. It was a bit of a shock in the first sessions when people were opening out a lot more than you thought they would. She thought "Well I have got a lot of baggage but I am not going to put it on display." If she had been in a smaller group she may have shared more perhaps. She felt "boosted up a bit" and thought she was ok to be a children's centre manager because there were other people who were a bit negative and less professional than she thought she was being. They were not behaving as she thought a children's centre manager should, the way she was aspiring to be. She felt it was alright for her to be on the course because even with a different background and previous journey to hers, sometimes members of the cohort were less professional and less academic than she was. Maybe they thought it was a very safe place for them to behave unprofessionally.

Millie recognised that the group always wanted to plough on with the next stage. She had done that on other courses. They could not 'trust the process' early on. They were worried about the assignment. They wanted to know about everything in advance so they could see where they were going to get to and work their way there. Millie found the first assignment very tough emotionally. It made her wonder whether she should be a children's centre manager. Was she good enough? Was she strong enough? Should she be doing the course? Should she be in the job? "It did take me quite low." The grade of the assignment felt like a knock back. It was a different kind of assignment to any other assignment that she had done before - much more exposing. She held back in some of the early

activities feeling a bit apologetic about her professional background as a child-minder. So many child minders say "I am only a child minder" and I always tell them you are not *only* a child minder, but I know they still think that. As far as she was concerned the child minding bit was going "to hold her down, not hold her back".

The next assignment put her back together again. She was really glad that there was two and not just the one. One pulled you apart and one put you back together. The process of writing the second assignment meant she learned a lot. When she had written it she realised how far she had come. "It was like the lights going on but very late in the writing." "It was like wow, I am the right person to do this job, I should be doing it, I am here". She felt it was weird because you do not normally give yourself a pat on the back and acknowledge it in writing but she had become aware she had made a difference. She had got those other professionals around the table, some of whom had never met each other before. The power of the course was seeing the 'light bulb moments' and seeing them as relevant and having a language to talk about them. "You know when you meet a group of previous N-picklers we all come out with the same phrases. Yes, we have been N pickled." She thought that although fellow participants might be making fun of themselves when they said that the course had really has made a difference to all of those cynics amongst them. In the end they had 'trusted in the process' and it did make a difference. Millie particularly liked tablecloth exercise. She had used it last week. It did not matter how many powerful people were around the table, everyone had their moment to put down "their two pennyworth".

Millie had not warmed to her small group as much as some of her colleagues had to theirs. She wondered if the children centre managers without staff to line manage should be on a separate earlier course. There were a huge amount of phase twos being set up and so the problems they faced were different. What worked for Millie was sharing ideas, being away from the centre to share them and being pretty confident that what you said was not going to get back to your line manager so you could be open. The mentoring was really beneficial. Millie had been one of the ones moaning at the beginning not thinking it would be worth the investment of time. Millie was really, really glad to have had the mentoring. She had not expected the practical advice and the freedom of just being able to talk.

Millie thought that the NPQICL had taken her to where she was. Through reflection and discussions with her colleagues she had realised that in order to be a better leader of the Centre and its visions she need to come out of my comfort zone and engage with those around me in a different way. It had meant that she knew she should be at the centre and "therefore I can stand quite confidently at the door of the children's centre fronting it as a manager, compared to thinking oh I am just a children's centre manager and should it really be me?". It had given her confidence and a sense of security in her role. Because of different things she had tried on the N pickle, she had the confidence to try them since. She asks herself "how can we get the best out of these partners". That was something that everyone had all brought away with them. She knew it would always be a battle but had realised she was "the right person to keep on trying". She had gained confidence from just having "that piece of paper, sometimes it is that you know that you have done that course andit is the relevant course and it is a

recognised course and you survived it and you passed it." Millie thought that you had to trust the process and go on a journey.

APPENDIX 6: Emerging descriptive themes from figurative language in the stories

Kay's story	give away part of my baby	<p><i>Meaning and context:</i> Kay infers that she had created the Children Centre and had learned to share ownership of its leadership with others.</p> <p><i>Role efficacy:</i> This confirms other statements made by participants that they had changed their leadership approach in this way (1)</p>
John's story	<p>If the risk paid off it might be powerful if not 'the ceiling would not fall down'.</p> <p>He wished he could do it again and get an extra layer of richness from it and also go back to high school again and experience learning through different eyes.</p> <p>His advice was 'plunge down into the learning environment - immersing self – giving up control – letting go – trusting the trainers etc and the process' and be ready to help others up out of it so they take with them what they have learned. It was like diving – if you come</p>	<p><i>Meaning and context</i> John infers that he had gained a sense of resilience i.e. that he would survive whatever happened. (2)</p> <p><i>Confidence, capacity. Role efficacy</i> This confirms previous analyses illustrating how precarious participants might feel about their jobs and the improvement to the way they felt that they reported.</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i> John infers he feels he has changed his disposition to learning.</p> <p><i>Confidence, capacity and agency</i> <i>Professional learning</i> This confirms John's newly found confidence as a learner as well as his sense that he has changed his perspective on education. The theme of 'seeing things differently' has not been explicit in the rest of the data. (3)</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i> This is a vivid and unusual metaphor used to expand on the 'trusting the process' mantra but applying it to learning.</p> <p><i>Agency</i> This seems to contradict the general call to believe that anything can be achieved provided there is enough self-belief and positive action. It suggests that a tentative, more passive approach to learning is the most fruitful.</p> <p><i>Professional learning</i> This metaphor suggests that participants have a role to</p>

	<p>up too quickly, you get the bends.</p> <p>He felt very much treated like a grown-up, that actually his knowledge and experience was as important to the course and to everybody else</p> <p>The course offered him a portfolio of tools with which to construct his leadership vessel!</p>	<p>play in helping each other recognise their learning and think about thinking. It also suggests that John thinks that learning can be overwhelming and can threaten an individual's steady state of being. (4)</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i> John infers that his experience of learning in this context felt different to his school based education.</p> <p><i>Professional learning</i> It portrays how andragogy is experienced as a learner.</p> <p><i>Professional identity: from outsider to insider</i> This is another confirmation of the power of acceptance, approval and affirmation from others with whom you identify i.e. with whom you think you have a shared identity (5)</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i> This was self-consciously 'designed' in the telling. John infers that what he learned in the course shaped his leadership approach. This an example of expecting to know and have knowledge that is derived from an ideology of 'profession'</p> <p><i>Confidence, capacity and agency, Professional learning, Role efficacy. Professional identity: from outsider to insider</i> This confirms the data that suggests that participants valued the theories and practices they could take from the course to use in their jobs seeing them as more than merely useful but also contributing to their ongoing leadership and identities in their roles. (6)</p>
Liam's story	Moving between wireless and cable connection	<p><i>Meaning and context</i> Liam infers he was aware of sometimes making decisions intuitively based on his professional knowledge and experience and at other times reflecting on situations to inform his future actions. (7)</p> <p><i>Role efficacy and professional autonomy.</i> Liam is saying that he has become more aware of his own thinking and has gained confidence and insight into the professional knowledge he uses in action and the knowledge he can gain through reflection. He implies that he is more aware of his tacit professional knowledge because of the habit of reflecting that he gained from the course.</p>
Dee's story	She found that sometimes she was 'playing the game'	<p><i>Meaning and context</i> This is a common expression but Dee has used it to say that she complied or conformed with the pedagogy</p>

	<p>it is important for mavericks such as ourselves to have that sort of support... because 'sometimes you're just thrown to the lion's den really'.</p> <p>She had seen herself in a little cocoon of her children's centre and her area but now she saw her role as much wider.</p>	<p>and culture of the course rather than adopted it wholeheartedly. This was surprising because Dee <i>presented</i> as someone who was enthusiastic and engaged illustrating the difference between a 'good student' and a 'good learner'.</p> <p><i>Agency. Professional learning. Professional identity: from outsider to insider.</i></p> <p>Dee was highlighting resistance to the pedagogy used in the programme. The statement that exemplifies how someone could go through the motions on a programme without really engaging in it or believing in its objectives and values. (8)</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>There are two metaphors here. The rather surprising use of the term maverick is intended to indicate both difference and lack of integration of children centre leaders into mainstream work with children. (9) The lion's den describes the difficult world in which a children centre leaders works where there are demanding targets, difficult groups to work with, a high degree of monitoring and little or no support. This sense of being an outsider and unregulated may come from an expectation of belonging to and under the control of a profession.</p> <p><i>Professional identity: from outsider to insider:</i></p> <p>The term maverick is an interesting one because it conveys the unregulated outsider status of children's centre leaders that Dee believes to be the case. Similarly the metaphor of being thrown in the lion's den indicates a similar sense of being an outsider but this time one that is a naive victim. (10)</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Dee infers that she had begun to be much more aware of what was going on in the local authority and the region.</p> <p><i>Confidence, capacity and agency</i></p> <p>The choice of the word 'little cocoon' signifies a sense of safety when working within a known area of work. It also connotes a sense of emergence of a butterfly spreading its wings and able to fly, i.e. with agency. (11)</p>
Katy's story	took it to heart/ brought it home	<p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Katy is describing the impact of her NPQICL learning as</p>

	<p>find strategies to convince myself that I am capable.</p>	<p>immediate and influential. <i>Professional learning,</i> Two similar expressions indicating how personal the professional learning was for Katy. (12) <i>Meaning and context</i> This relates to an aspect of Katy's growth in self-awareness during the course. It implies a conversation with herself perhaps reflection on action. (13) <i>Confidence, capacity and agency</i> Even this experienced CCL had doubts about her capacity to be a CCL. This may come from a sense of not belonging to a profession in the way she expects.</p>
<p>Elaine's story</p>	<p>...she had said something profound at the interview for the job that she would need to go out and meet people and drink lots of cups of tea to build important relationships in the community.</p> <p>...the programme was a 'rollercoaster'. As time went on she liked the fact that it was a rollercoaster but sometimes wished she could get off.</p> <p>She felt she had almost gone through a stage of being a rebellious teenager refusing to do things and doing things her own way</p> <p>Elaine thought that</p>	<p><i>Meaning and context</i> Elaine was describing the first stages of assuming her new role as children's centre head and how she developed relationships with stakeholders in her community. <i>Role efficacy and interprofessional learning and working.</i> Elaine's story that in order to start building relationships you needed to drink tea with people suggests the importance an approach of informality, listening and recognition of the humanity of colleagues through simple everyday activities. (14) <i>Meaning and context</i> Elaine was describing how she experienced the NPQICL. <i>Professional learning</i> In this metaphor Elaine seems to suggest that the course was a very vivid immediate experience that took hold of her and sometimes became too much. (15)</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i> Elaine was talking about her recently acquired sense of agency and autonomy in her leadership role <i>Confidence, capacity and agency. Role efficacy</i> <i>Professional identity: from outsider to insider</i> It is interesting the way Elaine presents this insight in terms related to a narrative about family life. There is also a point here about a journey from insider to outsider to become the lead insider that may offer insight into a process in professional learning and identity formation. (16) <i>Meaning and context</i></p>

	<p>taking risks and being out of her comfort zone had extended her learning not least 'because the sky wasn't falling down'.</p>	<p>Elaine is saying that she had tested her own resilience in difficult engagements with others and had gained confidence that she would survive.</p> <p><i>Confidence, capacity and agency. Role efficacy</i></p> <p>This is the second time that this image has been evoked by a participant. It seems to be being used to indicate a more measured, calculating response to difficulties that is part of her sense of resilience. (17)</p>
Sue's story	<p>The first half of the course 'was a journey'.</p> <p>...the NPQICL 'gave everyone a lot of tools and people might not have seen them as tools but ways of working with people,</p>	<p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Sue is using a metaphor that is much used in education but in this use it seems to imply change that has been an uncomfortable means to an end. (18)</p> <p><i>Professional learning</i></p> <p>The use of this metaphor implies an experience of professional learning as a process i.e. as a series of connected learning moments involving challenges that bring about perceptible change.</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Sue uses the notion of tools to describe things derived from the course that proved to be useful in participants' work context. (19)</p> <p><i>Role efficacy and interprofessional learning and working</i></p> <p>An interesting aspect of this is Sue's view of 'tools', i.e. as ways of working with people, which in the context of her story seems to include clients and colleagues as well as the wider professional community</p>
Ann's story	<p>a little bit like a pretender</p> <p>difficulties of sharing spaces with other agencies</p>	<p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Ann is suggesting a lack of authenticity in her role. This is because she does not match up to her (ideologically derived) expectations of being a professional CCL.</p> <p><i>Confidence, and development of professional identity: from outsider to insider</i></p> <p>At this stage Ann felt that she was an outsider even amongst other CCLs. (20)</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Ann is explaining one of the challenges of her work i.e. to work collaboratively and interprofessionally. Interesting that she describes it as occupying the same space. (21)</p> <p><i>Role efficacy and interprofessional learning and working</i></p> <p>Space seems to indicate a sense of territory and autonomy or a meeting place for professional work</p>

	<p>She was struggling to 'define the role and I wasn't really sure where I was going or what the vision was'.</p>	<p><i>Meaning and context</i> A portrayal of confusion and ambiguity in her role. This would be especially difficult because she is without a staff and is very isolated. (22)</p> <p><i>Professional identity: from outsider to insider and role efficacy</i> Her position is described as active however – she is struggling.</p>
Jackie's story	<p>Feeling like she had had her opportunities limited by experiencing a negative script,</p> <p>Individuals have light bulb moments, but a team can create a chandelier moment</p>	<p><i>Meaning and context</i> Jackie was using the notion of a negative script to refer to repeatedly undermining comments from people in her early life that diminished her confidence and aspirations. (23)</p> <p><i>Confidence, capacity and agency</i> What is interesting here is the link Jackie makes between having her words and life written for her i.e. her agency and autonomy in her life and professional identity. Are the words written for her from her construct of being a professional?</p> <p>See the critical incident 4 in Appendix 5</p>
Rashid's story	<p>it had not really addressed what it 'feels like to live the role.'</p> <p>The benefit was the time away in that safe place with kindred folk</p> <p>He was probably in the</p>	<p><i>Meaning and context</i> Rashid infers that he had experienced his previous course as an academic exercise rather than an experience.</p> <p><i>Professional learning.</i> Rashid offers an insight into his view of what should be available in a professional learning course here. (25)</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i> When Rashid uses the term kindred he means colleagues on the course who understand his work. (26)</p> <p><i>Professional identity: from outsider to insider</i> It is surprising to note that Rashid values the similarities in the members of the learning community rather than the differences, particularly when it was composed of people from a wider range of professional backgrounds. The shared role of children centre leadership seems to override other differences for Rashid. The use of the word 'kindred' implies family.</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i></p>

	<p>zone at this point. It was like a field trip</p> <p>Measuring himself against academic standards was an affirmation, a confidence-builder.</p> <p>He had been resilient and determined about taking his academic study forward. 'I'm prepared to push a lot harder than I was before.' 'It was a big kick, to get me going, and it did it.</p>	<p>Rashid is comparing his experience of being in the moment to being away on a field trip. (27)</p> <p><i>Confidence, capacity and agency. Professional learning</i></p> <p>Rashid is linking this sense of his experience on the course to a state of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002), immediacy and happiness which he seems to find enabling and defining.</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Rashid implies that he gained confidence and a sense of his own capacity through succeeding academically on the course. (28)</p> <p><i>Confidence, capacity and agency. Professional learning. Professional identity: from outsider to insider</i></p> <p><i>Role efficacy and inter-professional learning and working</i></p> <p>Rashid's comment implies that the academic element of a professional learning programme is an important feature for him. It probably came from his prior expectations of what makes someone professional. These were probably socio-cultural/ideological in origin.</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Rashid is describing how he felt stronger and more determined about his own development after the NPQICL.</p> <p>Agency.</p> <p><i>Professional learning</i></p> <p>The words 'push' and 'kick' so near each other are very evocative and convey a sense of almost physicality linked to activating his drive to study.</p> <p>(29)</p>
Henk's story	<p>he realised what he had gained through the NPQICL programme to date, 'almost by stealth'.</p> <p>I didn't have to be the shining light ahead of everyone else, trying to move quite a big children's centre and a health service forward</p>	<p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Henk is saying he realised that he had learned from the course without immediately being aware of it. (30)</p> <p><i>Professional learning</i></p> <p>This relates to the 'trust the process' manta which promises participants a worthwhile outcome if they approach actions with the 'right' approach</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Henk is saying that he had realised that the whole team could lead together rather than having to lead everything himself from the front and that a collaborative approach was not just more effective but less strain on him.</p>

	<p>pretty much on my own.</p> <p>Initially children centre heads were thrown into a centre in a community and everyone stood back and saw what came up.</p>	<p>He is comparing his current experiences with his expectations. (31)</p> <p><i>Professional learning. Role efficacy.</i></p> <p>This confirms a view in the stories that some professional learning can make the work role of a children's centre leader more viable and sustainable.</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Henk is describing how little support and guidance has been available to children's centre heads when they start their new jobs. (32)</p> <p><i>Confidence, capacity. Role efficacy</i></p> <p>Henk's statement resonates with the metaphor of being thrown in at the deep end to see whether you can swim. The words 'everyone stood back' are particularly expressive.</p>
Sally's story	<p>Everything was being thrown at the 'mother' and it was easy to forget how you can easily get into kind of firing questions and blaming parents.</p>	<p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Sally is saying that the goldfish bowl interprofessional exercise helped her to empathise with parents in a case meeting.</p> <p><i>Interprofessional learning and working</i></p> <p>This activity simulated a multi-professional meeting. It exemplifies useful learning from the programme that the way through inter-agency difficulties is to focus on what is an agreed priority. (33)</p>
Ursel's story	<p>...the first block of course days as 'really quite an emotional rollercoaster'.</p> <p>that is why I am talking about filling out the role, it is almost like bringing the words from the page and bringing them to life and actually making them work in practice</p>	<p>See notes re Henk's use of this metaphor. (34)</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Ursel is describing children's centre managers' job descriptions as not representative of reality.</p> <p><i>Professional identity: from outsider to insider, Role efficacy</i></p> <p>Ursel's use of 'bringing the words from the page' confirms the theme of role ambiguity in the data as well as the need for children's centre leaders to create their own job roles and identities whilst in situ. Ursel thought that the NPQICL had assisted her with this process. (35)</p>
Viv's story	<p>She remembered that she had taken a risk and used the Hungry</p>	<p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Viv is referring to a presentation of her own learning that she gave at the end of the course using the</p>

	<p>Caterpillar story as a metaphor for her new Children Centre leadership at the final Leadership Symposium.</p> <p>...people going along a path together made the course more successful for her and more long lasting</p> <p>You look in the mirror and you are this person and then actually at the end of it you look back and think oh now I am this person. It is recognition of the journey you have made that has impacted on your personality and on how you feel about yourself and your role.'</p>	<p>metaphor of the children's book <i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i> (Carle, 2002)</p> <p><i>Confidence, capacity and agency. Professional learning. Professional identity: from outsider to insider</i></p> <p>Viv used this story as a metaphor for gorging on learning alongside working and the subsequent transformation achieved. It conveys a sense of achievement but also pride in her identity as a children's centre leader. (36)</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Viv is referring to the learning community and its positive effect on her own learning</p> <p><i>Professional learning</i></p> <p>Viv is saying that the experience of interaction with other children centre leaders deepened and strengthened her learning so that its effects lasted longer. This confirms the strength of feeling amongst the participants about the value of the learning community. (37)</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Viv uses the metaphor of the mirror and the journey to convey recognition and self awareness of how much she thought she had changed as a result of the course.(38)</p> <p><i>Professional learning</i></p> <p>Viv seems to use the mirror and journey to exemplify her personal learning, growth of self esteem and the growth of pride in her status.</p>
Millie's story	<p>I can stand quite confidently at the door of the children's centre fronting it as a manager,</p> <p>You know when you meet a group of previous N-picklers we all come out with the</p>	<p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Millie is explaining that she now feels worthy of the role of children's centre leader.</p> <p><i>Confidence, capacity and agency. Professional identity: from outsider to insider. Role efficacy</i></p> <p>Millie's use of the notion of standing at the door conveys a sense of identification with the work of the children centre and that she is comfortable with and clear about her role. (39)</p> <p><i>Meaning and context</i></p> <p>Millie means that the NPQICL tends to leaves its mark on those who study it.</p> <p><i>Professional identity: from outsider to insider</i></p>

	same phrases. Yes, we have been N pickled	This is an interesting statement because it conveys a sense of shared experience and, from that, a shared language that has shaped the identity of the participants. (40)
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APPENDIX 7: Open coding of stories: an example

As an example of how this stage of the analysis was conducted, Elaine's story below shows how themes emerged from the key background and orienting concepts and her story.

<p>Elaine's story</p> <p>Elaine is the manager of a phase 3 Children Centre attached to a primary school in a socially disadvantaged area. She describes it as a hub and spoke model, where there are a few services going on at the centre, but most of them are through partnership working out in the local area.</p> <p>When Elaine applied for the NPQICL she knew it would be a professional requirement eventually but was keen to do it early because she <i>felt less well qualified than her peers</i>. She felt very aware that she <i>did not have a degree</i> and was <i>apprehensive about studying alongside colleagues from the same town</i> with whom it was a struggle to work effectively and also because she had heard that she would be exploring her innermost feelings in public.</p> <p>During the programme Elaine began to <i>make connections between her upbringing and her approach to her new role</i>. She felt that she was managing to project a calm, effective persona to local colleagues and did not want to admit to having any weaknesses. Elaine had been brought up in a family where loyalty to the family was very important and it was not expected that a member of the family admitted that they needed any help to an outsider. Elaine realised that although she had had friends with whom she felt she could drop her guard she had adopted her family protocol of not admitting any difficulty to anyone in her work life. Fairly early on Elaine realised that there was a barrier between herself and a particular local colleague also on the course. During a course activity this person gave her feedback that she did not need to try to appear as if she knew all of the answers and should feel she could admit that she might be struggling with something. Elaine realised that this was true and began to appreciate the local</p>	<p>Lack of job confidence</p> <p>Self-awareness</p>
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<p>colleague's honesty and openness following <i>an incident early on in the programme where Elaine tried to be open and direct and the colleague 'took issue' with what she said</i>. Elaine realised that the colleague was <i>much softer and much more vulnerable</i> than she had realised and that her own fear of dropping her guard was linked to the <i>'impostor syndrome' of believing she was not good enough to do her job well or to be undertaking the NPQICL Masters level programme</i>. Early on in the programme Elaine realised that most of the other NPQICL participants felt the same way. She recognised that they were a <i>diverse and supportive group of people</i> from whom she could learn. On meeting her fellow participants she had not expected to learn from them but had <i>gone on to learn a great deal</i> from sharing different experiences.</p>	<p>Significant incident</p> <p>Empathy</p> <p>Outsider. Lack of job confidence. Lack of academic confidence</p> <p>NB. Learning from the learning community</p> <p>Useful in role.</p>
<p>She realised that because she had had a safe happy childhood with loving parents she had no need to be other than compliant and to accept direction from knowledgeable line managers. About halfway through the NPQICL Elaine realised that she was <i>beginning to create her own way of working</i> and to give herself permission or as she called it a 'mandate' to opt out of things she would have previously expected to have been her duty. Finding this <i>autonomy and agency</i> in her role was at the same time exciting and terrifying. On her first day she realised that <i>it was up to her what she did in her job and how she did it</i>. One of her line manager reminded her that she had said something profound at the interview for the job that she would need to go out and meet people and <i>drink lots of cups of tea to build important relationships in the community</i>. He said her comment had stayed with him and he always remembered to go out and drink tea.</p>	<p>Agency/ autonomy</p> <p>Agency in her work Agency. I can do it. Role ambiguity.</p> <p>Figure of speech. Brings herself into her practice.</p>
<p>Elaine's view was that the programme was a <i>'rollercoaster'</i>. As time went on <i>she liked the fact that it was a rollercoaster but sometimes wished she could get off</i>. Because she had invested so much of herself in the first assignment she felt bitterly disappointed with the grade awarded but accepted that the learning that had come out of it was most important. Elaine saw that the theme for the second assignment could be something that she <i>really needed to do in her work role and took this forward with good results</i>. At the end of the course Elaine realised that she had passed while others had not. She felt <i>proud of herself</i> but uncomfortable for those who had not passed. The opportunity to <i>reflect aloud</i> on the learning from the programme enabled Elaine to acknowledge that for <i>the first time in her life nobody was telling her what to do</i>. There was <i>no more experienced 'expert' leading</i></p>	<p>Figure of speech. Experience of a different (for her) pedagogy.</p> <p>Useful in role.</p> <p>Gain in academic confidence. Reflection.</p> <p>Gain in academic confidence. Agency</p>

<p>her. She felt she had almost gone through a stage of being a rebellious teenager refusing to do things and doing things her own way and finding that that was acceptable to others and they <i>accepted her professional autonomy</i>. On reflection she realised that she was giving herself permission to avoid things she did not like and that <i>as the Children Centre Manager, part of her role required her to be strategic and professional about what she avoided</i>. Elaine felt that her experience on the NPQICL developed a 'huge growth in <i>confidence to trust myself</i>.' Elaine <i>had realised that she sometimes needed to take a step back</i> and say 'I need to think about what I need to do here', or 'I need to think about whether I'm the right person to do this'. Elaine discovered that staying away from home and cutting herself off from her work context during the course contact days did not work for her. When she returned to work after a series of days away her work felt out of control. Elaine saw that this was another situation <i>where doing what you think you should do was not the best thing to do</i> and that part of her continuum of change was that she was more centred in her own role and <i>decided what to do instead</i>.</p>	<p>Sense of autonomy and agency. I can do it. Self-awareness</p> <p>Role ambiguity</p> <p>Change in leadership approach. Working through the role ambiguity.</p> <p>Wider view.</p> <p>Confidence in role.</p>
<p>Elaine recognised that others already <i>thought of her a confident person</i> but that was because <i>she learned to project confidence</i> she did not feel. She felt that the programme had now enabled <i>her to bring herself to the job</i>. She recognised that she had begun her new role believing that <i>someone had already 'carved out what the job should be'</i> but <i>had realised that that was not the case</i> and she needed <i>to create her own role in the Children's Centre</i>. It was as if she <i>stopped seeking permission or a mandate</i> and created her own professional identity. Elaine observed that because the role of Children Centre Manager is so open-ended that managers were setting <i>different priorities influenced by their different professional heritages</i>. She <i>recognised the influence of her own professional heritage</i> of early years on her own priorities for development of the centre and also that she was likely to avoid things that were outside her 'comfort zone' unless she asked for help and worked in partnership with others.</p>	<p>Self-awareness</p> <p>Ambiguity in role. Gain in job confidence Agency I can do it. Lack of job confidence. Self-awareness. I am OK</p> <p>Interprofessional awareness. Role ambiguity. Self-awareness. Creating the role.</p>
<p>Elaine recognised that although 'scary' and 'painful' her learning was deeper because already she knew so many NPQICL participants. This was because <i>it involved taking risks and engaging with the realities of work</i> in the local context and because Elaine had felt that she had to be open and collaborative. Elaine felt that because her experience on the programme was so 'raw' there were <i>times when she would have benefitted from</i></p>	<p>Self awareness</p> <p>Self-awareness</p>

<p>having immediate access to a NPQICL mentor. The chance to talk to someone one to one about her experiences would have deepened her learning. Elaine thought <i>that taking risks and being out of her comfort zone had extended her learning</i> not least <i>'because the sky wasn't falling down'</i>. From taking the risks came a <i>sense of daring</i> that she felt she had never had before perhaps because her mother was very cautious and very protective of her. Elaine felt that she had to push herself to take risks recognising that it not natural for her to be like that but also recognising that <i>she has had to push herself to achieve things for the families using her centre.</i></p> <p>Elaine was <i>aware of changing</i>. She moved from being scared of reading to <i>enjoying reading</i>. She found that having a mentor, having the away days as spaced as they were, tutors that challenged her but also listened to her, allowed her to really explore herself and begin to understand how she became the person she is. She became aware that <i>she had built up layers of learned behaviour</i> rather than being herself, being authentic. She realised that <i>being herself was good enough</i> and was the best way to work. Elaine now <i>accepted the limitations of what she could achieve</i> and that doing as much <i>as she could was sufficient</i>. <i>Her confidence in being herself has 'grown hugely'</i> rather than the person she thought should be a children's centre manager. She now feels <i>that she has as much right as anyone to create her role as a Children Centre manager</i> and that the way that she fulfils her role and the 'feel' of the centre will influence the people who work at the centre. She has learned to recognise what the Centre has achieved as well as what else needs to be done and to allow herself to recognise what she <i>personally has achieved so far</i> which she has not been good at before. Elaine thought that if she had not done the NPQICL she <i>may not have stayed in the job</i> because it stopped putting so much pressure on herself to do everything straight away. Despite what she had said in her interview about building relationships and drinking tea she had still been anxious to see things starting to happen and working far too long hours. <i>Her mentor had been invaluable because her line managers were not able to be sounding boards for ideas. The journaling that she started on the course really helped too</i> sometimes just to get things out of her system and puts a perspective on things.</p>	<p>Confidence.</p> <p>Pedagogy? Useful in work.</p> <p>Resilience. Efficacy</p> <p>Agency. I can do it. Self-awareness</p> <p>Gain in job confidence and clarity</p> <p>Self-awareness</p> <p>Academic confidence</p> <p>Are the layers from confirming to a stereotype?</p> <p>Authenticity in role.</p> <p>I am OK. Role ambiguity</p> <p>Gain in job confidence.</p> <p>Confidence</p> <p>Role clarity</p> <p>I can do it.</p> <p>Useful in role</p> <p>Agency. I can do it.</p> <p>Role ambiguity.</p> <p>Professional autonomy</p> <p>Self-awareness</p>
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APPENDIX 8: Tables

Table 1: Descriptive themes from coding: Confidence, capacity, efficacy and agency

	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5	Theme 6	Theme 7	Theme 8
Expressions of:	Lack of job confidence (initial)	Gain in job confidence (after)	Useful at work or in job role (after)	Lack of academic confidence (initial)	Gain in academic confidence (after)	Gained general self confidence	Making things happen. I can do it. Agency	I now feel: what I think is OK; I am OK; I am OK to do this job
Participants								
Kay's story	2	4	8	4	6	1	3	1
John's story	1	1	4	4	1	2	4	1
Liam's story	1	3	4	4	0	1	3	1
Dee's story	1	5	5	2	1	2	1	1
Katy's story	3	3	7	2	1	2	6	2
Elaine's story	4	4	5	2	3	2	8	3
Sue's story	2	2	3	3	1	1	4	2
Ann's story	1	4	2	6	2	1	3	2
Jackie's story	1	1	9	0	0	1	1	0
Rashid's story	0	1	6	1	5	5	5	4
Henk's story	1	3	4	1	1	0	2	1
Sally's story	0	1	11	3	1	0	6	1
Ursel's story	3	1	6	1	1	1	2	2
Viv's story	2	2	4	1	1	3	5	1
Millie's story	4	4	2	0	3	0	3	2
Totals	26	39	80	34	27	22	56	24
Absences	2	0	0	2	2	3	0	1

Table 2: Descriptive themes from coding: Characterisation of the nature of professional learning

	Theme 9	Theme 10	Theme 11	Theme 12	Theme 13
Identifying: Participants:	Reflection	Significant incident leading to learning	"light bulb moment(s")	Growth in self awareness	Observations on <i>different</i> pedagogy
Kay's story	1	1	1	3	2
John's story	1	4	2	6	4
Liam's story	2	0	0	3	2
Dee's story	2	1	0	2	4
Katy's story	1	1	0	3	2
Elaine's story	1	1	0	8	2
Sue's story	2	2	2	6	4
Ann's story	2	0	0	1	2
Jackie's story	2	2	1	2	2
Rashid's story	1	1	1	3	1
Henk's story	0	1	1	2	2
Sally's story	1	2	0	2	2
Ursel's story	1	2	1	2	0
Viv's story	2	1	0	3	1
Millie's story	1	0	2	1	1
Totals	20	19	11	47	31
Absences	1	3	7	0	1

Table 3: Descriptive themes from coding: Development of professional identity: from outsider to insider

	Theme 14	Theme 15	Theme 16	Theme 17	Theme 8
Expressions of: Participants:	Feeling like an outsider at start of the course	Feeling affirmed and validated	Experiences of empathy & role-taking	Value of the learning community	I now feel: what I think is OK; I am OK; I am OK to do this job
Kay's story	4	1	3	4	1
John's story	2	2	1	2	1
Liam's story	1	0	1	1	1
Dee's story	2	0	1	3	1
Katy's story	0	0	1	5	2
Elaine's story	1	0	1	1	3
Sue's story	1	0	1	3	2
Ann's story	4	1	0	5	2
Jackie's story	1	0	0	0	0
Rashid's story	2	1	2	8	4
Henk's story	0	0	0	6	1
Sally's story	0	1	0	6	1
Ursel's story	1	2	1	6	2
Viv's story	1	0	1	3	1
Millie's story	1	1	0	2	2
Totals	20	9	13	55	24
Absences	3	8	5	1	1

**Table 4: Descriptive themes from coding:
Development of professional identity: role clarity and
certainty and interprofessional working**

	Theme 18	Theme 8	Theme 19	Theme 20	Theme 21
Identifying:	Role ambiguity/uncertainty	I now feel: what I think is OK; I am OK; I am OK to do this job	Change in leadership approach	Wider or more strategic view taken	Inter-professional awareness
Participants:					
Kay's story	2	1	4	1	0
John's story	1	1	3	0	3
Liam's story	5	1	1	0	4
Dee's story	3	1	1	1	1
Katy's story	1	2	1	0	2
Elaine's story	7	3	1	1	1
Sue's story	2	2	1	0	3
Ann's story	6	2	2	0	6
Jackie's story	1	0	1	2	1
Rashid's story	5	4	2	0	0
Henk's story	4	1	4	1	0
Sally's story	4	1	3	1	2
Ursel's story	5	2	2	2	1
Viv's story	2	1	2	1	1
Millie's story	2	2	1	0	1
Totals	49	24	29	10	26
Absences	0	1	0	7	3