Tricked by the Trade,

Professional Identity in the Emerging Early Years Teacher and the impact of EYITT.

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Abstract

This thesis contributes to contemporary debates about professionalism in the ECEC sector. This is achieved through the investigation of students' emerging conceptualisations of professionalism in early years teaching. The focus is on the introduction of the new undergraduate Early Years Teacher (EYITT) professional qualification route and related training in order to examine students' notions of their developing professionalism within the sector. This thesis utilises Wilber's integrated theory (AQAL, 2006) as a methodological tool for the holistic mapping of multiple perspectives. AQAL Integral analysis is founded in quadrant mapping, which assesses four viewpoints for every situation. These are the Interior Subjective intentional (I) perspective, the Interior Collective cultural (We) perspective, the Exterior Individual (It) behavioural perspective and the Exterior Collective (its) social perspective. Critical Discourse Analysis was used to analyse *More Great Childcare* (DFE, 2013) because this policy document was pivotal in creating the political landscape at the time of data collection, which impacted on professional qualifications in the ECEC sector and, in particular, on Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT).

The findings indicate that, in failing to establish full parity between those who hold the title 'Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS)' and school teachers with 'Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)', the government has restricted the potential employability of EYTS, and their access to equality in pay and conditions, which causes confusion as to the status and role of the Early Years Teacher. These factors, together with the absence of a related professional body, and a persistent government rhetoric which implies deficiencies in the quality of the ECEC workforce, have the potential to cause a dichotomy between the perceptions of professionalism in policy, theory and practice. These factors also have the potential to confuse the notion of professionalism in the ECEC sector, which in turn has a direct impact on the provision experienced by young children and their families.

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Introduction

1.1 The impact of Early Years Teacher status on the professional identity of emerging Early Years Teachers

The purpose of this study is to consider the complex perceptions of 'professionalism' in emerging early years student teachers and to identify how these trainee teachers conceptualise professionalism, throughout their training and as they prepare to enter the profession as qualified early years teachers. This thesis will utilise a variety of titles when describing and discussing those individuals who work and train within the ECEC workforce, including practitioner, teacher and student. The inclusion of a range of titles attempts to illustrate the variety of contexts, roles and responsibilities assumed by those who work and train in the sector. The focus on professional identities reflects the different ways in which this is constructed, by teachers, practitioners, the public, in policy documents and the trainee teachers concerned with this study.

There is an increasing bank of research into professionalism within the early years workforce and into Initial Teacher Training. This project seeks to add to the body of knowledge by focusing upon the impact of the new initial teacher training route for early years teachers, Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT) (DFE, 2013). The award of Early Years Teacher (EYT), created following the Nutbrown report (2012), placed a focus on the creation of a new status, the 'Early Years Teacher status' (EYTS) and replaced its predecessor the 'Early Years Professional Status' (EYPS). It was suggested that this new route would focus on building more parity with teachers i.e. (those with Qualified Teacher Status) along with increasing professionalism within the sector. Many within the profession, however, question whether the lack of qualified teacher status (QTS) attached to the new qualification will ultimately impact on the professional recognition of practitioners (Nutbrown, 2012; Chalk, 2015). As such, many issues remain unresolved, including the lack of pay and recognition for their roles in the workplace, all of which impact on the professional identity of established and emerging early childhood professionals.

The message from the government speaks of a clear commitment to raise the professional profile of early years practice, with the focus on the development of the new EYT qualification aiming to endorse professional working within the sector. Yet there remains an incongruity between the commitment to develop the workforce (Mahadevan, 2011), and the continued focus on the fact that many early years practitioners are somehow deficient and in need of transformation. This was emphasised by Allen (2011) in his early intervention report commented: "We must, therefore, ensure that all those working with children are adequately trained and I am aware that standards currently need to be raised" (2011, p. 56).

Despite such commentary, research signifies that whilst the status of the workforce for early childhood may be low, there are strong indicators that practitioners often create richer and more diverse and creative opportunities for young children's learning when compared to mainstream schooling (Hughes and Westgate, 2004; Davis and Barry, 2013). In relation to the capabilities of the workforce, such messages perpetuate the continuing perception of low status and they instil a collective efficacy in practitioners (Brock, 2012). Collective efficacy is a term which describes a group's shared perception of their own capabilities (Klassen and Usher, 2010). Such self-concepts are impacted upon by the attitudes of and interactions with others, in particular the society in which they function (Osgood, 2009). In creating a typology of professionalism, Brock (2012) investigated the professional knowledge of a group of 12 Early Years Educators and concluded that:

> Although the skills and knowledge provide the tools for success within educational settings, it is the beliefs that the students (and others) hold about their capabilities to use these tools that ultimately counts
>
> (Brock; 2012, p.43)

Whilst the perspectives represented by the students in this study inform the research and characterise important dimensions of their understanding and experience, it appears limited in presenting a valid and worthwhile viewpoint by itself. The more perspectives which can be included when developing a holistic picture of what it means to teach and learn in the sector, the more accurately that we can understand the ongoing tensions and dilemmas that these students face as they develop their professional identities in the field.

The research within this thesis presents a qualitative study which seeks to identify the impact of the new Early Years Teacher qualification on the emerging professional identity of a group of undergraduate students who have chosen to study on the new EYT pathway. The research has explored the practical and academic self-concepts of the trainee practitioners, as well as the relationship to academic attainment. Broader societal perspectives were likewise explored. The study has considered the notion of professionalism from the differing perspectives within the group of students within a changing and complex landscape.

1.2 Researching as a member of the research context

Data within this study was collected from early years teacher trainees within the university in which I work. My role is programme director for the EYT route of the BA Childhood Studies programme. The study participants were trainees participating in the three-year undergraduate programme leading to Early Years Teacher Status (EYT). This programme comprises one of the first cohorts undertaking this route to the newly created EYT status.

Data was collected at two points throughout the training programme and entailed gaining perspectives of both second and third year trainees in the spring and summer of 2015. It is considered that these facts are relevant as the thesis was developed, researched and analysed during a period of governance led by the Conservative administration. The participating trainees that contributed to the research were therefore responsive to the Conservative government's policies and the resultant educational climate.

The data was collected for this research against the backdrop of the teaching standards for Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT) in the summer of 2015. Teachers' Standards and reforms of Initial Teacher Training were introduced in 2012, with the partially realised vision of the Nutbrown Review (2012), which included the move from Early Years Professional Status (2006) to Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) (2013). This thesis captures trainee teachers' views of professionalism at this time of change in one particular university setting in the north of England.

It is thus necessary to outline my own position as a researcher when taking this political context into account. I am a programme director for the undergraduate Childhood Studies programmes, working within the Faculty of Education in the university; within my remit is

responsibility for the undergraduate Early Years Teacher pathway. I have therefore observed with interest as the Conservative government sought to professionalise the workforce with the introduction of a new initial teacher training programme for early years practitioners. The new programme appeared to present little equality in terms of career progression, as well as terms and conditions of service with its QTS counterpart. These limited incentives to potential students to join the profession resulted in poor recruitment and retention, with students choosing instead to select primary ITT routes and traditional UG programmes within the institution.   Resultant vulnerability in terms of job performance and security, along with a lasting belief in the continual undervaluing of the early years workforce, could very possibly lead to a bias in the construction of this research project.

Sustaining a reputation for delivering quality provision for early years trainees is considered imperative to the overall wellbeing of the faculty. Greenbank (2003) suggests it may become tempting for the researcher to quote selectively from the data in order to advance a particular social or political perspective. In an era of uncertainty and higher education reform in teacher education, it may be desirable for programme directors involved in research to construct a narrative that indicates any shortfalls in the success of a particular programme of study as a larger political miscalculation. I am mindful, in particular, of the fact that my primary position as programme director has resulted in my involvement in the design and delivery of the programme experienced by these trainee teachers. Whilst some may argue that these facts may predispose the research to researcher bias (Youniss, 2006), I would argue that I ultimately have a greater understanding of the programme of study and its related demands and structures. It has, however, necessitated caution to the avoidance of drawing upon my experiences of this group of students outside of the data collection. The study has, as such, been designed to include perspectives viewed through four different lenses: the I, It, Its and the we. This was done since I felt that it was important that the whole picture was considered in order to explore the conceptions of professionalism in the early years workforce. This approach has, on reflection, enabled me to develop a more unbiased narrative and rationale (Usher, 1996), facilitating a relationship with the data which is further removed from my own role and the resultant relationships with participants within the study.

1.3 Why professional identity?

Government policy (both the Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition that came to power in 2010 and the present Conservative administration) in England positions the ECE workforce as in constant need of professionalisation (Urban, 2010). This discourse persistently fails to acknowledge the wealth of experience, practice and resources which exist in this sector. As the professional qualification of Early Years Teacher is a relatively new addition to the qualifications framework, much of the literature examining professional identity makes reference to and looks specifically at its predecessor, the EYPS, Early Years Professional Status (2007) (Lumsden, 2012; Chalk, 2015). The continually changing nature of workforce reform and the ultimate impact on professional identity within the sector has been the subject of much investigation (Brock, 2012; Vrinioti, 2013; Chalk, 2015; Simpson, 2010). It still, however, remains a contested concept in policy dialogue and public perceptions of the role.

Through teacher training programmes, students make sense of themselves as teachers within organisational settings. These comprise both the HE institutions and the schools and settings responsible for hosting such trainees. Teacher identity is, therefore, a process of integrating the 'personal' and the 'professional' aspects of becoming a teacher. (Beijaard et al., 2004). For this research, it is difficult to analyse or comment on a student's professional identity without first attempting to understand their personal identity. Within the context of early years teacher training, students are making sense of their professional identity. These students are reconciling perceived professional demands with their own personal motivations, values and beliefs about teaching, as well as their beliefs about the sector. A shared sense of professional identity is, therefore, hard to perceive or identify (Beijaard at al., 2004) as it shifts from personal development to the shared cultural identity and understandings evident in institutions, the sector and practitioners. When forming identity, professionalism can shift from a development of the self, both personally and professionally. This shift can develop into a shared, cultural understanding of professionalism, based on the setting and context through which it is understood. Brock (2006) thus argues that a gap has emerged in what is known about early years professionalisation as told by those who work in the ECEC sector and the related available literature. This study has, as such, been constructed to investigate the thoughts of those who are working towards Early Years Teacher status in the field and their perceptions of

the impact of the qualification and resultant status on the sector. This thesis looks to contribute to a body of research which seeks to challenge the dominant culture in present-day early years education and care policy, a culture that privileges didactic and technicist ideologies (Moss, 2010; Osgood 2010), characterised and imposed by market forces, regulation, target setting, inspection and bureaucracy (Brock, 2012, Chalk, 2015; Evetts, 2009; Goouch, 2010).

This narrow approach to considering and realising professionalism has prompted many to call for early years professionals to be encouraged and supported to construct their own identities (Chalke, 2015; Brock, 2012; Osgood, 2009). In order to do so, it is important that the voices of those who are currently training to work professionally within the sector are heard. Furthermore, their responses to the initial teacher training programme should also be considered. By including the voices of these emerging early years teacher students, this research is substantially worthwhile in its aim to add to the discourses of workforce qualifications reform and early years teacher professionalism.

1.4 Chapter summary

This thesis is structured into six chapters. In Chapter 1, I have introduced the background and context to the study, followed by an overview of how the study is organised.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature and research concerned with professional identity within the context of the ECEC sector in England. This section concludes with a consideration of the privileged discourses related to constructs of ECEC professional identity. Early childhood organisations and the related workforce are then explored within the literature, focusing on how hierarchical structures promote the notion of professionalism through performativity and external accountability (Evetts, 2009). These concepts are examined in relation to the relevant theories and empirical research within the literature review. EYITT is also explored in relation to the standards and expectations it reinforces in order to establish a particular type of Early Years Teacher, as well as a certain type of teaching experience. The chapter conclusion indicates that it is not possible to consider professional identities without also considering notions of personal identity, such as values and beliefs and as such, these characteristics have helped to shape the structure and approach of the methodological process.

Chapter 3 outlines the aforementioned methodological approach utilised within this thesis. A qualitative research design within an interpretivist paradigm is explored. The two methods of data collection, an online bulletin board focus group and a diamond ranking group activity, are discussed, along with an explanation of the analysis technique which has been employed: Wilber's AQAL model (2006). Wilber's model includes four quadrants, or 8 zones, which indicate developmental levels and 4 primary states. Chapter 3 explains the framework. It also considers how the model facilitates investigation of the phenomena of professional identity, especially when dependent upon the individual lens through which this professional identity is viewed.

Both the results and the qualitative analysis are presented in Chapter 4. The data are constructed to build a picture of how students have made sense of particular aspects of their own emerging professional identity through their Initial Early Years Teacher Training (EYITT). The integral theory method is utilised in this chapter in order to explore professional identities. This is achieved by thematically recognising four different elements that contribute to the whole picture.

Issues and considerations arising from the qualitative analysis are presented in Chapter 5 and linked to the literature through short discussions. A fuller discussion is presented and furthermore, concluded, in Chapter 6. These chapters attempt to bring together the qualitative findings to contribute to the knowledge that centres around how trainee teachers experience, observe and respond to aspects of their experience whilst studying on the programme. In doing so, the final chapter considers the answer to the three main research questions that are set out in the methodology.

The final chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings of the research. It suggests that an original contribution of this thesis is the use of the specific model of analysis, Wilber's (2006) Integral Theory, as a tool for exploring professional identity in the ECEC sector. The findings revealed by the research reinforce the importance of knowledge, qualifications and external perceptions in developing professional identity. The chapters ultimately conclude with recommendations for further research into the area of professional identity construction within the early years workforce.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2 Introduction

This literature review is presented in four main sections, all of which attempt to provide a context for the research which is further explored in this thesis. The first section considers the historical and political contexts which have shaped our current understanding of professional identity in the early years workforce. The second section defines and discusses professional identity in the early years workforce. In this section, the chapter examines key concepts of professional behaviour along with perceived values and traits which underpin professional practice in the sector. The section furthermore provides an overview of the phenomena within a contemporary education context. The literature in this section will focus largely on the English context. This reflects the nature of the study which examines the particular context of Early Years Initial Teacher training, a training route which has emerged out of a particular socially and culturally situated phenomena and its associated values and beliefs.

The third section explores the training of Early Years Professionals and higher education training courses, particularly EYITT, as a context for developing conceptions of professional identity. The fourth and final section considers the link between the policy climate and workforce development.

The four sections in this chapter, professionalism and professional identity, training and context, are argued to be interconnected, since each one offers an important contribution to the research question. These sections are all closely related to the construction of early childhood teachers' professional identities.

Section 2.1 - Historical context, the rise of the early years professional

Oberhuemer argues that professionalism is a 'situated concept' (Oberhuemer, 2008, p. 136) which is embedded within our appreciation of children and childhood. This includes what is understood in relation to the historical, political, socio cultural and economic

contexts of the profession. Oberhuemer (2008) further argues that definitions of professionalism are inextricably linked to value based assumptions and cultural constructions of what is believed to constitute professional practice within the sector. What can be observed, however, is the ongoing debate surrounding what it means to be a professional working in the Early Childhood and Care sector and how this debate has gathered momentum since 1997.

The role of the Early Years Professional has been one synonymous with low status and low pay, what Mitchell and Lloyd termed a 'Cinderella role' (2013; p. 126). This is a role that Skattebol, Adamson et. al (2015) claim to be

> ...marked by struggle –the struggle for recognition of the professional character of the work, the struggle for wage justice – pay and conditions that reflect the importance of caring for children and the complex nature of the work – and the struggle for parity with other sections of the education profession.
>
> (Skattebol et al, 2015; p. 117)

These perceptions impact profoundly on the professional identity of the workforce. Potential staff are discouraged from working in the sector due to low levels of pay and recognition. This fact was famously highlighted in 2001, when the parliamentary subcommittee met to discuss early years provision and in which the following statement was made

> According to evidence given to our Committee, pay and training in this country are worst in respect of the ages nought to three, five and eight – probably the most sensitive period in a child's development
>
> (Hansard, 18 Oct 2001; Column 31OWH)

The history of the profession therefore demonstrates a long standing and complex situation. It has, as such, resulted in the disaffection and marginalisation of the workforce, despite the same workforce being recognised as having a crucial role in the wellbeing, care and development of young children.

From the late eighteenth century onwards, there has been a discernible move toward a state education system, one which has viewed children as empty vessels ready to be filled with knowledge. The approach to this was largely instruction-based. Famous pioneers such

as McMillan, Froebel and Isaacs campaigned for better access to education and health services for young children, and importantly, for the adequate training and recognition of professionals who work in the sector. Their "utopian dreams of social reform" were often the driving forces for developing provisions for young children (Campbell-Barr and Georgeson, 2015; p. 15). Yet even as far back as 1918, the status of teachers was the subject of debate in the House of Commons as it called for an "improvement and development in the status, the salaries and the conditions of work in this country" (Education Bill, 1918).

Provision for young children under five became the focus of further policy reform in 1944. The 1944 act was the first education act to give local authorities the responsibility for the care and education of this sector of society, resulting in the creation of nursery classes within primary schools, together with newly created nursery schools and formally acknowledging the role of the nursery teacher. The following years, however, resulted in a palpable decline in the political interest in ECEC and most newly created nurseries and nursery classes closed. The domain of child care was placed firmly back within the family, particularly with women (Randall, 2000). During this period, the work of John Bowlby (1953) became hugely influential. His research examining the impact of maternal deprivation on infant and childhood wellbeing was interpreted to consider day-care for children as damaging, with young children needing the continuous care of their mothers, or mother substitutes, at the very least.

It was not until over a decade later in 1967, when the Plowden Report was released, that policy developments in relation to ECEC began to emerge once more, advocating child centred teaching approaches. The Plowden report shifted conceptions of pedagogy in the early years, yet early years qualifications reform still lacked any form of national support or policy direction until the influential Rumbold Report, *Starting with Quality* (DES, 1990). This report, alongside research which presented evidence indicating that the quality off training, level of education and pay of the workforce who works with young children was inextricably linked to children's development (Whitebrook et al., 1990), prompted a campaign to create qualifications for early years practitioners at degree level (Pugh, 1996).

The end of the decade hailed a new Labour government and the introduction of the National Childcare strategy (1997). This policy saw services for young children move under the jurisdiction of local authorities. On a national level, these services became the responsibility of the Department for Education (DFEE, 1998). New labours 'The Children's Workforce Strategy' introduced radical proposals for the ECEC workforce, including the introduction of Foundation degrees (DFES, 2001) and the creation of the Children's Workforce Development Council (2006). The Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree was also introduced. This degree was promised to provide a new level of professional practice. The status of senior practitioner was also created. The degree, however, had to comply with a set of learning outcomes outlined by the government in the Statement of Requirements in order to be granted the status (DFES, 2001). Edmond (2010) argued that this change indicated a move towards a post-technocratic model which was reliant on the acquisition of competencies. These changes would thereby improve the professional image of practitioners. They also suggested the potential for career progression, which was linked to enhanced qualifications (Miller, 2008). Lloyd and Hallet (2010), however, pointed out that the role of senior practitioner was never fully acknowledged in the sector, with resulting issues in relation to both pay and conditions. This led to practitioners finding new and differing roles to recognise their enhanced qualifications. The introduction of the new Early Years Professional Status (EYTS) (2006) compounded feelings of dissatisfaction, with many FD graduates feeling disillusioned and undervalued (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010) by the changing landscape of requirements. The foundation degree was henceforth viewed less as a professional qualification and status and more of a progression route to full graduate status and ultimately a pathway to EYTS (DFE, 2013).

A new era of workforce reform had thus emerged and the call for evidence in relation to the skills and knowledge required by this workforce had gathered momentum. The new Children's Workforce Strategy sought to improve qualifications across the workforce, aiming to achieve a target of 70% of the workforce qualified to at least Level 3 as a large percentage remained poorly qualified (DfES, 2005). Governance was now powering rapid change in the workforce, fuelled by research and debate (Urban, 2008). Research by Sylva et al. (2004; 2008), which indicated that the quality of early years provision was directly linked to settings where staff held higher qualifications, was highly influential in plans for qualifications reform. The 10-year Childcare Strategy (2004) pledged to improve the lives

of families and children. This pledge included increasing the qualifications and knowledge of those individuals who work in the ECEC sector. Evidence of the impact of a more highly trained workforce continued to grow with Ofsted, which concluded in their publication *Early Years and Child Care* (2011). This publication indicated that the outcomes for children were consistently higher in settings where staff was well qualified. A more knowledgeable and skilled workforce began to consequently emerge with enhanced understanding of the developmental needs of young children. Yet the situation was slow to improve: a DFE survey conducted in 2011 reported that among providers of ECEC, 75% of childcare staff and 82% of staff in early years held Level 3 qualifications. At Level 6, however, the difference became more pronounced, with 42% of early years staff having a degree, yet only 10% of these staff were situated within care settings.

A further change of governance and an economic downturn was also impacting on workforce reform. Withdrawal of the financial support for training which had been instigated by the previous Labour government discouraged practitioners from undertaking further learning. Despite this, a commitment to upskilling the workforce persisted. This was evident with the continued articulation of a commitment to increase graduates within the workforce, with at least one graduate in each PVI setting. To realise these ambitions, the newly introduced Early Years Professional (EYP) qualification and related status was introduced. This EYP qualification (DFES, 2006), introduced a step change toward professionalisation through qualifications. The EYP was hailed as the graduate who would lead practice in the Early Years Foundations Stage (EYFS). They would raise standards and act as managers of change (Miller, 2008). Yet the EYPS was not without its critics, with Osgood (2010) arguing that it foregrounded a "neoliberal, technicist approach", one which was reliant on an externally prescribed set of criteria relating to professional competencies (p. 120). This was, nevertheless, an important step towards a recognised professional status within the sector (Hadfield et al., 2012)

To achieve this status, students had to demonstrate they could meet a set of 39 standards related to professional performance. Chalke argues that these standards were "ritualistic, rather than embodied within practice" (Chalke, 2015; p. 20). Further concerns in relation to the nature of the professional practice assessed under the 39 standards included whether the skills, knowledge and behaviours evaluated were representative of the nature

of the work undertaken in the ECEC workforce (Gaunt, 2015). Traits such as caring and passion seemed to be considered irrelevant within the standards, as these behaviours were deemed central to all levels of work within the workforce (Taggart, 2011). As Chalke (2015) argues, the complex nature of work in the sector requires the ability to not only manage practitioners' own emotions, but also those of the children in their care. She termed this "professional caring" (Chalke, 2015; p. 21).

The lack of parity and status in relation to teachers also remained unresolved. Whilst the dialogue from the government suggested that EYPS was equivalent to QTS, there was clearly a lack of recognition within settings. This provided evidence that this equivalency was not the case in reality. Reports from EYPs indicated a culture of challenging and problematic relationships, principally within school settings where qualified teachers were still leading practice, even where an EYP was present and their own training did not specialise in early childhood learning and development (Simpson, 2010). This led to practitioners perceiving a lack of an identified career path or opportunities. Hadfield et al., (2012) in conducting the final report into EYPS, did, however, present research which indicated that although practitioners felt the status did little to improve opportunities within the sector, 85% of participants surveyed also indicated that their own sense of professional identity had improved.

An independent review of the ECEC workforce commissioned by the government (Nutbrown, 2012) further uncovered a confusing and ill-equipped system of qualifications, which were considered inadequate in preparing practitioners for their work in the sector. The resulting *More Great Childcare* report (DFE, 2013) in response vowed to build a stronger, more capable workforce and better qualified practitioners who would be led by a group of newly created Early Years Teachers. The report promised improved early years qualifications so that "parents and carers can have greater confidence in the calibre of people who are teaching our youngest children" (DFE, 2013; 6). The re-professionalism agenda was proposed to practitioners as a way of awarding them a recognised professional status. Beck (2008) argues that in reality, such actions provide a pretext for bringing in further reform under a neoliberal agenda. Beck further argues that these attempts to re-professionalise the workforce would ultimately result in the de-professionalisation of teachers by what he termed "governmental professionalism".

This is where the background for this thesis resides, within the context of EYTS while taking into account many of the historical underlying issues and tensions which still remain. What seems apparent, however, is that in the model for Early Years Initial Teacher Training (NCTL, 2013), the standards and guidance for early years training is one which has moved to firmly align with that of initial and graduate teacher training. This move to an upskilling approach, which is modelled on teacher training, has caused concern by some because of what they perceive as the 'schoolification' of early years provision (Moss, 2010). Further anxiety related to the relevance of the pedagogy reflected in the standards has been expressed by the sector (TACTYC, 2013). The concern has been centred, in particular, on the complete disregarded of the importance of play in young children's learning. Whilst the current reformation of the workforce seems to suggest a model closely aligned to that of initial teacher education, the reality is a route to professional practice which ostensibly fails to offer equality in relation to pay and conditions of service associated with traditional QTS models. This will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Section 2.2 - Definitions of professional identity

At the centre of this thesis is the contentious and contemporary debate about the professionalism and professional identity of emerging Early Years Teachers. Brock (2012) argues that professional identity is located in specific cultural and historical situations and can be recognised as "a complex changing phenomenon" (Brock, 2012; p.28). Professionalism within the ECEC community remains a highly contested concept, made more complex by a discourse that has been fashioned and developed over time (Evetts, 2009).

The emergence of language involving the terms 'profession' and 'professionalism' first developed in the early 18th century. Initially, this language was concerned with a small number of occupations, including law, medicine and religion (Sutherland, 2001). In these professions features such as specialist knowledge, training and qualifications, as well as meeting professional standards, identify professionalism and professional practice (Moss, 2006; Oberhuemer, 2004; Osgood, 2006a). In return, the status of the professional brings

an expectation of enhanced working conditions and financial rewards (Moss, 2006; Oberhuemer, 2004).

The notion of teacher professionalism has also been shaped over time. Hargreaves (2000) describes four historical periods. He also discusses the discourses within which each one of these phases is situated. In the initial phase, the role was considered to be a demanding one, though technically less challenging. In this phase, the teacher was described as *"devoted herself to her craft"* (Hargreaves, 2000; p. 156). He terms this the 'pre-professional' phase. The second phase, autonomy, was marked by an increase in university based teacher training and subsequent demand for higher pay. Hargreaves (2000) terms the third phase historical phase, the 'Collegial Professional'. During this period, there was a move toward a less autonomous way of working and toward collaborating with colleagues and working in teams. The aim of this more collaborative method of working was to follow curriculums introduced in the 1980's, as well as the introduction of the 1988 Education Act. Evans (2011) concurs, suggesting that this period of time was what he termed an era of the 'new-professionalism' (Evans, 2011; p. 851). The final and current historical phase, the 'post professional', considers the dynamically changing context of teaching within a new millennium. This phase is considered a period in time in which older ideas of teaching and learning are insufficient when it comes to meeting the demands of regulatory requirements and inspection regimes which have been imposed on teachers. These requirements and regimes are resultant of successive governments' projects of modernisation within the profession.

If the term professionalism is further examined from the level of semantics, a debate must exist regarding the distinction between the terms 'profession' and 'professionalism'. A 'profession', one could argue, suggests individuals who belong to a group, often one with a self-serving bias. 'Professionalism' itself is a term which involves a progression, which could indicate an advancement within such a profession. What cannot be argued however, is that discussions of professionalism have inevitably overlying agendas, requiring both the systems and instruments of control. There appears to be little common agreement as to what is actually meant by the term 'professionalism', despite extensive use of the phrase 'professionalism' in the dialogue of politicians and the media. This lack of agreement as to

an agreed definition of the term appears to occur since its use varies both practically and theoretically within society.

The notion of professionalism is debated across many disciplines. This has resulted in a variety differing models; such as the activist, occupational, functional and process models (Friedson, 1994; Hoyle and John, 1995; Sachs, 2003; Evetts, 2009). Tobias (2003) discussed three models of professionalisation. The first is a professionalising model, which considers the attributes, characteristics and traits of professionalism and is characterised by the knowledge of the individual. The second, the historic dynamic model, considered ongoing professional development as a process for professionalisation. The third and final approach highlighted market forces and power as a priority and acknowledged professional education as being key in the formation of professional identity and the production of professions. Tobias's models illustrate the complex nature of professionalism and consider the emergence of considerations which link broader social and political discourses together.

What seems to be generally agreed in the above models is that there are certain generally accepted ideas about what constitutes both being and becoming a professional. Gibson (2013) points out that, firstly, there is an expectation that a professional must be skilled in a particular area, secondly, they must be in possession of a body of knowledge related to their expertise and thirdly, professionals must be given the independence to be autonomous, to solve problems and make decisions using their skills and knowledge. This third notion provides an argument for a professional Early Years Teacher who is effectively equipped to engage in complex thinking. Such an argument considers the role of the teacher in ECEC to be far more complex and multi-faceted than any predetermined list of standards could hope to represent (Webb, 2009).

Sachs (2003) contends that there are two separate discourses which shape the work of teachers and teaching, 'managerial professionalism' and 'democratic professionalism'. These two discourses, Sachs suggests, set the expectation of how teachers work, think and do in relation to levers and drivers which are active in the policy discourse of teacher professionalism (Sachs, 2003). Managerial professionalism, Sachs (2001) argues, is legitimised through the endorsement of policies and funding associated with such policies.

Managerial professionalism, as such, provides a recognition of professionalism based on accountability and de-centralisation. Sachs terms the second model 'democratic professionalism'. Sachs describes this model as one focusing on collaboration and cooperation with individuals whom are concerned with the school and community. This model thus denotes a sense of democracy consistent with community based childcare initiatives. Oberhuemer (2004) discusses a similar emphasis on democratic professionalism in the early childhood workforce. Democratic professionalism observes the emphasis on professional traits such as relationships with children and families and leadership qualities, alongside a secure underpinning of theoretical and practical knowledge of early childhood education and care.

Comprehensive research, which focussed on professional identity, was conducted by Trede et al. (2011) by way of reviewing 20 articles. These publications concluded that professional identity is complex and external context is increasingly the key to the formation of identity development. Evetts (2009) investigated the phenomena of context in the formation of professional identity, suggesting that there exist two types of professionals; organisational and occupational. Evetts argues that these two different forms of professionalism can be best understood as follows: occupational professionalism is directed 'from above'. This means professionalism which experiences parameters which are externally set, e.g. policy guidance and inspection. Conversely, occupational professionalism seeks guidance 'from within', giving rise to greater autonomy and self-directed practice. This phenomenon was also discussed in the work of Day and Kingston (2008), who considered differing domains of influence in professional identity formation. Day and Kingston also suggest that we look to the personal perspective outside the institution discussed, the range of perspectives present about expectations of the teacher, the professional perspective and the relevance of situated identity. Situated identity focuses on the environment in which the teacher practices, reinforcing ideas about the impact of domains of influence.

The necessity to define the term could, therefore, prove to be both contentious and complicated. It could also be argued to be unnecessary in relation to the resultant outcomes of any debate. Osgood (2010, 2006a), however, proposes that the early childhood community should be actively participating in the process of developing a

definition of professionalism in the ECEC workforce, one that positions them within the process, as opposed to passively accepting an externally imposed identity. Within this thesis, it is argued that the challenging and contrasting nature of definitions and paradigms amongst academics and commentators results in definitions which are not universally agreed (Simpson, 2010). This lack of consensus in relation to a definition of the term often adds to misconceptions and misinterpretations of professionalism and its location within the ECEC workforce. Professional identity in Early Years Teachers, as such, remains a highly debated and contested notion.

2.3 Notions of professionalism within the early childhood education and care sectors
As is clear from the above, notions of professionalism within this context are multifaceted and complex. In considering what he termed 'The Social System', Parsons (1951) described a notion of various sub systems among other aspects of a society's professions. Parson's explanation of key systems of a professional structure include a central regulatory body, a code of conduct and the production and regulation of entrance to the profession. One of these is, for example, the selection and training of future professionals. Indeed, in relation to working in the context of ECEC, there have been multiple definitions and notions of what constitutes professionalism in the sector. In her definition of early years professionalism, Katz (1985) suggested that there were eight concepts: social necessity; altruism; autonomy; code of ethics; distance from client; standards; training and specialist knowledge.

Oberhuemer (2005), on the other hand, utilised what she termed a democratic model of professional activity. This model identified four features of professionalism: interacting with children; care management and leadership; partnership with parents and knowledge base. Brock (2012) encouraged practitioners to identify perspectives of their own professionalism and found that they identified seven dimensions of knowledge: qualifications, training and professional development; skills; autonomy; values; ethics and rewards. What becomes clear here when reviewing the above studies is that concepts of professionalism are inevitably linked to knowledge, knowledge production and knowledge application.

Urban (2008) argues for a more diffuse definition of professionalism within the sector. According to Urban (2008), discrete layers to our understanding of professional practice within ECEC exist. Here he describes a body of knowledge of early childhood which results from academic research and study, later becoming applied within practice. He goes on to characterize this as a "powerful top-down stream" (2008; p. 4) of information which, though relevant for practice, works to set expectations, requires practitioners to improve practice on the basis of this knowledge. This research further leads to the government drive to increase standards through policy, inspection and regulation (Ritchie, 2015). These factors have driven the requirement for more professional knowledge and understanding of the role through academic study, as well as an increased awareness of the necessity for a career structure based on qualifications in addition to experience. Moyles (2001) states, however, that "educational improvement depends on practitioners feeling they want to make a difference: upon them feeling empowered and professional". (Moyles, 2001; p. 89)

The philosopher Foucault (1972) contested the very notion of professionalism, suggesting that the concept in itself is a means to gain influence and power and to secure economic advantage in an unequal society. Knowledge production, purpose and distribution play a fundamental role in this scenario. Foucault argued that imposed dominant knowledge is an effective means of control which prevents autonomous practice and individual thought, a phenomenon he described as 'regimes of truth'. Professional practice and, more relevantly, the belief that there can be universal truths and expert knowledge about children are both rejected by Foucault, who further argued that all knowledge has an intimate relationship with power, urging us to develop instead a will to know, drawing us to search beyond truth.

What is questioned within this study, then, is that which is identified to student practitioners as being professional in the programme standards of EYITT. Regulatory frameworks and legislation etc., can be seen as a specific discourse. This discourse is not necessarily appropriate to the field of ECEC and might ultimately deny students the opportunity to meet and challenge what Foucault described as their "will to truth" (Foucault, 1972; p.111). Urban (2005) points out that, as a consequence, student practitioners who work in a paradigm of pre-determined and evidence based practice outcomes are determined to failure. Vincent and Braun (2011) further argue that students

are faced with a fundamental dilemma, as in order to achieve recognition, they first have to acknowledge their professional identity against fundamental features of practice. This results in what Foucault (1988; p. 111) describes as "bodies that are docile and capable". Students, therefore, often seek to avoid uncertainty and mistakes. They thus brand themselves as experts who know what to do and are being instructed on how to do it by the knowledge producing systems which guide that practice. As Osgood (2006a) argues, increased state regulation and top-down policy prescription represent a direct challenge to "professionalism from within." (Osgood, 2006; p. 191). Sims-Schouten and Stittrich-Lyons (2013) further pointed out that a managerial construction of 'professionalism' actually runs counter to the emotional nature of early years work, thereby threatening a practitioners developing professional autonomy.

Yet further challenges to students' perceptions of their own developing professional identity may often originate from within the student body itself. Ritchie (2015) points out that perception is rooted in past experience, and emanates from cultural and practical opportunities. Bourdieu (1985) termed this phenomenon 'habitus', denoting status and identity drawn from a student's background and describing a layering of past and present linked to individuals histories, both personal and social. In response to demands for a better qualified workforce, work force reform has encouraged students from both traditional and non-traditional backgrounds into higher education. This has thus created challenges for both the student and the institutions in regards to overcoming previous academic habitus. Taylor (2009) argues that such students may experience uncertainty in relation to their academic capabilities or what Bourdieu (1996) terms their academic legitimacy.

Yet high levels of accountability and autonomy are agreed to be required in order for the individual to be justified as professional (Moyles, 2001). This, it is argued, inevitably entails accessing the requisite knowledge through education, training and practice. Moss (2008) disputes this argument, however, contending that any member of the early years team could be regarded as professional. Fenech and Sumison (2007) warn against such assumptions and suggest that accountability is a determining factor in defining professional status within the workforce. Accountability must further be included for quality and standards of practice within the setting in which early years professionals

work. Osgood (2006b) warns that purely promoting training to satisfy a growing demand for credentialed practitioners is insufficient, suggesting that continued education should also encourage greater self-awareness and self-confidence.

It is clear from the above literature that defining professionalism in the ECEC workforce is the subject of much debate. Further investigation is therefore needed to explore the complexity of how we define professional identity within the ECEC sector, particularly as new routes are introduced to support and develop professionalism within the sector. The following section considers perceptions held by the sector and reflected by the literature in relation to professional qualities and traits.

2.4 Perceived traits and competencies of the professional in ECEC

In England, the struggle for early years teachers to negotiate their professional status in the public domain is ongoing and complex (Brock, 2012). The complex array of titles, qualifications and roles (Nutbrown, 2012) have created long standing divisions in the workforce. This has led to confusion in relation to the different status and types of work practitioners are equipped to undertake.

It is inherently difficult, therefore, to locate the structure and features of professionalism. A common consensus seems difficult to reach, as research into the phenomena is varied (Kolsaker, 2008). Attempts by theorists to define professionalism often rely upon the analysis of traits. Theorists such as Eraut (1994), however, have been cautious about such an approach, warning that these attempts are created from the authors own perspectives. Eraut concludes that debates about traits are however necessary to identify characteristics of professionalism which individuals and groups consider to be valuable in the debate.

Katz (1985) suggested eight traits which indicated professionalism in the ECEC sector. These concepts included social necessity, selflessness, autonomy, ethical conduct, and distance from client, standards of practice, in depth subject knowledge and a long period of training. Oberhuemer (2005) alternatively suggested three professional behaviours necessary for working with children in a democratic model. These included knowledge and understanding, leadership and management and effective partnership with parents. Brock (2006) further identified seven dimensions of professionalism, knowledge, education,

skills, autonomy, values, ethics and reward (Brock, 2006). She later utilised these definitions to illicit students' voices to contribute to a typology of professionalism (Brock, 2012)

Of particular interest to this study is research conducted by Menmuir and Hughes (2006). They investigated emerging professionals' perceptions of what constituted professional practice with young children. These constructs are particularly relevant to this study, as they examine student teachers' perceptions of professional identity which is also explored within this thesis. They concluded that constructs such as personal professional attitudes, team working, professional experience, supporting children's learning, understanding children's development and partnership with parents were key skills and attitudes students identified as relevant to professional working in the sector. In the following section I have utilised a combination of these typologies of professionalism to examine in more detail how the literature is defining constructs of professionalism related to these areas.

a) A knowledgeable practitioner

Research suggests that professional identity in the ECEC workforce is often resultant of low status. This status frequently results from low qualifications and perceived knowledge, which then goes on to impact on the respect and confidence experienced by practitioners (Miller, 2008; Osgood, 2006b). Vincent and Braun (2011) additionally suggest that many practitioners in ECEC experience difficulty in claiming a body of knowledge for four reasons. Firstly, the perception that work in the sector is a 'derivation of mothering' (Vincent and Braun, 2011; p. 775), a set of instinctive maternal skills common particularly to women (Apesora-Varano, 2007). Osgood (2012) explored a similar set of ideas on maternalistic discourses. Her research argued that class difference is a mitigating factor in the professional identity of this set of workers. Osgood suggests that for this particular group, the nurturing nature of the work in which these professionals engage is fundamental and instinctive. The second reason is the conflict around who holds the expertise on individual children, the practitioner or the parent. Thirdly, the perception that knowledge in relation to child development is not a body of knowledge particular to the profession, but rather one shared with other related occupations, such as nursing and health visiting. It is also knowledge that is available to the wider general public through the

media. Lastly, the nature of work in the sector lacks the traditional indicators of a profession. Employment in the sector often includes some physical work in relation to the caring elements of the day to day work, which challenges definitions that suggest that professional practice is one which must inherently demand intellectual work over manual labour.

This divide in acknowledging different ways of knowing was also discussed by Manning Morton (2006), who explored the phenomena of professionalisation which recognises formal knowledge over skills and practice. Whilst it is accepted that specific subject knowledge is an important indicator of professionalism, it is also evident that there exist different forms of knowledge and ways of demonstrating that knowledge in practice (Chalke, 2015). A professional must have the autonomy to make decisions that combine skills with knowledge in order to solve complex problems. Early Years Professionals engage in multifaceted work, which is difficult to summarise in a list of predetermined categories (Webb, 2009). Anning and Edwards's (1999) research, however, supported 20 professionals to make explicit their tacit knowledge. They argued that practitioners needed encouragement to articulate the depth and breadth of the professional knowledge which they had acquired. These findings conflict somewhat to those of Davis (2014), who found that her participants reported that engaging with training to become an EYP did not provide them with knowledge as such. It had, however, encouraged skills of reflective and reflexive practice, which in turn enabled them to utilise the pre-existing knowledge they had. Davis (2014) reported that, in fact, the senior practitioners engaged in her study indicated that they had gained little in terms of knowledge through acquiring their EYPS status. Davis argued that the confidence reported by the participants in her study may be related to the difference between tactic and explicit knowledge as expounded by Eraut (2004). Here Davis ascertains that tactic knowledge may well be pre-existing, but that the confidence gained from EYPS training empowered those individuals to explain and rationalise their actions based on their explicit knowledge.

It is argued that expertise which encompasses both knowledge and skill is an important signifier of professional practices (Friedson, 2001). Whilst knowledge may be essential, it has been noted by Hobson (2003) that trainee teachers do not always appreciate the value of the theory underpinning the teaching profession, valuing practical experience in training over theory (Vincent and Braun, 2006). Urban (2010) concurred, warning that by

identifying a specific body of knowledge related to ECEC based on child development, we are at risk of not considering children as individuals. Urban further suggested that only by practical experience can practitioners learn to challenge the dichotomy between practice and theory. A clear body of knowledge related to ECEC has nevertheless been formalised and delivered by a wide range of higher education institutions (O'Keefe and Tait, 2004).

There remains a consideration that the existence of a knowledge base may be culpable in poststructuralist discourses related to knowledge and power. Such discourses argue that bodies of knowledge prioritise ways of thinking and dominate approaches to learning (Mac Naughton, 2005). Foucault (1979) explored the relationship between knowledge, truth and power, and the effects of these phenomena on the people and institutional structures concerned. Foucault believed that what we consider to be true does not in fact exist. For example, the beliefs in relation to the body of knowledge connected to ECEC such as child development are what he termed 'truth games'; fictional truths that express the politics of knowledge in that space.

Messenger (2013) argues that the resultant situation which arises as a result of these relationships within ECEC contexts and the subsequent impact on professionalism in the sector are power and knowledge. Messenger claims that such discourses, which are related to power, can and do emerge to counter policy constructions. It is, however, recognised that practitioners and students in response undertake training and qualifications, thus becoming communities of learners and knowers in the workforce (Osgood, 2012). Moss (2006) concurs, arguing that through the search for new knowledge and understanding and by interacting with the available discourses, student teachers are positioned as competent learners and makers of co meaning. (Moss, 2006, p. 36)

b) A practitioner who has met competency based standards

Competency based standards for the sector were introduced with the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) in 2006. To achieve the status, candidates had to demonstrate that they met a set of standards which reflected a child centred approach to teaching and learning. These standards supported the importance of play in learning and encouraged the practitioner to consider a holistic approach to young children's learning. Some

commentators still argued that these standards privileged the importance of education in the professionalisation agenda (Miller, 2008; Chalk, 2015). This resolve endured with the introduction of the new Early Years Teacher in 2012, which introduced new standards for EYT that were closely aligned to the standards for QTS and monitored by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) (2012). The new standards raised little confidence in the sector due to concerns in relation to the absence of any consideration of the importance of encouraging play as a vehicle for learning in young children's lives (TACTYC, 2013).

A further concern in relation to the standards identifies the acknowledgement of the professional practice of only a limited section of the ECEC workforce, such as teachers and managers. There seems to be a discernible policy discourse present herein which considers a notion of professionalisation reliant on an agreed set of competencies and standards. Yet these standards reflect the work of a narrow section of the workforce (Chalke, 2015) without truly reflecting the variety and context of work across the labour force, measuring set practice rather than evaluating professional competency.

Furthermore, practitioners and teachers themselves have been found to cast doubt over the relationship between the standards and professional practice. Empirical research, which examined teachers' attitudes to the standards underpinning teachers' competency frameworks by Poet, Rudd and Kelly (2010), suggested that at the outset of their professional careers, professional standards were considered a relevant guide to their practice. Teachers claimed that in their day to day work thereafter, however, they found them of little relevance and seldom referred to them. Professional standards in this instance become little more than a reference point for continuing professional development but are not regarded as reflecting the underpinning values or attitudes that inform the work of the professional in the sector. Evans (2011) indeed concurs that such practice encourages a performative agenda. In Evans analysis of the language of the 2007 teaching standards, he concluded that performative professionalism encourages a technicist approach to practice. This technicist approach is one that encourages a model of professionalism which is focused on work which can be quantified and measured for performance management purposes.

c) A practitioner accredited to practice

The concept of the graduate workforce within the profession has occurred later and faster than in comparable areas, with expectations changing for leaders within the sector to move from level 3 qualifications to level 6 in less than a decade (Osgood, 2006a). Nutbrown (2012) described the confusion of qualifications in the sector in commenting on the complication caused by the multiplicity of professional qualifications held by workers in the ECEC sector in her 2012 report. The government responded with the publication of *More Great Childcare* (DFE, 2013), which did acknowledge the confusion over terminology in the sector to some degree and thus changed the title of EYP to EYT. Nutbrown published her response to the document in her publication, *Shaking the Foundations of Quality* (2013). In reference to the new title of EYTS, she responded "However hard we try I do not believe that a status that is not the same as QTS or will ever be seen as equal to QTS" (Nutbrown, 2012, p. 5). Nutbrown argues here that the title of 'qualified teacher' is widely understood in society, thus affording the holder greater status and respect. Nutbrown contends that only by affording the Early Years Teacher the endorsement of 'qualified' within the title will the two statuses be regarded with the same esteem. The union ASPECT noted the disparity in its 2009 report, commenting on the split status model of EYPS and QTS. It has since actively sought answers from public parties in relation to parity of the status. Kingdom and Gourd (2013) point out that this perception is in direct contrast to that of the Nordic cultures, where the professional title of the Early Years Pedagogue is offered high status and respect. The English model could, however, be compared to the apparently successful solution of the single status model of Early Years Teacher adopted in New Zealand.

Four training routes to Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) have been identified, lasting from three months to three years and depending on existing experience and qualifications. EYTS, along with its predecessor, the EYPS, are additionally positioned in the intermediate position of being a recognised status nationally, yet having no related professional body or registration requirement. This thereby removes the higher level of scrutiny experienced by more established professions, such as medicine and social work, which further indicates that working in the ECEC sector is very much an emerging profession (Osgood, 2009). As previously mentioned, this move did not afford the holders QTS and parity was, as such,

not acknowledged across the sector. The publication has therefore been met with concerns from the sector, particularly in relation to the status of the newly created Early Years Teachers. Professor Nutbrown, in her response to the publication of *More Great Childcare* (2013), stated:

> Yet again those who work with young children are offered a lower status (and, we should realistically anticipate, poorer pay and conditions than those who work with older children) but a title which makes them appear to have the same role and status.

(Nutbrown, 2013; p. 7)

Professor Nutbrown additionally queried the ethicality of using a title so ingrained in the cultural understanding of education systems in the UK. Nutbrown called having the title of teacher without any of the benefits, opportunities for practice and career progression 'insulting' to those individuals who have undertaken EYITT courses (Nutbrown, 2013). She questions the ethicality of applying the term 'teacher' for a status with none of the opportunities, yet a selection process and training route which reflects almost exactly that for QTS. She questions whether this will mislead both parents and practitioners.

d) A Practitioner who holds power and autonomy

As discussed above, the range of titles applied to practitioners in Early Years gives rise to ambiguities when developing a professional identity. The EYTS status was created to promote the use of a skilled graduate workforce and to raise the status of working in the sector. The reports entitled *Effective Leadership in the Early Years Sector* (ELEYS) (Siraj Blatchford and Manni, 2006) and *Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years* (REPEY) (Sylva et al., 2010) both recognised graduate leadership as effective in improving outcomes for children. Government reports, policy and guidance work to establish the role of the transformational leader in the sector (Ritchie, 2015). The introduction of the Early Years Teacher (NCTL, 2013) and its predecessor EYPS (CWDC, 206) both demonstrated an ambition toward pedagogical leadership and thus facilitated pedagogical leadership as a fundamental part of the education and training of Early Years Teachers, embedded in their emerging professional identity.

Understandings of leadership within the ECEC sector are, however, complex. Murray and Macdonald (2013) argue that for the term leadership to become more relevant within the sector, the perception of the traditional nature of leadership must change. Research by Mathers et al., (2011) indicated that practitioners considered that leaders were individuals who were in a position of authority and power, a traditionally elite and hierarchical system (Mathers el at., 2011). McDowell-Clark and Murray (2012), however, suggest that such power situated perceptions of leadership do not reflect the values of care and nurturing so central to work in the sector. They go on to call for an inclusive style of leadership which enables a shared understanding of pedagogy. (McDowell-Clark and Murray, 2012)

Within a rapidly changing social context, the role of the transformational leader in ECEC will need to be reconsidered in relation to how the sector can satisfy the demands for child centred pedagogical practice and performativity. This needs to happen whilst complying with a regulated and controlled government agenda. Ritchie (2015) argues that the very nature of a power centred government management approach has taken autonomy away by 'embedding the hierarchical leadership practices with a focus on target led policies' (Ritchie, 2015, p. 65). Foucault (1979) did in fact suggest that the very nature of such regimes results in bodies which he describes as 'docile', arguing that constant surveillance and regulation, which may or may not be explicit, leads to normalisation and acceptance of such systems. This notion goes against the very nature of professional autonomy, which relies on a reciprocal relationship between leadership and professionalism, a relationship in which participative pedagogy is embedded within professional practice.

e) A practitioner capable of working in a multi professional context

The range of multi professional and multi-agency contexts that are required to develop a holistic approach to ECEC is continually increasing. This demands certain sensitivities, as well as thought, in relation to the impact of action on others and their likely response. Early years teachers need to develop the skills to engage with different professional bodies and the wider community when identifying common issues and solutions for children in their responsibility. These differing agencies and individual workers may have a varied range of experience and levels of qualification. They themselves may also be struggling for recognition (Moyles and Suschitzky, 1997).

In acknowledgment of such challenges, Sachs (2001) discusses a notion of democratic professionalism. This is an approach which acknowledges collaboration and which recognises the differing voices within the community of practice. Democratic professionalism opens up opportunities to reconceptualise practice in the sector and the professional identity of the Early Years Practitioner (Rinaldi, 2006). A fundamental focus of this phenomena rests upon participative decision making and collaborative working. This model, Sachs argues, adds clarity to professional working and it strengthens the relationships between those involved with children and families together with the professionals, agencies and school community associated with the setting. Oberhuemer (2004) further investigates the idea of democratic professionalism within ECEC contexts. Here, he stresses the knowledge of practitioners. This knowledge guides their work in the sector, and identifying the skills of practitioners in communicating with children and families when managing and leading within the sector.

f) A practitioner who exhibits an ethics of care

Any discussion related to professional identity within the ECEC workforce must consider the association with values and beliefs which guide practice within the sector. Cohen (2008) argues that these very characteristics are the ones which allow others to identify Early Years Practitioners within their roles (Cohen, 2008). It may, however, be these very conceptions of the profession which work as the antithesis of professional identity in the sector. Dalli (2002) indeed argues that it is the traditional association of childcare with the connotations of mothering and its associated discourses of traditionally female attributes of care and love which work to disempower early childhood practitioners from recognising their own professional status. Such perceptions position the early childhood professional within the care and domestic labour paradigm, reflecting on the status and respect offered to the profession (Maddon, 2012). Moloney (2010) furthermore argued that practitioners often fail to recognise their own skills and knowledge and consider themselves as little more than childminders. The skills of practitioners are nevertheless often recognised as technical (Moss, 2006), suggesting the status of a childhood professional (Oberhuemer, 2005) who could be described as providing 'professional caring' (Taggart, 2011).

The key theoretical concepts of Noddings (1984, 1992) are useful to explore the relationship between carer and child in a professional context here. Noddings (1992) identifies two types of care in teaching, virtue caring and relational caring. The notion of

"relational ethics" (Noddings, 2010, p. 7) promotes the importance of being 'in relation' to someone before 'caring for' them. Noddings (1984) argues that this entails both parties playing their part and views the child as a dynamic agent in the partnership. This form of caring is dependent on listening to children and responding to their child's needs. Virtue caring, alternatively, focuses on what is considered to be in the child's best interests; planning for their learning and guiding their behaviour. As teachers respond to the variety of children's diverse needs, they need to think critically and understand the complex situations which they might encounter. 'Care' in this context is therefore not seen as emerging from emotional responses but includes the professional competence to respond to caring responsibilities. Dahlberg et al., (2007) concur and highlight that the role of practitioners is not to consume and control, but to exercise an ethical responsiveness to and responsibility for the child (Dahlberg et al., 2007).

g) A Practitioner who demonstrates professional love

A dominant discourse in any debate related to care is love. Hatcher (2008) identified a set of 'soft skills' widespread in feminised work. Together with commitment, dedication and passion, love is inextricably associated with professional practice in the sector. The intersections between care and love compete with discourses related to economics, investment and human capital to advocate the establishment of the early childhood teacher (Gibson, 2013). The early childhood teacher is now considered as critical to the economy of the nation in policy direction.

The way the professionals articulate their roles is of central importance in conceptualising their professional identity. Osgood (2009) argued that when emerging professionals are provided with an opportunity to articulate their sense of commitment and passion for their role, they themselves benefit from emerging insights. They additionally benefit from achieving a greater depth of understanding, a phenomena Osgood termed "professionalism from within" (Osgood, 2009, p. 747). Moyles (2001), on the other hand, warns that a "culture of passion can be perceived as anti-intellectual, idealistic, objective, indecisive and feminine" (Moyles, 2001, p. 86). Moyles appeals for a more appropriate conceptual language, one which distinguishes how and when passion contributes to professional practice.

There exists a growing recognition of the importance of love alongside care as a key component of professional practice (Page, 2011). Page's research, which was conducted with mothers who utilised day-care for their children, indicated that these mothers considered love for their child as a central and essential quality of professional practice. Page termed this phenomenon 'Professional Love'. The term 'professional love' has become integrated within discourses which distinguish between parental love and that of the kind of love a child might experience in a care setting, thereby countenancing love as an essential trait of professional practice. Dalli (2006) concurs and suggests that society should revise its notions of love and care in order to acknowledge them as pedagogical and political tools.

It would appear that passion is therefore an important constituent of professionalism (as defined in the literature and by practitioners themselves). As Moyles (2001) writes 'passion is never mindless, but rather mindful,' further stating that 'to operate at a mindful level equates with deep level, higher order thinking' (Moyles, 2001; 84). Many writers and researchers agree, arguing that passion is an important and potentially desirable trait of professional practice and thinking (Moss, 2006; Freire and Freire, 1998; Page, 2011; Moyles, 2001; Dalli, 2010; Osgood, 2009).

h) A reflective and reflexive practitioner

Davis (2014) points out that reflection is an important professional tool, one which is essential in the development of pedagogical knowledge. Engaging in reflective dialogue encourages the sharing of insights and knowledge about practice (Anning and Edwards, 2010), whilst reflective practice allows the practitioner to critically engage with the relevant discourses. This pays a significant contribution to the development of professional identity (Osgood, 2006). Egan (2009) concurs, though emphasises that we should not underestimate the place of tactic knowledge alongside reflective practice.

To support students when it comes to developing a sense of professional identity, Miller (2008) suggests that training providers should develop programmes of study which encourage students to reflect upon practice. In a research study by Osgood (2010), students indicated that professional confidence is most successfully developed in

programmes of study which encourage reflexive practice. Yet as Sumsion (2005) points out, the core content of many training programmes does not reflect the practice of encouraging reflective/reflexive learning. Sumsion (2005) therefore suggests that there should be three considerations in teacher training programmes. These should allow trainees to prepare for the professional demands of the complex profession they are about to encounter in practice. Sumsion suggests, firstly, that the student be encouraged to think reflexively in order to see the situation differently. Secondly, the student should use reflexive thinking to imagine a different way of approaching the issue. Lastly, the student should challenge the 'taken for granted' (Sumsion, 2005, p.198) old habits and, in turn, transform current practice. Such approaches to learning support students in a rigorous and continuous process of meaning-making. This also allows students to construct and reconstruct theories in order to make new theories from their experiences (Moss, 2008).

i)   A practitioner who reflects social justice and equality in practice

Social research indicates that inadequate housing and socio-economic circumstances have a tangible impact on children's ability to developmentally thrive (Allen, 2011). Inadequate housing also affects children's physical growth and educational attainment (CYP, 2012). Research demonstrated that only 25% of children who receive free school meals gain five GCSEs or equivalent (DFES, 2006). A lack of maternal educational qualifications, together with poor socio economic circumstances, have also been evidenced to influence children's competencies at the age of three (Hartas, 2010). Such overwhelming evidence calls for an approach to practice which provides for an equitable and socially just approach to professional working.

Socially just education and care is about creating provision which challenges established discriminatory systemic and social relationships, these practices may disadvantage or advantage some groups over others (Hytten and Bettez, 2011). Amongst a multiplicity of interpretations in relation to the nature and theorisation of social justice and how it is lived in practice (Woods et al., 2013), Nancy Fraser's framework of social justice proves a useful starting point. In her 2003 work, Fraser suggested that social justice was two dimensional. Fraser started by describing the phenomena of recognitive justice. This is justice which relates to making the social background, culture, values, languages and

experiences of the communities in which settings and schools are situated (Frazer, 2003). Recognitive justice is thus one which values social and cultural diversity and is fully inclusive in relation to ways of being in the community.

Fraser goes on to describe redistributive justice. This relates to the unbiased distribution or redistribution of resources, skills and practices to include all culture as opposed to just the dominant culture. Redistributive justice, as such, ensures high quality education as a priority for all children. (Woods, 2012). More recently, Fraser has added the notion of representative justice, which argues for members of the community to participate democratically in the structures and practices (Fraser, 2008).

What is clear from the research is that the training of professionals must facilitate opportunities for students to consider ways in which they can address the inequities of our current system. Students must also consider what constitutes socially just early years care and education. Professional practitioners may have a wealth of experience and knowledge in relation to early childhood education and care, however, if process and practice ignore the experiences of the family and needs of the child, a resultant deleterious effect could emerge. Whilst it is important that professionals who support children and families ensure their wellbeing, they must also take the cultural values of the family and community into account. Professional practice in the ECEC sector must therefore be mindful that staff reflect the diversity of children's lives in its work.

Section 2.5 The context and policy climate, the call for quality

Day et al. (2006) argue that government policy constitutes part of the macro structures which impact on the professional identity of teachers and practitioners. They further suggest that the differing layers of teachers' work are also represented in meso and micro structures, identified specifically in school culture and inter-personal knowledge construction (Day et al., 2006). Stone (2016) concurs, arguing that without a strong sense of professional identity, the teacher will struggle to work effectively between these different layers. This will ultimately impact upon their work. Research conducted by Day et al. (2007) furthermore revealed that many professionals establish identity and purpose in their work through a strong sense of moral and professional agency. This contributes to both their perceived and measured professional effectiveness.

Periods of continual policy change and modernisation experienced in a neo liberal agenda are thus likely to continually threaten practice. This is often reflected in policy which guides workforce development in the UK, where graduate professionals are a requirement to lead practice in the maintained sector but not in the PVI sector. Policy developments in the sector have, as a result, been fragmented and subject to a high level of change, not least that of workforce reform. Clare Tickell expressed concern at the avalanche of legislation encountered by those working in the ECEC sector. Writing a forward for the publication *As Long as it takes: New politics for Children* (Action for Children, 2008) she lists

> 98 separate Acts of Parliament passed across the UK that affect the services that they use, 82 different strategies for various areas of children and youth services, 77 initiatives and over 50 new funding streams. That equals over 400 different major announcements- around 20 every year – with each new initiative lasting, on average, a little over two years

(Action for Children 2008; 3)

Tickell suggests that there is a necessity for a pertinent pause in legislation and period in which the sector can reflect and consolidate. Some themes have remained constant throughout, however. Meehan (2007) suggests four themes which can continually be observed as an ongoing focus for research and debate in government policy. The first one is the debate in relation to children's rights and the challenges with meeting those rights which is present within the ECEC sector. The second is the concern with the curriculum and pedagogical issues, a constant striving for understanding what constitutes best practice globally. Thirdly, Meehan lists the relationship between accountability and funding as a source of constant and ongoing debate from each successive government. The fourth and final theme is that of recognising and adapting supporting research which focuses on child development, particularly children's neurological development and the development of intellect and thinking. These themes contribute to a continual reconceptualization of childhood with a constantly changing and increasingly diverse society. Practitioners are thus training to work in the sector are facing major challenges in a rapidly changing and increasingly demanding sector (Urban, 2005; Oberhuemer, 2005). Brock (2012) points out that increased diversity in the communities in which practitioners will work with and support children and families does in fact require a broad understanding of the needs of young children; socially, developmentally and culturally. While such challenges are indicative of broader societal trends, they are also catalysts for

continued changes to legislation and policy. This is due to an ongoing attempt to reflect the lived reality of children and families.

The societal and political context has, as such, transformed the professional profile within the sector. This has been the result of various centralised reforms promising to modernise it. Mahoney and Hextall (2000) argue that there is a direct threat to professional autonomy in the sector as a direct consequence of increasingly regulated demands for performativity. Osgood (2005) further posits that the lack of recognition for professional autonomy, as well as the recognition and respect for professional judgment, are rendering the profession subordinate to the demands of professional judgment.

In the domain of educational provision, Beck (2008) argues that modernisation occurs in two phases. The first phase involves actively discrediting education professionals and making them more accountable, particularly those in managerial positions. The second phase centres on efforts to construct new models of teacher professionalism, ones which the practitioners themselves support. An example of such an approach can be observed in the re-professionalisation agenda for the early years workforce, one which provides a recognised professional status for Early Years Practitioners. Beck would argue that such actions, whilst seemingly supporting developing professionalism in the sector, in fact act as an effective pretext for introducing further reform under a neoliberal agenda. Such re-professionalisation agendas, Beck says, result conversely in an apparent de-professionalisation of the teaching profession. This is illustrated in the introduction of the EYPS qualification by the then New Labour government. This qualification reflected a certain concept of the professional in early years and facilitated an accepted reality of a managed professionalism, where professional standards and goals are closely aligned to current governmental policy ambitions, one Beck terms 'governmental professionalism'. Furlong (2008) argues that the wave of New Labour reforms was successful in their own terms, as teachers came to accept a more 'managed' professionalism, where professional goals and standards would become closely aligned to the policy ambitions of the governing party.

The professionalism of the Early Years Workforce has, however, seen a particularly rapid gathering of attention in the political arena. This has happened both nationally and internationally over the past decade (Miller, 2008 and Osgood, 2012). As each successive government embarks on a process of modernisation, there is a further impact on the

expectations placed on practitioners and teachers working within ECEC contexts. Each successive government wishes to improve standards within the workforce, yet how this should be achieved is continually contested.

Traditionally, the ECEC workforce has been predominantly made up by women (Moss, 2006; Osgood, 2012). In sectors of the workforce which are highly feminised, there is a tendency to lower remuneration, poorer conditions and low status (Whitehouse, 2011). This phenomenon can also be noted in primary education which also reflects a maternalistic discourse. Moyles argues that this is perpetuated by the perception of caring and nurturing, which dominates perceptions of the role of working with young children. (Moss, 2006). These traditional perceptions of work in the sector have resulted in a slow growing recognition and value of the work of Early Years Practitioners within policy development (Nutbrown, 2012).

The ways in which Early Years Teachers in England position themselves within the professional discourse, as well as the current conceptions of professionalism in the sector, have been fashioned over time. Governments and parents have not traditionally seen the practitioner in ECEC sector as providers of educational services and have acknowledged limited value in the work (Gibson, 2013). Commentators such as Jónsdóttir and Coleman (2014) argue that, historically, the role of the Early Years Professional has often been viewed as that of the caregiver, rather than that of an expert having specialist knowledge of ECEC. Those concerned with early childhood policy and practice have therefore struggled with the competing discourses of education and care (Moss, 2006; Osgood, 2012). The resultant argument has focused on the integration of education and care (OECD, 2006, 2012), with the *Starting Strong* (2006) publication stating "…services for young children should combine care, developmental and learning opportunities…education and care should not exist apart in approaches to young children" (OECD, 2006, p.229)

The phrase 'early childhood education and care' (ECEC) has subsequently emerged in publications, policy and curriculum. Provision of ECEC for young children has thus created a contentious debate, with political manifestos and policy decisions arguing for a way forward in providing the best care and experiences for young children. Policy for care of

young children is often driven by priorities such as employability and economic necessity, rather than as a way to enhance the development of young children. This is despite warnings from the early years stakeholder group when reviewing the 10-year childcare strategy, which stated: "Policy should avoid casting childcare as simply a route to higher parental income, adding 'it needs to be balanced by a vision of childcare as a valuable nurturing environment'" (Early Years Stakeholder Group, 2008, p. 7)

Nevertheless, commentators such a Woodrow (2008) point to a worrying trend towards marketization in early childhood. Woodrow argues that economics are increasingly a catalyst for investment in the early years as opposed to the learning and wellbeing of young children. This has, in turn, lead to a view of provision for ECEC as a commodity, utilising a business model approach of new management methods (Lloyd and Penn, 2010). Moss (2010) argues that such centres consider parents as consumers who demand greater choice and competitive pricing. The justification for the marketization of ECEC argues that such policies lead to a better balance between supply and demand. Yet even in the field of economics there is opposition to such moves, with Cleveland and Krashinki (2004) claiming a strong economic case for state support for ECEC as a public good.

The marketization of the English market for ECEC was explicitly strengthened by the 2006 Childcare act. This act introduced two significant requirements. The first one was a duty placed upon local authorities to close the gap in children's attainment between the most affluent and poor children in society. This requirement had to be fulfilled through the provision of services. These services were, however, restricted in that local authorities could not introduce new provision or expand existing provision. Secondly, the act established a requirement to professionalise the ECEC workforce by attracting graduates to work in the non-maintained sector (Lloyd and Hallet, 2006). This thereby established a clear link between perceived quality of provision and profitability and sustainability of the market (Hevey and Miller, 2012).

Government calls for a greater credentialed workforce are growing despite these challenges. It is acknowledged that a key attraction to encourage individuals to gain higher level qualifications is that such training pathways should theoretically lead to better pay and conditions of service. What the evidence shows is that professionals enjoy higher status and better pay than in countries which demand higher qualifications for their ECEC

workforce when compared with countries offering lower remuneration, as evidenced in the table below.

Table 2.1 Comparison of European salaries for ECEC teachers

European country	Childminders (family day-care)	Childcare workers in more formal settings (e.g. crèche or accredited play groups)	Supervisors/ managers of formal settings	Primary school teacher
Denmark	£21,500	£20,350	£32,800	£38,050
Finland	£14,800	£18,800	£22,300	£28,100
France	£13,250	£16,300	£23,950	£25,400
Germany	£14,600	£19,150	£28,250	-
Netherlands	£22,500	£22,100	£34,400	£34,000
Sweden	£20,150	£22,450	£29,250	£23,250
England	£11,400	£13,300	£16,850	£33,250

Source: Figures obtained via (DFE, 2013; 18)

PACEY (2016) point out that those countries who have a history of at least three years training at a higher education level, particularly the Nordic countries, demonstrate significantly higher pay than those of professionals working in English contexts. As can be understood in the table above, there is a similar recognition and value for childminders. , The English context sees childminders attracting an average salary of only £11,400, yet in Denmark the figure stands at £21,500 and £20,150 in Sweden (PACEY, 2016).

Qualification levels have traditionally remained significantly lower than in comparable countries. Whilst the proportion of graduates has grown in recent years,   there are only 13% of practitioners who are trained graduates in the non-maintained sector. The percentage of practitioners within the ECEC sector qualified to level 3 has, on the other hand, significantly increased, with 84% of practitioners holding Level 3 qualifications, compared to 72% in 2007 (DFE, 2013).

Nevertheless, with every change in government come major changes to policies and funding related to ECEC, alongside associated training and qualifications. At a time of austerity and financial hardship, the current conservative government has chosen to focus

on targeted rather than universal services (DFE, 2013). A number of major reviews have additionally been commissioned, each of which focused on ECEC services and, to a greater or lesser extent, on workforce development and qualifications in the sector. The Field report (2010), The Tickell Review (2011), The Allen Report (2011) and the Nutbrown Review (2011) all argued that the most effective, high quality provision was one led by graduate professionals, whether from health or education.

A clear connection has thus been articulated between high quality services and a highly qualified workforce. The Tickell review (2011), in fact, called for government to "Retain a focus on the need to up skill the workforce, to commit to promoting a minimum level 3 qualification and to maintain the ambitions for a graduate led sector" (Tickell, 2011, p. 43)

Criticism of the workforce development policy in England (Miller 2008), however, suggests that an emphasis exists around monitoring and evaluation which exclusively focuses on competencies. Hevey and Miller (2012) argue that practices are often overly regulated by externally monitored systems which disregard the complex contexts in which practitioners work. This overlooks the space for the professional judgement and the creativity of well qualified and experienced practitioners (Chalke, 2013). Hevey and Miller (2012) go on to point out that individual competency and professionalism alone are, however, not enough to achieve the highest outcomes in terms of quality provision. Here they argue that professionals should be supported by "competent systems of management, governance and wider policies and given the resources and respect to operate in professional ways." (Hevey and Miller, 2012, p. 284)

It is once more noted that the policy commitment to ECEC workforce reform within the UK is repeatedly articulated, alongside with a recognition that the provision has to be of 'high quality'. Standards are also in need of being improved. It is thus necessary to argue that the concept of "quality" in the early years workforce itself is highly contested, having been widely challenged by academics and authors for its implied relationship to notions of measurability, accountability and universality, (Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence, 2007; Urban, 2005). Often, the language of "quality" is utilised to afford credibility to the proliferation of policy and regulation which governs professional practice in the sector, often undermining the professionalism of practitioners. As Dahlberg et al. remind us, in this context "quality

remains a questionable concept", (2007, p. 3). Yet it seems the two discourses on 'quality' and 'professionalism' seem to become one within ambitious policy goals aimed at raising accessibility and quality of provision (Mac Naughton, 2005; Oberhuemer, 2005).

There appears to be undeniable evidence that the level of qualification of practitioners in a setting, however, has a direct correlation with higher inspection outcomes. Research by Hillman and Williams (2015) suggested that graduate leadership is successful in narrowing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children. These findings are supported by Ofsted's most recent report, which investigated inspection outcomes of Early Years Providers by staff qualifications. Their findings suggest that nurseries and day care centres which have three-quarters of their staff qualified to Level 3 or above are more likely to achieve better outcomes in inspection when compared with settings with less qualified staff (Ofsted, 2015). An earlier study by Mathers et al., (2007) additionally argues that unqualified staff may conversely have a negative effect on quality. Such compelling evidence led the House of Lords Select Committee on Affordable Childcare (2015) to recommend that the government should evaluate how resources were allocated within the ECEC budget as a priority in order to support settings to employ highly qualified staff.

Qualifications are nevertheless not recognised as the sole indicator of quality. Research by OECD (2012) has shown that the ability to demonstrate the key skills and traits necessary to create a high quality pedagogic environment are essential. These include a good understanding of how children learn and develop, together with the ability to be responsive to and develop children's ideas and perspectives, along with helping to encourage them in solving their problems and expressing their ideas in a supportive and stimulating environment. PACEY (2015) urge that, in order to support practitioners in developing the competence to develop these opportunities for children, it is vital that the government develop a workforce strategy that sets out a clear plan to attract new professionals into the sector and rewards and motivates existing practitioners to stay in the profession and to develop their careers.

2.6 Chapter summary - drawing the threads together

As is evident from the above literature, there are multiple discourses to consider when investigating the phenomena of professional identity in the ECEC workforce. To form a

clear understanding of the multifaceted nature of the phenomena, it is necessary to consider all perspectives which contribute to the debate. To develop a complete and holistic picture of what it means to teach and learn in the sector, it is imperative that we include all the perspectives of those involved in the care and learning of young children.

Mac Naughton (2005) suggests that, in order to make a difference to young children's lives, it is necessary to "recast the content and delivery of professional learning" (Mac Naughton, 2005; p. 189). The author calls for a critically knowing workforce in early childhood communities, one who has the skills to "revolutionise how the field of early childhood thinks about and engages with policy, funding, learning and pedagogical innovation in work with young children" (Mac Naughton, 2005; p. 190). In early childhood studies, this calls for deep learning practices. This is what Mac Naughton terms 'transformative learning'; learning with others to link knowledge and practice in order to transform how we think and act, a recasting of the professional knowledge base.

It thus seemed logical to utilise Wilber's (2000) AQAL Integral Theory for the purpose of this research, since it considers inclusive and comprehensive human ways of knowing. As Murray (2009) argues, Integral Theory in educational research can be understood as "a (meta) model or framework, a methodology, a community, or a stage or phase of human development" (Murray, 2009, p. 44). To gain insight into the phenomena of professional identity, the dynamically unfolding occurrence the research aims to investigate more deeply, it is first necessary to look at how participants experience their lived reality, the inside subjective. The research then examines the role that cultural beliefs, practices, and discourse play in the formation of professional identity, as well as how meanings emerge through the social, the intersubjective. The third perspective, the objective reality, reveals how professional identity is played out in reality, its various mechanisms and structures and their associated relationships, The outside-plural perspective, the inter-objective, the impact of socio-economic processes and the structures in shaping the workforce and the related training mechanisms are also herein disclosed. Davis points out that these four quadrants are not simply viewpoints one can take on reality, they are dimensions of reality in itself (Davis, 2008).

These dimensions are always present. For instance, all individuals have some form of personal or subjective experience. Equally, individuals always experience exterior physiological components of situations and conditions. In addition, individuals function in groups or communities. The interiors of these are generally known as intersubjective or cultural realities, whereas their exteriors are known as ecological or social systems.

In this debate, then, professionalism is a contemporary and contentious issue. Friedman likens it to "a ball of knotted string' that requires such 'knots' such as gender and power, ethics, leadership and change to be opened and untangled" (Friedman, 2007; p. 126). Early Childhood Practitioners in the UK have historically experienced an ongoing struggle to establish their professional status within the public domain. A 're-conceptualisation' of the notion of professionalism in the sector is therefore now overdue. Most importantly, the voices of those working in the sector need to be heard in order to generate a more comprehensive perspective of professionalism for ECEC.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology, including my approach to generating and analysing the data. To design the research methodology for this study, it was necessary to consider the question which originated the research as well as the ontological and epistemological assumptions and orientations which guided the study. The key research questions that informed this study were:

- How do students define a high-status profession and do they consider that EYT conforms to this definition?
- What are students' views of the EYITT programme and its potential impact on the status of emerging early years professionals?
- What is the impact of recent policy initiatives on the status of Early Years Teachers (EYTs), personally, professionally and in the wider public domain?

The research utilises Integral Theory as a theoretical framework in order to consider the aforementioned questions, which are at the heart of the research. Integral Theory falls into a post-modern, or progressive, understanding. Postmodernism is not a school of thought as such, nor is it a cohesive intellectual movement with a definite perspective. Postmodernism may be better considered a philosophical approach which attempts to define or explain a situation or phenomena and utilises many different contexts and considerations to cover many different aspects of the situation under investigation (Kvale, 1992). Every phenomenon may, as such, have an alternative story or interpretation, depending upon the lens through which it is viewed.

With Integral Analysis (AQAL), Wilber (2006) provides a frame in which to organise these concepts within seemingly precise categories. This notion is, however, contrary to the possibilities posed by the approach. The Integral analysis model includes four quadrants, or 8 zones, which indicate developmental levels and 4 primary states. The quadrants focus on differing aspects of the investigation. In the upper left quadrant, the focus is on the understanding and development of internal mental and emotional capacities. The

quadrant in the lower left prioritises collaborative or community. The upper right quadrant considers the physical embodiment of the phenomena, the issue in action, whilst the lower right quadrant highlights the social and political realities to be considered. There is naturally overlap between these principles. All quadrants will and should interact as they are in fact all components of the same system (Murray, 2009).

The research methodology then determined the choice of methods, which sought to elicit students' voices. Students were encouraged to contribute their perspectives of professionalism and professional practice in the ECEC sector. This included debates that were current at the time of the study. Professionalism in particular was explored in relation to the introduction of the Early Years Teacher route (EYT) during 2014-15. The impact on the professional identity of the nine emerging Early Years Practitioners involved in the research was examined at a time of considerable change and transition in the training of ECEC professionals and the sector at large.

Students' conceptualisation of professionalism in early years teaching was examined within this investigation. The study sought to furthermore ascertain student's perceptions of training within the early childhood profession. From a post structuralist position, many argue that professional training within ECEC is constructed out of a particular hierarchical model of passively applying expert knowledge and is not necessarily appropriate to professional practice (Moss, 2013; Dahlberg et al., 2007; Urban, 2005). This study sought to consider students' experiences of training in relation to their own developing professionalism, focussing on the introduction of the undergraduate Early Years Teacher (EYT) (NCTL, 2014) professional qualification and its associated standards.

The study additionally examined the political context and how it framed notions of professionalism and professional identity in this group of students. The Early Years Initial Teacher Training guidance, September 2014, (NCTL, 2013) and related standards were also reviewed, together with current policy initiatives concerned with the professionaliastion upskilling and development of the ECEC workforce. As Osgood (2010) points out, issues of professionalism in ECEC have been silenced by the political dominance of authority and are therefore not expressed from the field, but shaped by policy, legislation and guidance. This

research sought to investigate both the impact of such hegemonic discourses on students' professional identities and to empower students to have a voice in the context of fast paced change in the sector.

3.2 Context and location of the main study: an overview

The intention of this research design is to encourage students to reflect on questions of what it means to be a professional Early Years Teacher. This can be achieved by reflecting on interior meaning making and by examining their own self-beliefs and actions, together with those of others within the systems in which they operate. Through reflection on these questions, students can then develop the skills that they need to contribute to furthering their knowledge and that of others.

This study focused on a sample of nine trainee Early Years Educators as the participants. This group of developing professionals are undertaking an academic degree in Education and Early Years, alongside the professional qualification of Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS). It is therefore important for both the students and the course developers to work towards a better understanding of what it means to be an Early Years Professional. In doing so, it is hoped to develop a clearer articulation of professionalism in the ECEC sector, as defined by the voices of students, in the context of the standards of the academic and professional award of a BA honours degree and EYTS (NCTL, 2013). This study aims to contribute to more appropriate recognition of the value and status of Early Years Professionals and the service which they provide, together with ways in which HE institutions may support students to claim their own professional identity.

Whilst the policy context in relation to workforce development within the sector and political climate were analysed in relation to students' responses, any critical approach to identifying the factors which impact on professional identity needs to be reflexively mindful of its limitations. The methodology is not intended to include an exhaustive and comprehensive analysis of all aspects of the discursive construction of policy texts relevant to workforce development within ECEC. Rather, the purpose of this thesis is to focus on contextual considerations introduced by the students and impacting on them. In doing so, students will be utilising discourse as a central concept. It shall be considered a process

rather than a product (Bowe, Ball, and Gold 1992) with a focus on meaning and effects in educational policy, rather than with the intentions of policy-makers. Hyatt (2013) argues that utilising a discourse theory perspective questions the ways in which texts and practices are shaped by power, with analysis being a tool for "speaking truth to power" (Hyatt, 2013, p. 5). Furthermore, in identifying the commonality of their opinions and concerns, they sought to address their apprehensions by discussing and sharing their thoughts in a mutually supportive community of students.

The research largely utilises qualitative methods to collect data. The philosophical position which is usually associated with qualitative approaches is based on interpretivist and constructivist philosophies. The qualitative methodology was selected, as it was considered that combining elements of quantitative and qualitative methodologies in mixed methods approaches may result in fragmented and inconsistent data. It should be acknowledged, however, that the introduction of the diamond ranking activity to the research design may present the opportunity for a very small amount of quantitative data to support the research findings, though the risk of introducing inconsistency in this scenario is minimal. Denscombe (2008) argues that the risk of any inconsistencies should alert us to the need to reconceptualise the notion of paradigm in a way that corresponds with the practice-driven nature of the approach. In this context, he argues that the notion of communities of practice might be particularly useful. Communities of practice support a research paradigm that he argues to be "flexible, permeable, and multi-layered" (Denscombe, 2008, p. 278) enough to accommodate the variety of ways in which methods are used. It should be noted here however that the intention of this data collection method was to primarily collect qualitative data by recording the discussions and interactions of the group as they negotiate and debate their choices, this is described in full in section 3.12 b

The notion of communities of practice originates from the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and focuses on the social and communal aspect of learning. From this perspective, learning is a communal rather than an individual activity. The knowledge that is acquired through communities of practice is shared knowledge, co-constructed through participation within the group and through the adoption of shared practices. This research seeks to interpret understanding with the students and to know how individuals negotiate

meaning. It also seeks to find how students come to shared understandings of professional identity within a group or community of emerging professionals. From this intersubjective perspective, quality of inquiry is based on whether all voices within the culture have been fairly represented. Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest that in doing so, the data reflects a mutual understanding, demonstrating fairness and authenticity in the research process.

3.3 Researcher positionality

Many academics will argue that researchers are bound up in their research. Researchers might be believed to be inevitably incapable of presenting anything other than a subjective and limited account (Curtis et al., 2014). As a researcher, I acknowledge that I bring my own values, beliefs and professional experiences within the ECEC sector, together with those in the higher education training sector to this study. Curtis et al. (2014) point out that the very topic of professional identity chosen for investigation suggests a predisposition to an interest in this area. In this research, I acknowledge my bias and how it may affect the research process and how the choice of participants may well be part of this.

Researcher bias is inevitable because we are all shaped by our experiences and the environment in which we live. Meighan and Siraj Blatchford (1997) argue that as researchers, we will constantly theorise about social life and develop our own personal stances (Meighan and Siraj Blatchford, 1997). They argue that research a social act, and it therefore has unavoidable limits to objectivity. Benincas (2012) warns that researcher's stance can and does have negative impacts on the validity of research findings. Such concerns have led to a call for a third paradigm which calls for joint collaboration in the research process (Burke, 2002) between the researcher and the researched, giving participants ownership and an element of control over the resultant research. This research therefore prioritises the eliciting of students' voices within the research process, a more democratic research design with a more explicit agenda.

It is appropriate to first contextualise my interest in this particular field of study by giving a brief account of my background. I am a lecturer in Early Childhood Studies and have worked as an Early Years Practitioner, teacher and later academic, for over 20 years in the sector. I bring a long-standing interest in professionalism, practice and policy in the ECEC

sector to this enquiry, as well as to the question of how to prepare professionals for practice. My personal, moral and social values cannot be eliminated from influencing the research process, regardless of my ontological and epistemological stance. Moreover, research methods cannot be value free in their execution and planning. Values will, and perhaps should, impact on research, because in doing so we uncover different realities and different perspectives. What I feel is important here is that we make those values explicit within the writing so that the reader has an informed insight into the perspectives and background of the research and can review the research process from a critical stance. This, in turn, makes interpretivist research have internal validity and dependability.

Grix (2010) points out Individuals' underpinning experiences, perspectives, values and beliefs will be reflected in the research paradigm they hold, ultimately impacting on the methodological and ethical stance of the individual piece of research (Grix, 2010). This is not to imply a necessarily conscious determination to impose personal metaphysical and moral beliefs in educational research. As Carr points out, however, any educational research "always involves a commitment to some educational philosophy and hence to the educational values that such a commitment unavoidably entails" (Carr, 1985; p. 1). The multiple identities which I brought to this research inevitably impacted on ways in which I have engaged with the data. In acknowledging this, I have been compelled to question my own interpretations of the data, revisiting the transcripts again in an attempt to find meaning in the identities I was locating. Coen et al., (2007) argue, however, that the idea that truth is knowable, or that by capturing data we can arrive at the truth, is disputable. This is an argument often linked to the philosophical perspective known as interpretivism. When applied to a research context, it must be conceded herein that there are multiple ways of viewing reality, dependant on the researcher's own values and experiences. This position is furthermore ever changing and evolving.

Considering the interpretivistic orientation to this research, it is necessary to resist the claim that the research is neutral (Lather, 2006). I do not approach this research naively, or from a neutral position, despite the rigour applied in the analysis of the data, the scrutiny of my own values and beliefs, and the interrogation of multiple perspectives considered by the theoretical framework. My own interests are and should be evident in the research processes and conclusions. I situated myself as researcher, with acknowledgement that my

readings of the data are not a truth, but one of multiple ways of reading the discourses it reveals.

3.4 The case for an interpretivist approach

An interpretivist approach, using qualitative methods, was utilised in the research design to enrich the study. The reason for that was that it may promote transparency and reflect the subtle distinctions of participant's perspectives (Denscome, 2008). The underlying motivation is that the research may be more robust by combining research methods in order to promote a more nuanced understanding of the human phenomena of professional identity. In doing so, it was anticipated that the diversity of participant's interests, voices and perspectives be represented (Rocco et al., 2003) through the thematic framework of Integral Theory.

The research was designed to provide integrity and validity to the study, triangulation through the utilisation of a combination of data collection methods worked to produce a rich data set. The methods enabled the students to talk about what was important to them in relation to their emerging professionalism, as well as to give them the opportunity to reflect on future training and policy, and to enable the higher education institution to support them as emerging professionals. The typology of professionalism was therefore generated through a synthesis of the findings of the research and differing methods utilised. The students could reveal issues, dimensions and traits through their dialogues and behaviours. It was anticipated that the typology would be distinctive because it came from the professionals themselves. The voices of students needed to be integrated into any perspective of their professionalism, therefore this research prioritised eliciting their voices and the methodology was a key part of this.

3.5 Student voice

Research suggests that to be able to successfully elicit students' and practitioners' voices, the research needs to take place in a supportive environment and discussions should allow time to facilitate reflection and produce insights (Brock, 2012; Moyles, 2001; Hargreaves and Hopper, 2007). I would argue that it is crucial to not only obtain open responses, but to also understand the context in which these responses are acquired. Contextual

knowledge of the sector is, as such, important. The ways in which students themselves perceive their professional identity is central to how they will ultimately function as professionals in a community of practice. This study aims to facilitate an opportunity for student Early Years Teachers to voice their experiences and beliefs, as well as to enable them to reflect on their developing professionalism during key periods of their training on the programme.

The research was undertaken to examine students' own thinking and interpretations of their experiences in their own terms. Students develop and hold understood theories, which are diverse and drawn from various sources of personal and professional experience, academic knowledge, beliefs and values. Brock (2012) points out that these systems of thought are "not clearly articulated or codified by their owners, but are typically inferred and reconstructed by researchers" (Brock, 2012; p. 30). A key objective of this study has been to encourage students themselves to raise their interests and issues regarding identities and the nature of professionalism.

Brock (2012) points out that research on eliciting thinking can be approached from two different positions: either by adopting a theoretical researcher perspective or by adopting a practitioner perspective. This research study will sit in the second category of research. The study will be undertaken to establish students' own understandings, with accounts from their own perspectives. Students develop their own theories, which are most likely diverse and drawn from their personal experience, values and beliefs, together with their accumulated academic understanding. Utilising the Integral Theory approach will facilitate opportunities to investigate these understandings, alongside the meaning created within both the culture and the collective experiences of the individuals involved.

3.6 Methodological framework

I have chosen to utilise Wilber's (2006) Integral Theory for the purpose of this research. Wilber's theory is also known as All Quadrants All Lines (AQAL) or Integral Analysis (Table 3.1), is established in quadrant mapping, which considers a phenomenon from four viewpoints or lenses. These are the Interior Subjective intentional (I) perspective, the

Interior Collective cultural (We) perspective, the Exterior Individual (It), the behavioural perspective and the Exterior Collective (its), the social perspective.

All research seeks evidence and the evidence available within each of the above domains is different. The interior domains of I and we describe that which is valued and experienced by the individual or group and thereby interpreted by the researcher. The exterior domains conversely hold evidence which is observed or described by the inquirer, such as the impact of the policy discourse and political climate within which these young people frame their perceptions of themselves as emerging professionals in the sector.

Table 3.1 (AQAL) Integral Analysis quadrants

	Interior	Exterior
Individual	Upper left **I** (intentional subjective**)** How individual students perceive their own emerging professional identity	Upper Right **It** (behavioural objective) What constitutes professionalism as an Early Years Teacher
Collective	Lower left **We** (cultural intersubjective) Students shared understanding of professional status and respect within the sector	Lower right **Its** (Social inter-objective) The policy, organisations, and regulations which impact on the professional identity of the early years teacher

As Murray (2009) argues, 'Integral Theory' in educational research can be understood as a (meta) model or framework, a methodology, a community, or a stage or phase of human development. The integral approach provides something more profound than the theoretical framework within which to neatly organise reality; it suggests a differing method for approaching knowing, theorising and conceptualising. Wilber naturally describes this approach as:

To integrate, to bring together, to join, to link, to embrace. Not in the sense of uniformity, and not in the sense of ironing out all the wonderful differences, colours, zigs and zags of a rainbow-hued humanity, but in the sense of unity-in diversity, shared commonalities along with our wonderful differences.

(Wilber, 2000; p. 2)

Evidence indicates that students themselves will consider an interface of expectations when establishing their professional identity, including internal and external components. The integral approach requires this type of meta-level perspective on knowledge, method, learning, and doing. At the integral level, students are not only learning about their own identities but are adopting a critical meta-perspective on that professional identity. They are noticing how their own beliefs, assumptions and values fit into the system of developing a professional identity, as it is the confidence that practitioners hold about their capabilities that makes the difference between success and failure (Klassen and Usher 2010).

To gain insight into the phenomena of professional identity; the dynamically unfolding occurrence the research aimed to investigate more deeply, it was first necessary to look at how participants experienced the lived reality, the inside subjective. The research then examined the role that cultural beliefs, practices, and discourses played in the formation of professional identity, and how meanings emerged through the social, the intersubjective. The third perspective revealed how professional identity is played out in reality, and the structure of its various components and their interrelationships, the objective. Finally, the outside-plural perspective, the inter-objective was examined. Here the impact of socio-economic processes and structures in shaping the workforce and the related training mechanisms was disclosed. Davis points out that these four quadrants are not merely perspectives one can take on reality, they are the very dimensions of reality itself (2008).

These dimensions are always present. For instance, all individuals have some form of subjective experience. Equally, individuals always experience exterior physiological components of situations and conditions. In addition, individuals are members of groups or communities. The interiors of these groups and communities are known generally as

intersubjective cultural realities, whereas their exteriors are known as ecological or social systems.

Wilber is not alone in his consideration of the impact of the wider environment on individuals' experiences and meaning making. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1917-2005) contributes the ideas of micro, meso and macro environments as areas of influence on professional identity. Day and Kingston (2008) additionally considered the different domains of influence on the identity development of Early Years Practitioners; their personal life beyond the classroom, their professional life as a teacher and their situated identity, which considers the environment in which the teacher works.

3.7 Research design

The intention of the study was to develop a research design that would permit close attention to the research questions and contribute to ongoing debates in relation to professional identity in the ECEC sector. An apparent shortage of applicants for places on the programme was a catalyst for initiating this research project. With 45 providers across the UK offering EYTS training, there is an expectation that 2.000 recruits will be entering training in 2016. A nationally reported lack of applicants has resulted in many institutions making the decision to close training programmes (Scott, 2016). The net effect is a sector which is facing a shortage of Early Years Teachers at a time when schools are increasingly accommodating younger children and the government is promising a 30-hour child care entitlement for working families. It would then fall upon government and training organisations to consider the most effective way to support these emerging professionals and to consider appropriate training courses which truly meet their developmental needs.

For the reasons above, a largely qualitative approach to data collection seemed appropriate within the context of the phenomena. Students in the research were encouraged to contribute their experiences, accounts and stories through a focus group and on-line bulletin board. At the same time, their interactions and communications were analysed within recordings, videos and texts of students' interactions within the data collection. Common to these approaches is that they revealed how students construct meaning of the world around them. These observations and contributions were

reconstructed and analysed in order to describe and explain the social, cultural and political phenomena of professional identity within the research.

Three data sets were generated for the purpose of this research, and the rationale for each is explained later within this chapter:

- Online bulletin board focus groups conducted with emerging Early Years Teachers
- Diamond ranking exercise conducted with emerging early years teachers
- Analysis of selected key government texts in relation to student responses

A research schedule for collection, analysis of data and subsequent time frames for writing up the thesis was collated (Table 3.2). This schedule indicated relevant tasks and anticipated time frames for collecting, transcribing and analysing the data.

Table 3.2 Research schedule

Task	Resources and Action	Date
Ethical considerations	Compose ethical permission forms and template of ranking activity with sample questions	October 2014
Ethical Review	Submit ethical review request to both Hull and Sheffield ethics committees for consideration. Attach pro formas for permission letters and all appropriate materials for ranking task.	October 2014
Identification of participants	Distribute and collect consent letters	December 2014
Data collection focus group	Bulletin board focus group created on virtual learning environment, students enrolled onto group and necessary control measures put in place to exercise confidentiality	May 2015
Data analysis	Focus group feedback utilised to create questions for ranking activity	July 2015
Data Collection	Ranking activity conducted with students	September 2015
Data collection	Policy analysis commenced	November 2015
Data analysis	Transcripts analysed from Diamond Ranking	November 2015
Writing	Writing of analysis and discussion in respect of research conclusions	January 2016
Submission	Completion of thesis	Summer 2017

3.8 Research ethics

This research project was conducted under the guidance for the ethical conduct of research, obtained from the University of Sheffield Ethics and Integrity Policy in the School of Education. Procedures set out by the guidance facilitate a process which establishes awareness of the highest standards in ethical practice in educational research. It also ensures that any research project conducted in the department considers any ethical issues which may arise during the research process. The School of Education procedures for Ethical Review of Research conform to the British Educational Research Association Guidelines (BERA, 2011). Appropriate ethical review forms were approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (Appendix A).

3.9 Sampling strategies: the participants

The study adopted a purposive sampling method (Berg and Lune, 2012). The purposive sampling approach was chosen because I knew the population most likely to be affected by the phenomena under investigation. The nine EYTS students that were selected to be involved in the study comprised five second year students who had recently completed level 4 of a BA honours degree in Education and Early Years and had chosen to transfer to the EYITT route. Four newly recruited year one students were also selected. I recognise herein that utilising a small sample may be limited in terms of the constituencies, characteristics and diversity it represents. The interpretivist stance of this research acknowledges that researcher bias is inevitable, we are all shaped by our experiences and the environment in which we live. Curtis, Murphy and Shields (2014) point out that the very topic of professional identity chosen for investigation suggests a predisposition to an interest in this area (Curtis et al., 2014). I acknowledge my bias in this research and that it may affect the research process and the choice of participants. Conversely, my experience in the sector, and in particular my relationship with the developing Early Years Professionals concerned, may provide valuable insider expertise to the study. Crucially, this research does not offer broad generalisations to the wider population based on the findings, nor does it represent all EYT's experiences and opinions. The findings may however correspond to other research in the area of professional identity and, in doing so, contribute to new knowledge in the domain. Patton (2002) additionally argues that sample size is dependent on what the research seeks to explain credibly with available time and

resources (Patton, 2002). Creswell (2006) supports this perspective, arguing that a small number of participants are appropriate provided that they have all experienced the lived phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2006). Selecting a purposive sampling technique for nominating the participants, ensured that the study was representative of the population concerned with the research questions. The study, as such, views the participants as illustrative of the particular context of the research, not as representatives for the wider ECEC workforce.

In relation to diversity, it emerged that all nine participants were female. This was unavoidable due to the available sample and is, on reflection, likely to be representative of a highly gendered workforce in the sector (Kay, 2005; Moyles, 2001). Whilst the issue of a largely feminised workforce remains firmly an issue of concern and debate (Moss, 2003; Miller and Cable, 2008), within this research, it is not considered a limiting factor that there are no male respondents. As the sample utilised purposive sampling, the research is bound by the participants that are currently accessing the training and is therefore indicative of programme recruitment patterns in the sector.

3.10 Informed consent

Homan and Bulmer (1982) suggest that by gaining informed consent, we acknowledge that in all circumstances participants are free to choose whether or not to participate in the research process. To do so, participants must be aware of all factors which affect them and their rights within the research process. Curtis, Murphy and Shields (2014) suggest that it is important that the researcher be honest about their identity and the aims of the research so that participants can make an informed decision about their choice to participate. I met with the students prior to commencing the research for this purpose. I explained the research, the purpose and the reason that I had chosen to conduct the research and their potential roles and commitments within the research. This gave students an opportunity to question and clarify my aims and purposes, thereby ensuring that they were in fully informed about their involvement. This information was reiterated in the participant consent form.

Informed consent was obtained from the participants to partake in both the focus group and the online bulletin board data collection methods. This was done through two

separate pieces of correspondence. The first one was a letter detailing background information on the study and how the focus groups would be conducted along with an invitation to participate. Prior to the focus group commencing, written consent was obtained from each member of the group. This information was provided to participants prior to the start of the study and it afforded them with the option to withdraw from the focus group, or from the study at any time, should they wish to do so (Silverman, 2009). All participants who were approached chose to be involved in the focus group and there were no subsequent requests to withdraw from the study at any point. (Appendix B).

All students agreed to participate in the first two weeks of focus group activity. They were split into two groups, one of five students and one of four. A closed forum on the university VLE was created. This allowed only those students participating in the study to access the online focus group bulletin board meetings, announcements and comments. Initially, I posted instructions on the group site, utilising the announcement tool as a vehicle for communicating guidance for participation and again reiterating students' ethical rights to withdraw at any point in the research process.

As the researcher in this study, I was aware that students could perceive that I enacted and participated in relationships of power, compromising neutrality. I was therefore anxious that students understand that any comments made on the focus group or within the ranking exercise were entirely confidential and anonymous. I also wanted to make it clear that there was no extrinsic incentive for participating in the research.

3.11 Rigour: authenticity and integrity

The interpretive approach perceives reality as intersubjective and based on meanings and understandings on social and experiential levels, which is indicative of a relativist ontology. The demand for accountability in educational research can, however, cause incongruence between the choice for evidence-based quantitative research and 'softer' qualitative approaches. Lather (2006) suggests that valuing limited forms of research produces a distorted picture of inquiry into teaching and learning (Lather, 2006). In educational research, however, there are multiple methods and methodologies that are used to develop more detailed and insightful understanding of what it means to be a professional in the ECEC sector. These include grounded theory, ethnography, quasi-experimentation,

phenomenology and systems analysis. Whilst each alone presents an interesting and valid viewpoint, each one is also limited. Davis (2008) points out that to develop a more complete picture of the phenomena to be investigated, we must include multiple perspectives of what it means to teach and learn in the sector, in a critical yet inclusive manner.

Wilber's integrated theory, chosen as the theoretical framework for this investigation, utilises various research perspectives and considers the most appropriate methods and methodologies for determining appropriate research techniques. The research naturally seeks evidence, but what is accepted as evidence within each of Wilber's domains is different. Within the exterior domains, what is accepted as evidence is measurable, describable or observable by the researcher. Within the interior domains, what is considered as evidence is the meaning that the individual or collective makes and is thus interpreted by the researcher.

Table 3.3. Wilber's (2006) domains of enquiry

	Interior What meaning is being made? Interpretive	Exterior What is happening here? Descriptive
Individual	Upper left **I** (Intentions or beliefs) Goal of Inquiry: Truthfulness Inquiry Aim: Understanding	Upper Right **It** (Actions or behaviours) Goal of Inquiry: Propositional truth Inquiry Aim: Explanation, validity, reliability
Collective	Lower left **We** (cultural intersubjective) Goal of inquiry: Impartiality Inquiry Aim: Shared understanding, consensus	Lower right **Its** (Social inter-objective) Goal of inquiry: Functional fit Inquiry Aim: Explanation, prediction, control

In each of the four quadrants, regardless of these being situated in the interior or exterior domains, the researcher can look at evidence from either an interior or exterior perspective. These perspectives are what Wilber (2005) describes as the eight fundamental or indigenous viewpoints (Table 3.3).

The research framework can simply be explained by firstly considering the focus of each quadrant. In the upper left quadrant, the inquiry will view the phenomena from the individual's perspective, as the researcher examines the participants' thinking and experiences in training and practice. This will be achieved through the reflexive exercise of contributing to the online bulletin board focus group. The research will additionally look at participants' sense of meaning making from the 'outside' perspective. Here, I utilised phenomenological research methods, such as the analysis of the dialogue contributed in the focus groups.

In the lower left quadrant, the research considered the culture of which the participants are a part. The focus here was on uncovering participants' shared understanding of professional identity, how that was realised in practice and how they understood the status to be perceived in wider society. This required the utilisation of dialectic methodologies. In this case, the focus group was a particularly useful method. The research also looked at the culture from the 'outside' perspective, utilising opportunities to observe and record linguistic interactions of the participants during their conversations within both the focus group and as part of a diamond ranking activity.

In the upper right quadrant where objectivity is valued, the participants consider how they define professionalism, arranging descriptors in the diamond ranking exercise to define what they considered as valuable in professional practice. For this purpose, the exercise was filmed as well as recorded. This provided accuracy in relation to the choices the students were making during the ranking exercise. Filming the groups' interactions additionally provided information as to participants' more subtle responses, such as body language and facial expression.

In the lower right quadrant, the focus was on the system rather than the participants. For this purpose, data were analysed within the policy context. This was done in order to understand the systems and variables influencing practice. The outside perspective was framed from a more evaluative perspective. Here, the research considered the impact on the sector and on emerging professionals entering practice.

The detail provided in the resultant data from the interrogation of policy, focus groups and ranking exercises, together with the method of analysis, provided generalisability and an appropriate basis for rich data analysis. The interrogation of the data identified discourses, discursive practices and categories. The discursive practices resultant from the data analysis informed and built participants' theories (Silverman, 2009) about their professional identities. These theories have wider resonance as they are identified as enabling research generalisability.

Integral Theory as a theoretical framework is described by some as being "as limited as it is powerful" (Murray, 2009; p. 8). Some of its perceived limitations are because it appears so powerful, which makes the research believe that it represents an accurate picture of reality. In truth, like all models, Integral Theory is one interpretation of reality, and it offers one way to represent the origins of an individual or group of individuals' experiences and understanding. When utilising this method in complex real-life situations, it is evident that there are grey areas alongside its clarity and insightful distinctions, as well as a diversity of opinions about meaning. Murray (2008) points out that the tendency to consider that reality should reflect our constructs instead of the other way around is an ingrained human tendency that is difficult to avoid. (Murray, 2008)

Utilising Integral Theory supports the interpretivist approach of this study, which is associated with the philosophical position of idealism. Idealism rejects the objectivist view that meaning resides within the world independently of consciousness. Integral Theory considers that the emerging views of reality are fixed, but combine symmetry and substance with a variety of lines, quadrants, angles and lenses. This ontological and epistemological consideration of reality within this thesis is therefore transparent and, in keeping with the interpretivist research paradigm, provides an appropriate fit within the study.

3.12 Research methods

a) Focus groups

Focus groups are considered a popular way of collecting data from a group of people in order to determine their attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. Curtis, Murphy and Shields (2014) argue that focus groups have two main advantages. Firstly, more data can be gathered in less time (when compared with interviews). Although time is frustratingly limited when conducting a doctoral study whilst in full time employment, the potential for greater economy in relation to time was not the main motivator for selecting the method. Of greater appeal was the second argument, the notion that the group aspect would provide a potential basis for alternative viewpoints to be shared and debated. This would allow the added value of generating discussion among participants whilst allowing them to critically assess the veracity of their own views.

The focus group approach was selected in this study to provide differing kinds of data on the same issues. This approach allowed for an exploration of what the respondents were actually saying in different contexts and thus enabled triangulation across the study. The methodology is designed to be interpretative and exploratory, as it ascertains and explores the perceptions and issues that the students raised. Considering the data collection methods in relation to the framework of Integral Theory, it is also useful to consider the relationship between the data and the quadrants. Here, the focus is on the left hand quadrants, which consider the meaning-making of the individual or collective, hence the ontology is relativistic.

The focus group method was additionally utilised in this study to generate data in a more socially contextualised forum, one in which students could share their views and experiences. The intention underpinning the introduction of this method was to facilitate a forum in which students' contributions could synergise, refining what they heard others say and focusing on and reframing emergent issues.

The method was furthermore chosen to encourage students to reveal more of their own frames of reference. In doing so, the researcher had less influence than in a one to one interview (Bryman, 2012), reflecting the interpretivist approach. A key objective of this

study was to allow participants to raise their interests and issues so that in this way, the traits of their professionalism could be established. The online bulletin board focus group was indeed considered to allow the researcher less influence than in a one to one interview (Bryman, 2012), again reflecting the interpretivist approach within the study. It was recognised that some members within the groups may be more dominant in the discussions. As the researcher, it was my role to negotiate this scenario, as it was important that every voice in the group was represented. In order to achieve this, I was careful to stimulate further discussion through responding and questioning contributions offered by less vocal members of the group (Appendix E – list of questions posed). Gibbs (1997) points out that the lack of anonymity within the group may additionally contribute to how willing participants are to contribute to the discussion (Gibbs, 1997). Some members of the group may be more confident or assured in their opinions. The participants within the two groups are all familiar with one another, being equal parts of the same cohorts. For this reason, the groups were also arranged in cohort groups on the forum. This, it was anticipated, would allow students to feel comfortable within the groups and thus more willing to contribute and question opinions.

Two focus group forums were created, one for first year students and one for second year students. Segregation of the year groups was deliberate. It was additionally intended to facilitate a clearer understanding of the changing nature of students' perspectives as they progressed through the programme and had further experience working in the sector. Prior to the focus groups publication on the virtual learning environment (VLE), I met with the participants in both groups and explained the purpose of the research and how this would be executed. I showed the students the VLE and explained they would all receive email notifications that the site was live and ready for contributions. Students were then supported with technical instructions and demonstrations of how to utilise the forum.

The bulletin board focus group consisted of a home page on the University virtual learning environment. The site was closed and only accessible to those students who had agreed to be involved in the research. All messages posted were listed by date of posting, appearing in order of most recent posting and showing the discussion thread for each topic. Each question posted by myself to prompt or probe discussion featured as a title. Students were able to read the complete posted message and all replies to it in order of date and time

received. One advantage of this format is that it is easier to follow the thread of discussions than in traditional focus group contexts.

The focus group discussions were unstructured. They provided an open forum to allow students to reflect on and articulate their thoughts at their own pace, as well as to reflect on other students' contributions before replying to postings or initiating their own discussions. During the first three days, I posted questions to stimulate discussion and increase students' confidence to contribute to the bulletin board focus group. Fowell and Levy (1995) found that fear and anxiety initially inhibited and deterred students' acceptance of the online participation: as students' levels of confidence and skills increased, so did their participation (Fowell and Levy, 1995). The remainder of the two weeks I observed and occasionally interjected in discussions between the students.

Students participated in the asynchronous online discussion over the course of two weeks. During this time students could sign in and out as they chose, not necessarily simultaneously. My role in this process was to pose questions and probe responses. A short summary of the previous day's discussion was additionally provided at the start of each day, which highlighted certain aspects of students' responses before posting the next question. In doing so, it was possible to probe and provoke. The purpose of the group was not to reach a consensus of opinion but rather to expose the differing experiences, viewpoints and perspectives of the group (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The bulletin board approach had been selected to enable reflective discussions in ways that are not possible in one to one interviews. Students were allowed time to consider their response, with the intention that this would yield more depth in the contributions they provided (Krueger and Casey, 2000). This approach draws upon the work of Gibbs (2007), who suggests that identifying the dominant discourses which shape students' subjectivities and the ways in which they negotiate those subjectivities within the discourse.

b) Diamond ranking exercise

In ranking exercises, participants are shown a number of written statements and asked to prioritise or order them to stimulate discussion. The subsequent discussion may reveal dimensions of attitudes, experiences or opinions that underpin judgments of where the statements were ranked. Whilst the methodology within this research is principally qualitative, the results of the sorting and prioritising exercise are considered alongside the

considerations behind the decisions made. A diamond ranking exercise was selected for the purpose of this study.

The use of diamond ranking as an educational tool is not new and has been used extensively in schools, particularly in teaching thinking skills within the curriculum (Rockett and Percival; 2002; Clark, 2012). Diamond ranking is not limited to its use as a teaching tool and has also been utilised as a research method. Aspinwall et al. (1992) utilised the method to investigate the management of evaluations in education, and Harkin et al. (2001) used the method to research young people's experiences in post-compulsory education.

The diamond ranking method was selected within the methodology for the study. This was done in order to elicit students' thinking in relation to those traits identified as constituting professionalism in ECEC. It was expected that personal perspectives would be juxtaposed with notions of professionalism as indicated by the standards for EYTS (DFE; 2014) against which students need to demonstrate competence and professionalism during their training. It was also hoped that by encountering these points of conflict and resistance (Osgood, 2006; Brock, 2012) and through their shared dialogues, students would however negotiate meaning and understanding for themselves.

In this study, the arranging of various statements during the diamond ranking activity was intended to facilitate the development of ideas through spatial organisation (see Appendix D), as the participants organised their diamonds. Since participants worked in groups, arranging statements while discussing their relevance was a significant aspect of realising an agreement for ranking. Participants were encouraged to order and re-order the statements in response to their conversations. The intention here was to use diamond ranking, both as a data collection method and as a method to support students' voices by facilitating reflective dialogue between the students.

The exercise asked students to define the characteristics of 'a high-status profession' in terms of ordering nine statements which were drawn from the literature (Chalke, 2013; Dalli, 2008; Brock, 2012) and through responses offered in the online bulletin board focus group. Brock's seven dimensions of professionalism were utilised in particular: knowledge,

education, skills, autonomy, values, ethics and reward (Brock, 2006). Two additional statements were added in response to the data derived from the focus group responses, these related to professional accreditation and professional love.

- Those who have accreditation to practice, belong to a professional body e.g. QTS

- Those who meet a set of competence-based standards successfully e.g. EYT standards

- Those who are awarded power and autonomy in the workplace, they lead others to develop practice

- Those who demonstrate an ethics of care, the ability to engage emotionally with the child and those around the child, e.g. families

- Practitioners who demonstrate professional love, those who are passionate about children and working with children

- Those who demonstrate a wide body of knowledge and the theory of ECEC acquired through formal training and study, e.g. through graduate qualifications

- Ability to work and communicate as part of a multi professional team

- Reflective and reflexive practitioners, those that are capable of higher order thinking in and on practice

- Those who demonstrate the ability to create learning communities characterised by social justice and equality

Ritchie et al., (2014) point out that the design of the ranking materials requires careful planning but may aid expression and refinement of beliefs, revealing boundaries or contingencies of views (Richie et al., 2014). Students working in groups of four and five were asked to rate their levels of agreement with each statement about a 'high-status profession'. Each statement was presented on an individual card and given a short title. The students working together in year groups then sorted and ranked the statements according to their own feelings, thoughts and values of what qualified professional practice. Prior to students embarking on the task, a full explanation was provided on how to use the materials and how the exercise would be recorded.

The students were asked to rank the statements in a diamond formation from most to least important (Figure 3.1). The principles for ranking the statements were generally relaxed. During the guidance for the task, I explained that students could rank the statements by considering which ones they found to be most relevant or important to professional practice and those should be placed at the top of the diamond. The next two most significant would be placed below in equal position, with the next three in equal position at the centre of the diamond. These should represent statements which are of medium significance. The following two statements are equal in their place at the lower half of the diamond, with the final statement below being the one which ranked as the least important in relation to professional practice.
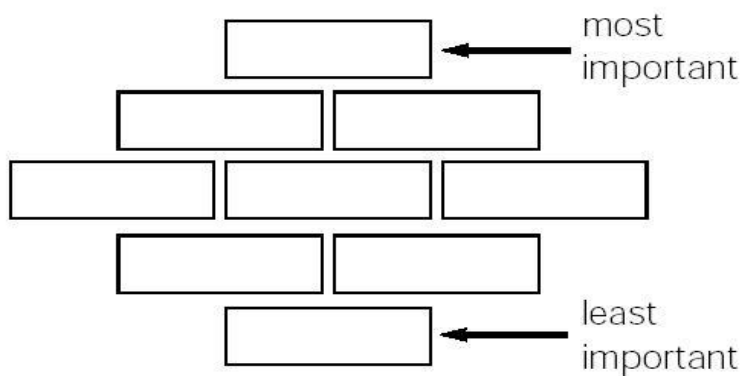
Figure 3.1 Ranking formation

Clarke (2012) points out that the strength of this method is in the idea that when participants rank statements, they are obliged to make explicit the principal relationships by which they organise their understanding, thereby making opinions available for analysis and comparison (Clarke, 2012). The primary purpose of this exercise was not to measure the importance students placed upon each selected statement, but to facilitate discussion of the reasons students made particular choices or priorities. As O'Kane points out:

> Attention to personal style and facilitation skills are essential for while the activities provide a source of data in themselves the dialogue around the activities provides the richer source of interpretation and meaning.

(O' Kane, 2001; p. 151)

The considerations drawn from the resultant data were then utilised to draw out relationships between examples and thus surface underlying constructs. The research sought to provide evidence of what students thought were characteristics of professionalism in early childhood teaching, as well as evidence of unease or tension in their understandings of who they are as professionals, their professed attitudes and values and beliefs. It also sought to provide evidence of the impact of power relations on their aspirations and experiences of training on the EYT programme. These characteristics corresponded broadly with those identified by Warren (2000).

Students' responses were then utilised to gain in-depth knowledge through recording, analysing and interpreting the discussion between them as they deliberated their decisions. The initial intention was to utilise responses from the diamond ranking exercise to inform questions for individual semi-structured interviews. On closer consideration, it is evident that in advocating a relativist approach one would question the validity of such data, which can only ever be a representation of that one single interaction. Miller and Glassner argue that interviews are symbolic interactions, which "does not count the possibility that knowledge of the social world beyond the interaction can be obtained" (2011; p. 133). Adopting an extreme interpretivist position here seems to deny participants the possibility of being able to share their views with the researcher in a meaningful way.

3.13 Analysing the data within the policy context

Policy initiatives in education are supported by guidance and training, through which ideas are legitimised and communicated to the workforce. It is the intention of this study to highlight the relevance of policy making and support students in the trajectory of thinking from their own personal perceptions to the wider political context through consideration of the development and implementation of recent policies across the ECEC sector in England,

It is also the aim of this research to encourage students to become aware of the policy agendas and developments which impact upon future ECEC professionals and more broadly the sector, families and children they will ultimately work with. Students need to

be supported to develop skills of analysis and critical evaluation, to question the link between evidence and the dominant policy discourse in ECE and to consider and reflect on the values and assumptions upon which each policy is based.

In this research, policy analysis itself is the breaking up of a policy problem into its component parts, understanding them, and developing ideas about what to do. Policy cannot be understood as simply text, it must also be recognised as a process. I would argue that within the context of ECEC, relevant policies are situated, interpreted and adjusted in specific ways. Ball (1994) concurs with this argument: there are multiple ways in which policy can be defined and utilised, suggesting that it is both a process and a product. He argues for two versions of policy, policy as text and policy as discourse, both of which are implicit in one another (Ball, 1994).

Ball posits that policy as text is read and interpreted by the reader, and is therefore open to interpretation at various stages in the process of implementation and interpretation (Ball, 1994). He describes this as 'textual interventions into practice' (1994; p. 18). An example of this might be that a practitioner may read and respond to a policy. Whilst doing so, they consider how the policy poses challenges which they must overcome in their practice. In other words, policy is not determining how they work. It is, however, impacting on practice and the potential outcomes of that practice.

Ball suggests that policy discourse, on the other hand, is about what can be said and understood about the policy, who speaks about the policy, when and where they speak, and the power they have to speak. The success of a policy is dependent on who has access to the policy as it is formulated and how the policy is read and interpreted. Individuals can and will impact on the policy through their presence or absence in the process, as well as in their cooperation or non-cooperation at each stage of the process. Ball argues that the social relationships in the policy discourse afford the process power (Ball, 1994). The dynamic of power around policy discourses, works to construct meaning around policies and how they are enacted and understood. Discourses therefore determine practitioners' access to the process in terms of power and opportunity. A collaboration is only a collaboration if all voices are heard. Who gets to speak is, however, often determined by power and status.

Much of the work on early childhood policy stems from, and is motivated by, academic or economic incentives. To ensure that policies have continued bearing and relevance in the sector, it is crucial that those of us working in the training ECEC professionals continue to introduce students to the relevant policy discourses and texts. In keeping with the relativist approach of this study, it was the intention of this research to empower students with the knowledge that their voice would be heard within the research. The study design acknowledges that policies cannot exist without taking account of the exactitudes of the context and the multiple perspectives of those involved. In this way, I hope to challenge students to disrupt current policies which seek to de-limit the professionalism of students and practitioners.

To investigate the policy context of this research, I have chosen to utilise Hyatt's critical policy discourse analysis framework. The frame Hyatt suggests is not an all-encompassing universal tool but rather that it invites researchers to take those aspects of the frame which are useful to the context of individual studies but not constrained by it. The frame comprises of two elements, concerned with contextualising and deconstructing the texts.

The contextualisation element of the frame comprises two parts: the policy levers and the policy drivers. Identifying policy levers and drivers allow us to understand the motivation, values and principles which steer and shape related policies. Steer et al. (2007) suggest that the term 'policy levers' relates to the functional instruments which the state utilises to manage and direct change in public policy and related services (Steer et al., 2007), what Kooiman (2003) refers to as the 'governing instruments.' Often these levers are realised in actions which are intended to change the behaviour of individuals within an organisation (Senge, 1989), including the practitioners, managers and institutions who lead and develop practice. Steer et al. (2007) argue that these actions are not to be thought of as neutral tools, however. When a governing party is selecting which policy levers to use and how they are implemented, they can become "inherently political and not simply rational administrative responses to pre-existing policy problems" (Steer et al., 2007; p. 4).

Policy drivers, on the other hand, define the goals of policy, often articulated through documentation and statements of government priorities. This provides a structure in which policy levers are realised in context, prompting direct responses in the sector and

informing practitioners' approach to practice (Spours et al., 2007; p. 196). Each national policy is translated into local policy, translated by setting managers and later re-interpreted by practitioners themselves within practice. Each of these interactions leads to differing interpretations, becoming at times distorted and even potentially lost in translation (Ball, 1993).

Hyatt suggests that engagement with policy drivers and levers is central to the analysis of policy. The deconstruction, critique and interrogation of policy are, he argues, largely accomplished through language and are therefore discursively meditated. They draw on discourses revolving around the notion of warrant. Warrant, he suggests, is the justification of a determined course of action or belief. Cochran-Smith and Fries, in Hyatt (2013), suggest subdivisions of warrant into three categories. The evidentiary warrant being the establishment of a position based on evidence. The accountability warrant is the grounds for action based on potential outcomes or results and the political warrant is constructed around the notion of policy for the public interest.

The second element of Hyatt's frame is concerned with deconstruction of text and discourse using critical literacy analysis (Hyatt, 2005). Hyatt suggests that the process by which policies are justified to their audience consists of attaching certain values and assumptions which could be termed modes of legitimation. Here, he describes 4 modes which broadly accomplish legitimation. Authorisation, which he suggests lead us to believe that authority is unchallengeable and beyond accountability. Moral evaluation, which appeals to a heritage perspective of education, one in which systems assert control, comparison and measurability of teaching. Rationalisation, which highlights the value of social action, and, lastly, mythopoesis, which describes moral or cautionary tales of the potential outcomes of not pursuing a defined course of action (Hyatt, 2013).

Whilst the above strategies of legitimation are likely to be implicit in policy documents and discourse, Hyatt (2013) suggests that the researcher is likely to observe a combination of the four approaches rather than solely identifying one approach (Hyatt, 2013). In order to identify the dominant discourses, Hyatt (2013) suggests a range of strategies which could be utilised. One such strategy he terms Evaluation. He describes this as the author's or speaker's stance toward propositions he/she is promoting. Evaluation can further be

divided into two further categories, inscribed and evoked. For the purpose of this research, I will utilise evoked evaluation. Evoked evaluation induces judgmental responses in those who subscribe to a particular set of values and dispositions using neutral choices. These evoked evaluations leave the value judgment to the reader or listener and are not overt in the content of the material presented. They are, however, implicit in the way evaluations are formed and constructed. For example, in policy texts which refer to the ECEC workforce agenda, terms such as reform, upskilling and professionalising are used to construct a positive image of the policy agenda. The positive or negative impact of the change is, however, dependent on the circumstances of the individuals and group affected by the policy. Whilst such statements appear to be general descriptive statements, they are in fact representing specific value positions (Hyatt, 2013) and as such are particularly useful tools as drivers of policy.

3.14 Approach to data analysis

Curtis, Murphy and Shields (2014) describe analysis in educational research as a process which involves discovering the layers of meaning within the data (Curtis et al., 2014). The type of analysis the researcher normally selects will be dependent on the type of data collected, qualitative or quantitative. The challenge in this study revolved around finding an analytical approach that would allow the research to fully examine all aspects which impacted on the experience of the participants as individuals and as members of a group. The research sought an analytical approach that was sympathetic to the holistic approach underpinning this research, along with one that would provide a way to create meaning which was reflective of all aspects of the students' experiences.

The utilisation of Integral Theory then became part of the unique contribution of this study. It provided a method to explore professional identities, by thematically recognising four different elements that contribute to the whole picture. The analysis of the four domains allowed for a refining of the original dialogue which was contributed in the focus group and the ranking exercises to highlight key points in relation to the students' emerging professional identities.

It was anticipated that the findings from the interrelated analysis of data across all three methodologies would reveal insights into students' perceptions of professionalism, values,

practice and knowledge. All data were transcribed. The sorting, coding and analysis were undertaken at several levels to form constructs. As Braun and Clark (2006) recommend, initially labels were low inference and descriptive, staying close to the data (Braun and Clark, 2006). The first level of analysis was undertaken through highlighting, making notes and concept mapping to determine the respondents' issues and interests. Hand coding was utilised for this purpose. This allowed me to become familiar with the data and facilitate the formation of codes and themes.

In her study of ECEC professionals, Brock (2012) recommended that in order to determine the strength of the codes across the data sets, it may be useful to utilise computer assisted data analysis software (CAQDAS) in order to redefine the data (Brock, 2012). The Nvivo programme was utilised in this study, though I was resistant to using this software at first, as I was conscious that this might provoke a temptation to quantify data in the sense of frequencies, which would detract from the value of the qualitative research. The purpose of this study was to meaningfully identify attitudes, perceptions and beliefs without the emphasis being centred on enumeration. In relation to thematic analysis, however, a CAQDAS package seemed a useful tool if not confused with an analytical approach. Coffey and Atkinson point out that:

> None of the computer programs will perform automatic data analysis. They will depend on researchers defining for themselves what analytical issues are to be explored, what ideas are important and what modes of representation are most appropriate.

(Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; p. 187)

Nvivo 10 (2012) computer assisted data analysis software was thus employed in the coding and sorting of the data sets. In relation to analysis, I found that although the software was useful for defining, tracking and retrieving relevant aspects of data, the search needed to be coupled with manual scrutiny techniques to thoroughly interrogate the data. Whilst the software allowed me to conduct quick and accurate searches of all instances of key words, the way in which respondents express similar ideas may be realized differently, using different terminology. This might have resulted in thorough data retrieval being difficult.

Once the coding had been conducted, an initial thematic framework was constructed to organise the data. Anderson (2010) points out that having a hierarchical arrangement of themes and sub-themes enables the researcher to hold the overall structure, rather than become lost in a proliferation of more specific labels (Anderson, 2010). A potential five to seven themes were identified. These were reliant on data retrieved through the research process, and more detailed sub-themes were developed. These sub-themes included relevance, value, personal perceptions, external perceptions, ambition and motivation. To achieve this, I chose to utilise the model explorer tool in NVIVO. This was useful for diagrammatically mapping how the themes relate to each other. I found the tool limited, however, in that it was difficult to view the whole picture on a screen. Instead I utilised a large sheet of paper and some sticky notes to allow me to explore the interrelationships of the codes at a glance.

Indexing was then conducted. This was done according to the thematic framework, showing which theme or sub theme was being referred to within particular sections of the data. In doing so, it was possible for interconnection or linkage to be identified for later analysis. I utilised an adapted version of Wilber's Integral Theory, AQAL (All quadrants, line, levels, states and types) as a thematic framework for this purpose. Wilber suggests that a phenomenon can be viewed both internally and externally, as well as individually and collectively. The indexing process was followed by the sorting of material dependant on content, this was then organised into the thematic sets which were then presented on a thematic matrix which effectively illustrates the key findings within the quadrants (See Appendix C).

Once the data had been arranged under descriptive codes and the thematic ideas had emerged from them, I considered if it was necessary to utilise the software to code again with the thematic codes scrutinized. Welsh (2003) suggests that the purpose of this type of analysis would be to ensure that any theoretical ideas which emerged in the first round of coding could be thoroughly evidenced in the data (Welsh, 2003). This, she argues, would ensure that all data relevant to a particular theme are electronically coded together, rather than manually highlighted on paper. I considered that coding the data manually at

this stage was appropriate, however, when considering the size of the data set, which was sufficiently small to see the codes easily on paper without electronically re-coding them. It is thus apparent that combining manual and electronic methods was appropriate to this study and utilised a time-effective approach to data management.

3.15 Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 has formulated the theoretical and methodological design for this thesis. In this chapter, I have outlined the theoretical framework that underpins this research. Integral Theory (Wilber, 2006) provided the framework in which I organised these concepts which were revealed by the data. It also determined my approach to data construction and data analysis. Wilber's integral analysis model includes four quadrants, or 8 zones, indicating developmental levels and 4 primary states. The framework of integral analysis falls into an interpretivist or relativist perspective, one which investigates the phenomena of professional identity, which is dependent upon the individual lens through which it is viewed.

This chapter has defined key research questions and indicated the data collection methods I utilised. Throughout this process, I have come to understand something of the challenge and complexity of using Integral analysis as a tool. I consider utilising this methodological tool positively, as the approach enables the investigation of whole phenomena. Its complexity meant that the research literature does not highlight one perspective or way to approach the investigation, but rather views the questions posed holistically, which encouraged students and researcher to draw on information from all angles to justify their position. The following chapter focuses on data analysis. I am mindful of the need to continue this explanation as I begin to present the findings from the analysis.

Chapter 4

Results and analysis

4.1 Approach to presentation of findings from qualitative analysis

This section presents the findings from the qualitative analysis of the online bulletin board focus group. A description of how the focus groups were conducted and analysed is presented in the methodology chapter. It is noted that an inductive coding of transcripts was carried out whilst considering the research questions. Integral analysis provided a useful framework for organising information in relation to the four main elements which impact on the phenomena of professional identity in ECEC.

The analysis additionally includes data located in the policy document *More Great Childcare* (2013). Fulcher (1989) points out that policy has the power to influence the beliefs and behaviours of individuals, and as such, provide a valuable insight into current discourses which may impact on professional identity. *More Great Childcare* (2013) is a document which, at the time of data collection, was pivotal in creating the political landscape which impacted on professional qualifications in the ECEC sector, particularly in EYT.

Inductive coding resulted in the identification of five main themes, through which the findings are presented. The themes that are presented are those that arose from the data and relate to the original research questions. Key points raised by the students as a result of their discussions and debates were analysed and organised within the five initial themes of motivation, ambition, value, internal perceptions and external perceptions. The theme of motivation reflected students' comments as to their initial choice to embark upon training and the value they placed upon this training. The theme of ambitions and aspirations considered the goals and objectives of participants in relation to the qualification, and where they perceived the qualification may lead professionally and personally. The third theme of value examined the significance of the training route, qualification and associated status. The final two themes of perception related to both internal and external perceptions of EYITT, how the qualification was regarded by the

students themselves, and how they thought it was regarded externally by employers, parents, government and public.

The research approached the complexities of professional identity by seeking meaning through the consideration of the above identified themes. The research additionally considered the questions shaping the inquiry through the lens of integral analysis. Integral Theory considers the phenomena through domains of inquiry and each domain is different (Table 3.3). For the subjective and intersubjective inquiry of the left-hand quadrant, questions of interest concentrated on what meaning was being made by either the individual or the collective. The left-hand quadrants emphasised developing subjective meaning of the individual, group or community and therefore used more interpretive methodologies.

For objective and inter-objective inquiry in the right-hand columns of the quadrant, the questions focused on either the individual 'It' and the behaviour of the phenomena or of the collective 'Its', the system in which the phenomena operates. The right-hand quadrants focused largely on developing objective measures of the individual or collective, therefore it used a more descriptive approach to data collection, looking at the societal and political concepts which impact on the construction of professional identity in the sector.

The following sub-sections examine the evidence related to each theme. The evidence will be considered from each lens. It is recognised that the evidence cannot and should not sit neatly within one quadrant. Integral analysis is described as a meta-model which may hold a comprehensive collection of understandings, principles and beliefs related to education, allowing them to be compared and positioned in a larger meta-theoretical context. Murray (2009) describes Integral analysis as "the kitchen sink into which all of these ideas are thrown" (Murray, 2009, p. 27). This allows for them to be conceptually clarified and organised. Some data may be collected together so as to understand the emotional or internal mental capacities, understanding and development of "mental, emotional, or spiritual capacities" (Murray, 2009, p. 27). These data will be analysed in the domain of the upper left quadrant, the 'I'. A second domain will consider the collective experience, the community. These data will be analysed in the domain of the lower left quadrant, the 'we'.

A third domain will provide an area for the analysis of physical embodiment of the phenomena, the reality in which it exists, termed the 'it'. This will be considered in the upper right quadrant. The fourth quadrant will allow the phenomena to be considered with regard to the impact of the political and social situation in which it exists, the 'its'. These data will be examined in the domain of the lower right quadrant. Integral analysis allows for overlap among systems, including individuals, groups and society as the quadrants interrelate (Figure 4.1). The I, We, It and It's of the system 'tetra emerge' (Murray, 2009; p. 27) which means that they grow simultaneously. The four-quadrant tool can be utilised to consider all aspects of professional identity and the interrelatedness of the phenomena. The arrows in figure 4.1 illustrate the manner in which information may be represented and considered within and among the quadrants, allowing the complexity phenomena to be viewed through each lens, this adds a dynamic complexity to the insights revealed. In doing so, it is possible to discover how individuals can work together to determine what may be most true for them about the particular context, it could thereby claim to include an epistemology as well as an ontology.

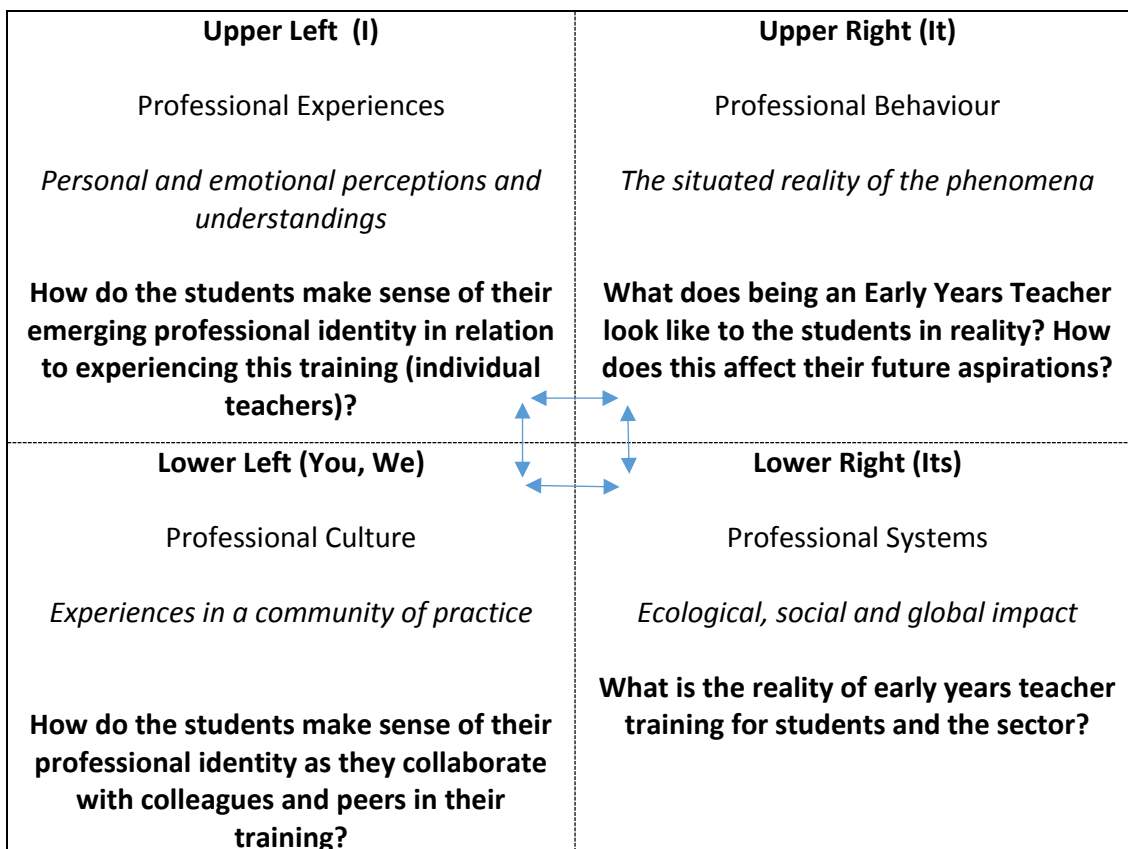| Upper Left (I)	Upper Right (It)
Professional Experiences	Professional Behaviour
Personal and emotional perceptions and understandings	*The situated reality of the phenomena*
How do the students make sense of their emerging professional identity in relation to experiencing this training (individual teachers)?	**What does being an Early Years Teacher look like to the students in reality? How does this affect their future aspirations?**
Lower Left (You, We)	Lower Right (Its)
Professional Culture	Professional Systems
Experiences in a community of practice	*Ecological, social and global impact*
How do the students make sense of their professional identity as they collaborate with colleagues and peers in their training?	**What is the reality of early years teacher training for students and the sector?**

Figure 4.1. The four-quadrant tool

Subsequent discussion and links to established discourses related to professional identity in the early years workforce will be presented in Chapter 5.

4.2 Presentation and analysis of findings

4.2 a - Theme 1 - Motivation

I

This section begins with analysis within the upper left quadrant. It is apparent that inquiry can be viewed from the individual's perspective as the participants examine their own thinking and experiences. The data here clearly indicates that all the participants had a strong desire to work in a professional context with children and their families. They reported that this was the main driver for choosing the programme. Nadine, a second year EYTS trainee, epitomises these ambitions in her comment, stating

> "When I discovered that the Teacher Training was being offered alongside the degree to suitable candidates, I was extremely interested as I wanted to gain experience in early years settings and work towards a future career working with young children."

It should be noted that the candidates in this study were previously studying on the BA (Hons) Education and Early Years when the opportunity arose to transfer to the newly introduced Early Years Teacher pathway. The students discussed their reasons for choosing to transfer to the programme in the focus group activity. In these contributions to the data, the students identified the opportunity to gain extra placement experience as a motivator for joining the programme.

> I chose to transfer from the Education and Early Years course to the EYITT as I want to become an Early Years Teacher and the course allows us to gain more experience while being on placement. (Lisa, EYTS Third year trainee)

Annie, a third year EYT trainee, further acknowledged how she perceived the EYT programme to present an opportunity to experience work placements alongside studying the theoretical knowledge which underpins that practice. This indicates a relationship between students' perceptions of professional identity as one which views professional

practice as being strongly linked to the acquisition of knowledge, as discussed by Brock (2012).

> I chose to transfer to the EYITT because I decided I wanted to work with early years and I liked the thought of having placement and learning theory alongside practice.

Lloyd and Hallet, (2010) discuss the importance of a particular knowledge base as a marker for professional identity (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010). Students in this study were keen to argue the importance of qualifications to their emerging perceptions of themselves as professionals. This concept became evident in the ranking exercise. Here, students deliberated over the ranking positions of the statements, in particular the qualifications and accreditation traits which featured highly in their conversations. The training and knowledge accessed on the degree programme focussed highly in this discussion. Gina, a second year EYT, argued in defence of her wish to move the statement related to gaining a relevant degree level qualification:

> Really I'd say that I'm thinking it's more important.... because you can't even get on to the QTS without a degree, this is more important to us now (pointing towards the degree related statement)

Flora, a third-year trainee, concurred, stating:

> If you were putting your child somewhere, I'd like to know they had passion but I'd like to know they had the qualifications because then I'd know they had knowledge.

Both groups of students placed the trait related to qualifications and knowledge in second place in the ranking exercise. This demonstrated that this was an important feature of professional identity for them.

We

In the lower left quadrant, the intersubjective domain of 'We', participants discuss the culture or collective of which they are a part. In this domain, participants focused on developing shared understanding (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

In their discussions, participants began to discuss passion as a motivation for working in the sector. Students in this study indicated that they regard passion as a prerequisite of professional practice, as Flora, a third-year trainee, stated: "Going and getting a degree in early years you've got to have the passion to begin with to push you into it".

Whilst this term was not introduced as a trait in the ranking exercise, the word was introduced in relation to a discussion related to professional love. As Annie considered the ranking order of the statement, she added "I don't know… how can you provide a service that provides care when you are not passionate yourself? Do you know what I mean?"

The notion of passion as a trait of professionalism caused much debate amongst the students. Students viewed passion for the role as an essential for anyone working in the sector, a foundation upon which professional practice is built. Kathryn, a third year EYT trainee, stated:

> We need to look at it as what is the least we expect, they shouldn't be there if they don't love children and then they work as a team, a professional team who love children.

The students' contributions in this study ultimately indicated that whilst love and care were important, for them it was a starting point for professional practice and not a definer. As Flora pointed out, "I think it's an attribute but whether you would deem a professional just for having the passion… I don't know"

Students' reference to vocational passion has been well documented (Moyles, 2001; Cooke and Lawson, 2008, Harwood et al., 2013). Studies clearly indicate that notions of care and nurturing are considered an important aspect of the professional work undertaken by professional early childhood practitioners (Osgood, 2012).

It

In the upper right quadrant of 'it', I examine the theme of motivation again. This time the data here analysed considering the actions and behaviours related to reasons that students chose the training programme. What did the students believe they would gain

from the programme, what were their future aspirations and how did these relate to the early years teacher programme?

The EYT programme, as communicated by the DFE (2013), is designed to prepare students for professional working in the ECEC workforce. At point of entry, all students, with the exception of two, commented that they had not considered QTS as a training route appropriate to their aspirations. They felt that EYTS was sufficient. Kathryn, a third-year trainee, considered the EYT programme as a means to develop her knowledge. For her, the training had no predefined outcome in relation to her career aspirations, as she states:

> My reasoning for choosing the EYITT programme over my initial BA in Education and Early Years, was to continue to evolve my CV and experience. When I choose the Early Years and Education degree I was not only choosing something that I was interested in studying for personal reasons but also by identifying the gap in my knowledge base with Children and Young People. I see this as a way of broadening my knowledge rather than as a career move. I never thought I wanted to become a teacher and the longer I continue through the course and the more placements I do it confirms my thoughts

This narrative demonstrates how important the value of acquiring knowledge through qualifications is to Kathryn. This evidence has featured significantly in similar studies related to the professionalisation agenda (Chalke, 2015; Brock, 2012). The reason that Kathryn chose to transfer to the programme could be described as external motivation, a desire to make herself more attractive to employers and enable greater mobility within her career. Kathryn, however, explains how this external motivation translated to the internal motivation to develop on a personal and individual level, to develop new understanding and confidence. For Kathryn, her understanding of what the programme could offer her personally prevented her study from becoming about performativity and related more implicitly to her personal and professional identity, a transformative process.

Other participants who were ultimately considering primary education as a career chose the programme to widen the age range they were qualified to teach. Tess, a third year EYT trainee, demonstrates this in her response:

I chose EYITT as I knew that I wanted to be a teacher with children in this particular age range once my degree was complete. With this being a brand new course, I felt that I should take up the opportunity to experience what this course had to offer additionally to the one that I was previously studying. Admittedly, the fact that this means that if i wanted too I could finish after three years instead of having to do an extra year on top of my degree was appealing to me, however I feel that at the end of this I would like to do my PGCE to ensure that if maybe later in life i wished to teach children of six or seven years old, that I would be able to do so without needing to then go back into education in years to come.

Tess articulated what appears to be a widely-held awareness amongst the participants that the EYITT programme delivers limitations in relation to the age range within which she can practice. This concern was expressed by all nine participants, who echoed Tess's awareness of the inequality experienced by Early Years Teachers in relation to their potential careers and the teaching responsibilities that EYTs may assume. As Annie illustrates in her response on the online bulletin board focus group:

I completely agree with Kathryn saying about how a student from a non-educational background can teach all age groups just from one year of PGCE, yet us who are on EYITT would still have to do a PGCE. I definitely want to do my PGCE so I have that age range, it would be good if the EYITT covered Key Stage 1

Participants further indicated in their discussions that they felt that the lack of parity in terms of pay and entitlement to lead within the maintained sector discouraged students from joining the programme and from choosing to use the qualification and professional status to practice. As Janine, a Year 2 trainee stated:

In my opinion, the EYITT programme is designed to train you professionally to teach early years and trainees should be treated equally to those who have gained QTS through another form of teacher training.

Frustrations in relation to the status of EYITT featured regularly in the students' dialogue, both in the forum and in the ranking exercise, with the third-year group ranking professional accreditation to practice as second and the second-year group ranking it third as an indicator of professional identity.

Its

In the lower right quadrant, the focus is on the system and how this motivates and influences the participants rather than the individuals. Whilst there is some overlap in relation to the data analysed in this section and that of the upper right-hand section of 'it', it should be noted that all quadrants should and do allow for overlap. Factors impacting on professional identity are multi-faceted and as such cannot be analysed in discreet sections.

Within this section, it is necessary to revisit the perceived inequalities described by the students in relation to entitlements offered by the qualification. Discussions conducted during the online focus group indicated that participants were fully aware of the limitations and opportunities offered by choosing the pathway. The programme, whilst offering a professional status, grants little opportunity for progression in the maintained sector in relation to access to the main pay scale or in terms of career development. This is despite the *More Great Childcare* (2014) document stating; "Early Years Teacher Status will be seen as the equivalent to QTS, therefore entry requirements to Early Years Teacher training courses should reflect this" (2014, p. 27). In its response to Nutbrown's (2012) recommendation that the award of QTS to be conferred on trainees at the end of their training, this document states unequivocally "We do not, however, consider a route to the award of QTS is necessary" (2014, p. 44). Here, the document explicitly contradicts its claim of equivalency, because without the qualified status, students will have no opportunity to secure payment on the main pay scale or to achieve equivalent opportunities for promotion in the maintained sector. Students in this study do acknowledge these limitations, yet they state that they chose the programme to increase their experience of working with the full age range from birth to five. Indeed, eight of the nine participants stated an interest in potentially following their degree programme with a Postgraduate Certificate in Education, allowing them to teach the full primary age range.

During the discussion in the diamond ranking exercise, students discussed the factors which they considered reflected professional roles in the sector. The focus at this point turned to their observations of the types of practice in which the more qualified staff members were involved. Students here began to express concern that the role of the EYT may ultimately be one who is limited in their direct contact with the children, evidenced below in the extract from the discussion during the ranking exercise:

> **Flora:** Yeah how many of the managers are on the floor? They are in the offices, doing the planning.
> **Tess:** From my experience I've never seen any of my managers on the floor!
> **Kathryn**: No because you need someone…there is so much stuff. You are developing so much, the staff team, the environment, and the resources. You need someone to be doing that.

The participants in this discussion are identifying concerns that training to work as the lead professional in the non-maintained setting may actually preclude opportunities to work directly with the children, the very reason they chose the pathway initially. Similar concerns were identified by participants in a study by Cooke and Lawton (2008), who suggested that such fears served as a demotivating factor in the professional development of early years professionals. Students in this thesis and, in particular in the excerpt above, acknowledged the multifaceted skills inherent in the professional role, such as developing the curriculum, learning environment and resources. Whilst students recognised that the role may preclude opportunities for direct contact with children, this was considered by participants as a feature of the role which would prevent the role being regarded as professional. This, however, did not deter them from following the pathway.

4.2b - Theme 2 - Ambition

This category of analysis is most closely aligned to the left side of the quadrant, the inner aspects of both the individual and collective, consciousness and subjectivity. In particular investigations in this domain fall within the upper left quadrant of the intentional subjective, the 'I', interior meaning making.

I

All participants, with the exception of one, stated that at the end of their studies they would embark on a post-graduate teaching training programme to gain qualified teacher status. As Janine, a second year EYT trainee, stated:

> I am hoping that at the end of this course I will be able to go into employment teaching young children in early years settings, particularly foundation stage, if needed I will complete some postgraduate teacher training in order to gain teacher status.

The decision to gain qualified teacher status by Janine and her fellow participants appeared one which was premeditated, rather than in response to their experiences on the training programme. Participants on the pathway saw the qualification as a way to broaden the age range they were working with and gain equal opportunities to their QTS counterparts. As Lucy, a second-year participant, pointed out:

> I thought that if I did this programme and then a PGCE it would broaden the age range of children (0-11) that I would be able teach, instead of just doing a primary education degree.

This view seemed to be one shared by the majority of the group. Whilst the students expressed a desire to work with the age range 0 to 5, their ambitions for future practice lay in the maintained sector. A PGCE was reported as the most likely pathway for realising their ambitions after graduation. Students, however, unanimously agreed that the further qualification would be unnecessary if opportunities to practice were equal to that of an individual holding qualified teacher status.

We

Through their discussions the students sought to explain and define their ambitions. This revealed beliefs held by the group in relation to the professional identity of early childhood teachers. The information which leads to these conclusions relates to their own personal experiences and largely to the discourse of qualifications and professional accreditation.

Whilst students recognised the power and status afforded by titles of qualifications, they strongly resisted the assumption that the Early Years Teacher is less qualified or less able to practice professionally in the sector than their QTS counterparts. They recognised the difference only in relation to opportunities and rewards offered by the titles. Kathryn explained her frustrations, stating:

> Personally, I think that the title of QTS is over rated in some respects. For someone who has studied a 3 year degree in Education or child development etc. then gaining a QTS in the year (PGCE) is an appropriate step to take. However, for

> those who study any other degree and then take 1 year to gain a QTS with no other background in children and education is ridiculous

Kathryn's focus on 'more knowledge' positioned the Early Years Teacher programme as more relevant to her ambitions, and of more value to the sector than an unrelated degree qualification supported by a post-graduate teaching certificate. Here Kathryn was positioning the knowledge gained on the EYT training route as central to her identification of herself as an early childhood professional. She is additionally arguing that the lack of recognition for this knowledge and understanding is actively diminishing the value placed on the work of professionals in the sector and the opportunities open to Early Years Teachers. Kathryn was not alone with her frustrations related to the situation, as Annie shares her analysis of the situation, commenting:

> A day class in safeguarding or 3 classes on how to teach maths just doesn't compute. Compare that to our degree, or any educational degree which gives a full understanding of child development and theories on learning, which is paramount when working and teaching children. It's no wonder that teaching has such a huge fall out as they are going in unprepared.

As qualified early childhood teachers who hold a professional qualification, Kathryn and Annie want to establish status that positions them and the work they do as valuable and important. Both Kathryn and Annie describe a ranking that exists between QTS and EYTS, what Osgood (2012) describes as a 'two-tier' system of ECEC, engendered to some extent through qualifications which result in Early Years Teachers being precluded from work in the maintained sector. This, they argue, forces professionals out of the profession and gives EYTs no choice but to train to work in the primary sector. They must do this in order to gain equality in conditions of service and career opportunities with their QTS counterparts. This perspective is illustrated here by a comment by Tess, a third-year trainee, in relation to future ambitions:

> I know of some people who wish to do the PGCE to ensure they would be paid for being a qualified teacher rather than the lower pay that an employer may wish to give to give an individual that has achieved EYITT

Once again, in the extract above, there is evidence that Tess considers an early years teacher's professional identity in the workplace to be defined according to discourses related to position and worth. Status in this extract affords the individual extrinsic rewards in relation to pay and autonomy. Yet throughout the focus group discussions, an emphasis on remuneration did not feature significantly, with references to pay and money spoken briefly: only five times across the focus groups. This indicates that although the students were aware of the disparity, at this point in their training their potential salaries after graduation did not impact significantly on their emerging professional identity.

It

Students' responses strongly indicated a degree of frustration with the title of the qualification. Students considered that the differing title illustrated the different status given to the profession. Nadine, a second year EYT trainee, illustrated this in her comment "You can get a QTS in Primary or QTS Secondary or indeed a QTS for Early Years 3-7. So a different title only suggests that it is different in its quality".

The award of Early Years Teacher Status (EYT), created following the Nutbrown report (2012) to replace the existing EYPS, placed a focus on the creation of a new status. The new route, it was suggested, would focus on building more parity with teachers holding QTS, in addition to increasing professionalism within the sector. Students in this study, however, regarded the title of the qualification to be one of the most significant contributors to their emerging professional identity. A total of fourteen references were made to the title of the qualification in the focus group discussion, which was the most debated theme to emerge from the groups. Students were largely unanimous that the award should carry the word 'qualified' in its title. This is illustrated here by an excerpt from Janine, a second-year trainee, who argued:

> More that it should be the same qualification at the end... for example you can get a QTS in Primary or a QTS in Secondary, why make it an EYT? It should still be a QTS with specialism in Early Years, just like the others are.

Only one student suggested that the title of 'qualified teacher' was unnecessary: her comments, which were expressed in the ranking exercise discussion, rejected the idea of the professional in early years contexts as the teacher. Lucy, a second-year trainee,

debated strongly with the rest of the group as to the positioning of the statement related to QTS, arguing:

> See I don't think it's important in terms of early years though, teaching focuses on slightly older children and it's not about early years. Its more play free play and less about academic things more creative things when it's early years… yeah.

For Lucy, the title of the qualification was important, yet her focus centred on the title being a true reflection of the role and the values and beliefs which she held in relation to that role. Lucy saw the role of the Early Years Teacher as one with specialist knowledge and skills, which to her were unrelated to 'teaching'. By producing the EYT as a 'specialist' with expert knowledge, Lucy was enabling her professional identity to be constituted as more important and relevant to role for which she was training (Sachs, 2001).

Its

In making sense of their professional identity, the students expressed concerns in relation to the currency of their professional qualification. They concluded in their responses that EYT carried less value than its QTS counterpart. When engaged in discussion in the focus group, students expressed frustration at what they reported as an incongruous and inequitable system of qualifications. One such example related to the age range within which the qualification entitled the bearer to work. Students indicated that they recognised that the qualification and related training of EYITT entails developing a great deal of specialist knowledge in relation to working with the youngest children. They also recognised that they are then precluded from working with older children, in particular, Key Stage 1. Students were confused as to the inconsistent standards applied to opportunities to work with children across the age ranges, pointing out that primary teachers could work across the whole of the age range from Foundation Stage to Key Stage Two. This is illustrated here in a comment by Kathryn, a third-year trainee.

> As a student on a PGCE they can do the majority of their "class time" in say a year 6 class and a day in a Foundation or Key Stage 1 class and the at the end be able to teach that age group. So why should this be different and more of an uphill struggle for someone on an EYITT?

In this contribution Kathryn uses the phrase 'uphill struggle', which indicates her frustration at the juxtaposition between the entitlement to teach of the QTS and EYTS

training pathways. Students' reflections and contributions in both the focus group and during the ranking activity indicated that they unanimously perceived that their entitlement to practice would be limited without the additional training needed to award the 'qualified' title to their teaching status.

The perception that the qualification of EYT offered less opportunities to practice also appeared to impact on the intrinsic value they themselves placed on the qualification. The students particularly seemed dismissive of the relevance of the standards to their future opportunities and indicated that the standards of EYT were not regarded as important in forming their professional identity. The two student groups during the ranking activity rejected the statement related to meeting the standards of EYT (Figure 4.2 and 4.3), ranking it as the lowest indicator of professional identity by Year 2 students. It was in the lower two statements by Year 3.
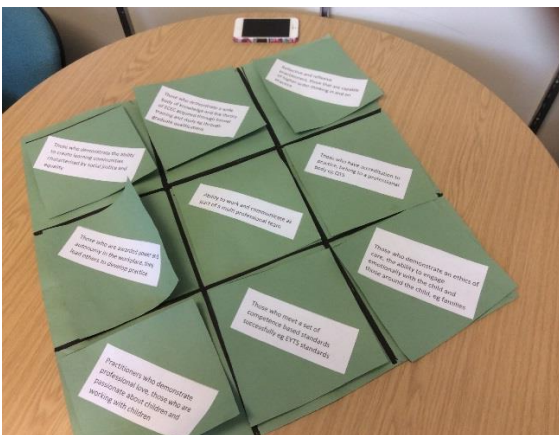

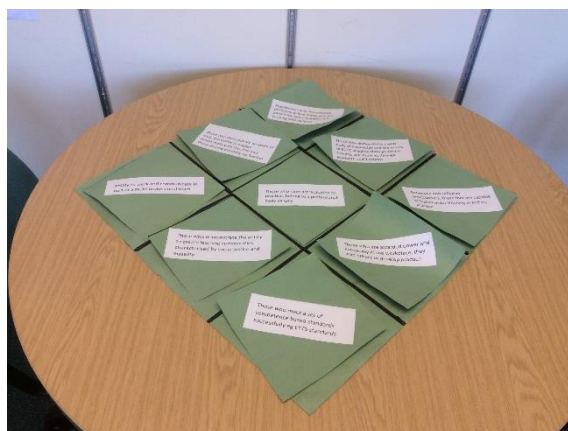**Figure 4.2** Year 3 EYT trainees' ranking of statements

Figure 4.3 Year 2 EYT trainees' ranking of statements

In the narrative presented in the *More Great Childcare* (2014) document, it is clear that standards are considered an important element involved in the professional identity of the workforce, as the document states:

> We will start training the first Early Years Teachers from September 2013. We will improve the existing standards for Early Years Professionals so that they more closely match the Teaching Standards for classroom teachers.
>
> (DFE, 2014; p. 27)

What is interesting to note here is inference to a deficit image of the Early Years Professional. Including the word 'improve' suggests that, by correlating the standards of EYPS to that of the teaching standards, the professional training and preparation of practitioners will be enhanced. This could indicate a government which is prioritising the skills and knowledge represented in a teacher in order to define what constitutes professional practice in the ECEC sector. In addition the above extract may also be symptom of an early years agenda which is more closely linked to curriculum delivery and the current emphasis on 'schoolification' in the sector (Moss, 2010).

The standards of EYT were discussed by both groups during the ranking exercise. Whilst acknowledged as an accepted necessity for successful completion of training, they were not accepted as an element which indicated professional practice. Annie, a third-year trainee, illustrates this belief in the ranking exercise discussion, as she holds the statement card related to the standards of EYT. "That's just ticking boxes, isn't it?'' Although the actual value of the standards is questioned in this statement, Annie is acknowledging the necessity to comply with them, seeing them as imposed by the awarding powers. The view that standards encourage an understanding of professionalism which sees professional practice as one which expects a trainee to meet an external set of criteria is one shared by Osgood (2010). Osgood argues that such training reflects a "neo liberal, technicist approach" (Osgood, 2010, p. 120)*. Flora concurred with Annie's conclusion. Pointing to the statement related to professional accreditation and QTS, she states "Actually that" (pointing to QTS statement) "I would value more than that" (EYT standards statement). In this reflection, Flora appears to be expressing further frustration at the marginalisation of

EYT in favour of QTS. This suggests that the title QTS for her would reinforce her own professional identity as a teacher.

4.2c - Theme 3 – Value

I

Students' discussions demonstrated that they consider that the training they experience on the programme allows for them to develop skills and understandings which contribute to their professional identity. Students report that they value their training from a personal perspective, they see its relevance and the contribution it makes. Gina, a second year EYT trainee, described her experiences on the programme and how those experiences had impacted on her developing identity as an emerging early years professional:

> I feel that the EYT programme does prepare you for the work as an early years teacher. The tasks which we carry out contain elements seen in teacher practice. The range of placements allow you to see a variety of different practices carried out with different age groups and abilities enabling you to take on your own professional identity.

The extract above, taken from the online bulletin board focus group, demonstrates how Gina values the opportunity to engage in the practical contexts offered by the programme. She states that these opportunities will allow her to develop her identity as a teacher. This finding concurs with research by Hadfield et al. (2012) which investigated the impact of the predecessor to EYTS, EYPS, and revealed that 85% of participants in their study felt that the training had positively impacted on their professional identity. (Hadfield et al., 2012)

Students stated that the qualification endorsed them as practitioners and allowed them to become respected members of the profession. This is illustrated in Kathryn's comment:

> It wouldn't matter to me but I know that before I had 20 years' experience but now I'm getting this degree a load more doors are opening just because I have a degree.

The connection between professional identity and gaining qualifications is widely documented (Wild and Street, 2013; O Keefe and Tait, 2004; Gibson, 2013; Stone, 2016).

Both groups of students ranked the statement related to qualifications as second in the ranking exercise, indicating the relevance of higher levels of qualifications to the development of professional identity. Conversations recorded during the ranking exercise indicated that the students involved in the study valued the actual degree level qualification above the professional status which accompanied it. Janine, a second-year trainee, illustrated this as she reflected on the positioning of the statement related to gaining knowledge through qualifications: "Really I'd say that I'm thinking it's more important.... because you can't get on to the QTS without a degree, this is more important to us now".

In this statement, Janine demonstrated her conviction that her current experience with formal learning was underpinning her opportunities for professional development. Janine considers that the degree qualification is pivotal to her in realising those ambitions, in terms of her developing professional identity, as well as in terms of the reality of her experiences at that particular point in time, . These findings concur with the findings of Manning Morton (2006), who found that the knowledge gained through qualifications underpins practitioners' positioning of themselves as professionals in the sector. (Manning Morton, 2006)

We

The students considered the value of the programme as a community of practice and reflected on the impact of a teacher in the setting and the value they could bring to the sector. This caused some debate amongst the groups, particularly in the ranking exercise. There were discussions where students wrestled with the notion of privileging knowledge over passion and caring. The second-year trainees reacted with very different responses to the exercise and demonstrated greater value for the emotional aspects of practice in the ranking of their statements, placing passion as the first indicator of professional practice, closely followed by an ethics of care, side by side with knowledge, through qualifications as ranking in second place.
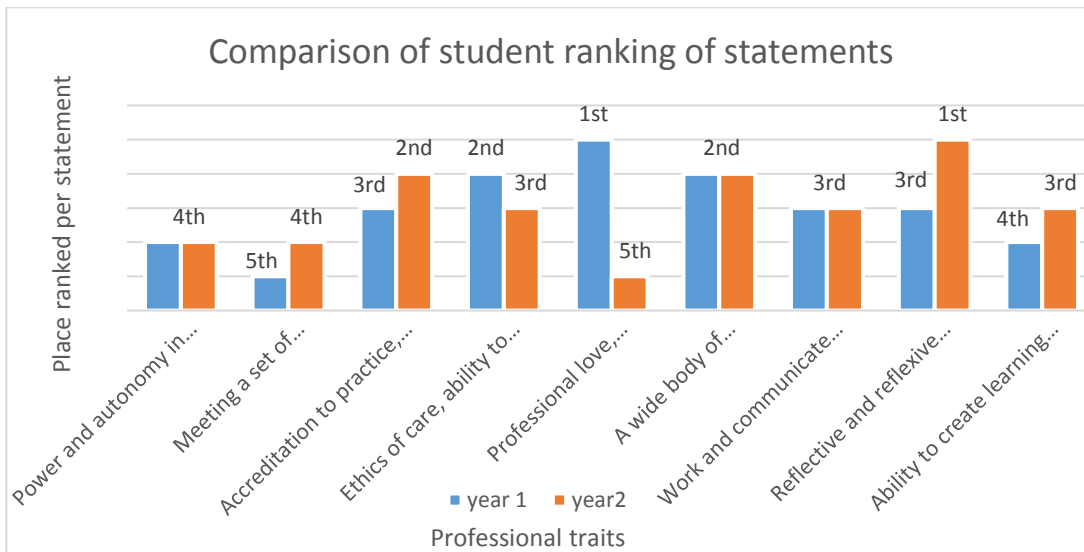
Figure 4.4. Chart illustrating comparative data from diamond ranking exercise

The second-year group of students settled on the unanimous decision to place professional love at the top of the ranking order with very little debate. Love and caring is articulated in much of the literature as a significant quality for individuals who work in the early childhood sector (Moyles, 2010; Page, 2011). These finding, to some degree, conflict with the findings of Chalke (2015), who suggests that students who may be new to practice could be less conversant with the notion of an assimilation of feelings and knowledge as a trait of professional practice. This suggests that more experienced practitioners may place greater value on such skills.

The third-year group, however, placed far greater value on the academic aspects of professional practice. This group privileged thinking skills, knowledge and recognition of professional accreditation over the more emotional aspects or professional practice. The third-year group ranked reflective/reflexive thinking as the highest indicator of professional practice, placing qualifications and accreditation in second place. Flora explained this thinking as she stated: "I would rather have a graduate who really knew about kids and how they learn over a level two who has the passion but maybe doesn't really know about them".

On analysis of the discussion, the students appeared to consider that passion and caring as a distinguishing trait for professional practice in the sector diminishes the value and importance of the work they do. For these students, the notion of 'care' as a qualifier for professional practice suggests that it is a role which can be conducted by practitioners at all levels. This reality would not require that the students study at degree level. It is, as such, one which renders EYT an unnecessary programme of study. By ranking the thinking and knowledge-based traits more highly than the caring traits, the third-year students are able to establish the Early Years Teacher as one whose skills are built on a foundation of knowledge and theoretical evidence, thereby validating their professional identity.

It

Students on the online bulletin board focus group discussed the frustration they had begun to experience when considering the reality of their role. As discussed above, students saw value in their training and the important contribution that they stated they could make to children's lives. Third-year trainee Flora expressed:

> It's extremely frustrating from our position, especially when we are learning the importance of the early years, and its key role in shaping future learning and development in children. If we fail at our task to create a love of learning with the children we work with, we create a much larger task for the future teachers that those children encounter.

This extract evidences Flora's conviction that the role of the Early Years Teacher is fundamental to the wider educational landscape. Flora views the work of the Early Years Teacher as pivotal in preparing a 'love of learning' in young children, which will prepare them for future schooling. This indicates that professionalism for this student is not simply responding to a performative agenda but is driven by an internal motivation to develop the joy in learning for young children.

Flora's beliefs were echoed by Kathryn, who demonstrated confidence in the professional identity of Early Years Teachers as the experts in their field. The depth of knowledge and understanding gained from the training experienced by these students is an important aspect of the students' identity. This, Bathmaker and Harnett (2010) suggests, helps to shape future practice. In this extract from the focus group discussion, Kathryn discusses her beliefs in relation to constructing a developmentally appropriate curriculum for all

children. Kathryn advocated play-based learning throughout the entire school curriculum. This demonstrated a confidence in her own pedagogical understandings:

> If more teachers understood Early Years development then they would be able to implement a more inclusive practice rather than just letting the gap widen as children move up year groups. Plus why stop with a play based curriculum at 5? QTS Primary and Secondary should learn the benefits of play.

These contributions demonstrate a collaborative discourse which privileges the notion of the expert Early Years Teacher. Students further appear to consider themselves as belonging to a knowing community of practice, which Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest works to engender a sense of professional identity.

Yet the identity which the students described in their dialogue was not that of the child care professional but that of the teacher. Students made reference to the Early Years Teacher as the expert in child development. They placed those professionals as the first and fundamental educators in a period of learning which would underpin a lifetime of learning. The students were resolute in their responses that their work as early childhood teachers is underpinned by their expertise and knowledge of early childhood. This indicates that the value they placed in their role demonstrated a confident sense of professional identity related to their professional practice.

Its

The discussion covered in the analysis of the previous quadrant of 'It' saw reference to the argument for the early years as the preparation for future learning and development. That investing in young children's early years reaps dividends as children grow and learn, supporting children to become competent educated adults. Highly trained and qualified Early Years Teachers would ensure quality.

The connections between the discourses read in the document *More Great Childcare* (2013) seem to place its ambition for the Early Years Teacher as one who will be equipped to contribute economically to society. It states "That is why this Government is determined to ensure that the system delivers high quality at good value for children, parents and the tax-payer" (DFE, 2013; p. 4). The rhetoric within this document describes a new Early Years Teacher who will be equipped to support more children in their care, thus presenting a more cost-effective investment to the workforce.

Ambitions for the new EYT are additionally portrayed within this document. EYTs are seen as those who will become catalysts for change in early education, capable of developing "a stronger society, with more opportunities for women who want to work and raise children at the same time, and better life chances for children whatever their background". (DFE, 2013; p. 6). This statement uses modality to imply a hypothetical scenario in which the new Early Years Teacher, as a result of their skills and knowledge, helps a generation of mothers back into meaningful employment and significantly impacts on the life chances of children. The document also argues that "We need to move decisively away from the idea that teaching young children is somehow less important or inferior to teaching school-age children". (DFE, 2013; p. 6) In using the word 'we', it is difficult to ascertain if the author is referring to government, society or the sector. This, as such, provides ambiguity as to where the author places responsibility for the lack of recognition and respect for practitioners.

Students' contributions however suggest that the reality of the situation is that the new title has attracted little change in attitude. Third year student Flora illustrated this conviction in her contribution to the focus group discussion. She stated:

> Many assume that EYTS is inferior to QTS. It seems bizarre that something that takes the same length of training and rigour can be of less quality just because of the age range chosen, however pay scales and society's attitude towards EYTS and QTS would suggest that this is the case.

The frustration described here relates to inequality in relation to the investment that those in positions of power are prepared to make in the early years. Flora is keenly aware that the inequality she perceives is related to the age of the children she has chosen to work with, yet Flora's comments were rare in the discussion. As mentioned previously, matters related to inequality in pay, terms and conditions did not feature highly in the transcripts of student discussion. Students' contributions focused instead on inequality in relation to opportunity to practice and the respect that inequality generated. One possible reason could concur with Gibson (2013), who argues that:

> "The idea of the image of the child as economic unit, while predominant in government and policy discourse, is entirely absent from early childhood professional discourse, and therefore unthinkable and unsayable."

> (Gibson, 2013, p. 239)

Gibson's argument suggests that early childhood teachers do not utilise an economic discourse, as doing so generates disconnections between the historical nature of the profession and the underpinning values and beliefs associated with the sector. Gibson argues that this may explain why the profession has traditionally experienced such poor terms of service, suggesting that the 'philanthropic traditions' (Gibson, 2013; p. 238) ingrained in the profession enable the situation to persist. Meanwhile the government is constructing policy for childcare based on largely economic principles, as the government document *More Great Childcare* (2013) explicitly illustrates in the statement

> Our reforms seek to benefit society and the economy by delivering high quality education in the early years at the same time as helping parents back to work. This will complement the Government's wider commitments: reforming education, so that we produce the brightest graduates and skilled school leavers; and reforming welfare so that it always pays to work
>
> (DFE, 2013; 13)

The extract above from *More Great Childcare* (2013) utilises the language of quality in order to legitimise the contents of the document. It persuades the reader that the proposals therein are of benefit for children, families and society at large. Initiatives related to early childhood education and care are often produced under the guise of raising quality. In this document, the word 'quality' was used a total of 132 times. As Dahlberg et al. (2007) point out, quality is contestable, being a phenomena which is difficult to quantify or define and is dependent on a range of measures designed around accountability and externally imposed standards (Dahlberg et al., 2007).

This document, which introduced the training programme of EYT, spoke of the value of the programme. It foregrounded this in the language of raising quality, as it stated "We know from the evidence at home and abroad that the quality of staff is crucial in delivering high quality education".

> (DFE, 2013; 28)

The *More Great Childcare* document articulates the argument that quality staff equals quality 'education'. The emphasis here appears to focus on the role of the educator, with little mention of the place of care in the profession. In doing so, the government legitimises the demand for a graduate-led industry as an investment in a sector concerned with more than care, and one which facilitates learning and education.

Further analysis of the document alludes to a workforce which is in many ways deficient. It cites a lack of basic skills in the workforce, a history of poor pay and a proliferation of early years qualifications which "lack rigour and depth" (DFE, 2013, p. 6). The document therefore requests a move away from the idea that working with the youngest children is less important than working with school age children and introduces the new Early Years Teacher qualification, stating:

> "We want to raise the status of the profession so that more high quality graduates consider a career in early education"
>
> "Early Years Teachers will be specialists in early childhood development, trained to work with babies and young children"
>
> (DFE, 2013; p. 27)

The *More Great Childcare* (2013) document evidences multiple discourses concerning a call for quality and child development to necessitate graduate Early Years Teachers. The economic dialogue additionally establishes Early Years Teacher identities as being those who contribute to the economic prosperity of society. The document states this explicitly. It describes EYTs as responsible for "ensuring we can compete in the global race, by helping parents back to work and readying children for school and, eventually, employment". (DFE, 2013, p. 6). Early Years Teachers are positioned here as holding responsibility for something much greater than a role in the setting in which they work. The EYT is positioned as being responsible for the long term economic benefits of early childhood education. Gibson (2013, p. 6) likens teachers in this scenario to "investment brokers, with all of the ensuing responsibility for financial investment that this category suggests".

4.2d - Theme 4 - Internal perceptions

I

It was clear through the analysis that participants attempted to make sense of their emerging professional identity in the profession by comparing it to alternative contexts in ECEC and the value assigned to that work. Primary teachers were identified as a notable comparison in the construction of individuals' professional identity, as these roles are currently afforded status and respect. This is not to say that the students perceived their qualification to be of less value in terms of preparation for professional practice, rather that the external perceptions were impacting on their own internal perceptions. This is illustrated in Janine's contribution to the focus group here:

> Personally, I believe all trainee teachers should gain teacher status in one way or another and have equal opportunities when applying for teaching positions e.g. Pay, responsibilities, etc. If this is not possible through this form of training, I would consider gaining QTS through another method as I ultimately want to become a successful teacher.

Under the discourse of professional accreditation, a qualified teacher status qualification is articulated here as better than an Early Years Teacher qualification, because of the access to better terms and conditions of service. By producing primary school teaching as a more advantageous career choice, students are justifying their decisions to pursue a teaching status bearing the title 'qualified'. This, students argue, will make the role more recognisable as a professional qualification. Tess, a third-year trainee, explains:

> I have also heard from others that have spoken with potential employers, that they do not perceive EYITT as a recognised qualification as of yet, which I find slightly worrying and sways me more to needing to do my PGCE at the end of this degree rather than me simply wishing to do so out of choice.

Here, Tess is positioning the Early Years Teacher identity as one which is unrecognised. The impact of this perception is one which leaves her feeling that the profession is undervalued. Tess uses the word 'needing' here when explaining why she will follow her early years qualification with a primary teaching qualification. This suggests that Tess does not see this as a choice, but as a necessity if her professional identity is to be valued. The decision made by 8 out of the 9 participants to consider the route to QTS after their EYT

training is complete, does not, however, correlate with contributions which indicate that students valued the expertise they had gained on their current pathway. This is evident in Janine's comment: "Personally, I am aware of the difference and the responsibilities that come with training to become an Early Years Teacher and I hope to enlighten others in this area".

Frustration in relation to the right to practice as an EYT in a full range of settings, both maintained and private, was additionally highlighted as a factor which impacted significantly on students' perceptions of the value of the qualification. This is evident in one of Kathryn's contributions to the focus group discussion, where she stated "I have ruled out EYT due to my personal attainment levels. I think that unless I was managing provision and it was under my control I would be bored and frustrated".

For Kathryn, the entitlement to lead practice is an important aspect of how she constructs her professional identity and how she feels her professionalism is recognised and valued. Kathryn considers that her knowledge and skills should provide her with a position of power in her professional life and one which would allow her to exercise agency in her day-to-day dealings with children and families.

We

The desire to have autonomy and respect for the profession, as discussed in the previous section, was one which featured highly in the discussions and contributions. The participants perceived an EYT as someone who should lead practice. They experienced, however, that this entitlement to practice was one which was strictly confined to the private sector. If opportunity to lead practice did present itself, it was suggested that this leadership may manifest itself in being limited in contact with the children they were trained to support. Lisa, a third-year trainee, points this out:

> I am aware of the different roles people with higher qualifications take within a setting, often people with higher qualifications are given roles within the office, more paperwork based rather than interacting with the children.

This finding is supported by findings by Chalke (2015) and Cooke and Lawton (2008), who concluded that practitioners' day-to-day encounters with children were influential in the production of professional identity in the sector. In these studies, a number of professionals

actually moved away from working in management roles to ensure continued contact with children.

Contributions from students demonstrated that they see the value of themselves as role models in the sector and as individuals who should lead by example. These comments indicate an awareness of how students perceive themselves as responsible for modelling professionalism and how this modelling of professional practice may not always entail managing practice, as Flora concludes: "It's something you're given not something you have, you are given that power. You can still be a professional and not be given that role, have that power".

Whalley (2008) argues that leadership in this context is constructed differently to that of the role of the manager (Whalley, 2008). The professional profile of an individual in this perspective is one who leads change and closely attributes themselves to reflective and reflexive practice. During the ranking exercise, students ranked traits such as higher order thinking, together with the ability to reflect and respond to situations, as one of the most important indicators of professional practice. The third year group ranked this trait as first in the ranking exercise. These findings fundamentally correspond to the work of Jones and Pound (2008), who argue that the ability to reflect, evaluate and respond are qualities which are central to professional practice in the ECEC sector. Osgood (2010) also observed similar responses from participants who reported that the most appealing training is that which provides "scope for reflexivity" (Osgood, 2010, p.129). This, she suggested, led to higher professional confidence in practitioners.

The second-year group placed less importance on thinking skills as a trait associated with professional practice. The group ranked it third alongside the trait concerned with leading and managing practice. While students placed less importance on the trait, they acknowledged its importance, as Nadine articulated during the ranking exercise, "I think that should be number three as well... you know the reflective one ...because without the reflective practice you can't improve".

A potential argument which could be presented for why the second-year group of students placed this trait in third place could be related to experience. Sumsion (2005) suggests that there are three beliefs related to teacher education. She suggests that the first requires that the student is responsive to the need to act and think in different ways. The second is reflexive practice, the ability to see a different way of doing. The third relates to change, what she terms "transformative change' (Sumsion, 2005; p. 198), to look beyond previously accepted truths and find new ways of approaching things. It could be argued that this particular group places less value on reflective practice because they feel less empowered as agents of change. Their experience in practice is still relatively brief and, as yet, they do not feel the same level of confidence in their ability to elicit change. Interestingly, the Year 2 participants' discussion during the ranking exercise was relatively brief in comparison to the third-year group. In this group, students generated a great deal of debate in relation to justifying their choices. The third-year group contributed a total of 86 interactions during the discussion, which was double that of the second-year group.

It

In relation to the intrinsic value of the programme, the students reported that they did feel confident about the skills and understandings they were developing as Early Years Teachers who had completed the EYT programme. They also stated that they would consider that they were equally and potentially more appropriately skilled than a person who held QTS to work with this particular age group. The confidence that their training and experience was preparing them well for practice seemed to instigate more frustration at what they perceived as barriers to practice. Kathryn, a third-year trainee, described her comments in the focus group as 'a rant', demonstrating anger at the perceived lack of value associated with the early years teacher qualification. She wrote:

> Going back to the EYITT if you are going to learn on a 3-year degree or as a worked based qualification, which in my opinion is giving the best sort of knowledge, then it should be given the same status value or to be honest more so than a bog standard 1 year PGCE. (Sorry little rant over).

In this study, the refocusing of the professionalisation of the workforce into a teacher-led profession appears to be causing significant confusion in relation to the participants' personal and professional role identity. Students reported that that they chose the

programme as a response to internal desires to work within the age range, the title 'teacher' suggesting initially to students a professional pathway to realise this ambition. It had, however, quickly become apparent to students that pay and conditions of service were inequitable to those who carry the status of QTS. Janine expressed her frustrations, as she stated:

> …you see also like the ratios, in the QTS if there is a QTS in the room the ratios can be higher, you need less adults in the room. So you see even the EYFS recognises that QTS is most important.

In this example, it is apparent that Janine believes that a professional occupation within ECEC seems to be less valued than that of the professional within the compulsory education sector. Martin (2010) supports this view, suggesting the beliefs about their status that practitioners hold are clearly linked to social interactions with other persons and society at large (Martin, 2010). Brock (2012) argues that values are bound up in personal identity and beliefs established from a professional knowledge base (Brock, 2012). Osgood (2006) concurs, suggesting that ECEC professionals working with young children are perceived to be committed, investing emotion and personal sacrifice to reinforce their professionalism (Osgood, 2006). The participants involved in this research evidenced significant personal and emotional values about what they believed was quality provision for children throughout the data collection.

Its

In relation to the wider impact of government policy and initiatives which may impact on professional identity in the sector, students disregarded government discourses on workforce professionalism in their responses. This concurs with research by Osgood (2010), which suggested that the respondents in her study did not value discourses such as rationalism and accountability when accounting for the formation of their own professional identities.

The introduction of the *More Great Childcare* policy document, however, was one which introduced the notion of the Early Years Teacher to the public domain. Up until this point, there had been a complicated array of qualifications (Nutbrown, 2012) which would be

brought together at national level. EYT was to be the gold standard qualification for practitioners. The policy document additionally clearly positioned early childhood education as valuable to the future social and economic wellbeing of the country. The workforce is clearly articulated as intrinsic to this goal, as the document proposed to "build a stronger, more capable workforce, with more rigorous training and qualifications, led by a growing group of Early Years Teachers".

Students perceive that practitioners have long been working within a sector which has many of the qualities and competencies of a professional workforce, even though these qualities are constantly derided in the pursuit of evidence of improvement instigated by government policy. Students consider that such discourses have not been privileged in public and policy reform, as Kathryn illustrates in her contribution to the focus group discussion:

> I think its society's opinion that needs to change but this change won't come about until the government, businesses and media make changes to show how important our little people are and how important it is to get the right people working with them.

The *More Great Childcare* (DFE, 2013) document was introduced as an external discourse, one that could bridge the divide in the educational experiences and care for young children and families in England. The document emphasised a focus on ratios, suggesting that a higher quality workforce could cater for a greater number of children within its ratios, a notion which prompted resistance in the sector. This document, it could be argued, spoke the language of empowering professional identity by valuing the professional understanding and skills of early years teachers, as the document explicitly states

> "We need to change the way we think about staffing in the early years, placing the emphasis on the individual development needs of each child, rather than relying on tight central prescription. Professional judgement should be backed with, and decisions based on, up-to-date evidence on child development, with Ofsted continuing to hold providers to account for the quality of education and care".

Students in this study were unconvinced by the rhetoric emerging from the government. Students' contributions demonstrated that they consider that whatever language emerges

from policy direction and documentation, the value placed on working with young children is palpably lower than the value placed on teaching older children and adults, as this contribution from Tess to the focus group demonstrates:

> Society as a whole still believe that working with our youngest children is seen as an unimportant task and that the older client you have (secondary teacher, college teacher and University lecturer) the cleverer and thus more important you are. This is obviously reflected in the pay and the level of training that is needed for each position.

The policy initiatives that have introduced Early Years Teachers to the public through the *More Great Childcare* document therefore appear to iterate a change that reinforces the value of early education as central to the work of early childhood practitioners by a rebranding exercise. The data in this study, however, reveals that students perceive a lack of authenticity in the rhetoric which emerges from government policy and one which does little to contribute positively to their emerging professional identity.

4.2e - Theme 5 - External perceptions

I

Public and professional perceptions of early years teacher training and status were discussed by participants as a factor which had significant impact on their professional identity. Several of the participants believed that there was generally a lack of understanding and appreciation for and about the EYT qualification. Students wanted their professional knowledge and experience recognised and accorded appropriate status. This concurs with findings by Davis (2014), who reported that Early Years Professionals in her study experienced a distinct lack of status for the profession beyond the settings in which they were employed. Furthermore, Davis's research indicated that this experienced lack of recognition extended to parents, teachers and schools. These findings correlate with responses which indicate similar experiences in this study. Gina, as second-year trainee, explains:

> …when I tell people what course I am doing and what age range I will be working with once I complete my degree, the reactions that I have very commonly received is 'oh so it is a bit like a babysitting course looking after young children and babies'.

This point was reiterated by Lisa, who stated:

> I have also experienced what has previously being said, when discussing what I am studying and the career I hope to enter they appear to believe I do not need to attend university to achieve this. I believe because the EYITT is a new profession people are unaware of what the title means.

These comments voiced by the students in relation to public recognition of EYTS expose apparent lack of clarity in the sector about the role and identity of the Early Years Teacher. Janine provided a useful example of how the title of the qualification is often confused with differing titles in the workforce, which then leaves the status of the training open to misinterpretation, as she described her experiences in settings:

> When I have had experience in an early years setting, staff had been given the title of early years educators when many had not had training in teaching young children and I believe that professionals and others should be aware of the differences between roles in early years.

The confusing array of qualifications in the sector was identified by Nutbrown (2012), who stated that employers, the public and parents are lacking clarity in relation to the differing qualifications and roles held by practitioners. By blurring the lines between the qualified and non-qualified teacher, there seems to still exist an uncertainty as to the exact contribution the EYTS qualification brings to the sector, further working to unsettle the professional identity of emerging early years teachers.

This corresponds with research by Payler and Locke (2013). This study confirmed similar confusion in relation to the predecessor to the EYT qualifications, the EYPS. The lack of commitment from the government in relation to awarding equality of opportunity to EYTs as to their QTS counterparts appears to be actively obstructing clarity in understanding. It also seems to be causing a lack of confidence and recognition for the training in the sector. Students indeed suggested that there was a distinct lack of respect for their training pathway. Janine, a second-year trainee, illustrated this in her contribution to the focus group:

> When explaining to others what I am studying and what career I want to enter, the overall reaction is that they believe that I could have entered the profession with a Level 3 qualification e.g. childcare.

Students in this section of the dialogue had become more vocal in their responses and their contributions denoted a distinct sense of disillusionment in relation to the external perceptions of title and training. The struggle to perceive their own professional identity appeared to tangibly revolve around status, in particular how it is perceived by wider society. Some of the contributions relating to status made this issue very clear.

We

Previous evidence discussed in this analysis has suggested a clear link between students' perceptions that increased qualifications contribute to their professional identity. It is clear, however, that how those qualifications are accepted externally is considered to have an impact on the professional identity of them as a community of practice. What is clear in the literature is that work in the sector is generally considered to be undervalued (Osgood, 2012; Sumsion, 2003). This is, in itself, a cause of concern for the students, as indicated by Tess. She states:

> I do not feel that a great deal of the public that I speak too are at all aware of what Early Years Practitioners actually do and how important their role is in a child's life.

Here, Tess is acknowledging the perceived lack of value placed on the profession externally. Tess affirms 'how important' her role is for the children in her care, however. By identifying the practitioner as important, Tess is alluding to the knowledge of child development and learning which she considers is of benefit in her training. In doing so, she is able to identify early years professional identities as important.

Students in this study were keen to highlight the lack of respect and recognition they experienced as a community of EYTs, despite the addition of the title 'teacher' to the qualification. Kathryn describes the reaction she often encounters when explaining her course of study:

> When I have told employers, practitioners, parents and the general public what course I am studying they do not understand what it is. I either get "oh you're going to be a primary teacher" when explained what it is and that it is a specialised teacher status for 0-5, I get "oh you're going to work in a nursery", with a slightly less impressed tone than when they thought I was studying to be a primary teacher.

Chalke (2015) argues that the opportunity to identify with others is vital in allowing for a professional identity construction to address such social, cultural and political aspects as represented in the professional identity of the community of practice (Chalke, 2015). She would argue here that the external identifiers of what makes an EYT are being incorporated into the wider discourses of teaching, for which professional identity is more established. These conclusions are supported by third-year Annie as she empathised with the experiences shared by earlier contributions:

> I also feel as though people who I tell what I am studying and training to be think that I am training to be a primary teacher and once I say it is for early years they then say "oh so not a proper teacher" which I then have to explain if I wanted to be a primary teacher I would have to do a PGCE. I feel as though staff in the nursery where I do my placement don't understand that I am training to be an Early Years Teacher. Some of them think I am a college student training to be a nursery nurse.

In the extracts above from the focus group, Tess and Annie appeared to qualify early childhood teacher professional identities through the level of their highest qualification. I would argue that this indicates a notion that status arises from the trainee teachers' degree level training and qualification. This notion produces the early childhood teacher as more qualified and therefore more important than a person qualified to diploma level, "a nursery nurse".

It

Moving to the exterior domains of the quadrant, I examine the phenomena of external perception through the lens of 'it'. Students' contributions to the focus group discussion suggest that the external perception of the professional identity of Early Years Teachers and early years teacher training seem to be aligned to care rather than education. Tess, a third-year trainee, illustrated this in her response. She stated:

> When I tell people what course I am doing and what age range I will be working with once I complete my degree, the reactions that I have very commonly received is "oh so it is a bit like a babysitting course looking after young children and babies". I find that to become an Early Years Teacher is looked upon as inferior to becoming a primary school teacher

This reference to 'babysitting' symbolises the low status that Tess feels is being assigned to the role. Tess perceives that the qualification is viewed as one aligned to care rather than education. The term 'babysitting' is one which conjures an image of an unskilled worker taking the responsibility of caring for the child in the absence of its parents and requires no qualifications or specific skills to gain employment. Tess uses the term 'inferior', suggesting that the impact on her professional identity of such perceptions is deeply damaging, both to her self-worth and her perception of herself as a professional. Tess is making an explicit reference to the inequality she feels, in contrast to the perceived respect Early Years Teachers receive. This example illustrates the cultural intersubjective, the impact on the community and sector in which the students train. Goouch and Powell (2013) argue that much of the persistent undervaluing of the role of Early Years Teachers is directly linked to the differing aspects of work they engage in, privileging teaching over care (Goouch and Powell, 2013). Kathryn's comments further reflect this view. She goes on to say:

> I also think that people still believe that working with our youngest children is more of a care role, which care in itself is an underqualified profession that unfortunately employs anyone willing to give it a go.

Here Kathryn is arguing that the value of care-giving is not synonymous with society's consideration of what is considered to be a professional attribute. Kathryn argues here that it is potentially the emphasis on caring which may undermine societal notions of professionalism in the sector, with care being considered synonymous with maternal attitudes (McGillvray, 2008; Lloyd and Hallet, 2010). Kathryn is describing these responses through the lens of the external behavioural objective of 'Its', the impact on the sector at large and the values and beliefs held by society in relation to the notion of care as a professional trait. It could be suggested then that the technical emphasis of meeting the standards is a direct attempt to counteract such notions, as well as to justify the role in a society which values more cogent or knowledge-based approaches to professional practice (Chalke, 2015).

The policy change that introduced the status of Early Years Teacher (DfE/NCTL 2013) to replace the pre-existing early years professional status of EYP reflected a distinct

privileging of education over care as central to the work of early years professionals. This move thereby reflected a discourse in the sector which suggested that in order to be valued or recognised within society, the Early Years Professional needed re-branding as that of the Early Years Teacher (O'Keefe and Tait, 2004).

Its

The data recorded in both the focus group and ranking exercise, as discussed above, demonstrate that although a great deal of what contributes to professional identity emerges from the confidence and development of the individual, there is a distinct need for external reinforcement and affirmation. This indicates that professional identity requires an external appreciation for the community of practice in which these students exist. This concurs with findings by Trede et al., (2011) who investigated external contributions to professional identity in the sector. The authors suggested that practitioners need to identify commonalities between themselves and other professionals in the sector. (Trede et al., 2011)

The contributions from the group of students involved in this study suggest that they struggle to distinguish which community they should align with. The rhetoric from the government suggests that they are aligned with the teaching profession. They feel that they earn none of the privileges of opportunity to practice, remuneration or status, on the other hand. When student Kathryn reflected on the ranking of the trait pertaining to professional accreditation, she illustrated this: "I don't think it's important but society does and if I was looking for that provision I would be just the same as society". This comment demonstrates Kathryn's struggle to identify with the community of practice to which she subscribes. Kathryn understands that established rules, principles and ways of being define the professional identity of a certain workforce, in this case teaching, and teachers carry professional accreditation.

It is evident that the external identifiers of what constitutes an Early Years Teacher are being spoken within a wider discourse more closely related to teaching. Turning back to the analysis of *More Great Childcare* (DfE, 2013) the document explicitly states:

We agree with Professor Nutbrown that there is a need to transform the status of the profession and we want more high quality graduates to consider a career in early education. We do not, however, consider a route to the award of QTS is necessary to do this. We will introduce Early Years Teachers who will be specialists in early childhood development trained to work with babies and young children from birth to five.

(DFE, 2013; p. 43)

The government statement offers no justification for the decision to preclude awarding QTS for the status, instead it states that conferring QTS is 'unnecessary'. The statement then goes on to state

Early Years Teacher Status will be seen as the equivalent to QTS, therefore entry requirements to Early Years Teacher training courses will be the same as entry to primary teacher training. This change will give one title of 'teacher' across the early years and schools sectors which will increase status and public recognition.

(DFE, 2013; p. 43)

The extract above explicitly confirms the status is 'equivalent' with equivalent entry criteria. The document is making use of factuality as a strategy to convince the audience here. The extract goes on to state that the qualification 'will increase status' thereby naturalizing the statement as a common sense assumption. Data in this study however suggests that the fact that the EYTS does not provide qualified teacher status is impacting on the professional identity of the participants. They are aware of the inequality in status, power and pay the position holds in the wider workforce.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This discussion has been written in four main sections. These sections attempt to relate to issues raised in response to the initial research questions which provided the context for the research explored in this thesis. The initial research questions sought to establish trainee Early Years Teachers' notions of professionalism through the four lenses of Integral analysis. The research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis were as follows:

1. How do participants define a high-status profession, and do they consider that EYT conforms to this definition?
2. What are students' views of the EYITT programme and its potential impact on the status of emerging early years professionals?
3. What is the impact of recent policy initiatives on the status of Early Years Teachers (EYTs), personally, professionally and in the wider public domain?

These questions will now be investigated by considering how trainee teachers in this study experienced their training, their attitudes, and those of others to the profession. Their perceptions of the impact of the profession on the sector will also be considered. Having already discussed the identified themes and related findings, and their relation to aspects of the literature in the analysis chapter, Chapter 5 will begin by returning to the research question. Here, the thesis will discuss the term professionalism, and how the data relates to the literature and students' experiences of the profession. It will do this while also considering the rhetoric to emerge from the policy document *More Great Childcare* (2013). This section will conclude by discussing the theoretical framework of Integral analysis and how this method of data analysis has enabled a more holistic investigation into the phenomena of professional identity.

Chapter 6 will then provide the opportunity to answer the research questions directly, during the conclusion to the thesis.

5.1 Early Years Teacher, fact or fiction?

In defining their notions of professional practice in the sector, students turned their attention to the nature of the work and the types of skills they would need to define themselves as 'professionals'. The qualitative data revealed that students justified their motivation to choose EYT as a career pathway by reporting a strong desire to work with and for young children. This dedication to the work they do with children was often translated by participants to the word 'love'. The recognition of love as a trait of professional practice is one recognised by writers such as Page (2011) and Dalli (2006), who countenance the practice of professional love as pedagogical tools. Others argue that it is precisely the notion of the soft maternal skills associated with love and caring which work to mitigate against the notion of work in ECEC as professional (Moyles, 2001; Hatcher, 2008; Maddon, 2012). They warn that such cultures may be perceived as anti-intellectual. This demonstrates a perception of professionalism which recognises formal knowledge over skills and practice (Manning Morton, 2006)

Students' contributions in this study recognised the skills needed in professional caring and felt that the knowledge and aptitudes necessary to deal with the complex and demanding work encountered by EYTs was not always acknowledged. The work of Noddings (1992) concurs with students' perspectives, identifying two types of care in teaching, virtue caring and relational caring (Noddings, 1992). The author explains the complexity of professional practice as she describes the skills involved in being 'in relation' to someone before 'caring for' them. Noddings (1984) suggests that the child will become a dynamic agent in their only learning only by teachers having the skills to listen and respond to the child and encouraging them to play their part in the relationship. Complementary to this, the notion of virtue caring focuses on planning for their learning and scaffolding behaviour. Responsibilities to care in these contexts demand professional competency and cannot be enacted without direct involvement with the children.

Participants were additionally keen to claim that being in possession of a wide body of knowledge was a trait for professional practice in the sector. They also stated that, in their

experience, the degree programme related to EYT did equip them with the skills and knowledge relevant to their future careers. Student narratives related to this aspect of professional identity were very confident in this conviction. Osgood (2012) suggests that it is precisely these beliefs which allow practitioners to defend the profession and establish themselves as knowledgeable practitioners belonging to a developing community of practice (Osgood, 2012). These findings are counter to research conducted by Hobson (2003), who suggests that trainee teachers do not necessarily appreciate the value of the theory underpinning their practice, valuing instead practical experience (Vincent and Braun, 2006). Students in this study demonstrated a strong argument in relation to the value of knowledge underpinned by theoretical principles. It is argued that one explanation for this may lie in the historical and cultural background to the profession. This profession has traditionally struggled for recognition of the complexity of their work and parity in the terms and conditions they experience.

The evidence from this research, however, did not indicate that students saw little value in their practical training. On the contrary, one of highest-ranking traits of professional practice identified by the students was the ability to think and act reflectively and reflexively. These skills, as they stated, were effectively developed through practical training. Findings by Anning and Edwards (2010) concur, suggesting that reflective dialogue encourages opportunities to share understandings about practice (Anning and Edwards, 2010). This allows students to critically engage with discourses which underpin the development of professional identity (Osgood, 2006).

Participants, whilst supportive of the programme and confident of the skills and knowledge they were developing, were reportedly aware of the limitations of the programme in relation to their chosen careers. A strong narrative, which emerged from the groups, discussed a lack of parity with their QTS counterparts. Students expressed concerns that their qualification, though equally as challenging and rigorous as other initial teacher training routes, lacked the respect and status offered to qualifications holding the title 'qualified'. This was echoed in comments by Nutbrown (2013), who stated that

equivalency between the two qualifications would never be recognised whilst inequality in the titles existed. (Nutbrown, 2013)

The data furthermore suggested a perceived lack of parity in relation to participants' opportunities to practice and related remuneration within the maintained sector. This, the students argued, impacted significantly upon the professional identity of the workforce. These findings concur with those of Oberhuemer (2008), who argues that such perceived inequalities are inseparably linked to values and assumptions associated with cultural constructions of what constitutes professional practice (Oberhuemer, 2008). The value of EYT programmes as a route to professionalising the workforce for ECEC, it could thus be argued, has contributed little to the recognition of the professional character of the work. Participants expressed frustration that the importance of their role, as well as the complexity of the work in which they are engaged, is not reflected in the terms and conditions they would expect for a professional role and one which is considered as equal in status to other members of the education profession. These sentiments and concerns are echoed by Skattebol et al., (2015) who argue that professional transformation within the workforce will never be recognised whilst the workforce continues to experience disaffection and marginalisation. (Skattebol, 2015)

Responses to the inequalities experienced and articulated by the participants suggested that the strategy they had identified to overcome these factors was to enrol on a post-graduate teacher training route at the end of their studies. In their responses, students justified their actions in relation to widening the age group they would be entitled to teach, and there was a discernible reluctance to link these choices to remuneration. The almost complete absence of references related to pay could be explained by arguments presented by Gibson (2013). Gibson suggested that early childhood professionals may consider the image of the child as an economic unit, and childcare as business as unthinkable and, in some ways, distasteful. This, she argues, arises because the historical perception of work in the sector is that of one being predominantly philanthropic and run by dedicated but largely low-paid individuals (Gibson, 2013). These values and traditions may explain the reluctance of participants to discuss economic considerations in relation

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to their chosen career. Whilst participants were eager to discuss the value their role could bring to the sector, and their impact on children's lives in particular, any expectation that they should be rewarded for this work in ways other than respect, status, and opportunity to practice was almost entirely absent from their narratives.

5.2 EYT, Professionalising or de-professionalising the workforce?

It is clear from the data collected from both the online bulletin board focus group and the ranking exercise, that acknowledgement of the role, status and respect were factors which impacted significantly on the emerging professional identity of students. Many of the participants have progressed to the programme from diploma level study and, as such, have some practical experience in the sector. Students in the study reported an intrinsic desire to work with young children in a professional capacity as a motivating factor to enrol on the programme of study. A source of frustration expressed by the students related to references which demonstrated a lack of recognition or understanding about the status, however, with many students experiencing comments which suggested that a degree level qualification may be an unnecessary achievement for such work.

Such challenges to the value of the qualification may be particularly significant to the students, who reported negative past experiences related to the respect afforded to work in the sector. These encounters, it is argued, contribute to the low self-esteem and disillusionment evidenced in some contributions. Participants discussed the need to be degree qualified and hold a professional status in order to command the autonomy and respect they felt marked professional practice. The impact of these past experiences may be explained by referring to what Bourdieu (1985) terms 'habitus', which describes how status and identity may originate from a student's experiences (Bourdieu, 1985). Bourdieu suggested that the juxtaposition of past and present histories, both personal and social, interrelate to develop professional identity. The newly introduced Early Years Teacher status, which was introduced in response to demands for a higher qualified workforce, could be argued to have created challenges for the new recruits in overcoming previous academic habitus. Such challenges to the validity of the graduate status may engender uncertainty in relation to the legitimacy of their academic capabilities, what Bourdieu (1996) terms their academic legitimacy.

The challenge for these emerging professionals in developing their professional identity therefore appears to lay in the recognition of their newly introduced status and their opportunity to identify with a community of practice. In their discussions, the students suggested that a continued lack of recognition for the status was additionally impacting on the support they accessed during their training. Participants stated that they struggled to distinguish which community they should align with, with settings lacking suitable role models to support training and mentor practice.

The rhetoric from the government suggests that the Early Years Teacher is affiliated with the teaching profession, with a set of standards aligned with those of teaching but none of the privileges of opportunity to practice, remuneration or status. The re-professionalisation agenda for the early years workforce seems to be one which reflects an approach closely associated with the current government agenda, one which Beck (2008) terms governmental professionalism. The students in this study, however, expressed doubt over the relationship between the standards and professional practice, dismissing the standards as one of the lowest indicators of professional practice. These findings correlate to empirical research by Poet, Rudd and Smith (2010). Their findings suggested that teachers in their study considered standards as a tool for professional development, yet in their daily work were of little relevance, being little more than a reference point. (Poet et al., 2010)

Students' contributions concurred with these findings. They stated that standards were tools to measure performance during training, yet did little to nurture a sense of professional identity for trainees. These perceptions are echoed in research by Evans (2011), who suggests that standards encourage little more than a performative agenda which encourages a technicist rather than a professional approach to practice (Evans, 2011). Urban (2005) concurs, warning against students measuring their professional identity by a paradigm of pre-determined and evidence-based outcomes and suggests that in doing so they would be determined to failure (Urban, 2005). As the literature indicates, models of professionalism focused on performance management through targets and measures, appear to do little to foster the autonomous attitudes to practice, which are synonymous with professional behaviours (Ritchie, 2015). As Wood et al., (2015) point out

> Aligning professionalisation with professional development has thus become an instrumental process with changes in practice only considered worthwhile if they result in improved learning outcomes for children.
>
> (Wood et al., 2015)

This thesis would therefore argue that EYT students in the study placed little importance on the standards by which they are judged. This is due to the fact that they struggle with the specific discourse related to the standards, since they do not necessarily regard this as appropriate to the field of ECEC. This thesis additionally argues that students' contributions indicate that they regard the standards to have little significance in the development of their professional identity, as they represent only a limited section of the work they undertake in the sector. This may arise because the standards are aligned with those of teaching, marking a discernible policy direction to focus on evidencing school-based competencies in early years provision. These standards therefore reflect the work of only a narrow section of the workforce (Chalke, 2015). This is done without truly reflecting the variety and context of work across the sector. It also measures set practice rather than evaluating professional competencies relevant to working with young children.

Students further expressed concerns in relation to the nature of work that EYTS would ultimately prepare them for and the roles they may occupy. Whilst government rhetoric (NCTL, 2013) speaks of an ambition toward pedagogical leadership, students' narratives describe the graduate practitioner as one who is too often removed from practice. In order for ambitions of pedagogical leadership to materialise, it seems that the perception of leadership in the sector must also change (Murray and Macdonald, 2013). Participants in the study felt that concepts of leadership situated within a discourse of power did not sit comfortably with them. This reflected little of the central values of the transformational teacher who leads by example, one which they saw as relevant to leadership in the sector.

5.3 The context and impact of policy in the sector

Participants in the study seemed reluctant to make direct reference to the wider impact of government policy and initiatives which impact on their developing professional identity. Comments related to policy agendas and government discourses which did impact on their experiences, were, however, implicitly referenced in many contributions in both the focus group and ranking exercise. These comments often referred to society at large, rather than

pointing comments explicitly at specific government policy. Findings by Day et al. (2006) concur with this experience, suggesting that students establish identity and purpose which contributes to their effectiveness through moral and professional agency (Day et al., 2006). These findings concur with those of Osgood (2010), who reported that the respondents in her study did not value discourses such as rationalism and accountability in discussions relating to their own emerging professional identities.

This thesis argues that any consideration of factors which impact on professional identity must also look to the impact of macro systems. In the circumstances of this thesis, it was useful to interrogate the language and policy direction indicated in the document 'More Great Childcare' (2013). This document was, however, superseded at the close of this study by the 'Early Years Workforce Strategy' (DFE, 2017), which indicated that a consultation process would be imminent to revisit the entitlements offered to those who hold the title and status of EYT. As the data collection and analysis occurred within the period of time in which the policy direction for the children's workforce was governed by the More Great Childcare Document (2013), however, it seems pertinent that this document is the reference point for this thesis.

 The aforementioned professionalisation of the workforce into a teacher-modelled profession, articulated in 'More Great Childcare' (2013), appeared to have caused significant confusion in relation to participants' professional identity. Students stated that the language used in initial documentation was misleading, claiming that decisions to enrol on the programme were impacted by the title 'teacher'. The title initially suggested to students that EYT provided a professional pathway which offered an equivalent status, enjoying equivalent benefits and opportunities, which participants later found to be inaccurate. Nutbrown (2013) agrees, arguing that the title of 'qualified teacher' is one which is widely understood in society, and therefore affords the holder status and respect. By denying the trainees on the Early Years Teacher programme the opportunity to achieve a status which carries the word 'qualified' in the title, students are instantly disadvantaged in relation to how the qualification is understood or respected. Confusion caused by a lack of clarity in the title of the qualification is not new. It corresponds to findings by Payler and Locke (2013), whom identified similar tensions with EYT's predecessor the EYPS (Payler and Locke, 2013). This thesis posits that the data collected from participants indicates that

there is a perceived lack of commitment from the government in relation to awarding equality of opportunity to EYTs as to their QTS counterparts. In addition, this lack of equality actively obstructs understanding of the qualification in the sector and disrupts students' emerging professional identity and confidence in the sector.

Furthermore, participants in this study indicated in their narratives that they believe that many practitioners in the sector do have the qualities and competencies of a professional workforce. Persistent references to inadequacies in the workforce observed in government policy rhetoric, however, continue to point to inadequacies within the workforce, citing a lack of basic skills and a range of qualifications which "lack rigour and depth" (DFE, 2013; p. 6). Participants felt that such rhetoric constantly derided the workforce and the respect it commanded. They suggested that this could arise from a continual pursuit of evidence which indicated improvements in quality and outcomes, instigated by each successive government. Participants further contend that the messages which emerge in government rhetoric and policy direction are reflected in the attitudes of the public whom they serve. Participants believed that without a clear articulation of the value of the qualification in the public domain, Early Years Teachers would continue to struggle for the respect and autonomy for which they strive.

Analysis of the discourse within the *More Great Childcare* (2013) document speaks the language of quality in ECEC, firmly aligning the notion of quality alongside a perception of work in the sector which reflects a teacher-led model. Yet the document makes little mention of the place of care in the profession. There appears to be a clear policy direction emerging, one which, whilst legitimising the demand for a graduate-led industry, is less concerned with care. It rather fixes firmly on academic learning and education. Woods et al. (2015) argue that by equating the professional status of EYT with the training and standards appropriate to initial teacher training, government is defining the competencies, skills and knowledge that they consider appropriate to practice (Woods et al., 2015). The authors use the term 'governmentality' to explain this trend, arguing that such policy agendas impose considerably on professional values related to identities in the ECEC sector. (Woods et al., 2015)

A contentious debate related to the provision for young children has thus emerged within the ECEC sector. This debate manifests in political and policy decisions, which signify a way forward. It purports to offer the best care and learning opportunities for young children. The introduction of the early years teacher status appears central in this debate, and is clearly positioned as a role which will contribute to the long term economic benefits of early childhood education (Gibson, 2013). Analysis of the discourse intimated in *More Great Childcare* (2013) suggests an introduction of policy priorities which consider the child as an economic unit. Evidence for such assertions were observed in references to parental employability and educational reformation. Such trends have also been observed by Woodrow (2011), who argues that economics is increasingly a catalyst for investment in ECEC, as opposed to the learning and wellbeing of young children (Woodrow, 2011). Woodrow (2011) warns that this indicates a worrying trend towards the marketization of early childhood. Yet justification for the marketization of ECEC posits that such policies promote a balance between supply and demand. Moss (2010) disputes these assertions, warning that parents in this model are encouraged to be consumers, demanding greater value for money and viewing ECEC as a commodity, one which demands a business model approach (Moss, 2010). Commentators such as Cleveland and Krashinki (2004) warn against such approaches from an economic perspective, arguing that ECEC should be viewed as a public good, and one which demands state support.

More Great Childcare (2013) carefully positions the economic argument with justifications of reform for the greater good of society, promising to "produce the brightest graduates and skilled school leavers; and reforming welfare so that it always pays to work" (DFE, 2013; p. 13). In this argument, the government makes the case for ECEC as enabling a more productive citizen, less reliant on state support and capable of a making a future contribution which allows the nation to "compete in the global race" (DFE, 2013; p. 6). These arguments present a model of a socially just education. Nancy Fraser's framework of social justice (2003) suggests that social justice is two dimensional. Recognitive justice, Fraser argues, relates to making visible the social background, culture, values, languages and experiences of the communities in which education is situated (Fraser, 2003) and is fully inclusive. Statements evidenced in *More Great Childcare* (2013) and the succeeding *Early Years Workforce Strategy* (2017), reflect the values and beliefs which indicate a privileging of education over care. If social justice relates to the whole child and the

communities in which they live, then such policy directions can only prove deleterious or fail to meet the aspirations to which they strive. Fraser (2003) additionally discusses the notion of redistributive justice, the unbiased distribution or redistribution of resources and practices to include all and not just the dominant culture (Fraser, 2003). Policy directions which indicate blatant inequality to those concerned actively work against socially just ways of working. In this case they ensure that the ECEC sector, and those who train to work professionally within it, are continually disadvantaged. The data which emerged from the participants in this study emphatically reinforced the sense of injustice they experienced and perceived both from government and the attitudes of society, which they believe are largely impacted by government policy and rhetoric.

5.4 Reflections on research design and analysis

When gathering data, the use of the online bulletin board proved to be useful in eliciting a response that enabled participants' views. The students in the study were not limited to a set time or day to respond. This provided them with the opportunity to consider their responses and to contribute at a time which proved most suitable for them. As a result, the study achieved a contribution rate of 100%. The research focused on the participants' experiences on their training route and their motivations in choosing the programme of study, but it was anticipated that trainees who were still relatively new to the sector would not necessarily have experienced the complexities of the role first-hand. The trainees were therefore invited to reflect on their experiences. This yielded a response that in some cases confirmed, in other cases contradicted, their beliefs about working in the sector.

The diamond ranking exercise benefited by establishing traits identified and adapted by several researchers (Chalke, 2013; Dalli, 2008; Brock, 2012), using identified traits which had been previously established. As a result, some findings could be compared to the original studies. For example, it is interesting to note that knowledge ranked highly in this study (see Appendix D) as a trait of professional practice. These findings were also identified in research by Brock (2012) and Chalke (2013). As previously indicated, however, the focus of the largely quantitative method of data analysis was not to utilise a positivist approach that ranked traits of professionalism. Rather, the method enabled a useful and frank conversation amongst the participants, which offered insights into the ways in which

professional identity is constructed amongst this group of students, as well as the impact of the EYTS training route on these perspectives. In this respect, the quantitative approach has been able to provide qualitative material to prompt discussion, and together offers empirical insights into the emerging professionalism identity of this group of students.

The inclusion of Integral analysis (Wilber, 2006) into the research design has proved a very useful tool for analysing the complex phenomena of emerging professional identity. Utilising a quadrant analysis approach to interrogate the data provided this thesis with an opportunity to utilise an analytical approach that allowed the research to fully examine all aspects which impacted on the experience of the participants as individuals and as part of a group. Firstly, data were analysed from the inside subjective, where participants' experiences, feelings and emotions were examined, the 'I' quadrant. Secondly, the experiences of the students as a community and within a community of practice were analysed. This included the cultural beliefs, practices, and discourses, which together allowed the study to understand how meanings emerged through the social context experienced by the students. This was termed the intersubjective 'we' quadrant. The study then identified data in the third perspective, revealing how professional identity was played out for these students in reality, the structure of its various components and their interrelationships, the objective 'it' quadrant. Finally, the outside-plural perspective was incorporated, the inter-objective 'its' quadrant. The research examined the impact of socio-economic processes and rhetoric which shaped the workforce and the related training herein. This section in particular examined the discourses in the *More Great Childcare* document (2013) because of its contemporaneous relevance to the research. The analytical approach proved sympathetic to gathering data which would provide a holistic picture of the phenomena, along with providing an effective tool to create meaning that was reflective of all aspects of the students' experiences.

To analyse the discourses and rhetoric prevalent in *More Great Childcare* (2013), the research utilised Hyatt's (2013) critical policy discourse analysis framework. The research utilised those aspects of the frame which were useful to the context of the study. The frame allowed the study to examine elements of the policy document, by contextualising and deconstructing the text. Firstly, in contextualising the document the policy levers and drivers were identified. This allowed the research to recognise the motivation, values and principles which steered and shaped the policy document. This element of the analysis

identified rhetoric within the document, which engages in a dialogue related to economics, establishing Early Years Teachers as contributing to the economic prosperity of society. Additionally, this element of the analysis revealed a rhetoric related to quality and drew parallels between the quality of staff and quality 'education'. This was done with little mention of the place of care in the profession, thereby legitimising the demand for a graduate, teacher-led industry. Secondly the text was deconstructed to identify ways in which the policy is justified to the audience, attaching values and assumptions that Hyatt terms modes of legitimation (Hyatt, 2013). This approach identified a rationalisation of the introduction of EYTs in relation to social justice. There was also an argument which articulates a model of the Early Years Teacher as one who will raise quality and thereby increase opportunities for children, families and society at large to become more prosperous and successful.

5.5: Limitations of the analysis

Whilst the data has provided a useful context for a discussion on trainees' conceptions of professionalism within the ECEC sector, there are a number of issues relating to the reliability and limitations of the data. These are summarised as follows:

- The overall sample size is less than 10 students and is therefore relevant only to the particular group involved as participants in this particular study. Experiences in relation to programme content and related practical training, could therefore be argued to be confined to this one institution, making statistical significance and comparison problematic.

- Integral analysis may be considered as subjective within an interpretivist framework at the point of compartmentalising data. Alternative interpretations of each element are probable and therefore it may be tempting to position information within one quadrant and overlook the relevance of that particular component within other quadrants. Analysis must thus allow for overlap.

- The use of an online forum did not permit opportunity to observe body language, physical or vocal interactions between participants. The forum may have, however,

empowered students to voice their opinions and ideas. These students may otherwise have lacked confidence in a group situation.

- As programme director, I have been involved in the design and delivery of the programme experienced by these trainee teachers. Whilst this has provided a greater understanding of the students, training and related demands and structures, it could be argued to predispose the research to researcher bias. It has, therefore, necessitated caution to avoid drawing upon the experiences of participants beyond the data collection.

Despite these limitations, integral analysis has provided an insight into emerging early years teachers' constructs of professional identity. Qualitative findings have provided an insight to the phenomena. Whilst it could be argued to be contextually dependent on the sample within the research context, it is argued that the views expressed by this sample are likely to be indicative of the Early Years Teacher training landscape at this point in time.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The conclusion chapter of this thesis aims to bring together the qualitative findings in order to answer the three research questions that frame the overall focus of this study. This research has aimed to establish Early Years Teachers' perceptions of their own developing professional identity. It has sought to do that alongside the impact of the identified training route for EYTS. The study has examined this phenomena through the four lens of Integral analysis, the 'I', the 'We', the 'It' and the 'Its'. This thesis suggests that findings indicate that constructions of professional identity in the sector are multifaceted and that there is no simple solution to professionalising the workforce. What has become evident during this investigation is the importance of engaging students and trainers in the debate related to professional identity as part of the complex journey to professional transformation of the workforce. Although the data were gathered at a particular point in time, the findings remain relevant in relation to the new Early Years Workforce Strategy (DfE, 2017) for England.

This thesis has therefore utilised Integral analysis to facilitate opportunities to investigate these understandings, alongside the meaning being made within both the culture and the collective experiences of the individuals involved. This conclusion identifies key findings from the data in order to provide implications for future directions for research and practice. These findings, together with my methodological approach, provide a unique contribution to understanding professionalism within the ECEC sector.

As a method of analysis, this framework could be utilised as a methodology to examine further research agendas related to professional identity of the workforce, and related issues that have been identified as needing further research. Research agendas related to the professional identity of practicing graduates in the workforce, and that of non-graduate early years educators and communities of practice, could provide useful insights to the phenomena of professionalising the workforce for ECEC.

6.1 Responding to the research questions

As a conclusion to the previous chapter the three main research questions will now be responded to. These responses will then identify the recommendations in the following chapter.

6.1 a) How do participants define a high-status profession, and do they consider that EYT conforms to this definition?

The examination of the data derived from the on-line bulletin board focus groups and the diamond ranking exercise located discourses related to participants' notions of professional identity in ECEC. The resultant data were read to identify ways in which it indicated understandings and ideas related to Early Years Teachers' professional identities. Ways of identifying professional identity were recognised, challenged and occasionally reconstructed.

In defining professional qualities related to work in the sector, the students in this study were keen to point to the necessity of being in possession of a specialist body of knowledge. The degree level qualification was indicated as important. A degree specialising in early childhood was even more relevant. . Participants in this study considered their level of qualification as highly relevant in the formation of their professional identity. They felt that this indicated a higher level of expertise and knowledge when compared to those individuals in the workforce who held lower levels of qualification. The experiences of the trainees prompted concern that higher qualifications may ultimately work against the purpose for which they were designed. Students warned that, in their experience, the role of specialist early childhood teachers often manifested as an office-based role, one which could limit their contact with the children with whom they were trained to work. Additionally, specialised knowledge was used to justify their beliefs that Early Years Teachers were better trained and equipped to work with the youngest children than primary school teachers. A clear source of frustration for students emerged, however, from their inability to lead practice in the maintained sector, despite their specialised training, skills and knowledge of and in ECEC. Students argued that in their experience, the individuals who did have responsibility for leading ECEC practice in schools had no or very little training to work with young children. These limiting factors

had substantial impact on student professional identity, as they reported a perceived lack of respect and acknowledgment for the status.

Knowledge alone was however considered inadequate as a requirement for professional practice. The data suggested that students regarded a 'love of children' as a 'minimum requirement' for practice. These discourses disrupted students' notions of professional practice, prompting a dilemma between their convictions related to love and care as a requirement for professional behaviour, and the knowledge that such discourses at times diminish the value of the work they do. In order to validate their professional identity, the data suggested that students were keen to establish the Early Years Teacher as one whose skills are built on a foundation of knowledge and theoretical evidence. This was particularly evident in the ranking exercise in which students ranked the thinking and knowledge-based traits more highly than caring traits, particularly related to the reflective and reflexive practice aspects. Participants therefore validated the professional identity of their role by indicating their understanding that a professional in this perspective is one who responds to and leads change.

6.1 b) What are students' views of the EYITT programme and its potential impact on the status of emerging early years professionals?

The student Early Years Teachers involved in this study reported at the outset that they envisaged the EYITT programme would provide a defined route to employment. The realisation that the contexts and opportunities for teaching in the sector would be limited only became evident once training had commenced. Students reported that they considered that the limitations to practice in the maintained sector undermined the status and respect offered by the qualification. These factors prompted the majority of students to select a post-graduate training route to achieve qualified teacher status (PGCE) at the end of their programme of study. Participants reported that in selecting the post-graduate pathway to QTS, they would broaden the age range that they would be entitled to teach. Students insisted that if the EYT programme provided equity in the rewards it could offer, there would be no need to pursue further qualifications.

Students reported that a lack of knowledge and understanding about the role, its purpose and value, additionally impacted significantly on their professional identity. The comments

which contested the need for degree level qualifications in the sector, and queried the equivalency to QTS, were particularly damaging to their professional worth. Students felt that a continued denigration of the profession in government and policy discourses contributed to the lack of respect offered by the profession. Additionally, students reported that the title of the qualification was misleading to both the sector and the public. Students suggested that for the programme to demand the same rigour in recruitment and training and not offer equality in opportunity was derisive.

Participants suggested that they perceived a lack of confidence in the professional values and beliefs which underpin the nature of the work in the sector from both government and society. The new government vision for professionalism in the sector appears to be one more closely related to teaching, with a set of standards resembling those for QTS, which are highly technicised and focuses on the development of academic learning, privileging learning over care. As a result, students reported that they saw little relevance of the standards beyond training. They reported that they were 'hoops to jump through' in their training but these reflected little of what they considered to be the nature of work in the sector.

Students in this study were, however, confident about the skills and knowledge they were developing on the programme. More relevantly, they believed that the role of the Early Years Teacher would and could impact positively on the lives of young children. Trainees particularly regarded the role of the Early Years Teacher as fundamental to the wider educational landscape, as one responsible for laying firm foundations which could instil in young children a lifelong love of learning.

6.1 c) What is the impact of recent policy initiatives on the status of Early Years Teachers (EYTs), personally, professionally and in the wider public domain?

Although students were largely reluctant to discuss the impact of policy explicitly, the implications of policy and government's attitude to the sector were implicit in their responses throughout the data. For the purposes of this thesis an analysis of the document *More Great Childcare* (2013) was undertaken. At the time of writing, this document contained the contemporaneous policy directive concerning the early years workforce and made a case for the introduction of the Early Years Teacher. Moreover, this document

utilised language which indicated that the suggested deficit model of the Early Years Professional would be replaced by the new Early Years Teacher, one who would increase the quality of practice and raise standards in the sector. The policy contradicts itself, however, indicating a reluctance to offer equal opportunities to practice, yet stating that the EYT was of equal status to QTS. Contributions offered by students in the data collection process suggest that such contradictions impact negatively on their emerging professional identity. Additionally, the students claimed that the perceived inequality and injustice imposed on the status has contributed to uncertainty in the public domain as to the nature and purpose of the role.

What is clear in the policy direction intimated in the documentation of *More Great Childcare* (2013) is the apparent move to consider the child as an economic unit. The EYT is placed within this rhetoric, as one who will support and nurture children to become productive and profitable citizens. In addition, the document carefully positions the economic argument with justifications of reform for the good of society, enabling parents to work and relieving the economic burden of welfare support on the nation. In this argument, the government makes the case for the Early Years Teacher as someone who makes a contribution to society and the economy, which is concerned with more than simply the care and education of young children.

Nevertheless, what is clear throughout the policy directive is an apparent legitimisation for the introduction of the Early Years Teacher as one who will lead on academic learning and education, though less concerned with care. This conclusion is supported on closer examination of the training and standards for EYTS, which clearly reflect those of initial teacher training. In specifying the standards, the government is defining the competencies, skills and knowledge that they consider desirable for a professional in the sector. This thesis argues that this approach reflects a downward pressure from the National Curriculum onto the Early Years Foundation Stage. Such policy manifestations potentially indicate a privileging of more formal teacher-led approaches in ECEC, as opposed to child-led, play-based pedagogies.

6.2 Implications and significance of research

This thesis has attempted to expose some of the dominant discourses that have formed our understanding of professional work in the sector, as well as the factors which impact on the identities of a group of ten trainee Early Years Teachers. In doing so, wider questions related to professional identity in early childhood training programmes have been raised. These issues have the potential to encourage a revisiting of government policy directives which guide early years teacher training programmes.

By encouraging students to share their experiences, understandings and perceptions, this research shows the need to promote students and their trainers to develop the confidence to contribute to such debates. This raises the question of how students and future practitioners might be empowered to understand that they can play their part in opposing the derision of professional practice in the sector. In addition, by encouraging a collective voice in communities of practice, they can stand together to speak out against the standardisation and technicised approaches to practice currently imposed on the sector. In doing so, it is hoped that these emerging professionals can be encouraged to campaign for equity and justice for professional practice in ECEC. This can be achieved via early years pressure groups and organisations, as well as via research and advocacy. The students in this study held expansive views of professionalism, and the importance of their professional knowledge in determining those views. In contrast, government policies, and the standards that define professional competence in the sector, offer restrictive views of professionalism.

Using Integral analysis as a lens through which to investigate the impact of EYITT on the emerging professional identity of trainee Early Years Teachers has provided a holistic and appropriate method to analyse the data. As a result, some useful findings for early years teacher educators have been revealed. This study has provided an insight into the impact of the EYT training programme and related policy directives on the experiences of Early Years Teacher trainees. Although the research focused on a small sample, the wider literature reflects similar concerns about the nature of professionalism and debates about professionalisation of the ECEC workforce. Taken together, these debates and related evidence indicate that government policies that are driven by economic agendas may reduce rather than expand notions of professionalism in ECEC. These debates remain

relevant as the new *Early Years Workforce Strategy* (DfE, 2017) comes into force in England. The problem encountered is, once again, whether restrictive or expansive concepts of professionalism will influence the sector.

6.3 Summary of thesis achievements

This study builds on previous research studies which have considered the professional identities of Early Years Teachers and Professionals (see chapter 2). The contribution to the field of research offered by this thesis can be identified by the following achievements.

The thesis has utilised a framework for methodological analysis which has adapted Integral Theory (Wilber, 2006) for the investigation of professional identity in emerging Early Years Teachers. The literature search found no comparable studies that utilise Integral Theory for educational research. Using Wilber's four quadrants has enabled this thesis to produce a detailed and insightful analysis of the impact of EYITT on the professional identity of trainee teachers. The thesis thereby contributes to understanding of methodological investigation of the phenomena of professional identity in the sector. It allows for a detailed and holistic investigation of the impact of the differing factors which influence the way in which emerging early years teachers make sense of their roles. This thesis has therefore recommended Integral Analysis as a theoretical framework which is valuable for further investigations into professional identity in the ECEC sector.

The research has furthermore illuminated the complex nature of the profession, as perceived by the trainee teachers, and some of the discourses which work to impact on these identities. At a time when the sector is experiencing unparalleled periods of change, the profession is struggling to re-envision professional working in the sector. This thesis has revealed ways in which students understand and experience professional practice and the qualities and traits which, they argue, define professionalism in the sector. A thematic matrix of results (Appendix C) highlights the main findings of the study, utilising the four quadrants to effectively illustrate the motivations, ambitions, perceptions and values which impact on this group of trainees. This matrix illustrates the value of the opportunity to consider the profession through the lenses of Integral Theory, enabling an insightful, comprehensive and considered investigation of professional identity in this group of trainees.

A further unique feature of this thesis has been the scrutiny of policy alongside the dialogue contributed by the emerging Early Years Teachers in the data collection schedule. This has allowed the thesis to investigate the impact of policy and government rhetoric on professional identity in the sector and identified current discourses which are influencing practice in the sector. The misalliance of policy and the attitudes and discourses emerging from the workforce responsible for enacting the aforementioned policies and initiatives has also presented a significant repercussion for this research. Students have been encouraged to conceive of professional identities which allow them to engage with dominant discourses and empower them to resist policy agendas which seek to undermine professional practice in the sector.

This summary identifies the unique and valuable contribution to the research and knowledge offered to the ECEC sector by this thesis. This thesis has examined how trainee Early Years Teachers experience the EYT programme and its impact on professional identity, as experienced and perceived by the students within this study. It is the intention of this thesis that, by identifying factors which impact on emerging professional identity, it is possible to inform an understanding of the phenomena in the sector. This contribution therefore offers an insightful and significant opportunity to view the many factors which guide and frame professional practice in the sector and providing a new way to consider the related dominant policy discourse.

Chapter 7

Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations arising from the research

The recommendations in this chapter are made during a period of fast-paced change within the ECEC sector. At the close of writing this thesis, a national 'crisis' PLA (2016) is emerging related to the government agenda for higher qualifications and an expansion in the ECEC market in the sector. Nationally, a growing number of institutions are closing EYITT programmes due to poor recruitment (Scott, 2016). The institution which hosted this research has itself, in fact, elected to cease recruitment to all EYTS pathways. This decision was taken as a response to rapidly falling student numbers and poor retention.

In this thesis, participants made constant reference to injustice and inequity. In addition, the literature revealed a constantly changing sector in which workforce policy agendas reflected aims and ambitions strongly related to economic outcomes rather than serving the needs of the children and families. Students felt strongly that the pathways designed to professionalise the sector were ill conceived, and called upon the government to rethink the entitlements offered to Early Years Teachers on completion of their training. Whilst this evidence provides a bleak landscape for the sector currently, this thesis seeks to additionally identify recommendations in which the ambitions of the workforce can be recognised.

The first recommendation suggests that training providers consider developing programmes which, in addition to developing the theoretical and practical knowledge relevant for professional practice, also encourage students to consider the impact of policy, legislation and guidance on the sector. In doing so, students are encouraged to reconceptualise ingrained ideas about the workforce, what constitutes quality and the imposition of policy on practice. Students will thus be encouraged to think about new ways of being, inspiring them to think critically about the way professional practice manifests in the public domain. Work in the sector is seen in this research to suffer constant denigration, yet is hailed in policy rhetoric as valuable and important work. As a workforce, students should be encouraged to collectively recognise the damage which can

be inflicted by further unhelpful policy reform. They should also be empowered to recognise the impact they may have as a collective voice in a community of practice. The second recommendation suggests an urgent review of the disparities experienced between state and maintained sector, and opportunities for Early Years Teachers. Until Early Years Teachers can enjoy equity in pay and conditions of service as those who hold the title QTS in a maintained setting, there will continue to be an impact on professional status (Nutbrown, 2013). Developing and improving the workforce requires the government to make a committed investment and this necessitates public and professional recognition for the role. Only by recognising that the role is truly equivalent to QTS in all respects will the profession command the same respect.

The third recommendation therefore relates to the public perception of the work of Early Years Teachers. Examination of the policy rhetoric suggests a mandate for early years education which prioritises school readiness and formal approaches to learning. Children are competent and enthusiastic learners who require a workforce who has the specialist knowledge and skills to support this distinct phase of learning. This research and preceding research (Davis, 2014; Osgood, 2009) has indicated that societal perceptions of the professional nature of work in ECEC has a significant impact on the identity of the Early Years Teacher. It is therefore imperative that a concerted effort by all agencies concerned should seek to raise the profile of the profession, to drive appreciation and recognition of the value of professional work in the sector.

The fourth recommendation relates to the standards of EYTS. This thesis has revealed that participants see limited relevance in the standards and the professional work demanded by the sector. This research recommends that the standards be reviewed to ensure that students are able to engage with and question all aspects of work in the sector.

Lastly, this thesis recommends that whilst this research has focussed on the undergraduate route to EYTS, it would be useful to examine the impact of alternative routes to achieving the qualification, such as post-graduate and employment-based routes. This research found that the knowledge and theories taught on degree programmes were valued by participants above all other traits of professional practice. It was argued that the described depth of knowledge stimulated effective professional

practice and pedagogy. It is therefore imperative that professional development programmes ensure that content is appropriately designed to support students' emerging professional identity, regardless of the pathway on which they enrol. Further investigation would additionally confirm whether the lack of significance attached to the standards to practice were related solely to those studying on the undergraduate pathway or were relevant regardless of the chosen route.

7. 2 Closing comments

This thesis has sought to contribute to the ongoing research conversation related to professional identities in ECEC. The thesis has made visible ways in which discourses in the sector bring about new understandings of the impact of policy and practice on training Early Years Teachers. At the time of writing, the ECEC sector is undergoing a period of intense flux and change, particularly around the debate relating to the professionalisation of the workforce. Policy-driven demands to raise the quality of the workforce have witnessed the creation of the new qualifications. The purpose of this study was to investigate how one of these qualifications, the Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS), has impacted on the professional identity of the trainees it seeks to cultivate.

To reveal the complexities of all aspects which impact on this phenomenon, it was important to resist the temptation to consider identities to be inflexible. Therefore, the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis allowed the research question to be considered through four differing lenses, creating differing spaces for reconsidering the way the phenomena of professional identities is discursively established.

An integral element intrinsic in this study has been the invitation to students to consider the image of the professional Early Years Teacher. Giving the students the opportunity to do so generated thoughtful and, at times, enthusiastic debates related to the identity of the Early Years Teacher. Working together with these students has provided this research with an invaluable opportunity to review their ideas about what constitutes professional practice and the impact of policy. More importantly, students have been encouraged to think expansively about the future of the profession, their hopes and aims for the sector and to consider the part that they could play in that future.

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Appendix A

Joanne Traunter
Registration number: 120222775
School of Education
Programme: EdD Early Childhood

Dear Joanne

PROJECT TITLE: A study to examine the impact of the early years teacher status on the professional identity of emerging early years teachers

APPLICATION: Reference Number 002534

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 17/03/2015 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 002534 (dated 27/12/2014).
- Participant information sheet 004307 version 1 (27/12/2014).
- Participant consent form 004308 version 1 (27/12/2014).

The following optional amendments were suggested:

Please can the information sheet follow the format of the template provided here. There probably should be something in the information sheet that tells the participants how they can raise a concern or complaint? The supervisor's contact details should be added for this purpose. Please can the information sheet follow the format of the template provided here http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.374544!/file/infosheetexamp.pdf This gives the participants a clearer sense of the research venture. Hope this is helpful - this is a really interesting study

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

David Hyatt
Ethics Administrator
School of Education

Dear ……………..

 I am writing to you to ask you if you are willing to be involved in a research project which examines the impact of the early years teacher status (EYITT) on the professional identity of emerging Early Years Teachers. The aim of the study is to consider the perspectives of student early years educators via personal reflection and discussion. It is hoped that the study will provide innovative insights into students emerging professional ideologies. The study would like to include your experiences and reflections related to the personal knowledge, beliefs and practices you encounter throughout your academic journey.

The study will involve two data collection methods and will be of a qualitative design. The data will be collected over a period of twelve months and will be staggered across this time frame. The first method will be an online Bulletin Board focus group, this method will be conducted online and you will be able to contribute to the focus group by discussing an initial question posed by the researcher each day. During the five days of this online focus group you will be able to log on at your own convenience as many times as you wish to contribute.

The second data collection method will invite you to complete a ranking exercise, here you will rank your responses in relation to the priority and importance you would place on the statements made. Statements will emerge from responses of Bulletin board focus group. This exercise will take approximately fifteen minutes and take place in semester two.

All data collected will be anonymised in the report. The data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to the researcher and no names, details or responses will be shared with staff or students. The contributions to the online focus group will be printed and the online forum deleted after the five days, again hard copies of data will be stored securely. You are free to withdraw from the research at any point in time with no adverse consequences, any information gathered before this time will not be utilised for the study and destroyed immediately. If at the end of this study you wish to read the report you are welcome to do so by contacting the researcher directly.

If you have any questions or concerns in relation to your involvement in this study I invite you to attend a meeting on the …. Of January 2016, at this meeting I can answer any questions you may have and give your further relevant detail about the study. Thank you for your consideration of involvement in this study, if there are any further questions you wish to ask then please feel free to contact me via details below.

If you have any concerns in relation to any aspect of this research then please contact the project supervisor: Elizabeth Wood, Professor of Education, rm. 6.12, School of Education, Tel 0114228712, email e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk

Kind Regards

Jo Traunter

Rm ██
J.traunter@hull.ac.uk

Appendix C

© Perspectives of EYT Programme	Interior		Exterior		Key points arising from analysis
	I	**We**	**It**	**Its**	
motivation	Participants overwhelmingly stated that they wanted to work professionally with the young children with the exception of only one student who suggested that she wanted to broaden her knowledge within the children's workforce.	Passion for the role and love of children was regarded by the students as fundamental for practice. The second year students considered passion for the job as the greatest motivating factor to join the programme, the third year students considered this as essential across the workforce as a minimum requirement to practice.	The programme is designed to prepare students for professional working in the ECEC workforce. At point of entry most students did not consider QTS feeling EYTS was sufficient. Others ultimately considering primary education as a career chose the programme to widen the age range available to them to teach.	Despite rhetoric from government stating equivalency to QTS, has no recognised professional body or registration requirement. Students stated that in their experience, higher qualifications often remove practitioners from direct work with children in order to take a more strategic lead.	* A strong desire to work with young children reported as motivation to enrol. *No Professional body or registration requirement *Lack of parity in pay and conditions * Students experiences indicated that increased qualifications may result in less direct contact with children.
ambition	Participants reported that they enrolled on the programme to become early years or primary school teachers. Post graduate teacher training was stated as inevitable by the majority (9/10 students) to ensure opportunities to gain QTS and broaden the age range they can teach and to truly	Participants acknowledged the benefit of undertaking the degree qualification. In addition they appreciate that the increased knowledge is allowing them to construct a professional identity that the sector value; however participants report little optimism for wider recognition of the	Students in this study regarded the title of the qualification to be one of the most significant contributors to their emerging professional identity. The DFE promised equal status to those who hold the qualification and title EYTS as those who hold the title QTS. Students felt the title	EYTs do not have qualified teacher status and cannot lead practice in maintained schools on the main pay scale. Aligning teaching standards and standards for EYT in the more great childcare agenda	*Students felt the programme prepared them theoretically and in practice. * Lack of parity in extrinsic rewards means students choose PG routes after the completion of the EYT

	achieve recognition for their status and profession.	status of EYTS and professionalism beyond their training.	was misleading to trainees, parents and employers.	indicate a privileging of teaching in the ECEC agenda. There remains an incongruity between a commitment to develop the workforce and the continued focus on alleged deficiencies in sector which require transformation	*Students regarded the title 'teacher' to be misleading. *A privileging of teaching indicates an agenda for ECEC which values education over care and suggests ECEC workforce is currently deficient.
value	Participants valued the training and opportunities offered by the degree programme. They felt of particular significance was the opportunity to contextualise the theory in practice. Participants stated that they would feel prepared by the programme to lead practice in a professional context on completion of their training.	Participants ranked thinking and knowledge based traits gained on the programme more highly than the caring traits, when defining professional practice in the sector, in particular reflective/reflexive thinking. In this way students were able to establish the early years teacher, as one whose skills are built on a foundation of knowledge and theoretical evidence, thereby validating their professional identity.	Participants recognise the top-down approach imposed by the standards of EYT which promote school based learning approaches to professional practice in early years. Participants consider the role of the early years teacher as fundamental to the wider educational landscape. Students consider that the work of the early years teacher is pivotal in preparing a 'love of learning' in young children, which will prepare them for future schooling.	The rhetoric within the More Great Childcare (2013) document, engages in a dialogue related to economics which seeks to establish the early years teacher identity as being one who can contribute to the economic prosperity of society. The document articulates the argument that quality staff equals quality 'education', with little mention of the place of care in the profession, thereby legitimising the demand for a graduate led industry..	*The EYT is articulated as raising quality and thereby contributing to economy by increasing opportunities for children, families and society at large to become more prosperous and successful. *Top down approach of school based pedagogy compromising professional integrity
Internal perceptions	Significant in responses from participants was the suggestion that they felt undervalued as a teacher. The EYT status did not provide parity with QTS and thus they felt demonstrated a lack respect and confidence in the	Participants perceive an EYT as someone who should lead practice and yet they felt that this entitlement to practice was one which was strictly confined to the private sector	Participants stated that they would feel confident about the skills of an early years teacher who had completed the EYT programme and would consider that they were more appropriately skilled to work in	Students were unconvinced by the rhetoric emerging from government. Students consider that whatever language emerges from policy direction and documentation, the value placed on working with young	*Students are confident about the skills EYT degree programmes develop and see value in the role of the EYT in young children's lives

	individuals which held the qualification.	Students perceive EYTs as responsible for modelling professionalism and leading practice but are aware that in the private sector this may take them away from direct practice with children.	ECEC than one who held QTS. Students indicated that their experiences suggested that this was not a perception shared by employers and society.	children is palpably lower than the value placed on teaching older children and adults	*Lack of parity in opportunities to practice results in students perceiving the status to hold little respect and confidence externally.
external perceptions	Participants reported lack of professional recognition within the public and professional domain as a constraining factor in the creation of their own personal professional identity.

Frustrations were expressed in relation to the impact of external perceptions of EYT in placement training. Support in settings for training was problematic due to uncertainty from staff as to the nature or purpose of the training and role, this, participants felt led to a lack of challenge in training opportunities in practical contexts. | Participants stated that the word teacher in the title had little impact on how they are perceived as a sector of the workforce.

Participant had encountered reactions which included suggestions that they need not study to degree level to work with young children and that the status is inferior to QTS

Frustrations were expressed by participants that the youngest children were considered to need the least support in their learning by the least qualified staff | Historically the role of the early years professional has often been viewed as that of the care giver, rather than that of an expert having specialist knowledge of ECEC.

Participants expressed frustration at the lack of recognition and value for the training and roles of early years professionals.

It was felt that confidence in the workforce was low and the result is a regulated and technicised approach to professional training emerging from government policy ambitions and enforced on the sector in the name of raising quality in the workforce. | The message from government speaks of a clear commitment to raise the professional profile of early years practice, with the focus on the development of the new EYT qualification to endorse professional working within the sector. Yet EYTS does not provide QTS, the data suggests a resultant impact on the professional identity of the participants, who are aware of the inequality in status, power and pay the position holds in the wider workforce. | *Students experience frustration and disappointment at lack of public recognition for the profession.

*Lack of knowledge and understanding about the role had significant impact on training in settings

*Lack of confidence and respect for the role of EY professionals in the workforce was resulting in highly regulated and technicised training which does not fully reflect the role

*Continued reference to the deficiency of the workforce and commitment to raise quality is contradicted by government reluctance to provide equal opportunities for EYT as QTS. |
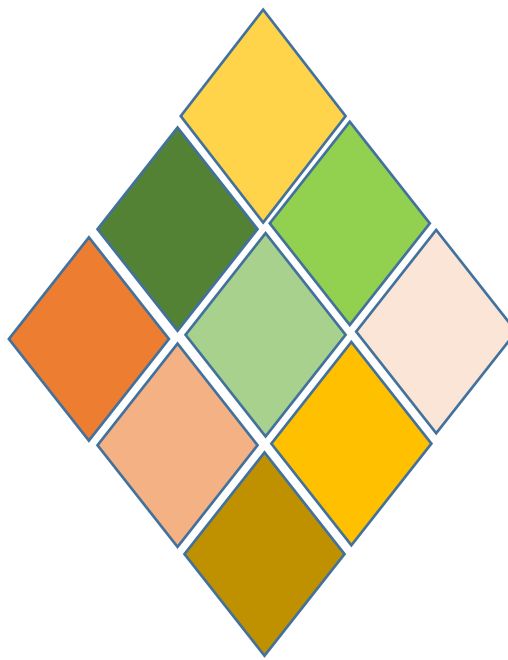
Diamond Ranking Order of Professional Traits

Year 1 and 2 Comparisons

Year 2

Year 3

■ Power and autonomy in the workplace, leading others to develop practice

■ Meeting a set of competence based standards successfully eg EYTS standards

■ Accreditation to practice, belong to a professional body eg QTS

■ Ethics of care, ability to engage emotionally with the child and families

■ Professional love, passionate about working with children

■ A wide body of knowledge and the theory of ECEC through graduate qualifications
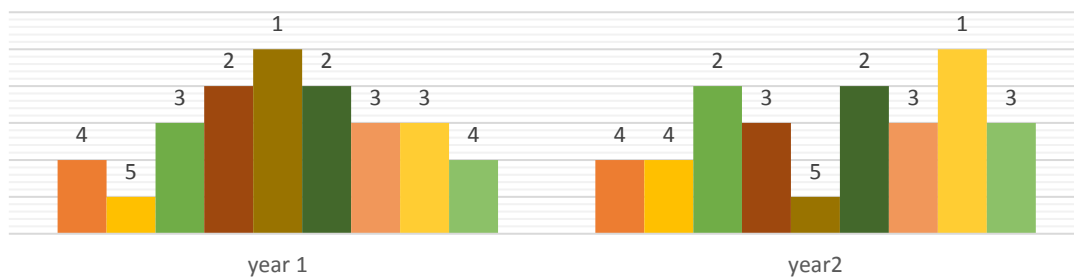
Appendix E

<u>List of Questions added to Focus group to provoke discussion</u>

- Why did you choose this particular programme of study and what are your resultant career hopes at the end of the programme?
- What are the skills and knowledge that you feel are necessary for professional working in the sector?
- Does EYITT in your opinion equip you with the necessary skills and knowledge needed to successfully perform the role?
- Is the age range you are equipped to work with wide enough to give you options for professional working in the sector?
- What career do you envisage an EYITT embarking on if they don't wish to teach in schools?
- Is gaining QTS important/necessary if you wish to pursue a career in ECEC?

- Your responses indicate that you view the qualification as another string to your bow in gaining a place teaching primary, as opposed to wanting to become an early years teacher?
- Many on this forum state you wish to become an EY teacher but you intend to do a PGCE at the end of your EYT, you all suggest this is to broaden the age range you can teach, is this correct or do some have alternative reasons for this course of action?
- If EYT allowed you to teach foundation stage and key stage 1 in schools, would you no longer feel the need to do a PGCE or are there other advantages people feel they would gain from this further qualification?
- Many of you are stating that the public and professionals you encounter do not understand the professional role. Has anyone else encountered such reactions to the role or the training programme?
- How could the profile of early years teachers (EYT) be raised if it needs raising at all?
- Some of you believe that the lack of respect you state you encounter is related to age range of the children you teach, what makes you believe this to be true and do some people not relate to this statement?