

**Negotiating and Developing Professionalism: Early Years  
Practitioners' Stories of Professional Identity**

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|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Table of contents</b>   |           |
| <b>Abstract</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Table of Figures</b>  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Glossary</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Chapter One: Introduction.</b>                                  | <b>8</b>  |
| Professionalisation and the change agenda                          | 9         |
| Exploring professional identity                                    | 11        |
| Personal context   | 11        |
| Thesis summary   | 12        |
| <b>Chapter Two: Literature Review.</b>                             | <b>16</b> |
| The policy context for professionalising the workforce             | 17        |
| Senior Practitioner Status   | 19        |
| Early Years Professional Status                                    | 20        |
| Early Years Teacher Status 2014 and beyond                         | 22        |
| Development of a curriculum  | 23        |
| Definitions of professionalism                                     | 25        |
| The professionalisation of ECEC                                    | 26        |
| Professional identity  | 28        |
| External contributions to professional identity                    | 31        |
| Professional traits and competencies                               | 33        |
| Knowledge  | 33        |
| Education  | 36        |
| Skills   | 37        |
| Autonomy   | 38        |
| Values and Ethics  | 40        |
| Reward   | 42        |
| Professional identity development in ECEC what is being privileged | 43        |
| Privileging knowledge over caring                                  | 44        |
| Privileging Teaching   | 46        |
| Quality and standards  | 47        |
| <b>Chapter Three: Methodology.</b>                                 | <b>50</b> |
| Methods  | 56        |
| Ethical considerations of interviewing                             | 64        |
| Ethical considerations of analysis                                 | 65        |
| Data Analysis  | 67        |
| Holistic Silhouettes analysis                                      | 67        |
| Analysing the narratives within the policy context                 | 75        |
| Conceptualising my methodological journey                          | 77        |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Chapter Four: Presenting the data: the professional development narratives.</b>         | <b>81</b>  |
| Exploring the head: Knowledge, reasoning and thinking                                      | 88         |
| Exploring the heart: the passion, feelings, values and beliefs.                            | 95         |
| Exploring the hands: Performing professionalism in practice                                | 100        |
| Negotiating tensions   | 108        |
| <b>Chapter Five: The impact of policy on participant's views of professionalism.</b>       | <b>116</b> |
| Training and qualifications  | 117        |
| Funding and ratios   | 125        |
| Regulation and inspection  | 129        |
| The Early Years Curriculum   | 132        |
| <b>Chapter Six: Conclusion: Developing Professionalism</b>                                 | <b>140</b> |
| Factors influencing professional identity construction                                     | 143        |
| Professional journeys  | 147        |
| Resisting or embracing constructs of professionalism                                       | 150        |
| Conclusion   | 152        |
| <b>References</b>  | <b>158</b> |
| <b>Appendices</b>  | <b>179</b> |
| Appendix A: Zoe: transcript data from Head (knowledge)                                     | 180        |
| Appendix B: Julie: transcript data from the domain of Heart (feelings, values and beliefs) | 187        |
| Appendix C: Debbie: transcript data from the domain of Hands (practice)                    | 195        |
| Appendix D: (Re) presentation of participants' key word analysis in holistic silhouette    | 203        |
| Appendix E: A timeline of events in ECEC from 1997 to 2012                                 | 207        |
| Appendix F: Example of analysis showing data from theme of curriculum                      | 209        |

## **Abstract**

The professionalisation of the early years education and care workforce became a significant policy issue in England from 1997. Notions of a graduate leading practice became part of the expectations that led to the establishment of the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) (CWDC, 2006). Academic debate at the time began to question the value of the status, with some voices arguing that it purely provided a technician approach (Osgood, 2010) and suggested there was a need to discover how practitioners in the workforce viewed and constructed their own professionalism (Brock, 2006a). This study responds to that call for evidence by exploring the professional life histories of five graduate early years practitioners in England who were working with children from birth to age four years. Analysis and discussion of their narratives considers how they construct their professional identities.

This study recognises the importance of qualifications for developing professional knowledge and identity but also makes a case for acknowledging the role of performing practice; as well as feelings, values and beliefs in professional identity construction. It develops a method of analysis in the 'holistic silhouette' which provides a technique that allows exploration of the interrelationships between these three key aspects of professional identity: head (knowledge, reason and thinking), heart (passion, feelings, values and beliefs) and hands (professionalism as worked out in practice). It concludes this approach provides a means to develop understandings of professional identity construction in the early years workforce through further research, as well as supporting transformation of professional identity within the sector outside of the narrow definitions currently represented by the Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) (NCTL, 2013).

### **List of Figures and Tables in text**

- Table 3:1 Table of participants taken from data
- Figure 3:2 'Holistic silhouette' analysis stage 1
- Table 3:3. Extract from the data analysis
- Figure 3:4 'Holistic silhouette' analysis stage 2
- Figure 3:5 Matrix to show stages of analysis for holistic silhouette
- Figure 3:6 Matrix to show stages of analysis of data against policy context
- Figure 3:7 The 'warp' and 'weft' of data reduction
- Figure 4:1 My (re)presentation of Zoe's professional identity
- Figure 4:2 My (re)presentation of Rachel's professional identity
- Figure 4:3 My (re)presentation of Helen's professional identity
- Figure 4:4 My (re)presentation of Debbie's professional identity
- Figure 4:5 My (re)presentation of Julie's professional identity

## Glossary

I am aware that the nature of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) means that acronyms abound. This short glossary indicates the main acronyms used in this thesis with a short explanation of their meanings and where relevant links to government websites.

CWDC - Children's Workforce Development Council was set up in 2005 to support delivery of the Every Child Matters agenda. It was responsible for the introduction of the Early Years Professional. It closed in 2012 and its responsibilities were taken on by the Teaching Agency.

ECM - Every Child Matters came out of a government response to a high profile Child Protection Case. The five key outcomes were to be embedded in all practice with children.

<https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/EveryChildMatters.pdf>

EPPE - The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project was major longitudinal study to look at the effects of preschool education

<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/research/153.html>

EYE - Early Years Educator is a new specialist term for practitioners qualified to level 3 in the National Qualifications Framework from September 2014.

<http://ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-and-assessments/qualification-frameworks/>.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/h00221927/earlyyearseducators>

EYFS - Early Years Foundation Stage is the statutory framework which sets the standards all early years providers must meet in both education and welfare. Since its introduction in 2008 it has been updated on two occasions to reflect policy changes. <https://www.education.gov.uk/eypqd/eyfs-statutory-framework.aspx>

EYPS - Early Years Professional Status was the first specialist status designed by the CWDC, defined above, to develop graduates who could lead

practice in the early years. It started in 2007 and was replaced in 2012 by the Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS), this then became EY ITT.

EYTS - Early Years Teacher Status replaced EYPS after which it was originally modelled, but with changes to the standards assessed. EYTs are specialists in early childhood development trained to work with babies and young children. Replaced by EY ITT.

EY ITT - Early Years Teacher Initial Teacher Training leading to the award of EYTS. From September 2014 this became the new status for graduates leading practice in the early years predicated on the module for QTS, training and assessment are built around a set of standards that candidates have to meet. It leads to a status not a qualification. <https://www.gov.uk/early-years-initial-teacher-training-a-guide-for-providers>

EYSEFD - Early Years Sector-Endorsed Foundation Degree

KP – Key Person is a term used in the EYFS which says  
3.27. Each child must be assigned a key person. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs (in accordance with paragraph 1.10), to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents.  
(DfE, 2012 p.21)

NCTL - National College for Teaching and Leadership is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department for Education.

NNEB - National Nursery Examination Board this refers to a two year diploma in childcare. Was considered the gold standard in early years training (Nutbrown, 2012 p.22).

NVQ - National Vocational Qualifications

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Ofsted - Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills this is the department responsible for inspection and regulation of the early childhood sector.

PVI providers - private, voluntary and independent childcare providers as opposed to maintained providers which fall under the state system. Some are run for profit and some are not for profit businesses.

QTS - Qualified teacher status.

SEF - Self-Evaluation Form this document was introduced by Ofsted as part of the data collection for inspection and regulation. Each setting needs to complete one before an inspection.

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/early-years-online-self-evaluation-form-sef-and-guidance-for-providers-delivering-early-years-founda>

# Chapter One

## Introduction

The political focus on the professionalisation of the early years workforce (Parker, 2013) coincided with my own professional journey into Higher Education (HE). In 2002 I moved from practice, as the Education Manager, with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in a special needs family centre, to become a Senior Lecturer at a University charged with leading an Early Years Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree (EYSEFD) which fuelled my interest in the notion of professionalisation. This interest was further increased when I examined the relevant literature on the topic which had exploded into the academic arena (Simpson, 2010b). Snape et al. (2007) claimed that most EYSEFD students were mature practitioners with many years of experience in the field of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), but who did not have qualifications at HE level. Furthermore, Mitchell and Lloyd, (2013) argued that these practitioners brought with them not only a great deal of knowledge and understanding about young children, but also a growing awareness that they were in the midst of a period of significant change in relation to early education policy reform (ibid). The reforms placed early years practitioners at the forefront of the change agenda.

The government intention was that the EYSEFD would equip students to become “senior practitioners” (DfES, 2001 p.5) with the ability to lead the learning and development of young children in ECEC. During a discussion session in the new EYSEFD programme about how the skills of the ‘senior practitioner’ were to be defined, a student referred to the political trend of the changing nature of roles and responsibilities in the early years workforce (DfES, 2005) and asked me: “how do we know it won’t change by the time we get there?” This truth came to pass as senior practitioners never developed as a recognised status within the workforce (Miller, 2008; O’Keefe and Tait, 2004). Some of those first Foundation Degree students in my institution went on to be early adopters of the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS); some saw the route as an opportunity to gain a degree and

then obtain QTS and some stopped working in the early years sector altogether. It was those early discussions that began for me an interest in the personal professional experiences of the workforce living and working through a time of unprecedented change (Brock, 2006a) and thus became the focus of the research study reported on in this thesis.

### **Professionalisation and the change agenda**

English government policy (both the previous New Labour government and the current Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition who came to power in 2010) situates the workforce as one in need of professionalising (Urban, 2010). This discourse has failed to recognise the rich resources of experience and practice that exist in many areas of ECEC and which I have explored through this study. Although some examples of these experiences and practice have been captured in studies which have focused specifically on the EYPS (Lumsden, 2012; Lloyd and Hallett, 2010; Simpson, 2010), the issue of professionalism requires further investigation due to the changing nature of workforce reform. Despite the change that has occurred within the discourse on professionalisation of the workforce (Vrinioti, 2013; Simpson, 2010; Evetts, 2003) in the last 15 years early years practice has remained largely unrecognised, hidden by public perceptions of a role which has low status and is low paid (Hordern, 2013). I agree with Brock (2006a) that there is a gap in what is known about early years professionalisation as told by those who work in ECEC. This inspired me to construct a study to investigate the thoughts of those who work in the field and tell the stories of what the practitioners themselves had to say about their experiences as early years professionals. My purpose in this study was to look beyond what is already known from the outcomes of previous studies, what Usher (1996a) calls “knowing differently” (p.19). This thesis is part of a body of research which seeks to contest the dominant culture in contemporary education policy in England that appears to only recognise technicist and rationalist ideologies and instead focuses on practitioner voices (Brock, 2012, 2006a, 2006b, 2001; Goouch, 2010; Simpson, 2010a, 2010b).

At the time of writing, several key policy changes are set to further influence early years practice in England:

- *More great childcare: Raising quality and giving parents more choice* (DfE, 2013a);
- Introduction of Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) and Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT) (NCTL, 2013);
- The proposed changes to child-minding (Morton, 2014);
- The introduction of Early Years Educator qualifications (DfE/NCTL, 2013b).

The literature review chapter of this study further explores the context of these policies.

Professionalisation is a topic for debate not only in England but also internationally in Italy (Balduzzi, 2011); Finland (Karila, 2008); Germany and Greece (Vrinioti, 2013); Australia (Woodrow, 2008) and New Zealand (Cherrington and Wansborough, 2010). This suggests there is a need to reflect upon where the voices of practitioners who are working within the English policy context sit within the wider international policy discourse (OECD, 2012). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) debate has revolved around what makes an early years professional, what professionalism means for ECEC and who is constructing the professional practitioner. It has been argued that the emphasis in England and the development of the EYP has fore-fronted a 'technicist' approach to professionalisation (Moss, 2010; Osgood 2010). I have understood this to mean performing professionalism in a way that can be judged by meeting an external set of standards. Brock (2012), Gooch (2010) and Osgood (2009) have criticised this narrow approach to professionalism. Their suggestion instead is to encourage early years practitioners to construct their own professional identities, which fits with my own thinking (Chalke, 2013). This also reinforces my examination of professional identity through listening to the voices of those employed in professional roles in the current early years workforce in England as told in this thesis.

## **Exploring professional identity**

In this study I have explored how early years practitioners have expressed and constructed their own professionalism. From my experience working with students, I approached this study with the view that early years practitioners have already conceptualised what it means to act professionally. This study explored the personal professional journeys of five practitioners in England who work with children from birth to age four.

I undertook this study mindful of Elliot's (2005) view that identities are created and recreated and are not static over time. I was particularly interested in the passage of time, most notably the changes in policy and practice experienced by practitioners throughout their professional lives. I therefore formulated a series of research questions to allow for the exploration of context over time to become part of the interpretation of identity and which in turn provided me with an insight into these stories. These research questions are:

- How are early years practitioners expressing their professional identity?
- What factors have influenced and continue to influence early years practitioners' professional identity constructions?
- What do early years practitioners personal narratives reveal about their professional journeys?
- How are early year practitioners resisting or embracing the constructs of professionalisation from external influences?

This study is situated at a significant point of change in the development of the early years workforce in England, with various government models of prescribed professional status. Therefore this research provided me with a unique opportunity to capture the views from the workforce at this time of change.

## **Personal context**

I am acutely conscious of the role I played myself as researcher and my epistemological and ontological approach to the creation and exploration of knowledge as both constructivist and interpretivist. I have sought to make meaning at all stages of the research process, through interpreting the worlds my participants inhabited, while recognising there are multiple realities that are possible (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). I also acknowledge that I have drawn significantly upon my own understandings, values and beliefs as an early years educator in the way I have constructed, interpreted and made meaning of what I heard and saw (Youniss, 2006). While some of these felt intuitive (Elliot, 2005) it was important that I aimed for reflexivity throughout and that I identify whose voice I have used while recognising I am part of the work I have constructed (Usher, 1996b). The acknowledgement of the power relationships within this study includes acknowledging that I had access to the advantages of education all through my life (Brine, 2010; Harding, 1987), whereas my participants were from a sector that traditionally had low educational attainment (Snape and Finch, 2006). The issue of power was revisited throughout and considered not only in relationship to my participants, but also the power inherent or not in the roles they enacted in their daily lives.

## **Thesis summary**

This thesis is structured through six chapters. In Chapter One, I have introduced the background and context to the study before now moving on to map out the structure of how the remainder of the study is reported on.

In Chapter Two I critically review the literature starting with the contextualisation of policy in ECEC in England in order to frame the later analysis, followed by a discussion which gives consideration of the ways in which professional identity can be considered. In looking at studies related to professional identity, I focus upon not only those specific to early childhood (Harwood, et al., 2013; Brock 2012; Osgood, 2012, 2006b; Karila, 2008) but

draw upon a range of ideas and practices in similar educational studies such as those undertaken by Goouch (2010), Egan (2009, 2006), Sikes and Gale (2006) and Nias (1989). I conclude it is not possible to consider professional identities without also drawing upon ideas about personal identity, values and beliefs and these aspects shaped the methodological process. The literature review then utilises what I consider as the seminal work of Brock (2012, 2006a, 2006b) as a starting point for exploring professional traits and competencies and concludes with a consideration of the privileged discourses in current constructs of ECEC professional identity.

My methodological journey is explored in Chapter Three where I explain how I perceive the whole thesis has become an iterative practice through which I create meanings drawn from the literature, the data and my own experience and personal journey. I conceptualise this as a weaving, where I begin by seeking the patterns of individual lives and end by aligning them in a structure that presents a whole picture but in which individual strands and texture can still be observed and returned to. I conclude that although I go on to represent the narratives at this moment in time in a particular way, they could be unwoven and rewoven again and could mean different things at different times and in different contexts (Clough, 2002).

This chapter argues for the importance of the use of narrative because of its ability to hear practitioners' voices, aligning with Riessman (2008) who suggested identities are narratives that people tell about themselves and that in collecting stories about experiences, aspects of identity are also revealed. It also explains how the 'holistic silhouette analysis' emerged and was developed as a way to ethically explore keeping the integrity of the individual stories while also providing a way of considering the data.

The rationale for the criterion for selecting participants is also fully discussed in Chapter Three. In choosing those who work with children up to four years of age to focus on I use the term practitioner throughout the thesis as relating in this instance to those who work in a preschool, nursery setting or at home, caring and educating young children within the English Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2012). For me there is a confusion and blurring of

practitioner roles within reception classes within schools, that has not yet been clearly resolved (Messenger, 2013; Simpson, 2010a) and as such I have not included these within my study. There are some studies such as that by Gooch (2010) which focus on early years teachers with QTS mainly in school based contexts, and Brock (2012) includes representation in both school based and out of school settings. I consider that it is the practitioners working with children up to the age of four years that needed further representation and which therefore became the focus for this study.

In Chapter Four I present and discuss the narratives from my participants utilising the holistic silhouette analysis which I developed to make meaning from the stories. This analysis explores the personal representations of the participants' professional journeys and draws out similarities and challenges in their narratives in order to tell the story of how they were expressing their professional identities.

In Chapter Five I review the stories told to look at the influence of the policy context on participants' views of professionalism and the impact of the drive from central government for professionalisation of the workforce. The dominant themes of: training and qualification; funding and ratios; regulation and inspection; and the early years curriculum are explored to determine how the participants stories of acceptance or resistance emerge within these contexts.

Chapter Six concludes with a review of how this thesis has addressed the research questions and a summary of the main findings of the analysis. It suggests that the original contribution of this thesis includes the use of a specific model of analysis as a process for exploring professional identity. It proposes this model could also be used as a tool to promote discussion on the role of the professional and what it is to be a professional early years practitioner. It reinforces the importance of knowledge and qualifications in developing professional identity; the key role care and nurturing play in professional work with young children; and the ability of practitioners to enact their personal pedagogies through the EYFS (DfE, 2012). It concludes with recommendations for further research into the areas of collaborative

reflection and professional identity constructions to support the development of communities of practice as part of a more general move to professionalisation within the early years workforce.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

Practitioners in the field of ECEC have been significantly engaged in discussions about professionalism and professionalisation of the workforce for a considerable period. One example of this writing is Stonehouse (1989) who discussed issues of identity and stereotypes about the nature of early years practitioners, some of which still have resonance today. Stonehouse raised the question about who is looking after young children and the way society and the sector construct practitioners and their roles. Other researchers such as Katz (1985) and Brock (2006) also acknowledged the professionalisation agenda in ECEC. Miller (2008) and Osgood (2012) indicated it exists across Europe and into other contexts (OECD, 2006). In England the discussion around professionalisation of the ECEC workforce has been closely linked to government policy starting from the National Childcare Strategy (DfES, 1998) and this chapter therefore begins with a review of the policy context in England from that date.

It then seeks to interrogate and establish contemporary constructs of professionalisation and professionalism, as well as to examine the key concepts of professional identity, professional behaviour and professional values. It is recognised that the literature to be drawn on in these areas does not just come from the field of ECEC but is also allied to other caring professions such as nursing, as well as more general education. It is important to consider these ideas as part of the debate in ECEC rests on how individuals, communities of practice and society in general view the two elements of education and care in terms of status and privilege and therefore how in constructing a professional identity for the ECEC workforce these complementary and /or competing elements are perceived and restated by those within and outside of the workforce.

## **The context for professionalising the workforce in England.**

The ECEC workforce is a complex organism, being a community that can be made up of a range of different roles and job titles (Aubrey, 2011; Adams, 2008a; McGillivray, 2008) that include academics, teacher educators, local policy implementers as well as practitioners (Osgood, 2006a). Additionally the work they do is carried out in a variety of settings and may include work with older children and other family members, as well as work requiring the implementation of the EYFS (DfE, 2012). A large proportion of the work of ECEC is carried out in Private, Voluntary or Independent settings (PVI) in England and this diverse group has historically recruited practitioners who are mainly female and poorly qualified (Nutbrown, 2012). For other practitioners, their professional role may not relate to direct work with children because they are affiliated to professions such as health or social care. Consequently there are a range of qualifications, training backgrounds and routes into the workforce as well as variable pay and conditions (Miller, 2008).

McGillivray (2008) suggested there is additional confusion over the range of titles for people working with young children, as different titles contribute to different understandings of professional identity, even though individuals may be undertaking similar jobs (Adams, 2008a; BERA, 2003). This confusion exists not only within the ECEC sector, but also makes it difficult for the general public to clearly identify the workforce and therefore impacts upon the discourse of professionalism within ECEC. Moyles (2001) proposed the term practitioner can cover the diverse workforce who include teachers and nursery nurses working directly with children. This terminology is helpful to discriminate the professionalisation and professional identity of practitioners in general, as distinct from the status that has been awarded to Early Years Professionals (EYP) (Simpson, 2010b) as a recognition of meeting a specific set of standards.

Policy discourses reflect the underlying policy drivers that have influenced the move towards professionalisation of the sector (Parker, 2013; Cooke and Lawton, 2008). Osgood (2009) suggested and Page (2013b) acknowledged

that ECEC at the time of the National Childcare Strategy (DfES, 1998) was the means through which the government aimed to achieve its objective of engaging more women/mothers in the workforce through providing access to day care. This agenda is not unique to England but can be seen mirrored in the developing world, where economic imperative requires more accessibility to the workplace. As Urban (2008) proposed, “political agendas are driven by common concerns about employment, competitiveness and gender equality” (p.137). Cooke and Lawton (2008) described the development of ECEC services as “critical to delivery of both economic prosperity and social justice” (p.6), with the suggestion that requirements for developing early education are closely linked to ideas of early intervention and the promise that high quality provision would help close the gap for those in deprivation (Brooker, 2007). These aspects remain strongly in the policy of the coalition government (Parker, 2013).

The difficulty for policy makers is mediating the requirements for ‘quality’, with what are very low wages in the sector (Gambaro, 2012). There have been significant funds directed towards ECEC, through the transformation fund and graduate leader fund, policies which were specifically dedicated to supporting employers to hire better qualified workers or to sponsor their training (ibid). However these have not meaningfully addressed the overall issues of generally low pay throughout the sector (Daycare Trust, 2008). Gambaro (2012) suggested there remains an inherent problem in the recognition of how to quantify and reward skills related to caring that are not formally recognised or accredited by the training systems.

Following the publication of *More great childcare: raising quality giving parents a choice* (DfE, 2013) one solution to the quality and funding dilemma proposed that higher qualified staff were able to work with corresponding higher ratios of children to adults. The argument here was that better qualified staff provided higher quality provision (Parker, 2013). However this pressure for higher child to adult ratios was strongly resisted by the sector through the consultation process as devaluing the importance for young children of close relationships with significant adults and undermining ideas about quality held by the sector (TACTYC, 2013).

Urban (2010) suggested that there is a general agreement that the workforce is key to attaining policy goals relating to both sufficient quantity of provision, but also the desired quality of provision. One of the consequences of this focus has been that it has created a discourse that positions the workforce as something that needs to be professionalised in order to cope with the increasing requirements and challenges of the work. The transformation reform agenda implemented by the previous New Labour Government stated that it was “designed to improve life chances for all and reduce inequalities” (DfES, 2006 p.2), part of this agenda “is the increasing skills and competence of the workforce” (Miller, 2008 p.256). The *Children’s Workforce Strategy* (DfES, 2005) was the vehicle through which plans for transformation could be traced, and through which the funding for training was released. This policy was influenced by findings from the Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) research (Sylva et al., 2004) which indicated that higher quality provision was experienced by the children when graduates were part of the provision. The target was to increase graduates within the workforce, until there was at least one graduate in each PVI setting mainly through the introduction of the EYP, introducing the policy step towards professionalisation through qualifications. The strategy also intended to improve qualifications across the sector, where a large proportion remained unqualified or qualified below level 3 National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ), to 70% of workforce obtaining a level 3 qualification (DfES, 2005).

### **Senior practitioner status**

The move towards a graduate led workforce started several years before the launch of the Workforce strategy (DfES, 2005) and is illustrated by the Senior Practitioner status that was created in 2001 (Miller, 2008). This status was achieved through the completion of a Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree in Early Years and promised to provide the ECEC sector with a new level of professional practice, based on Foundation Degrees that complied with a government set of learning outcomes specified in *The Statement of Requirements* (DfES, 2001). Foundation Degrees were introduced as part of a wider policy context on professionalisation, something which Edmond

(2010) suggested indicated a shift to a post-technocratic model which emphasised the acquisition of professional competences rather than knowledge and enabled “practitioners to be valued as professionals” (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010 p.78) although others suggested it was only at a “associate professional level” (Farely, 2010 p.3).

The introduction of EYSED also suggested the possibility of some type of career progression linked to qualifications, via routes to graduate status and /or qualified teacher status (Miller, 2008). However, as Lloyd and Hallet (2010) identified, the role of senior practitioner was never fully articulated and issues of pay and conditions were never addressed, meaning that many Foundation Degree graduates moved to new employment (Miller, 2008). These feelings of dissatisfaction were compounded with the introduction of EYPS leaving many Foundation Degree graduates feeling unfulfilled and let down (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010) by the changing requirements for professional recognition. Currently Foundation Degrees in early years are seen more as an articulated progression route to full graduate status rather than a stand-alone qualification (DfE, 2013c).

### **Early Years Professional Status**

The EYP was introduced as the graduate professional who would lead practice in implementation of the EYFS, act as agents of change (Faux, 2010) and raise standards in settings (Miller, 2008). Taggart (2010) criticised the EYPS claiming it was an example of a “particular form of professionalism” (p.88) which Osgood (2010) argued “foregrounds a neo liberal, ‘technicist’ approach in which individuals must perform professionalism and are judged by an external set of criteria” (p.120). To achieve the status candidates had to demonstrate they met a set of 39 standards. It was these standards, rather than the process that indicated a performativity of professionalism that was ritualistic rather than embodied within practice. Nevertheless, it could also be argued that if engaging in the process of obtaining EYPS enabled practitioners to see themselves as leaders of practice and agents of change (CWDC, 2010a) this was a step

towards the professionalisation of the sector, and part of a journey that was about enhancing practitioners' performance (Hadfield et al., 2012).

However, the nature of leadership in ECEC is in itself a multi-faceted debate (McDowall Clark and Murray, 2012; Robins and Callan, 2009; Whalley, 2008). Although the leadership role of EYPS was very specific in respect of leading practice, a proportion of the first candidates were not necessarily working hands on with under-fives in early years settings, but were teachers in reception classes, managers and supervisors (Lumsden, 2012) who undertook the training for a variety of reasons (Ranns et al., 2011). It could be seen that some of these early adopters were not therefore changing practice from within, through role modelling and being part of the community of practitioners working directly with children, but were already part of leadership and management models (Whalley, 2008) and undertook EYPS to gain a specific early childhood recognised status.

The standards themselves raised concerns about the nature of the professional practice that was being assessed (Gaunt, 2013) and whether the assessment processes were able to measure, support or acknowledge some of those professional traits that many in the workforce deemed essential to effective practice, such as passion and caring (Brock, 2006a). Taggart (2011) suggested that these skills were not articulated in the standards because "care" was "taken for granted" (p.87) as a lower skill upon which professionalism is built. However, I agree with Page and Elfer (2013) who argued for the complex nature of professional caring, requiring the ability to manage not only one's own emotions but the turbulent and changing emotional states of the children being cared for. Additionally, this policy discourse on professionalisation appears to emphasise a body of standards or competencies that teachers, early years professionals and integrated centre managers need to acquire, but does not really address what it means to be a professional across the workforce. It recognises only a narrow section of practitioners within its definitions and assessment processes. The problem this raises is that competencies and criteria are not taken as indicative of professionalism but used as measures of set practice.

There were concerns raised about the entry requirements on some of the pathways for EYPS (Gaunt, 2013) particularly one where a graduate in an unrelated degree, with minimal experience in early years practice can achieve the status in one year. There were also some management issues on the ground, where new graduates were coming in to lead practitioners who have immense experience but not academic qualifications (Simpson 2010b; Miller, 2008). There were other unresolved issues as well, such as the lack of parity of status in relation to school teachers. While it was suggested it would be an equivalent status, early reports from EYPs suggested on-going and antagonistic relationships, particularly within reception classes in maintained school settings, where qualified teachers continued to hold the lead role even if they did not have specialist training for under-fives (Simpson, 2010a; 2010b). Woodrow (2008) suggested that this privileging of identities from the compulsory school sector indicated a possible danger that the EYP would remain in a marginalised role working mainly with birth to age three in private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings. The final report into the impact of EYPS (Hadfield et al., 2012) highlighted that 52% of those in the study felt there was still a lack of an obvious career path even with the status, but 85% did feel it had improved their own sense of professional status (ibid, p.5).

### **Early Years Teacher Status 2014 and beyond**

The major work for this research took place within the context of a discussion about the role of the EYP and how as a status it was perhaps indicating a technician approach to professionalisation and as such I will return to that construct throughout. However, although that status has currently changed to Early Years Teacher, the mechanisms for the delivery and assessment for the first iteration were strikingly similar to those for EYPS and therefore the discourses of professionalisation as a regulated technician approach remained current.

It is apparent, however, in the second iteration of the *Early Years Initial Teacher Training: September 2014*, (NCTL, 2013) that the model of the graduate in early years has moved from one who is leading practice to align

with graduate teacher entry pathways. This is suggested by both the terminology of 'initial' and the nature of the standards being closely aligned to other models of QTS, thus reflecting Moss's (2010) concern about what he saw as the 'schoolification' of early years. The proposed routes are now based on graduate entry, with no opportunity for direct progression from Foundation Degrees in the same articulated manner that EYPS provided (DfE/NCTL, 2013c). It appears there is little confidence in the sector regarding the standards for EY ITT being an appropriate benchmark for early years practice because of the absence of the mention of play and pedagogy for babies and toddlers, for example (BERA/TACTYC, 2013). The reforming of the professionalisation of the workforce into a teacher led profession is not universally being welcomed, as it also comes without increased pay or better conditions despite being so closely aligned to a qualified teaching model. However the 'role' identity (Cohen, 2008) of the EYTS is likely to be recognised by others beyond the sector, with expectations attached about the beliefs and values situated in that role as everyone is familiar with the concept of teacher.

### **Development of a curriculum**

Alongside the development of qualifications there has been the development of an early years curriculum that can be seen to have been aligned to the money that has been directed into ECEC for providing places for two, three and four year olds, supporting Doyle's (1997) argument that "a curriculum is essentially policy to govern schooling and content" (p.98). This is evidenced by the rapid development of a range of curricula and regulatory documents. Regulation was initially through standards of care, which were enshrined in the *National Standards for Day Care* (DfES, 2003) and explained the care requirements and regulations for children across a range of settings, while the *Desirable Learning Outcomes* (SCAA, 1996) gave suggestions for what children should be learning while in the settings in preparation for starting school. Four years later those outcomes had become structured and formulated into a more significant document, the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (CGFS) (QCA, 2000) for three to five year olds and the first step towards a statutory curriculum. Within two years there was

guidance for the under threes with the publication of *Birth to Three Matters* (DfES, 2002).

The introduction of a statutory curriculum for under-fives marked a significant point in increasing government intervention. *The Early Years Foundation Stage* (EYFS) (DCSF, 2008) can be seen as a strategic move as part of the childcare strategy and the Childcare Act 2006, bringing together the three distinct parts which practitioners had to give attention to, into one document for all early childcare providers. This involvement by central government in the day to day activities that need to be undertaken in the lives of young children aged birth to five, represent for me, part of the shift within the early years to a privileging of an education agenda that is outcomes driven and linked to curriculum delivery, instituting a type of 'performative regime' (Ball, 2003). Providing the inspection regime with predetermined outcomes for assessment of quality, strengthened this view of a performativity discourse that Moss (2010) proposed is evidenced in ECEC in England.

It could alternatively be suggested that this regulation and statutory curriculum could result in an enhanced professionalism, because it forefronts a body of knowledge that all practitioners have to demonstrate in their practice. As Ortlipp et al. (2011) contended this also provides a view into what is constituted as valued in practice, and in the case of the EYFS (DCFS, 2008) also stressed the educational aspect of early childhood provision. Because the curriculum emphasises school readiness, it could be argued it has driven "underground the softer and more humanistic aspects of early childhood education ... and thus eclipsed the central importance of caring" (Goldstein, 1998 p.259). This is despite the literature making clear that the aspect of care and "professional love" (Page, 2011 p.310) is vitally important in the work of the entire ECEC sector (Taggart, 2011; Moyles, 2001) and particularly in the work with under threes (Manning-Morton, 2006). I do not have the scope in this literature review to discuss the psychological literature around attachment theory, but acknowledge its influence as the theoretical basis for the development of the key person approach (Elfer et al., 2012). It could be argued that as the key person is a feature of the EYFS (DfE, 2014), this notion of the importance of relationships is embedded within

curriculum principles, even if the care required to undertake these relationships is not recognised as a professional trait when unpicked from that role.

Oberhuemer (2005) suggested that specified curricula framework can bring challenges in terms of professionalisation. On the one hand they may indicate improved value and status because they confirm the professional nature of the work, but on the other the prescribed framework may limit or undermine professional independence, developing performativity (Spencer-Woodley, 2014) rather than professionalism. This would particularly be the case if there was lack of confidence, knowledge or understanding in how to interpret the curriculum, thereby leading to a more formulaic approach. This challenge for the practitioner is identified by Cottle and Alexander (2012) who discussed how this tension is exacerbated by the conflict that arises from the differences in language and emphasis between the statutory requirements (DCSF, 2008a) and the non- statutory guidance for the EYFS (DCSF, 2008b).

Having explored the policy context, this chapter will move on now to discuss ways in which professionalism has been constructed in the literature.

### **Definitions of professionalism**

There is general agreement about the difficulty of coming up with a simple definition of professionalism or what makes a professional and it has been suggested that these definitions are not universally understood (Oberheumer, 2005; Evetts, 2003). Lloyd and Hallet (2010) proposed there is a traditionally accepted framework of a professional which could be considered. This model included three main elements;

- “the monopolisation of specific and exclusive skills and knowledge;
- group member solidarity and
- restricted access to learning opportunities requiring accreditation to practice” (p.76).

These elements denote the importance of access to tertiary/higher education (Evetts, 2003) as part of the process of becoming a professional, as this type

of education is the means through which specialist knowledge may be gained and /or accreditation may occur. There is also no agreed definition of what a professional behaves like as some approaches emphasised a more moral or altruistic construct of professional practice (Gilligan, 2011) rather than the functional or normative view held by others (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Evetts, 2003).

Osgood in her writings (2010, 2006a, 2006b) argued that the ECEC community should be engaging in the process of constructing a view of professionalism for the workforce, that situates them as part of the process, rather than accepting an externally constructed identity, what Evetts (2003) referred to as professionalism being “imposed from above” (p.409). This view of the professionals themselves constructing their identity is something Simpson (2010a; 2010b) supports and Musgrave (2010) has some sympathy with as she argued a more highly qualified workforce will be able to contribute to the discussion. It is the problematic nature of definitions and constructs which means that they are not universally agreed but often contested that justifies further research (Simpson, 2010a; Furlong et al., 2000) and allows for the possibility of new forms of professional identity to emerge, which is the focus of this thesis.

### **The professionalisation of ECEC**

Freidson (1999) defined a profession as a “particular kind of specialised work located within a much larger universe of work” (p.119), and advocated there are recognised value differentials of professional occupations within society. Ultimately Freidson’s view suggests the workforce is not deemed professional by its own ideologies, constructs and identity, but where it sits in relation to the workforce in general. This would explain one of the difficulties for viewing ECEC as a professional occupation as ECEC has always been a poor relation to compulsory education (Moss, 2010). Also, teacher education itself has recently gone through challenges to its professional identity (Sachs, 2001). The issues around professionalisation are therefore not fixed or concrete, but rather need interpreting and reinterpreting in the light of changing societal, political and economic discourses. Woodrow (2008)

indicated that he felt “to seek a fixed position is futile: professionalism has always been a changing concept” (p.275), and Ortlipp, et al. (2011) recommended that because there are “multiple discourses of professionalism and pedagogic practice” (p.57) it would be possible for early childhood practitioners to engage in a form of agency to resist or reject some of these. That this resistance is problematic is evidenced by Evetts’ (2003) view that “accountability and performance indicators have become a fundamental aspect of professionalism” (p.408) and these external elements become the tools through which professional identity becomes normalised and performed. Raven (2011), on the other hand, emphasised the view that professional competence should be demonstrated by seeking to influence external constraints, rather than merely working within them.

Miller (2008) made the case that students and training providers should be part of the process of helping early years practitioners develop a sense of professional identity. However, the historic nature and variety of training sites and qualifications in the ECEC has made this difficult (Nutbrown, 2012). Osgood (2006a) highlighted that in order to do this practitioners and students need to develop effective “reflective” and “reflexive practice” (p.11), as reflexivity will support practitioners not only to engage in a deeper level of understanding through reflection upon their practice (Potter and Hodgson, 2007) it will enable them to develop and take their ideas forward into new constructs.

However even with a political shift to focus upon ECEC (Osgood, 2009; Miller, 2008; Urban, 2008), Fleer (2002) noted that historically “the status of the early childhood profession was deemed to be extremely low, making it an unattractive career option” (p.26). This is partly due to significant differences in pay, employment conditions and educational qualifications (Moss, 2006). Comparison with our European neighbours provides fresh eyes to examine the familiar. Oberhuemer (2005) made a study of the different societal values given to ECEC professionals, raising challenges around use of terminology and the conceptualisations behind ideas of teaching and pedagogy. This was reflected in a discussion that took place in England as part of the government’s consultation on the future of the workforce (DfES, 2005). The

resulting decision for the EYPS was aligned to the idea of a 'new teacher' rather than the pedagogue model (Miller, 2008) and privileged the importance of education in the professionalisation agenda. This decision seems to have been reemphasised in the new standards for EYTS which are closely aligned to teaching standards and monitored by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) (2012). The suggestion for non-graduate practitioners to be called Early Years Educators (Parker, 2013) also reaffirms the emphasis on education as a significant part of practice in ECEC.

The professionalisation of ECEC can also be seen as a potential solution to policy discourses that have sought to address the notion of a genderised workforce, with a policy shift to recruit men through workforce targets (Cameron, 2006), alongside more general exhortations to increase the diversity of the workforce. However as this attention to the gender make-up of the workforce has historically been linked to the nature of the job and the perceived value of the work undertaken (ibid), it will require quite a shift not just in constructs of professional identity but also allied to pay and conditions to become a truly attractive option to men (Daycare Trust, 2008). It should also be noted that the gender imbalance remains not just in ECEC, but also in primary education (Moyle, 2001), reflecting a social construction of the education of young children that policy in itself will find difficult to change. It is important in the discussion on professionalisation in ECEC to acknowledge those aspects such as maternalistic discourses of care and nurture (Moss, 2006) which both reinforce and are reinforced because of the gender imbalance in the workforce.

### **Professional Identity**

It is essential to recognise that professional identity can be situated in both an individual and a community of practice and is not fixed but emerges from what Clegg (2008) called "lived complexity" (p.329). Beijaard et al. (2000) concluded that "identity itself is a poorly defined concept" (p.750), but that despite the lack of clarity in definition, identity as a concept is being increasingly explored across a range of disciplines including education.

Viewing professional identity from an individual viewpoint allows regard to be taken of the influence of personal and biographic events; such as prior education, family life and any critical or dramatic life events (Beijaard et al., 2000), which have contributed to a sense of self. This may be of particular relevance as Belenky et al.(1997) argued that access to different types of knowledge is influenced by social and cultural backgrounds. Professional identities in a highly gendered, low wage workforce may be constrained by the ways in which the participants have learnt to see themselves through the more powerful discourses that historically have surrounded them.

An interesting piece of research carried out by Trede et al. (2011) consisted of a systematic literature review of 20 articles on professional identity development in Higher Education. Although Australian based, it drew on articles from the UK and it covered articles between 1998 and 2008. One of the conclusions the authors drew was that “professional identity development is ...increasingly ...about being in a multiplicity of worlds or communities, and professional identity and its development is thus complex” (Trede et al., 2011 p.14). Individuals do not exist without an external context and this should also be considered in relation to identity formation; Karila (2010) explored this aspect as something she called “working culture” (p.211). These overlapping aspects appear regularly. Day and Kingston (2008) discussed ways of looking at different domains of influence on identity development of teachers. They proposed the need to consider the impact from the: personal perspective, which they equate to life outside school; the professional perspective which covers a range of perspectives about expectations of what a good teacher is and finally they proposed the importance of the situated identity, which relates to the environment in which the teacher is directly working. They reinforced the idea that it is through the way these different domains of influence interact that different professional identities are formed.

Similarly Bronfennbrenner’s (1917-2005) ideas of micro, meso and macro environments consider areas of influence on professional identity from an ecological perspective. These aspects could be represented as personal experience, professional context and external political environment, as explored by Mockler (2011). It is clear from these models that others have

used that a personal and professional identity must manifest in the intersection between the values, constructs or domains that are identified (Trede et al., 2011), but that there is no common agreement about how these need to be explored or even what they are. Trede, et al. (2011) concluded that although many of the articles “discussed professional, personal and social identities, [they] did not make explicit connections between them, let alone how to reconcile and integrate them” (p.12). This indicates that there is still work to be done on looking at how individuals draw together the various factors that influence personal constructs of professional identity.

This lack of certainty means there is ambiguity in trying to pin down the definition and Sachs (2001) discussed the powerful influences of “culturally available meanings” (p.154), which will serve to prioritise and ratify certain constructs and forms of professional identity over others. It is therefore not possible to discuss the ECEC workforce without acknowledging that it is a highly female gendered workforce (BERA, 2003) and this does impact views of professional identity. Bradley (1989) suggested that societies play a part in defining some work as more suited to females and that this is usually work that is located in the “domestic arena” (p.345). Timmerman and Schreuder (2008) proposed that the “taken for granted” nature about providing care as a female occupation is prevalent. It is evident that these views about ECEC are well established and embedded in the psyche through historical patterns of gender segregation and sex typing of jobs. The challenge continues to be how to redefine this work so that it becomes more valued in the public sphere (Skevington and Baker, 1989), an on-going issue within feminist principles (Walby, 2011). However, as it is suggested that there is not one feminism, but many (Griffin, 1989), care is needed not to oversimplify the impact of the gendered nature of the workforce on notions of professionalism. However this thesis is not primarily feminist in stance so, while acknowledging the complexities of gender and utilising some of the literature, I have chosen to explore this aspect primarily through the professional discourse discussions about caring and maternalism which are discussed more fully throughout this thesis.

## **External contributions to professional identity**

In accepting that identity is not just a personal construct but one that is also shaped by validation from others; perhaps through role models or feedback on performance (Slay & Smith, 2011), as well as political and cultural discourses it is possible to recognise the external validation of professional identity in the award of EYPS. This for a brief period marked the goal or highest point a practitioner could reach in England in leading practice. However, it could also be seen to have suggested that those without the status do not have access to recognition of their professionalism in practice.

Paterson et al. (2002) implied a broader approach to professional identity which incorporated “the sense of being a professional” (p.6). This approach allows for interpretation and reinterpretation, both for the individual and as communities of practice, as discussion has to occur on the nature and aspects of professional practice that have to be embodied for the professional self to be recognised. This idea is in opposition to Sachs (2001) who suggested the orthodox use of the “idea of professional identity is rarely problematic”, because it relies on “externally ascribed attributes ... to differentiate one group from another” (p.153). EYPS or EYTS might therefore be deemed to indicate the orthodox or professional view, while the rich traditions and experiences outside of this held by individuals and embraced in ideas about pedagogy and practice fit more with the loose nature of Paterson’s idea. Slay and Smith (2011) suggested that these identities can be formed through the narratives of people’s lives, that people come to know who they are through the stories they tell about specific struggles at specific points in time. It would seem to me that this approach to professional identity development would also be strongly sympathetic to the requirement of reflection in and on practice as an element for professional identity development. The sense of being part of a community also seemed to be important as Edmond (2010) stated:

becoming a professional...is not just about demonstrating a meeting of standards in practice. It is about relationships with colleagues and participating in and contributing to the development of professional communities (p.320).

Although there is an element where professional identity emerges from the personal, this comment indicates the need for an external or corporate place for professional identity to be expressed or 'performed' and that belonging to a community of practice is important.

It is suggested (Trede et al., 2011; Evetts, 2003; Sachs, 2001) that in exploring the importance of the external contributions to professional identity, it is necessary to consider the reinforcement given through established ideas and principles. These conceptualisations of identity typically emphasise either the similarities or commonalities between members of a group or sector of the community (Mockler, 2011). Developing a professional identity in this respect is therefore about becoming more like those who are already part of the community of practice or profession as put forward by Trede et al. (2011):

One starts to develop knowledge, sets of skills, ways of being and values that approach being identical to those held by other members of the profession. In doing so one becomes different from those who are not a member of the profession and ... one identifies oneself with one's profession (p.16).

This identification with others is important as it allows for a professional identity construction to address social, cultural and political aspects as represented in the professional identity of the community of practice (Sachs, 2001). It could be argued then, that the external identifiers of what makes an EYP, are now being subsumed into the wider discourses of teaching, for which the professional identity, as discussed above by Trede et al., is more secure. However, the fact that the EYTS does not provide qualified teacher status means that those who hold it will be aware of the difference in status, power and pay the position holds in the wider workforce.

Osgood (2010) in her research into professionalism identified an additional key external factor that contributed to this acting out of a professional identity, one that also provided feedback on how successful the performance was, and this was imposed by the regulatory framework of Ofsted. She commented:

The Ofsted inspections dominated subjective constructions of professionalism and were highly emotive. Performing professionalism was felt to rest upon a combination of personal/ moral commitment and the embodiment of externally defined notions (Osgood, 2010 p.123).

In her summary she drew together the personal and the external as both important factors in professional identity, but highlighted a mechanism by which the judgement of an external body can come to inform the personal understanding of successfully being professional.

### **Professional traits and competencies**

This section considers which competencies and capabilities the literature suggests are signifiers of professionalism within ECEC. In a previous study I examined these ideas using Dalli's (2008) notions of; "pedagogical style, specialist professional knowledge practices and collaborative relations" (p.183) (Chalke, 2013). Using this model allowed the exploration of aspects of knowledge, pedagogy and ideas around teaching in ECEC, the ethic of care and the importance of affective traits in professional practice in ECEC and the idea of working collaboratively and as part of teams.

Others have attempted to make these kinds of definitions for example Brock (2006b) in her doctoral study sought to define professionalism and came up with seven dimensions; knowledge, education, skills, autonomy, values, ethics and reward. She then used her definitions to interrogate data gathered from early years practitioners in order that their voices would contribute to the "current theorisation of professionalism" (p.1). In the next section I utilise this "typology of professionalism" (Brock, 2012 p.34) to provide a way of examining how the literature is defining competencies of professionalism in these areas.

### **Knowledge**

Domain specific knowledge is an aspect of professionalism which is generally accepted (Karila, 2008; Urban, 2008). However, it is also evident there are a range of types of knowledge or ways of knowing that need to be considered alongside how they may interact, challenge or support notions of

professionalism. While it is suggested that there is a clear body of knowledge and understanding related to ECEC that has been formalised and delivered through a wide range of qualifications and in-service training opportunities (Musgrave, 2010; O’Keefe and Tait, 2004), this knowledge could also be seen as part of the hegemonic discourses in ECEC that constrain and prioritise certain elements over others and reflect strong cultural boundaries and ways of thinking (Fleer, 2003).

Urban (2010), for example, challenged the privileging of this systematic knowledge because it is based on child development and developmentally appropriate practices and he argued they predicate a uniform child. He explored the idea that day to day experience will challenge these conceptualisations and suggested this can reinforce the dichotomy between theory and practice. Manning–Morton (2006) also recognised this divide in exploring aspects of professionalisation that may recognise formal knowledge over skills, again illustrating the privileging of certain types or ways of knowing. Alternatively Edmond (2010) suggested that for some areas of education, which he described as associate professionals, the emphasis had moved from theoretical knowledge to valuing the professional competencies (skills) that are demonstrated. Interpretations of knowledge are therefore not clear, for while systematic or theoretical knowledge is important for professionalisation, there also seems to be a move to credentialise the more competency and skills based practice knowledge, as a lesser form of professionalism.

The idea of competencies as a measure of professional practice has been debated in a wide range of education environments (Raven, 2011, 2001). Schön (1983) argued that the perception of a professional is broader than just judging competencies, as professionals need to deal with situations that are messy and unclear and cannot be resolved by a simple application of technical knowledge. Gardner et al. (2008) also contested that complex work requires more than just competence, but something they identified as capability, “a holistic attribute” (p.7), that allows the management of change in a turbulent environment these aspects they argued are necessary to develop an effective workforce (ibid).

In relation to Brock's (2006b) findings, systematic knowledge was integral to understandings of professionalism and something all her participants demonstrated. However, she did comment that "it was rare for them to use academic language" (p.5). The knowledge exhibited showed evidence of not only being learnt from education but strongly integrated, embedded and contextualised through experience and practice. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) explored dimensions of knowledge in teaching by talking about the differences between "knowledge for practice, knowledge in practice and knowledge of practice" (p.250) suggesting that formal knowledge (knowledge for practice) is supplemented by experiences and embedded practical knowledge (knowledge in practice) as well as the possibility for creating new knowledge by using the classroom as a site for inquiry (knowledge of practice). This argument would suggest that academic or systematic knowledge of itself is not the only marker of professionalism, but that it needs to be explored through relationships with practice. This view is recognised by Edmond (2010) and Urban (2008) who indicated knowledge gained from experience should be an important part of the professionalisation within ECEC.

Egan (2004) talked about the need for active engagement with systematic knowledge, emphasising the importance of reflection as part of professional practice in doing this, but she also suggested that there is a place for tacit or intuitive knowledge in professionalism. Messenger (2013) also recognised a place for tacit knowledge and Gough (2010) can be seen to have explored these dimensions as part of her examination of the work of two early years' teachers. This suggests to me that there is a personal element beyond systematic or theoretical knowledge and beyond practice or experiential knowledge that can emerge for the professional in the intersection of all the elements. Gourlay (2004) suggested tacit knowledge is something that is acquired through experience, similar perhaps to Eraut's (2000) view of "trained expertise"(p114), but Gourlay (2004) also explored other views which suggest knowledge that can unconsciously affect practice and this perhaps would be closer to intuitive knowledge. Osgood (2012) explored these ideas in her discussion of maternalistic discourses, suggesting that

class difference is one of the factors that influence professional identity, as often nursery workers will be working class and “do professionalism in ways that are instinctive, intrinsic to the nature of the work and foundational to providing appropriate emotional nurturance” (p.118).

Knowledge, however, is not limited to an individual, but also emerges from shared practice and working culture (Karila 2008). Tarule (1996) suggested that social construction of knowledge can be powerful and provide an opportunity to resist the more dominant other. Goldberger (1996) also argued for the importance of interactions as part of the meaning making process, recognising the idea of Wenger (1998) and the importance of situated learning. Osgood (2012) suggested that it is from these sites that discourses about professionalism can emerge to counter the more public policy constructions. Practitioners therefore engage in communities of knowers at a practice level in the workplace, but perhaps also become communities of learners when they undertake formal qualifications. In these two situations they may have different experiences of power and status (Messenger, 2013) which will contribute to what and how they know about ECEC and consequently to ideas about professionalism.

## **Education**

Brock (2012) identified that many of her respondents saw acquiring qualifications as an important element of their professionalism. Manning–Morton (2006) concurred with the view that “study arguably exhibits both a desire for public recognition of one’s abilities and a desire for up to date knowledge and self-improvement: both characteristics that are generally ascribed to a professional attitude” (p.48). Musgrave (2010) also supported the notion that professionalisation is achievable through acquiring college based qualifications and Edmond (2010) explored the role Higher Education plays in supporting professionalisation through graduate awards.

Nutbrown (2012) explored the role of qualifications as part of the policy agenda to streamline career and progression pathways in ECEC, illustrating that this is an on-going area of attention for public policy and arguably indicates the significance of education to the professionalisation of ECEC.

However, the role and purpose of education is not without its critics “as qualification routes designed to assess measurable technician practice through prescribed competences continue to prevail” (Osgood, 2010 p.128) over those that seek higher thinking and more reflective practice. Osgood (2010) argued that practitioners “consistently indicate that training of greatest appeal, relevance and effectiveness is that which provides scope for reflexivity leading to heightened professional confidence”(p.129), and this claim links with the purposes of education identified by Brock (2006b). Osgood (2012) also suggested that the emphasis on graduate status as a marker of professionalism has been a difficult and complex identity to construct and negotiate in the field of ECEC, and illustrated how some practitioners concealed from colleagues that they had achieved a degree.

Berthelsen and Brownlee (2007) subscribed to the view that it is education in its widest sense that is of value if it improves reflective and metacognitive skills. They indicated that more educated childcare workers held more sophisticated belief systems, which are deemed to provide better quality of provision. I suggest, therefore, that education remains important to professional identity construction and closely links to some elements of knowledge and skills as a vehicle through which continuing professional development (CPD) can occur.

## **Skills**

The articulation of professional skills in Brock’s (2012) model reflects the changing nature of practice within ECEC. Here she highlighted the importance of multidisciplinary work; the need for collaborative and effective teamwork; and the application of appropriate practice for fulfilling requirements of the EYFS. ECEC has always required sensitive and caring relations with children, their families and the wider community they belong to, but it can be seen that since Every Child Matters (ECM) (DfES, 2004) there has also been a legislated requirement for collaboration across agencies. All the requirements for high quality communication such as report writing, taking part in meetings and respect for issues such as confidentiality indicate the high level skills being required in ECEC and suggest this aspect

of practice as one that reflects a clear dimension of professionalism (Cameron, 2006).

Additionally ECEC work is highly relational, with working relationships an essential part of day to day practice (Chalke, 2013; Manning–Morton, 2006). These relationships place high demand on practitioners in terms of physical and emotional engagement (Page and Elfer, 2013; Taggart, 2011) and also personal knowledge and skill if, for example, they are going to become advocates for children and families in multidisciplinary contexts (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009).

One other key skill recognised by Brock (2012) is that of the ability to reflect effectively upon practice. Reflection is acknowledged as an important part of the personal and professional tools demonstrated by those in ECEC (Osgood 2010; Miller 2008). It enables the development of pedagogical knowledge and understanding practice and this is why it has already been alluded to in the knowledge section. It is suggested that since early childhood practitioners have to daily deal with situations and problems that are highly complex and cannot be dealt with by application of knowledge in a simplistic fashion (Urban, 2008), reflection is an essential skill to practice. In terms of professional practice, therefore, reflexivity has to become an “attitude and a fundamental cognitive tool for the development of professionalism” (Balduzzi, 2011 p.843).

### **Autonomy**

Brock (2006b) found that her participants acknowledged that until recently there had been “unwillingness by central government to allow them to use their professional knowledge and pedagogical expertise” (p.6). These findings explored how Brock’s participants felt that recent changes were raising the profile of early years and that they were having more of a voice, for example by being able to take part in consultations that shaped policy. They also felt that although they were required to meet curriculum expectations, there was discretionary judgement about how they did this. They felt these types of characteristics showed professional autonomy as part of the identity for the early years profession. However these ideas have

to stand in tension with aspects that Osgood (2010) talks about that imply restraint and standardisation, such as the increased accountability that was embodied by the regulatory body Ofsted.

Friedson (1999), however, argued for professional autonomy by recognising its place where work is specialised and:

cannot be performed mechanically because the contingencies of its task vary so greatly from one another that the worker must exercise considerable discretion to adapt his knowledge and skill to each circumstance in order to work successfully (p.119).

It could be argued that working with young children requires this type of adaptive and flexible approach. Recognising children as individuals and working with their unique characteristics means that the ECEC workforce need continually to be showing autonomy in how they interpret and respond to children's needs and desires in the light of policy and pedagogy. This aspect of the work of ECEC would also align with Gardner et al.'s (2008) understanding of capability.

Another aspect that might be construed as requiring autonomy within ECEC is that of engaging in leadership. Woodrow (2008) specifically talked about the importance of "agents of change who are willing to shape their own professional identities" (p.276). Andrews (2009) suggested pedagogic leadership as vital for change and adaptation to occur to bring improvements to practice. The language of agents of change is seen within the standards and descriptions for EYPS, (CWDC, 2010a) and could therefore be taken as echoing a popular discourse. However, what is embodied in these sentiments is the sense that practice should not be static, but that in the light of new and developing knowledge and changing policy, there are those in the workforce who are ensuring that practice responds appropriately, what Raven (2011) would consider as acting professionally. Leadership as it is embodied here is constructed differently from those who often work under a title such as manager or supervisor (Whalley, 2008). This concept of leading change is part of the portmanteau of traits demonstrated by any early years practitioner working professionally and in my mind links closely to reflexive practice.

## Values and Ethics

Values are important in the discussion about professional identity because the association with a specific set of values and beliefs is what links individuals to a specific role and what enables others to recognise them in that role (Cohen, 2008). Alexandra's (2010) research illustrated how different settings could contribute different understandings of ECEC based upon values and beliefs enshrined in the type of setting they worked in. Brock (2006b) argued for values unique to ECEC which have been built through a good understanding of child development and early years practice. This for me could be enshrined in what she described as a "self-regulating code of ethics" (Brock, 2006a p.7), as codes of ethics can help to act as benchmarks for behaviour within a specific discipline. Taggart (2011) argued that in this sense ethical actions are based on reason. However, he went on to suggest that the challenge is that these codes "can have a narrowing effect which masks the complexity of real life situations"(p.86) and that vital qualities such as patience, courage, persistence or care are often absent from codes of practice and assessment standards. However Osgood's study (2010) that encouraged participants to account for how they perform professionalism indicated that the most highly regarded values and therefore the attributes most related to contributing to " the professional self were those within the affective domain", such as being "caring /loving/compassionate, non-judgemental and fair" (Osgood, 2010 p.126) suggesting these aspects remain important within the workforce itself.

Brock (2006b) explored how values may come into conflict when early years practitioners are working with others who have a different background in education, what she explained as "inappropriately trained educators" (p.6). The main area of contest in her study appeared to be around the value of play and implementing a play based curriculum, with the early years practitioners saying how important it was when working as a team to share similar ideologies; otherwise the work could become unsatisfying and demoralising. Unpicking core values seem important then to build a strong community of practice. Working as a community of practice seems to be an important part of developing professionalism in ECEC, as it appears that it is

the communities of practice rather than individuals that have the ability to represent and lobby for change (BERA /TACTYC 2013, Early Childhood Action n.d.).

Recognising societal and cultural influences that might impact individual views is an important aspect of understanding values. As Manning–Morton (2006) concluded, “engaging with young children touches deeply held personal values and often deeply buried personal experiences” (p.46). It is essential that individuals recognise where these aspects interact and have strategies in place to deal with them. This includes strategies for dealing with what Manning–Morton (2006) called “the darker side of children’s learning and developing, with their distress, their defiance, their dependency and their inherent mess and chaos” (p.46). These types of interaction need to be handled confidently and securely without threatening personal or professional identities in those who care for them. Valuing children in a professional way also means valuing self and being able to separate the personal and the professional at times, something Clouder (2005) talked about as a morality of care.

In order to work in an ethical way, Miller (2008) suggested practitioners in ECEC needed to demonstrate a range of professional dispositions that included “sensitivity, empathy, awareness, respect for others, and commitment to the field of early years” (p.262). Several of these are similar to traits proposed by the practitioners in Osgood’s study (2010). Brock (2006a) considered that the early years practitioners she worked with demonstrated ethical principles and high level commitment similar to what Goldstein (1998) explored as the idea of an ethic of care and what it might look like in the classroom, drawing upon ideas of caring as “a feeling or set of feelings – nurturing, supportive, nice, inclusive, responsive, kind” (p. 245). However, the suggestion imbued in this idea is that these are more personality traits that make someone suitable for working with young children rather than actions carried out as intellectual acts. The concept of an ‘ethic of care’ is born from notions of morality (Gillingham, 2011; Noddings, 2003) and is linked with the idea of relations, not an attribute or personality trait. Noddings (2003) explained that “caring involves stepping out of one’s own

personal frame of reference and into the other's" (p.24) and that part of the caring encounter included the cared for acknowledging the care received through a thank you, or smile, for example. She argued that teachers should embody this approach as it gives children the opportunity to learn how to be the one caring, by being the one cared for. It is this that gives caring a moral stance and provides a way to think about caring that, according to Goldstein (1998), would provide a way "that repositions the concept, transforming it from a personality trait to a deliberate and decisive act" (p.247).

However, although caring is recognised as important in work with young children, the ethic of care has not yet been embedded in ideas about professional practice. In discussing this previously I aligned myself with Moyles view "that operating emotionally at a mindful level requires higher order thinking" (Moyles, 2001 p.84) and is not something that just anyone can do. If emotions are to be engaged in work with children, there also needs to be the skill to know how and when to place boundaries in relationships (Cameron, 2006). This is a challenge as ECEC practitioners are required to make meaningful relations as part of key person responsibilities (Page and Elfer, 2013), but also have to be able to help children negotiate into new relationships through transition arrangements (Page, 2013b; Elfer et al., 2012). The danger here is perceived as "getting too close" (Manning-Morton, 2006 p.48) and consequently exhibiting non-professional conduct. There is therefore a requirement to construct a professional identity that allows this ethic of care to be embraced, rather than seen as something that inhibits or disempowers practitioners (Dalli, 2008), or something that is based on a gendered or second class discourse of personality traits (Bergman, 2004). Taggart (2011) advocated it should become a "central plank of professionalism" (p.85) for the ECEC practitioner and Page (2011) declared the need for 'professional love' illustrating a clear place for this within the requirements for professional ethics (Page, 2013b).

## **Reward**

The final category Brock (2012) identified of reward not only relates to pay and conditions, which might be expected in thinking about professional

identity, but also covers personal satisfaction or intrinsic rewards that those working with children gain from the work. It could be seen that ECEC work is strongly linked to a sense of vocation and Taggart (2011) suggested it is this and the “skilled exercise of emotional labour (that) accounts for why many teachers find the work rewarding” (p.89). This emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) relates strongly to the previously discussed notion of ethic of care. Clouder (2005) in talking about health professionals noted a similar reward where care is given when she suggested:

the positive response of clients as care receivers provides an important feedback loop in that caring provides intrinsic rewards such as increased self-esteem, job satisfaction, motivation and joy in giving and that cannot be underestimated (p. 508).

Brock (2012) described the immense pleasure gained from being with the children, and the fact that many of the practitioners she spoke to were passionate about their roles. Moyles (2001) also discussed this notion of passion as a characteristic of professional practice and Cooke and Lawton (2008) affirmed that many practitioners do not want to progress in their jobs because it would take them away from the part they enjoy which is being with the children. Colley (2006), however, emphasised that this reward is potentially costly to those working in ECEC, as she proposed that the management of emotional labour is a stressful business, particularly with the demand for close relationships to children in settings as inferred by the Key Person approach of the EYFS (DfE, 2014 p.21). Sumsion (2004) considered how the demanding nature of the work can have an impact upon retention in the sector. Fortunately, the intrinsic rewards appear strong enough to outweigh the emotional costliness for many practitioners and ensure they continue to work with the youngest children even though the external rewards of pay and conditions have not been sufficiently addressed.

### **Professional identity development in ECEC-what is being privileged?**

Having discussed the six professional traits or dimensions emerging from within the field of ECEC itself, it is important to consider how they fit within the wider discourses of society and how external constructions are influencing notions of professionalism.

## **Privileging knowledge over caring**

The introduction of the EYFS (DCFS, 2008) can be seen as an external discourse that aimed to bring some bridging to the divide between what is needed for the education and care of under and over threes (OECD, 2006). It is evident at the time of writing that policy discourses are clearly rearticulating the divide in the revised EYFS (DfE, 2012) and there is a current emphasis on ratios and school readiness (Parker, 2013).

Professional identity for workers in ECEC can be seen to revolve around the status and value given to different aspects of the work, for example learning over toileting (Goouch and Powell, 2013), and yet I believe, when working with the youngest children, the skills of professional care should have higher value as a professional attribute. This aspect continues to be challenged and undermined and Adams (2008a) suggested early years practitioners have to be “particularly strong to protect their developing professional values in the face of pervasive societal undervaluing of their work” (p.197). It is possible to suggest that because the emphasis on caring reinforces maternalistic attitudes (Gibson, 2013) that can be deemed to undermine notions of professionalism, the external emphasis on technical requirements and meeting standards is a response to counteract this.

Osgood’s work (2010) found that “rationalism, accountability and other traits encompassed within government discourses of professionalism were notably qualified or absent from nursery practitioners self-definitions” (p.125). In other words, the notions of a professional self as experienced by individuals within the ECEC workforce did not, at the time of her study, reflect the public discourses of what makes a professional. Manning-Morton (2006) suggested the reason why the thinking mind of rationality and knowledge is privileged over the “physical constraints of the body and the unpredictability of emotion” (p.45) is due to the fact that as a society we embrace a Cartesian world view which presents a body/mind dualist philosophy. However she also considered that these could be looked at as gendered traits, which clearly has an impact when the workforce is highly gendered in itself. Privileging knowledge, therefore, devalues the art of care giving and relegates caring to

the work women do (Graham, 1983) rather than an aspect of professional identity.

The challenge of gaining appropriate acknowledgement for the caring element of early childhood work is highly relevant to a discussion on professional identity as this aspect still seems to be undervalued. The place of care has entered the professionalism debate (McKenzie and Blenkinsop, 2006; Bergman, 2004) as an aspect for consideration in all educational practice not just early childhood. It has also been reconceptualised by Page (2011) as a concept of “professional love” (p. 310), specifically in relation to the importance of early attachment and quality relationships in young children’s lives (Elfer et al., 2012). The difficulty these concepts present are that engagement with the requirements of care often perpetuates the feminised and mothering discourses that suggest ECEC is an easy job and any one can do it (McGillvray, 2008). Feminised stereotypes around the need for nurture and care still dominate public attitudes and official discourses about childcare (Lloyd & Hallet, 2010; Colley, 2006; Graham, 1983) and present a place of conflict with notions of professionalism that privilege more rational or knowledge based approaches (McGillvray, 2008). Goldstein (1998) emphasised the need therefore, for early childhood educators to work towards, “developing and communicating an understanding of caring that emphasises its deeply ethical, philosophical and experiential roots” (p.245), because “the importance of caring and caring work has been degraded in order to maintain the power of those who are privileged” (ibid p.259). In other words there needs to be a clear articulation of the complexity of being a ‘professional’ carer to counteract the privileged discourses that currently hold sway. The literature in the sector is seeking to address this as evidenced by the work of those focusing on under threes (Goouch and Powell, 2013; Page and Elfer 2013; Page, 2011), and I argue this needs to continue and more strongly encompass all work in the early years.

## **Privileging Teaching**

Another area where there is clearly a privileged identity is around notions of teaching in ECEC. Formal education has a more privileged position than early childhood education, as has the role of a teacher over an early childhood worker in public discourses. In commenting on the Scottish situation Adams (2008a) suggested the educative role was missing within job titles in the early childhood workforce and she proposed this lack of clarity about the educative work that is done with young children could be essential to professionalisation in the sector because of the higher value education has in public discourses. Miller (2008) explored the fact that in England, even within the sector, different values are given to staff working in the same settings. She suggested “qualified teachers working in early years settings have long enjoyed the sense that they are regarded as professionals, whereas others working with young children have not” (p.266). Urban (2008) proposed it is a divide that is increasingly being challenged not just by the workforce, but by researchers and in some cases by policy makers too. It could be argued that the EYPS, which was designed to provide a similar status to that of qualified teacher, is an example of this challenge to historically privileged professional identities. Discourses from EYPs in the sector, such as those gathered by O’Keefe and Tait (2004) suggested that the EYPS had not become sufficiently recognised or valued and that “if you want any recognition at all you’ve got to become teachers” (p.32). The policy moves that changed the status EYP to that of Early Years Teacher (DfE /NCTL 2013a) and the introduction of Early Years Educators (DfE/NCTL, 2013b) reflected a move that reinforces the emphasis on education as central to the work of early childhood practitioners by a rebranding exercise.

It is suggested by O’Keefe and Tait (2004) that although the workforce are generally viewed as non-teaching, “in reality, practitioners require the significant repertoire and skill of the teacher” (p.27). In other words, practitioners for a long time have been working within a framework of professionalism that makes high demands of them in terms of skills and knowledge, as well as professional competency. It would appear that this discourse has not yet been privileged in a wider policy and public

consciousness, although recognised within the field. The lack of recognition of the complexity of the work also means that, in the collaborative and integrated field of childhood services, some practitioners may not feel as confident or articulate alongside other more valued professions. Since Every Child Matters (ECM) (DfES, 2004) there has also been a legislated requirement for collaboration across agencies. For some young children and their families their lives include engagement with a wide range of professionals including those in health and social care. Working together as partners in a multidisciplinary way needs individuals to respect and value the contributions that each other brings (Brooker, 2007) and it would be hoped this may help raise concepts of professional identity.

### **Quality and standards**

Another notion of what is currently privileged in professional identity revolves around the value given to issues of quality and standards. Moss (2010) wrote that the discourses of “quality”, “best practice” and “evidence based practice” (p.12) were creating a system that implies there is only one right way of doing things, and illustrated how the professional had been reinterpreted as a “technician” (ibid p.12) with care and education becoming a commodity that needed marketing (Lloyd, 2012). This reinforces a suggestion that in many minds the ideas of professionalism and quality have been conflated (Urban, 2008). Mockler (2011) suggested this is particularly problematic as it appears educational policy takes the approach that emphasises the best is “what works” (p.517), rather than considering approaches that may be more complex and nuanced. What then becomes privileged is “that which is simple and easy to measure over the more complex and wieldy dimensions” (ibid p.517) of professional identity. This is a troubling position as coupled with the emphasis on education and the lack of recognition of the importance of care there is the potential for the squeezing out of creativity and originality in practice into a performativity culture that is easily measured as a technician approach.

Other issues that appear to have been excluded from the discussion on professional identity in current policy are those of pay and conditions. Rather

policy discourses are emphasising the cost of childcare to parents and looking for cheaper provision (Parker, 2013). If, as Moyles (2001) pointed out the public discourses of low status and pay can contribute to promoting limited self-confidence and self-esteem in the workforce, then the suggestion that it should be provided in a way that is cheaper for parents reinforce this lack of perceived value by the public. Moyles (2001) found this lack of confidence and self-esteem often became expressed as an apologetic discourse about personal job roles and recorded the example “I’m only a nursery nurse” (p.93) to illustrate this view. However, Brock (2006b) in her slightly later research, found that the early years practitioners she worked with had a more positive view of their professionalism. O’Keefe and Taite (2010) also suggested that increasing opportunities for achieving recognition through qualifications were impacting practitioner’s views of themselves in a more positive way. Nevertheless, Cooke and Lawton (2008) highlighted the issue that continual low pay is undermining the ability to raise quality and emphasised the importance of on-going investment in the sector if it is to continue moving forward.

One other factor related to professional identity, which may not have had the same emphasis in the UK, but which has been examined in Australia, is the whole impact of corporate branding. Woodrow (2008) explained that the influence of the corporate on professional habits, dispositions and competencies had led to “professionalism becom(ing) imbued with commercialism and competition, affiliation and loyalty to company” (p.273). This is an interesting phenomenon, as the privileged discourses relate much more to the world of marketing and business. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) referred to this as the commodification of childcare as a result of the neoliberal policies that require that all actions and relations should be “business like” (p.37). This “for profit” model has implications for the professionalisation of the sector particularly as it enshrines notions of performativity that are related to an accountability agenda linked to imposed requirements (Spencer-Woodley, 2014).

## Conclusion

I have suggested through examples from the literature that there are different ways of constructing professional identity. These depend upon the interconnectedness of a range of factors that are simultaneously external and internal; individual and corporate; and therefore complex and not easily identified. It is not clear yet to what extent the role of the EYP, now EYT, will restrict the development of a professionalism that is wider than the narrow technician qualities that are being assessed in these statuses. It is hoped there is still space for the “dynamic transformative nature of professional identity development” suggested by Trede et al. (2011 p.14) and one way of achieving this is looking beyond certified technical competence (Raven, 2011) to the grass roots communities of practice that could provide opportunities for professional reflexivity. However, in a profession that is historically gendered and lacking self-esteem it may require academics and trainers to support and develop these types of conversations and activities (Miller, 2008; Furlong et al. 2000). Manning–Morton (2006) summarised the ongoing struggle effectively when she suggested that “developing a professional identity that respects all aspects of practice and areas of knowledge is an on-going and contested debate within the early years community” (p.44).

Exploring traits and dimensions of professional competency that emerge from within the sector and contrasting this with what is currently being privileged in external discourses has helped create a picture of some of the areas of tension and conflict that remain, but also highlighted some common areas that practitioners in the field acknowledge as contributing to their sense of professional identity. These aspects will enable me to examine how my participants are positioning themselves within some of these discourses of professional identity.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology

Osgood (2010) argued that issues of professionalism in ECEC have been silenced by "hegemonic government discourses" (p.121), and were therefore not being expressed from the field, but were being shaped by policy, legislation and guidance. Research into this field therefore requires a methodological approach that provides an opportunity for alternative expressions of professionalism and professional identity to emerge. My aim was to find a methodology that allowed for different voices to construct individual meaning. Rather than initially trying to find a common meaning within the data collected; I considered I needed to approach the research participants as individuals as my belief was they would have different stories to tell (Olsen, 2001). The intention was to see if these individual stories provided practitioners with the opportunity to demonstrate different professional identities through their narratives. I wanted to examine in what ways these identities embraced or resisted the more public formulation of the EYP. The methodology needed to;-

- facilitate opportunities for practitioners to discuss their lived experience within the early years workforce,
- and allow them to articulate how they have been and are currently, negotiating their professional identities.

The methodological approach that seemed most suited was the use of narratives with a life historical perspective and I will discuss and justify this approach in the next section.

Sikes described narrative (2006) as "an account of something" (p.3), but because each account is special, it possesses the power to present "unique individual world views and perceptions" (Mello, 2002 p.233) and therefore seemed an appropriate choice for my research. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) suggested that because "people shape their daily lives by the stories of who they are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories...narrative inquiry...is first and foremost a way of thinking about

experience” (p.477). Thinking about experience justified my methodical approach and was fundamental to answering the research questions:

- *How are early years practitioners expressing their professional identity?*
- *What factors have influenced and continue to influence early years practitioners identity constructions?*
- *What do early years practitioners personal narratives reveal about their professional journeys?*
- *How are early years practitioners resisting or embracing the constructs of professionalisation from external influences?*

Elliot (2005) claimed that common themes in narrative approaches include an interest in peoples lived experiences and an interest in process and change over time. I believed there was synergy between these elements and my research questions.

In recognising an overall methodology I then had to consider firstly what I meant by narrative, and secondly in what ways I was approaching it from a life historical perspective. It was clear from looking at the literature (Bold, 2012; Elliot, 2005; Clough, 2002) that the term ‘narrative’ could be interpreted in different ways and with different understandings and also that it was still contested as a method in some areas (Sikes and Gale, 2006). Bold (2012) illustrated two ways of thinking about narrative, first through the general meaning of the word “narrative, as a spoken or written story” (p.1), and secondly a broader narrative approach based on Czarniawaska (2004), where the idea of narrative can be used “in various ways and at different stages of the approach”(p.1). This approach recognises the ways in which narratives are created at all stages of the research process, starting from the stories told by the participants and how these can be shared and reconstructed in the process of narration, moving through analysis into the final account that is written by the researcher. It is this broader approach that represents the methodological ideology of my research. I could identify stories and narratives emerging at all stages of the research process, including my own story as it became woven into the narratives I was researching and writing about.

I am interested in people and their stories, and looking back I can clearly remember an early encounter with narrative as a research method. It was during a doctoral study weekend when the academic leading the session remarked, “I’m going to tell you a story”. I was so struck by this simple phrase which captured my immediate interest that I entered my thoughts into my research journal as follows:

These familiar words immediately connected me to other times and places when the comfort and joy of storytelling was part and parcel of daily practice both in my work with young children, and also in my family life with my own children. Although this was not my first encounter with a narrative research story, I believe it was the oral telling of the story itself, and the time and space to consider, reflect and digest it, which enabled me to engage interactively with the idea of narrative in a new way (Chalke, October, 2011).

Having this personal affiliation with the narrative method as it was presented on this occasion meant that when I came to consider the methodology for this research, I could distinguish that there would be stories throughout the process, both those I wished to collect and those I would write. This is what I believe Sikes (2006) referred to as “data as narrative and narrative as data” (p.5) indicating that a narrative can be both the stories that are collected and the accounts that are written from the data. I interpret them as fluid and subject to development as they go through iterations, by both the participants, and also through my analysis and editing (Bold, 2012). I also recognised that even as I gathered the data the stories may be developing as the early years sector continues to change and shift as policy and practice dictate (Brooker, 2007). Narrative approaches allow for this flexibility in the process to be captured and (re)presented.

I sought to capture the meaning of the narratives and what they revealed about professional identity and professional journeys, rather than interrogating their structure as stories. I did not, therefore, consider using rigid linguistic techniques in interpretation such as Labov and Waletzky (1997) employ. Instead, I focused on the consideration of meaning as “continually constructed and reconstructed” (McCormack, 2000 p.286). I anticipated the requirement to visit and revisit the narratives collected and

my reconstructions of them in order to try to elicit what was buried within the layers. I also considered it was important that my approach to the narratives allowed the opportunity to capture the context (Clandinin et al., 2010), as the context is part of the whole picture in terms of exploring how these early years practitioners (my participants) resisted and embraced the external changes which continued as we met (Parker, 2013). Bold (2012) suggested this opportunity to identify the context in which the stories are being told as an important element that a narrative approach provides but other methodologies may not. It is these references to changing contexts where I feel the narratives reflected an element of a life historical approach (Goodson and Sikes, 2001).

As the focus of this research was also on how these practitioners were creating and perhaps recreating their professional identities, their stories of experience would help the exploration of the identity work they were engaged in as they constructed themselves within specific institutional, organisational, discursive and local cultural contexts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). I also aligned with Court et al.'s (2009) view that in preschool teaching "personal and professional are intimately intertwined" (p.208) and therefore a narrative framework provides a vehicle for exploring these aspects.

Riessman (2008) suggested that contemporary preoccupations with identity could be linked with ideas about narrative, as if the two have some kind of "symbiotic relationship" (p.7). Miller et al. (1990) also recognised a "special affinity between narrative and self" (p.292). The context that Miller et al. (1990) were discussing was that of meaning making with stories with children. I think it can also be true of the stories we tell as adults. In my own autobiographical writing alongside and sometimes within this research I found myself exploring my own professional identity as I re-examined my own story where it intersected with those told by my participants. The challenge for me in looking at my participant's accounts was to what extent they had created their identities or how far it was my writing about their lives and narratives creating a version of their professional identity. Clandinin et.al (2010) explored the nature of this tension as part of the view that narrative inquiry emerges as a relational act, with shared meaning making. It was this

relational aspect to the inquiry and a concern about (re)presenting my participants with respect which caused me to explore different ways of analysing the data.

The relevance and appropriateness of narrative inquiry combined not only my personal starting points but was anticipated to create a familiar environment for my research participants. The importance of storying as part of human experience is readily recognised (Clandinin et al., 2007; Sikes and Gale, 2006; Elliot, 2005). Gooch (2010) affirmed it is an important part of practice in early childhood and I therefore deemed it should be accessible to my participants. It is generally agreed (Fraser, 2004) that part of what makes us human, and part of our shared culture is the way we use stories and narrate events to ourselves. Stories are used variably in life to help individuals make sense of their experiences, to be able to describe human action and to help make meaning or enter the meaning making of others (McIsaac-Bruce, 2008). Stories are fundamental to human understanding, communication and social interaction (Sikes and Gale, 2006); therefore I concluded this approach was justified to seek answers to the questions I wished to examine.

It was expected that personal stories would be juxtaposed with stories of change within the early years sector in which the participants worked. It was these points of conflict and resistance (Osgood, 2006a; Brock, 2001) that would be examined as I sought to explore the way the participants negotiated meaning and understanding for themselves. I was clear that I would be looking at the stories told through the lenses of political and contextual change, a feature of life history (Goodley et al., 2004; Goodson & Sikes, 2001). However, I was less interested in the formative years of my participant's lives, as my questions focused more on their professional journey of working in early years. Within this approach I was aware they might make links to aspects outside of the working environment and there needed to be room to encompass these should they arise. As Dhunpath (2000) indicated one aspect of life history is its focus on the significance of an individual's story, I adopted an approach that would leave room for

participants to express what they wanted about their lives and their work without setting any boundaries. My approach allowed the participants to decide what stories they wanted to tell, but recognised the contexts through which I examined them as events that have shaped the stories (Goodson, 2013; Waller, 2010). Structuring the research this way allowed my participants to construct their professionalism from whatever starting point they perceived as important. Sermijn et al. (2005) argued that as a respondent is constructing their narrative for a particular purpose all entry points connect through the researcher. While acknowledging this I also saw my research role as interpreting the practitioners' stories and examining how they were located in their historical and cultural backgrounds (Goodson, 2013).

In embracing a narrative methodology I situated myself as a constructivist and interpretive researcher (Grieg et al., 2007), who was making an effort to understand how the lives of some practitioners in ECEC had enabled them to view themselves as professionals in the field, through exploring the stories they tell of themselves and their practice. I recognised the stories themselves as unique, but I anticipated they would present recognisable features that could be identified by others working in the sector. These would include the issues, challenges and successes that early childhood practitioners have experienced though living and working during a time of unprecedented change (Booker, 2007).

It is commonly understood (Baker and Edwards, n.d.) that sufficiency in terms of numbers of participants is related to the nature of the method, methodology and questions being asked. Illustrating this Patton (2002) suggested 'Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources' (p. 242-243). With this in mind my sample size of, five individuals, is not unusual for a life historical approach (Chase, 2008; Riessman, 2008; Goodson and Sikes, 2001) where the emphasis is on the individual and situating that individual in the larger context of the enquiry (Dhunpath, 2000) something my research questions promoted. Creswell (2006) also suggested that a small number of

participants are suitable where they have all experienced the phenomenon that is being investigated, and mentioned 'professionalism' (p.60) as an area that could be studied in this way with a small sample size. Having also decided on a purposive sampling technique once I had obtained participants from a range of settings (Table 3:1) I considered these to be sufficient as they were not intended to be representative, but reflected those who responded to my request to be involved. I therefore saw my participants as illustrative of lives lived, not as representatives for the wider ECEC workforce. In undertaking an enquiry of this nature I recognised there are limitations to this approach, but I have sought to justify the decisions taken to embrace a narrative methodological approach throughout.

## **Methods**

Having decided upon a narrative methodology my thoughts turned to how I would collect the stories. I needed to talk to practitioners who had been in the early years workforce for a significant period, ideally since the introduction of the curriculum framework in the form of the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (QCA, 2000) or the introduction of the EYSEFD. According to Brooker (2007) this was considered to be a period of a major change in the sector, but it also coincided with the start of my academic career and my own journey to a changing professional identity. Previous anecdotal observations and discussions with undergraduate students at my own institution had indicated that undertaking the EYSEFD played a part in their professional identity, so I was specifically interested in recruiting participants who had undertaken the Foundation Degree. On a professional level as an educator, I was interested in what could be learnt about their journeys of professional identity that might then be built into work undertaken with other graduate pathways. My sample was therefore purposive (Sikes, 2006; Goodson and Sikes, 2001) in that I sent letters to managers of a range of settings in the locality in which I worked. These letters invited participation from practitioners with over five years' experience in ECEC and a Foundation Degree to get in touch with me if they were interested in being part of the research project.

As I had decided on a narrative with a 'professional' life historical approach I initially sent out twelve letters. I did not want to be inundated with more participants than I could manage, in line with Chase (2008), who suggested that as narrative researchers are not seeking to generalise their stories to a particular population, small numbers as acceptable. Additionally Sikes (2006) indicated that there is no clear number of participants for a life historical project. However I was seeking to find respondents from a range of settings that early childcare workers, who would be regulated by current government policy for ECEC, might be found in. Settings I approached were typically PVI, government statistics suggest that these make up approximately 85% of the provision in settings for children up to four years of age (DfE, 2012). In addition I was also keen to include home based care, as child-minders are a continuing part of provision and have had to respond to recent requirements for professionalisation as well (DfE, 2012). Setting types are;

- Sessional Care; typically pack away preschools which offer children two years and nine months to aged four a three hour session in a rented hall, and where staff have to daily set up and pack away all the resources. They are often community run and not for profit. In areas of deprivation some of these have extended provision from two years nine months to include two year olds following government initiatives (DfE, 2012).
- Full Day Care; typically day nurseries; providing all day provision for parents. These cater for babies to preschool aged children. Approximately 60% of these settings are for profit (DfE, 2012).
- Home based child care; usually an individual working from within their home and providing care for children of a range of ages including before and after school provision (DfE, 2012).

All the settings were known to me from my work, as I had engaged with large numbers of students over the eleven years I had been in academia. Details were freely accessible from the local authorities Children's Information

Services. If I failed to recruit from this first letter I had planned to send some more letters to additional settings and providers in the locality of my workplace until I had a sufficient purposive sample (Page, 2013a). I had decided that the sample size should have at least one representative from the three different setting types discussed above and could be between four and six individuals. The rationale for a range of settings was not to particularly make comparisons, but so that it could be noted how the issue of professionalisation touched all areas of the workforce. I deliberately did not want to include any practitioners working in a school based environment as some of the issues are different and relate to notions of hierarchy and power in school structures (Simpson, 2010a). They do not specifically refer to the professionalisation engendered by EYPS and the government intention to achieve a graduate in every Early Years setting (Osgood, 2012) which is part of the context for this study. I was also concerned to avoid conflict with notions of teaching and the professionalisation of the teaching workforce (Goouch, 2010) from practitioners working in school based settings which in my view would add further layers of complexity.

I received five responses and all were from former students who have studied at the institution where I taught the EYSEFD and who I had taught at some point (see Table 3:1). The fact that I was known to these respondents was a consideration in terms of the dynamics of the research relationship, but following Goouch (2010) I felt that their willingness to be involved presented an opportunity to become reacquainted in a different role. The interactions of these relationships are considered more fully later (see section ethical considerations of interviewing). Within these five participants I had two preschools; one pack away and one in a permanent building, a child-minder; and two day nurseries; one of which was situated in a children's centre. Additionally I discovered that one of the preschools offered wrap around care which is defined as 'the provision of childcare from 8am to 6pm every weekday for children under age 14, usually on school premises' (DfE, 2012), in this case the preschool was situated in a building on a school site, these were sufficient to meet my purposive sample (Elliot, 2005).

The judgement I made about the sufficiency of the sample related to meeting the criteria as explained; about the types of settings, my defined criteria of length of time in sector; having a Foundation Degree and suggestions in the literature that “typically small” samples in narrative and life historical work were acceptable (Sikes, 2006; Goodson and Sikes, 2001 p.22). It transpired that all five participants were female, but in some ways they are representative of a workforce that remains genderised (Cameron, 2006; Moyles, 2001). While I am aware that the issue of men in early childcare remains on the government agenda (Morton, 2011), I do not consider it distracts from my research that I have no male participants. As my sample was purposive I was bound by the participants that came forward. My letters had been addressed to the managers or supervisors in each of the settings none of whom were male.

Table 3:1 details of participants taken from interviews

| *  | Zoe  | Julie  | Helen  | Debbie   | Rachel   |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Current Job role                             | Supervisor /manger   | Group manager/setting manager  | Senior in baby room currently                                  | Manager  | Childminder                                      |
| Other jobs in childcare they have undertaken | Childminder Practitioner in preschool                      | Nanny<br>Nursery nurse<br>Room leader<br>Deputy  | Nanny<br>Room leader<br>Deputy<br>Manager                      | Childminder Practitioner in nursery<br>Practitioner in preschool |  |
| Setting                                      | Pack away sessional preschool                              | Group consists of day nurseries and holiday clubs. Manages a day nursery associated with a children's centre | Day nursery  | Session preschool providing wrap around care.                    | In own home                                      |
| Years in childcare                           | Since 1999   | Since 1984   | No date given  | No date given  | Since 1988                                       |
| Why entered                                  | By default son in preschool didn't want it to close        | Always wanted to   | Careers guidance, insufficient A level grades to be a teacher. | Always wanted to   | Means to an end, convenient , fitted family life |
| First qualification in ECEC                  | PPA  | NNEB   | NNEB   | PPA and NVQ3   | NVQ 3  |
| Highest qualification in ECEC                | BA Hons achieved during interview process already has EYPS | EYP non honours  | EYP non honours  | EYP and BA honours   | BA Honours. Considering EYP /Masters             |

\*names have been changed (see section ethical considerations of interviewing)

My decision to use a narrative methodology meant that I decided to use interviews as my research tool; the choice of this format was to enable participants to tell the story of their experience of working in ECEC. As McIsaac-Bruce (2008) contended, interviews are the most common way of collecting stories. Court et al. (2009) indicated how they allow for the collection of “uniquely personal data” (p.209) which gives insight into underlying feelings and attitudes. However I did not assume that interviews themselves were without difficulties and I did not want a set of questions which participants could answer, as I was looking to collect stories that I could examine. In the initial interview therefore I used a form of “free association narrative interview method” proposed by Hollway and Jefferson (2000, p.152). In other words I started each interview by inviting interviewees to talk about their story of working in ECEC and my role was to encourage them to make associations between one idea and the next. Framing the interview in this way with a broad question is common in narrative approaches (Chase, 2008). I had intended to have limited intervention from me as the interviewer (Stroobants, 2005) in order to capture the stories as told. However, I found a difference in the way the participants perceived what I had asked from them and often the interview became more of a dialogue, with interruptions, questions and shared remembrances.

Fraser (2004) suggested that drawing upon a conversational style is common in narrative interviewing and is therefore a legitimate way of obtaining data, but I was not sure at the time whether this interaction was distracting from what I thought I would collect. I think my inexperience in this less formal type of interviewing approach made me question my own ability rather than the data itself. On reflection I realised that the shared meaning making was part of the process I engaged with, so a conversational style promoted this (Elliot, 2005). I also think that the participants themselves despite the briefing were looking to me to help guide their storying perhaps reflecting Goodson’s model (2013) of descriptive life storytellers. The one exception was where one participant just talked about her life freely and openly and included numerous anecdotes and examples to illustrate her points; all I needed to do was add affirmatives as she went along. She would

have fitted Goodson's (2013) model of an elaborative life storyteller. However, it is probably too simplistic to just designate categories in this way, as these interviews were not the first conversations I had had with participants and previous shared history and relationships of student / teacher must also be considered. Although this means there were perhaps some taken for granted assumptions in the stories told, I have for the purposes of this research attempted to keep to the narratives as expressed in the interviews.

In terms of interview technique, I found on occasion that questions or comments asked by me were not always clear. I believe this is because I was balancing the struggle of making sense of what I was being told with an awareness that I did not want to put words into participant's mouths as I was endeavouring to continually recognise the power differential (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Listening back to the interviews I heard myself checking for meaning with comments such as, "so are you saying ...?", I believe this approach reflected my efforts to conduct interviews within an ethical stance that sought to hear the story the participant wished to tell (Bold, 2012).

The first interviews lasted between one hour and one hour thirty minutes. They covered all aspects participants wished to discuss in response to the initial question. All participants discussed their entry into the ECEC workforce, including motivations and rationale for this work. They explored how they had engaged with upskilling in terms of their own practice and what was important to them in terms of the provision they offered. This was not always recounted in a chronological fashion, but in keeping with the 'free association narrative approach' (Hollway and Jefferson 2000 p.152) where supplementary questions allowed them to follow their train of thought. The second interviews took between forty five minutes and one hour and occurred within three months of the first interviews. These interviews reviewed aspects from the first transcripts seeking expansion of some areas, allowed further exploration of pedagogical factors and sought comment on specific changes occurring at that moment in the external agenda. It was

noted that similar themes and ideas emerged in these second interviews from questioning, to those that had been offered through the free association method. The full transcripts from both interviews were used in the analysis to provide rich and detailed accounts of the participant's understandings of how they viewed themselves and the work they do (Meier and Stremmel, 2010). The recognition that identities may be formed by the stories the participants told about themselves (Slay and Smith, 2011) and the notion that identity is not a fixed concept (Clegg 2008) provide justification for seeking to capture these stories within a limited time frame. Rather than looking at how my participants identities might change over time if I were to revisit them, my research questions were seeking to explore what was offered by the participants' narratives at a specific moment in time.

Once the first interviews were fully transcribed I returned them to the individual participants for them to clarify if what I had recorded was what they intended (Sikes, 2010) before undertaking the second interview. My purpose in this part of the research was to ensure participants were happy with the narratives that they had so far told me and gave them the opportunity to correct, elaborate or rescind anything they had said in line with the ethical principles I had outlined to them that underpinned this research. Sikes (2010) suggested respondent validation is not always an easy process; however with one exception (see section ethical considerations in analysis) they all said they were happy with the scripts. The second interview was designed to have a more dialogical framework that would cover questions that were missing, as well as exploring topics that I had found interesting in the first interviews. It was also timely from the change context as these second interviews took place shortly after the revised *Early Years Foundation Stage* (DfE, 2012) had been published, as well as within a few weeks of the publication of the *Interim Review of the Early Education and Childcare Qualifications* (Nutbrown, 2012) both of which had implications for my participants. The purpose of the second interview was originally designed to follow a model by Stroobants (2005), where in her work on women and learning the initial stories had been analysed thematically in relation to the research questions and then explored further in a dialogical interview. In my

initial examination of the data from the first interviews I was less inclined to follow themes as these were not providing clarity for me. Instead I was more interested in following up individual aspects that had resonated or stood out to me and exploring responses to the change in the early years policy landscape. I believe in this way I was more interested in seeing if I could “make the familiar strange and the strange familiar” (Clough, 2002 p.8) by building on earlier and perhaps taken for granted thoughts and sayings. One of my participants was unable to complete the second interview due to family circumstances changing that required her attention, so we were unable to agree a date to meet. However she expressed her willingness for me to use the narrative we had from her first interview.

### **Ethical considerations of interviewing**

Underpinning the methodological approach, the decision about methods of data collection and the process of analysis and writing up I have been acutely aware of what Sikes (2010) talked about as the “heavy ethical burden”(p.11) in writing life histories and narratives. Submitting an ethical application form to the university allowed for the completion of the procedures to commence the research, but undertaking the interviews was the place where I encountered the real ethical journey. The researcher participant relationship is often considered to be one where the researcher holds the power (Elliot, 2005), although as the participant is the one who controls what they want to say they could be viewed as powerful in this instance (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). Measor and Sikes (1992) considered narrative interviewing can also give rise to an intimacy in relationship where there is more ambiguity and a sense of reciprocity in the process. I wanted to try to acknowledge this perhaps shifting power differential. I sought to ensure the participants were comfortable and had some ownership of the process where possible through offering choices. These consisted of where the interviews were to be held, allowing checking of interview scripts (Fraser, 2004), and through encouraging the opportunity for personal choices of pseudonym (Newman, 2010). This latter I felt important as names to me are a symbol of identity and as I was writing about identities I wanted to

acknowledge this for my participants. In the event only one participant felt as strongly as I did about this, the rest were happy for me to choose pseudonyms.

My concern was that at times, my previous role as tutor could have reinforced the power dynamic of this new relationship as researcher. I wrote in my research proposal (Chalke, October 2011) of the need to think about this relationship in the following terms:

I am aware that the power relationship that exists not only as interviewer / interviewee, but as tutor / ex- student needs careful negotiating and it is suggested remains a continuous 'moral responsibility' (Ryan, 2011 p.421). I take this to mean I need to be continually reviewing and revisiting the relational identities within the research journey to ensure I remain trustworthy in providing my participant protection throughout the process and not purely as something that has been achieved once I am in the receipt of signed consent (Ryan, 2011 p.428).

I also recognised that I am both an insider in the context of ECEC and an outsider because of my professional role and my researcher role and therefore I would privilege some parts of the narratives over others, but I sought to work respectfully with the stories I had been told and the lives they represented (Sikes, 2010).

### **Ethical considerations in analysis**

I think the most challenging aspect of this research relationship came at the analysis stage where I agonised over the process, feeling that some of the earlier techniques I had considered now did not seem to fit and my responsibility for respectfully retelling the stories became even more paramount (Smythe and Murray, 2000). Adams (2008b) raised this issue in his work on auto-ethnography as he indicated how others' lives are always involved in the stories we tell and how personal narratives can appear a bit "riskier" if we begin to "disassemble" (p.183) the stories from the larger context in which they are told. I was also conscious of the work of Sikes (2010) and her challenge to researchers to consider how participants feel about the way they are presented in the research report. One example of

how I chose to consider this was following the member checking of the first interview where one of the participants specifically asked me to take out the 'bad grammar' that had been reflected in the transcript as she was concerned at how that would be interpreted. I was happy to comply as I felt this request did not distract from the content and was only one more element of the 'cleaning up' (Riessman, 2008; Elliot, 2005) of the script I undertook in my focus for a readable text for analysis. However the participant clearly felt she did not want to be portrayed as someone with bad grammar as she felt it might make her look "*less intelligent*" (her words) with the implication that this might influence how I portrayed her professional persona.

Brock (2001) in a very similar type of research study suggested that the power relationship she had with her research participants could have affected the validity of her research, however I think in my own situation while I acknowledge the differential I do not believe the issue of concern to primarily be one of validity because of the narrative method employed. I felt secure in the knowledge that the participants had chosen to entrust their stories to me for interpretation and the fact that in places the interviews became more of a shared conversation at times indicated that we were working at creating meaning together (Elliot, 2005). In this respect I recognised that in bringing myself into the research process and specifically into the interviews I was working with my own sense of knowledge creation (Sikes, 2010). However I must also acknowledge as problematic that as I am the one writing up the final accounts, it is my meanings from the stories that will be presented (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000) and in this regard it is with me that the responsibility of (re)presentation in the final report remains.

Another observation about the researcher / participant relationship was that the prior history of our connections meant that on occasion some things were unsaid, or unstated because it was assumed I already knew. Often these aspects were to do with previous work that was related to or had been undertaken through the university. In considering these omissions it could be suggested they were primarily because of our shared backgrounds in ECEC, through the Foundation Degree and later study and the implication of shared tacit knowledge (Gourlay, 2004; Eraut, 2000). The conversational process

occurring here demonstrated a familiar quality where previous history is referred to, but subtly or sometimes assumed. I asked the participants to sometimes state things for the purpose of my text, but in retrospect I wonder if these examples signified a sense of trust or tacit knowledge given to me by participants to some aspects of their prior experience and whether I can see this as part of the collaborative process of this narrative research (McIsaac-Bruce, 2008; Beattie, 1995). For the purpose of analysis therefore it was important that I attempted to limit this prior knowledge and not make assumptions, although some of the shared meaning making that occurred through the interviews is evident in the discussion.

### **Data analysis**

Once I had collected my data I was acutely aware that coding was not going to be an easy process and might not be the best way of analysing the narratives I had gathered. I had sympathy with Mello's (2002) view where he indicated the difficulties of coding narrative as a way of analysis, because he felt that as an approach it "creates an artificial form" (p.235) that distances the "data bites" (p.235) from the longer narrative. I therefore needed to work out how I could interrogate the data in order to answer the research questions I had established.

It had at this point become really important to me that the individuals somehow remained whole. Following a discussion with my supervisor at a study school I realised that my original approach to analysis was completely divorced from the methodological approach that I had taken to conduct the study. I needed instead to locate a complementary mode of analysis which would take a holistic view.

### **Holistic Silhouette Analysis**

I therefore began again and this time used large silhouettes into which I cut and pasted the narrative relating to three areas of; the head (knowledge, reason and thinking), the heart (passion, feelings, values and beliefs) and hands (professionalism as worked out in practice) as illustrated in Figure 3.2,

this method I termed 'Holistic Silhouette Analysis'. These three areas were more directly related to the person and their expressions of identity and professionalism and provided a way of ethically exploring the integrity of the individually stories in line with Hollway and Jefferson's idea of a "Gestalt principle" (p.68) that seeks a holistic interpretation. I was now able to look for the underlying stories in these three areas and how they shaped the individuals concerned as well as satisfying my own desire for the individuals to remain whole. In this way I feel I was fulfilling Bean's (2006) requirement for "suspending normal constraints in order to see new patterns, possibilities and connections" (p.363).

I recognised later that these areas had connections to my own values and beliefs and certain pedagogic principles that have influenced my practice as I recognised the head, heart and hands of Pestalozzi's (1746-1827) ideas about pedagogy and Steiner's (1861 -1925) holistic approach to the education of the child, sympathetically represented in my diagrams. As I mused in my research journal about this observation I reflected that I was drawing upon my beliefs and values as an early childhood practitioner first and a researcher second in order to make sense of other lives. Sikes (2010) suggested this auto/biographical element is an important and necessary part of the process of writing about other people's lives and I was aware of how strongly it was coming through in this part of the process of the research.

In some ways the process could be criticised as merely an aesthetic, but recognising myself as a kinaesthetic and visual learner I would argue that it allowed the knowledge creation process to effectively progress in order for the analysis of the data, providing in Bochner's (2001) terms "my way of seeing" (p136). I think it also said something about my own identity within the sphere of early childhood. As someone who worked with young children, I am comfortable with practical and visual ways of creating knowledge. I was able to distil the essence of what I felt represented the individual professional identity of each participant in the different aspects of head, heart and hands while also holding these elements together as a holistic (re)presentation. I recognise however, as with all types of research these (re)presentations are not complete (Kuntz, 2010) but influenced by my own conceptions and view

of what is important, highlighting my involvement with the research process (Clough, 2004) and the educational context that informs my thinking and “making sense” (p.376) of the data.

The physical task of cutting the narrative into sections (Morehouse, 2012; Plummer, 2001) then felt less like I was dissecting the individuals; as I was at the same time re-connecting them within a body shape I had drawn which represented the person for me. The process itself was important to me in allowing the handling of the data at a visceral level. Analysing the content in this way allowed the establishment of the categories (Silverman, 2011; Richards, 2009) within the silhouettes.

Figure 3.2 Holistic Silhouette Analysis - Stage 1



My approach to analysis was informed by the research literature on narrative analysis, in particular that by Ely et al. (1991) who argued for the “teasing out” of essential meaning from the raw data, in a way that “speaks to the heart of what was learned” (p.140) and that by Riessman (2008) in her discussions around working with interviews and cleaning up the text. I believe it is justified as an interpretive method in that it is using the process of identifying categories, in this case those key words and phrases that were (re)presented in my visual constructions as the tools for the starting point of (re)creating the narratives of my participants’ lives. Ely et al. (1991) indicated

that themes can appear in a variety of ways, that they are “statements of meaning” (p.150) but can vary from running throughout the data to being minor elements that are important because of their emotional impact. Riessman (2008) also suggested that “good narrative analysis is going to provoke the reader to think beyond the surface of the text” (p.13). Deconstructing and then reconstructing the stories of professional life enabled a process of looking beyond the surface to examine the content the narrative communicates (Riessman, 2008).

I decided to focus on one participant at a time and began the process of immersing myself (Silverman, 2011) in both the texts and the audio recording, trying to hear and see which parts of their narrative emerged around the three aspects; the head (knowledge, reason and thinking), the heart (passion, feelings, values and beliefs) and hands (professionalism as worked out in practice). This type of immersion is recommended by Goodson (2013) who suggested that it allows themes to emerge that can then be followed up. Thinking about my participant’s narratives in this way enabled me to identify key sections and also to disregard elements at this time, which while part of the overall narrative, did not emerge out of those three aspects directly. Some of these elements would be returned to in the second phase of the analysis when I revisited the stories against an historical time line of significant change for the early childhood education sector. Rapley (2011) suggested this type of iterative process of data reduction can be effective especially when looking at individual lives.

Having engaged in holistic silhouette analysis at the meta level I then continued with the second stage of data reduction. This was to sift the narrative to discover dominant themes through exploring the key and repetitive words, phrases and ideas. Table 3:3 shows an example of how I went about this process illustrated through the use of Zoe’s interview (see also Appendices A, B and C for fuller examples from the 3 categories). The Table reads from left to right beginning in the first column with the original interview data, which I transcribed. The second column shows how I identified dominant domain themes from the full interview transcript using the

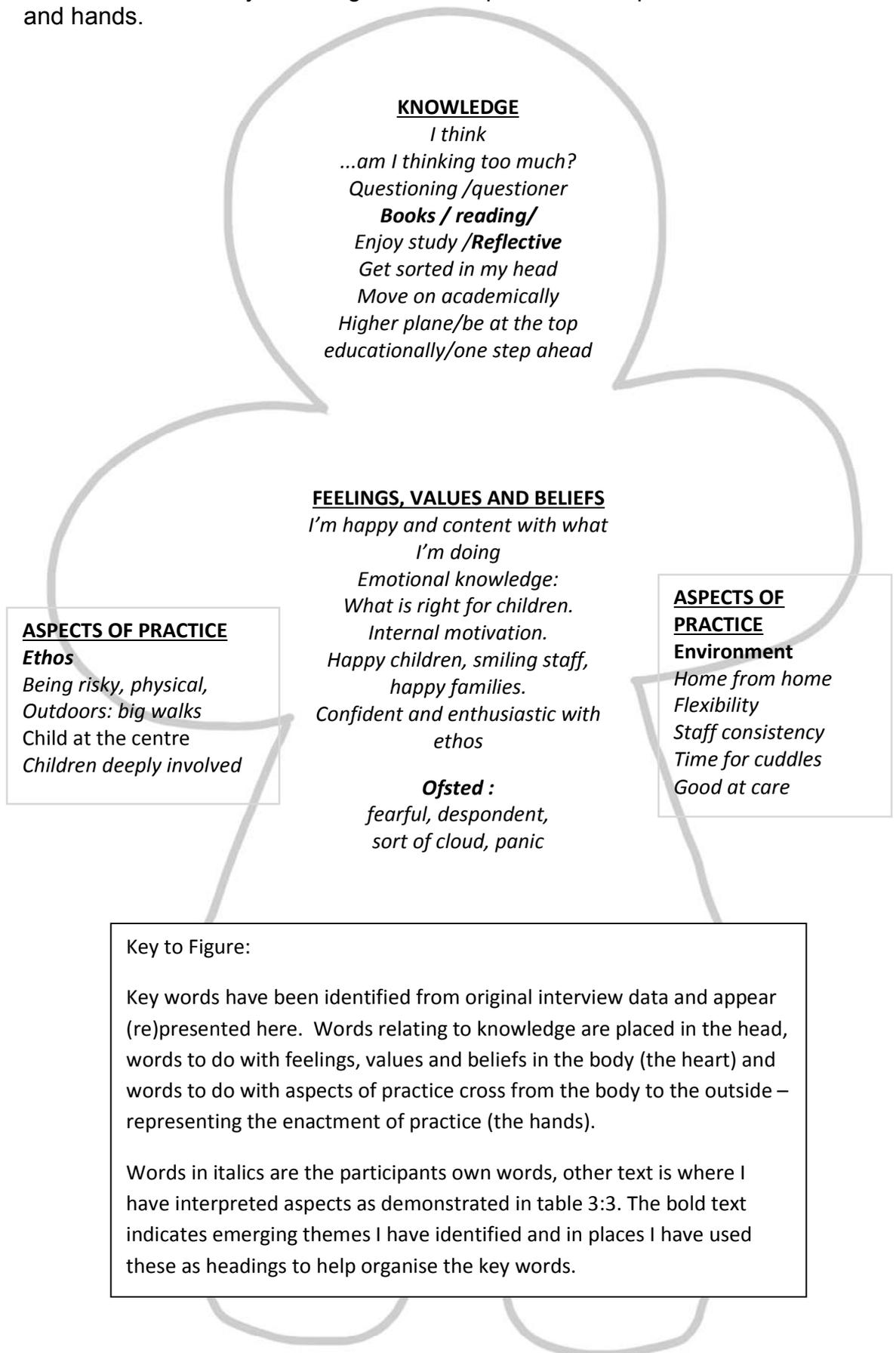
participants' words. The final column (stage 3) is a further distillation so that I have now interpreted those domains into key words and phrases I believe represent the essence of the stories I heard.

Table 3:3 Extract from data analysis of Zoe for the aspect of the head: knowledge and understanding

| Stage 1: Excerpts from Zoe's 1 <sup>st</sup> interview   | Stage 2: Dominant domain themes which emerged from original interview data                       | Stage 3 My analysis of dominant domains into key words. <i>Italics</i> denote original interview data |
|--|--|---|
| <i>The first course I did things were happening I think nationally and they were starting to recognise that it was the diploma that was the desirable level 3 , then the Foundation Degree was new ... I suddenly wanted to grow up and go to university...its was being talked about in Nursery World and all sorts so that's what made me want to ...move on academically then</i> | <i>I suddenly wanted to grow up and go to university</i><br><br><i>move on academically then</i> | <i>Move on academically</i>   |
| <i>oh dear, but how we actually do it is written in the books. We do it naturally but it's quite nice to read, during the different modules that I've done that the authors would have done the same things.</i>   | <i>do it is written in the books.</i>  | <i>Books</i>  |

I then used the words from the final column (stage 3) in my (re)presentation of this data in the fourth stage of the holistic silhouette diagrams (Figure 3:4). Reconstructing the words inside the silhouette was a way of seeing the components of each participant's professional identity in a holistic form, while recognising that the aspects are separated because of decisions on analysis. I hoped by having this picture alongside as I explored the data I would not lose sight of the individual in the wider discussion. I frequently returned to the fuller accounts taken from the Table, but the immediacy of the silhouettes allowed the whole person to stay in focus and allowed me to check and recheck my analysis and (re)presenting of the data.

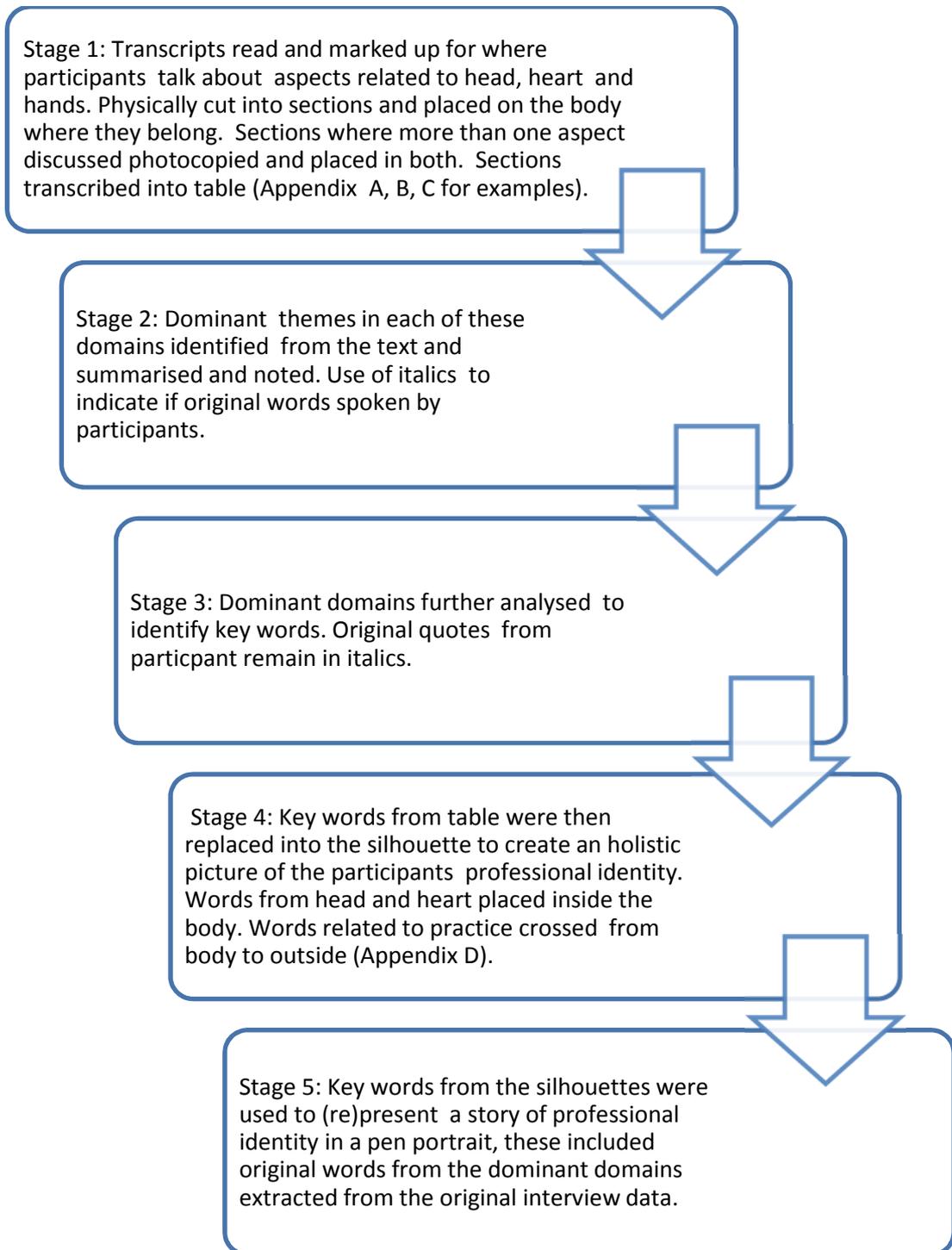
Fig 3:4 Example of holistic silhouette analysis stage 4. (Re)presenting key words taken from data analysis of original transcripts into the aspects of head, heart and hands.



For the final stage of the analysis I then reworked each participant's key words from stages 3 and 4 into what I have called the reconstructed stories of each participant (see pages 81-85). These were completed by weaving the participants own words, presented in italics, and the dominant domains as interpreted from the original interviews into a short narrative that also drew upon the factual data from the original interviews. This illustrated Goodson's (2013) idea of a "portrayal" (p.71) where each stage of the holistic silhouette analysis belongs as one of the steps between the raw interview data and the interpretive discussions (see Figure 3:5 for matrix outlining the process of holistic silhouette analysis as I conceptualised it).

When looking at the final snapshot portraits I noted that while the words do fit within the outline, the inherent slightly messy look of this final stage reflects that narrative research is not a tidy activity. Clough (2002) suggests "messiness" (p.83) might emerge as a form of understanding because lives are not tidy. I have an empathy with this view and therefore left the slight messiness of these pen portraits as a reminder of the messiness of working with life history.

Figure 3:5 Matrix of stages undertaken for analysing data for Holistic Silhouette Analysis



## **Analysing the narratives within the policy context.**

In addition to the narrative that was reduced and (re)presented as described above in the silhouettes, I also deconstructed the stories into the context of a timeline of events relating to policy changes in ECEC starting in 1997 and working through key events at the time of writing (Nutbrown, 2012) (see Appendix F). This method indicated a more multi-layered approach to the analysis in line with Bathmaker (2010). In thinking about the rationale for the choice of dates in the timeline I realised that it echoed a familiar story that I tell to students when I discuss policy and practice and therefore the events remain for me as significant points in the history of ECEC. I was to discover that this was not how my participants recall events, but rather because they choose how to represent their reality (Riessman, 1993) the stories they tell may not “reveal the past as it actually was” (Personal Narratives Group, 1989 p.261), because people can forget things, elaborate or recall in a confused way. As the literature also explained (Riessman, 2008; Barone 2007; Elliot, 2005) speakers do not work chronologically, but connect events into a sequence that makes meaning for themselves, and this is what I found occurred during the interviews I collected. Not all participants mentioned all events, but the purpose of this analysis was to identify what responses they had had to changes that had occurred and how they foregrounded or assimilated these external changes in their stories of professionalism allowing the creation of new categories and exploration of emerging themes (Ely et al., 1991).

Many of the earlier events in the timeline have been regularly rehearsed in much of the literature around professionalism. In particular Osgood (2012) explored in depth her perception of the competing discourses government policy promoted following the radical reform of the children’s workforce, of both saviour of the economy and of a workforce that is still “lacking” (p.43). In the table constructed I selected events related to aspects discussed, experienced or talked about by the research participants themselves or those which occurred while I was undertaking my research. In particular this gave me the opportunity to explore responses to both the revised EYFS (DfE,

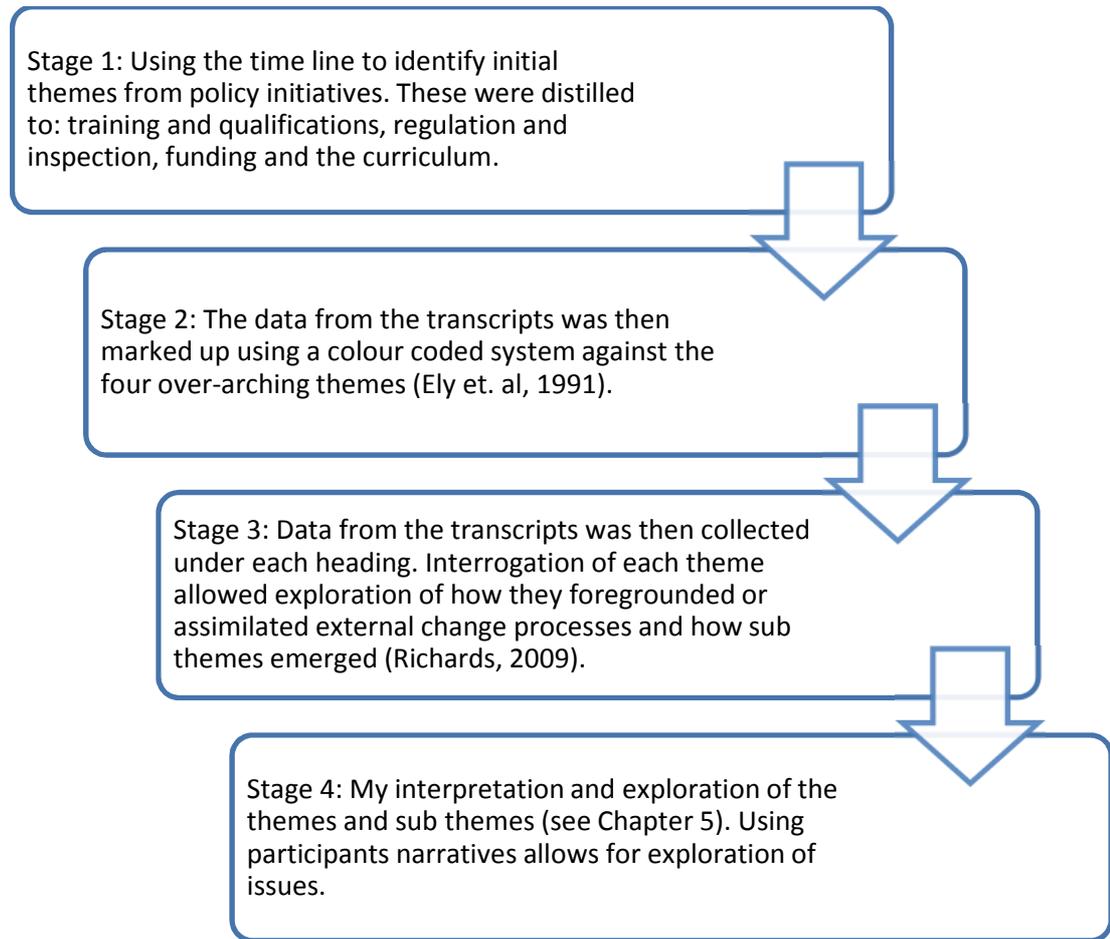
2012) and the proposals in the Nutbrown Review (2012). As identified in my introduction, I am aware that I am now reviewing this data in the light of subsequent changes, specifically the development of the Early Years Teacher Status, so stories I tell include the knowledge I have of later events.

The process of this analysis started from the timeline which I used to identify the four broad themes which emerged from the policy initiatives. These themes were:

- 1) Training and Qualifications
- 2) Nursery funding
- 3) Regulation and Inspection
- 4) The Curriculum

I then colour coded each narrative against these content themes (Riessman, 2008) by identifying sections from the original transcripts (Morse and Richards, 2002). The data was then physically gathered by cutting and pasting sections of text from the original transcripts under each of these themes. This allowed for an exploration of the texts that identified sub themes and allowed for initial annotations of my thoughts and comments (ibid) (see appendix F for an example of this analysis). This process of categorising the data then allowed me to reflect the range of ways my participants talked about each of these themes (Riessman, 2008) (see Figure 3:6 for matrix illustrating stages of analysis).

Figure 3:6 Matrix to show stages of analysis for policy context

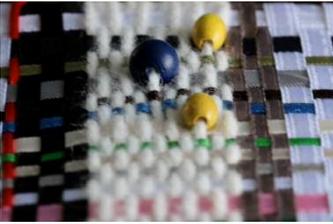


### **Conceptualising my methodological journey.**

During the process of analysis I explored what the narratives were telling me and this was when I discovered something further about how I go about the process of creating knowledge. I realised I am not a linear thinker and although I now had a framework I spent a lot of time exploring aspects that might not even be seen in the final version. Would my pen portraits or silhouettes, for example, make it into the text themselves? I was also moving between ideas, seeking links, themes and understandings as I went. I was writing regularly, little bits here and there and coming back looking for how to join them together. At this point I began to conceptualise the process of this research for myself as rather like undertaking a weaving (Figure 3:7 p.77). I

had started with what appeared to be huge amounts of data, from which I was making some kind of order through varied processes of data reduction, using tools such as questioning (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000), thinking, finding themes and categories (Ely et al., 1991, Mello, 2002). These methods of 'teasing out' meaning (Ely et al., 1991) came to represent what I saw as the warp threads in my metaphor. The idea of thinking in a metaphor came from a study by Sermijin et al. (2008) who used the metaphor of a rhizome for the narrative construction of self, to argue that there is no single point of entry that can lead the researcher to the truth or reality, but there can be many connections that will lead to a version of reality. What I believed my metaphor gave me was the sense that the strands and themes I was drawing from individual stories are one form of truth, they are the stories as told of lived experience (Riessman, 2008). My engagement with them, bringing together the different strands and themes would be re-creating another story (Fraser, 2005). However as Mulholland and Wallace (2003) suggested, arriving at an exact replication of experience is not the object of a narrative inquiry. Indeed the essence of the research process was the construction and reconstruction of stories as a way of engaging persuasively and purposefully in human experience (Barone, 2007) in order to inform professional colleagues. Narrative researchers such as Elliot (2005) argue that it is not effective to try and bring ideas about validity from a positivist paradigm into a methodology that is constructivist and interpretive, rather it is the research question and methodology that should be examined and deemed trustworthy (Riessman, 2008). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Goodley et al (2004) talked instead about the need for authenticity in the way stories are captured and presented. It is only as the narratives I wrote are read, that others can make those judgements about this piece of narrative inquiry, this tapestry of stories of ECEC that I have created.

Figure 3:7 The ‘warp’ and ‘weft’ of data reduction: Creating the tapestry.  
 (conceptualising my methodological journey)

|   |   |
|---|---|
|    | <p>I saw the warp threads as being the elements that I drew out from the pile of data they were the individual stories of my participants and what they had chosen to share with me, what Meier and Stremmel (2010) call the “narrative threads” (p.250). But I could not leave myself out either. I was also a warp thread and would be entwined throughout the process. Unlike a normal weaving, these threads were not the same colour, or thickness. The individuals had chosen in their interviews what to share, some focused on one thing, some on another, therefore demonstrating their unique nature.</p> |
|   | <p>However, in creating the boundaries of time and space for the interviews and in setting a framework for the study I had lined them up alongside one another and created some order.</p>  |
|  | <p>The complexity of the weaving began with the analysis. Here the themes and ideas become the weft threads, those ideas I was tracking across all the individual stories. As I began writing I was hoping the ideas would link and join the individual stories together so some conclusions and answers could be drawn.</p>  |
|  | <p>Finally I trusted that when complete I would be able to take a step back and look at the whole. While it has a shape it is not be the only version possible, but it hopefully has several points of connection, depending upon the viewpoint of the reader and what resonated with them. As with the idea of the woven mat in Te Whāriki curriculum (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), the strength of the whole is that it allows both diversity and integration within a holistic framework.</p>   |

Throughout this process I came to glimpse something of the challenge and complexity of using narrative as a tool but also the positive way this methodological approach enables the investigation of lives as lived. Its complexity meant that the research literature does not highlight one way it can be approached, but rather each researcher, draws from others (Elliot, 2005) and then justifies their position. This chapter has sought to explain and justify the process of this study. I am mindful of the need to continue this explanation as I begin to present the narratives themselves in the next chapter, as I become a narrator (Chase, 2008).

## Chapter Four

### Presenting the data: the professional development narratives.

Slay and Smith (2011) describe “one’s professional self-concept (*as*) based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives and experiences” (p. 850) indicating the complexity involved in trying to understand the subject of professional identity. This chapter is going to explore the ways in which the constructs of professional identity are seen to emerge from the stories my participants told and how these insights provide answers to the research questions articulated in Chapter One.

The Figures presented (Figure 4:1 – 4:5) (see p.83-87) illustrate the final stage of the holistic silhouette analysis as discussed in the methodology chapter (see matrix of stages Figure 3.5). They link therefore to the previous use of silhouettes as illustrated in Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.4. The rest of the silhouettes from stage four which informed these pen portraits are found in Appendix D, with the exception of Zoe as she was presented in the holistic silhouette analysis section of the methodology chapter (Figure 3.4). The key points from these pen portraits allowed me to revisit the original interview data to explore issues raised through a discussion of the different aspects: the head (knowledge, reason and thinking), the heart (passion, feelings, values and beliefs) and hands (professionalism as worked out in practice) to examine how participants are constructing and enacting professional identities (Osgood, 2010).

For Moyles (2001), the interface between head and heart is the place of “reflection” (p.9), of thinking about the implications of the possible contradictory dynamics enshrined in practitioner’s heads and hearts. This aspect is represented in discourses around professionalism which include reflection as part of the embodiment of practice. Mockler (2011) referred to a “performative edge” (p.519) in relation to teacher identity where she suggested “the process of ‘storying’ and ‘restorying’ has the effect of both claiming and producing professional identity”. I recognise that in the

discussion that follows this element of performativity will be presented as I seek to both (re)tell my participant's stories, but also (re)story them to identify and produce aspects of professional identity. Drawing upon the discussions of professionalism articulated in Chapter Two allowed me to situate my analysis in the literature on professionalism

The Figures (Figure 4:1 -4:5), my (re)presented pen portraits from the final stage of the holistic silhouette analysis are now illustrated, with italics used to indicate the participants own words both in the figures and throughout the discussion that follows.

Fig 4:1 My (re)presentation of Zoe's professional identity which combines the key words in italics from the dominant domain themes extracted from Zoe's original interview data.

Zoe is a supervisor /manager of a pack away preschool. She explains how she came to her role *by default* because there was nobody else. She identifies herself as a *thinker* and questions at times whether she *thinks too much*, but also acknowledges that this is really a part of who she is, recalling that she has been a *questioner* since she was a child. She talks about how her study and in particular how her *reading* has helped her get her ideas sorted in her head.

She evidences a desire to *be at the top educationally*, linking this to the fact that she always wants to be *one step ahead*, so no one can question her qualifications. She describes herself as *happy and content with what she is doing*, which she links to her *emotional knowledge* which helps her know *what is right for children*. This knowledge is what is worked out in her practice, particularly in what she describes as *her ethos*. It's *this ethos* that she wants to continue, saying that she *is confident and enthusiastic* about its benefits for children. It involves children being *risky and physical*, spending time *outdoors, going on long walks* and placing the child at the centre of the practice. But it is also this element that she feels doesn't get recognised by *Ofsted* and which therefore causes her to become *fearful or despondent* at times. She describes the panic that comes over her, even though *Ofsted* do recognise that they are *good at care*, and that this part of her practice is just as important. She describes her setting as *home from home* where the consistent staff team *have time for cuddles* but can also work flexibly to follow children's interests. Following her ethos is what keeps her in ECEC and she says that what she wants to see *is happy children, smiling staff and happy families* to know she has done a good job.

Fig 5:2 My (re)presentation of Rachel's professional identity which combines the key words in italics from the dominant domain themes extracted from Rachel's original interview data.

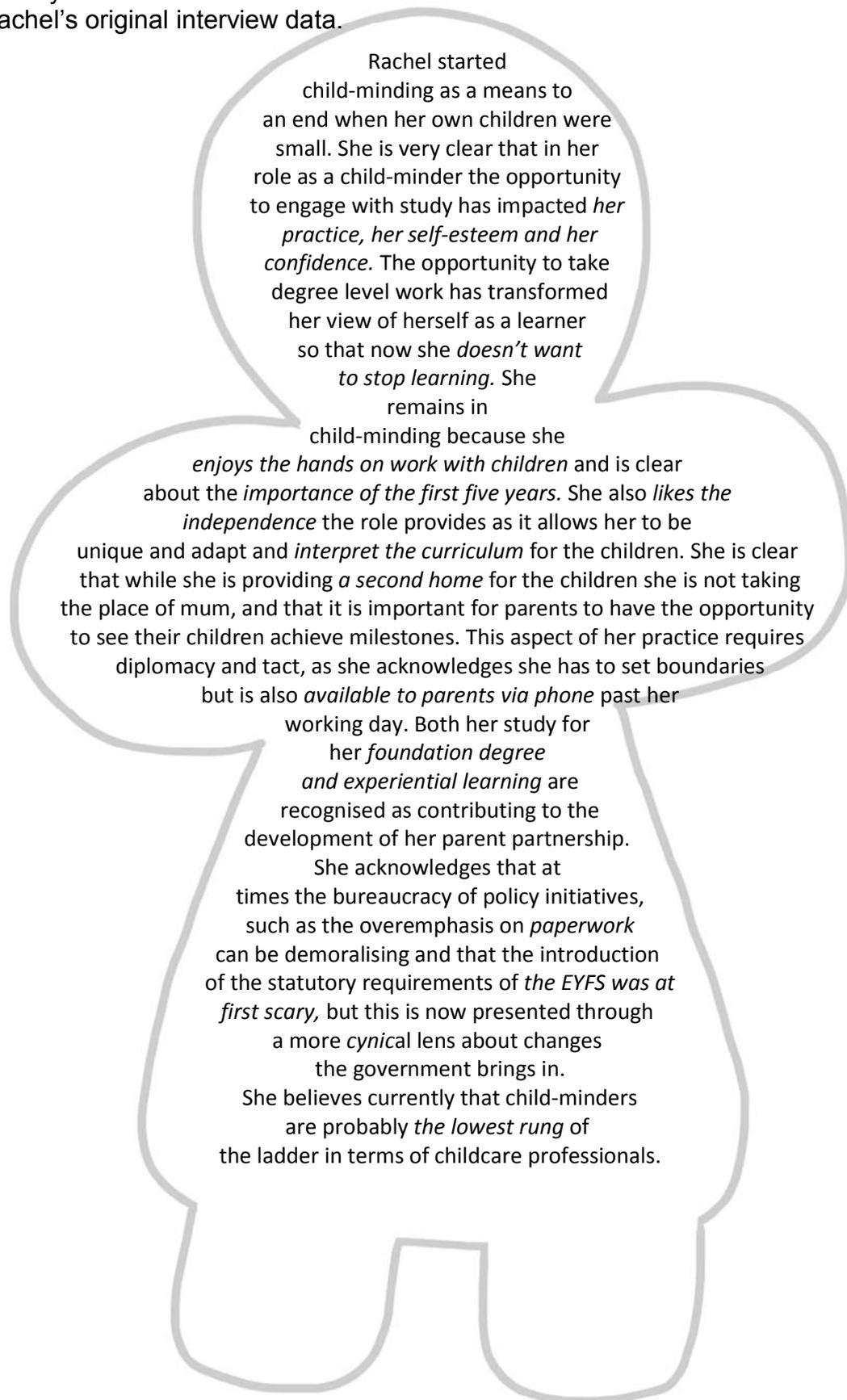
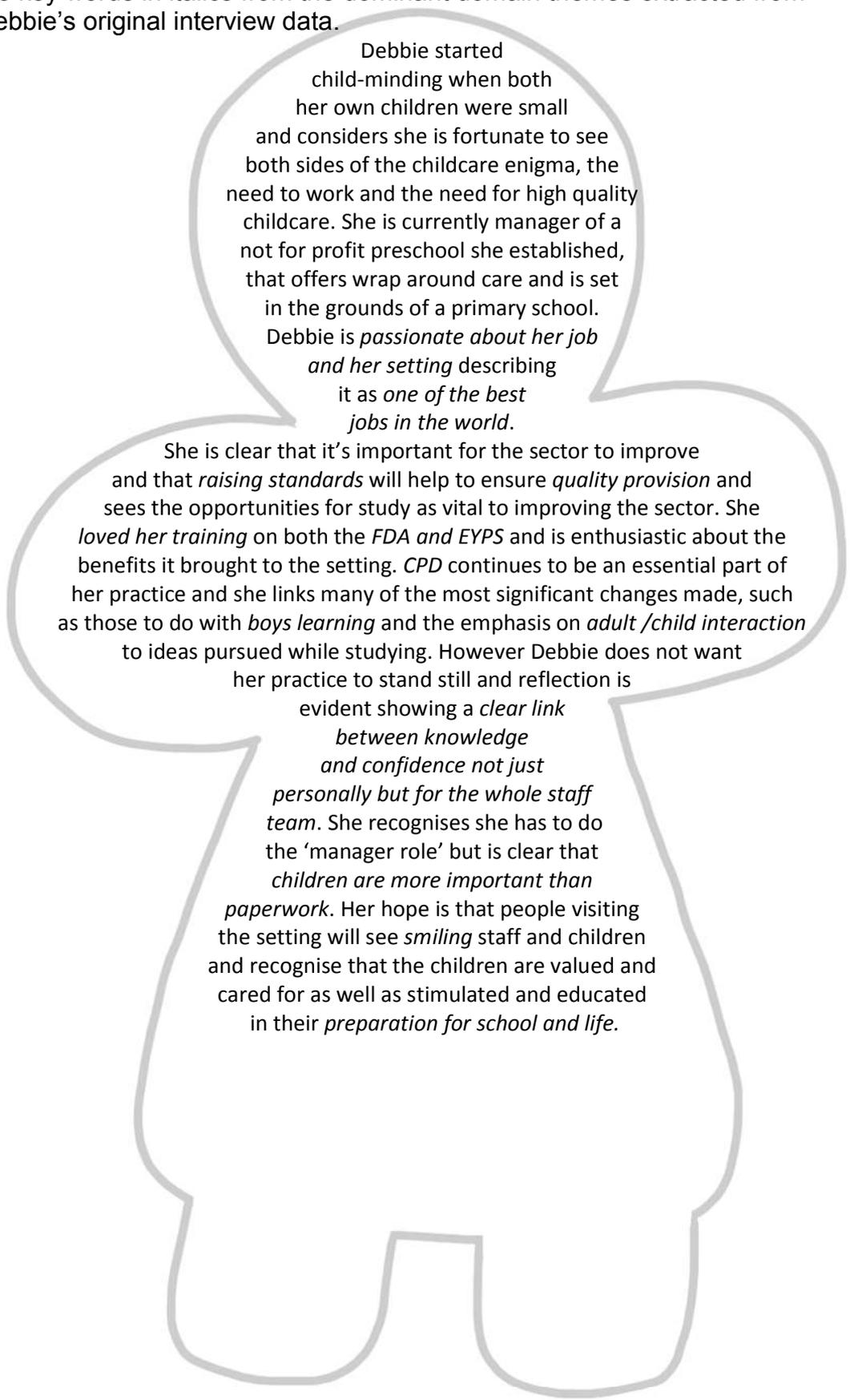


Fig 5:6 My (re)presentation of Helen's professional identity which combines the key words in italics from the dominant domain themes extracted from Helen's original interview data.

Helen is currently a senior practitioner in a baby room whose interest in young children started with work experience at school. She has been a nanny, nursery deputy and nursery manager, but is currently working directly with children as an EYPS. She clearly articulates how she has used her skills and knowledge to develop and *implement change*, particularly when she was in the role of a manager.

She describes herself as *easily bored* and her professional history reflects her need to move onto the next challenge. Currently she is really enjoying working with the babies because she says *you can sort of love them*. She identifies strengths of her practice as *understanding of the curriculum*, she introduced *High /Scope* and believes it is important for children to have *choice* in what they do as well as *routine*. She shows dissatisfaction with the general pay and conditions of the sector, although acknowledges that where she is currently working is well paid. She also found it *frustrating* that she feels the government offered things, such as a quick route to teacher training that were then withdrawn or changed. She talks about the value of undertaking the *Foundation Degree as a vehicle that changed her view of herself*, indicating how she feels study made her a *reflective practitioner*. Her narrative indicates how *new knowledge changes practice* as she talks about work with individual children, but also indicates how her practice draws upon her own memories of being a child. She describes herself as a *realist*, who has pride in her current setting; someone who *will do what she believes is right even if others don't agree*.

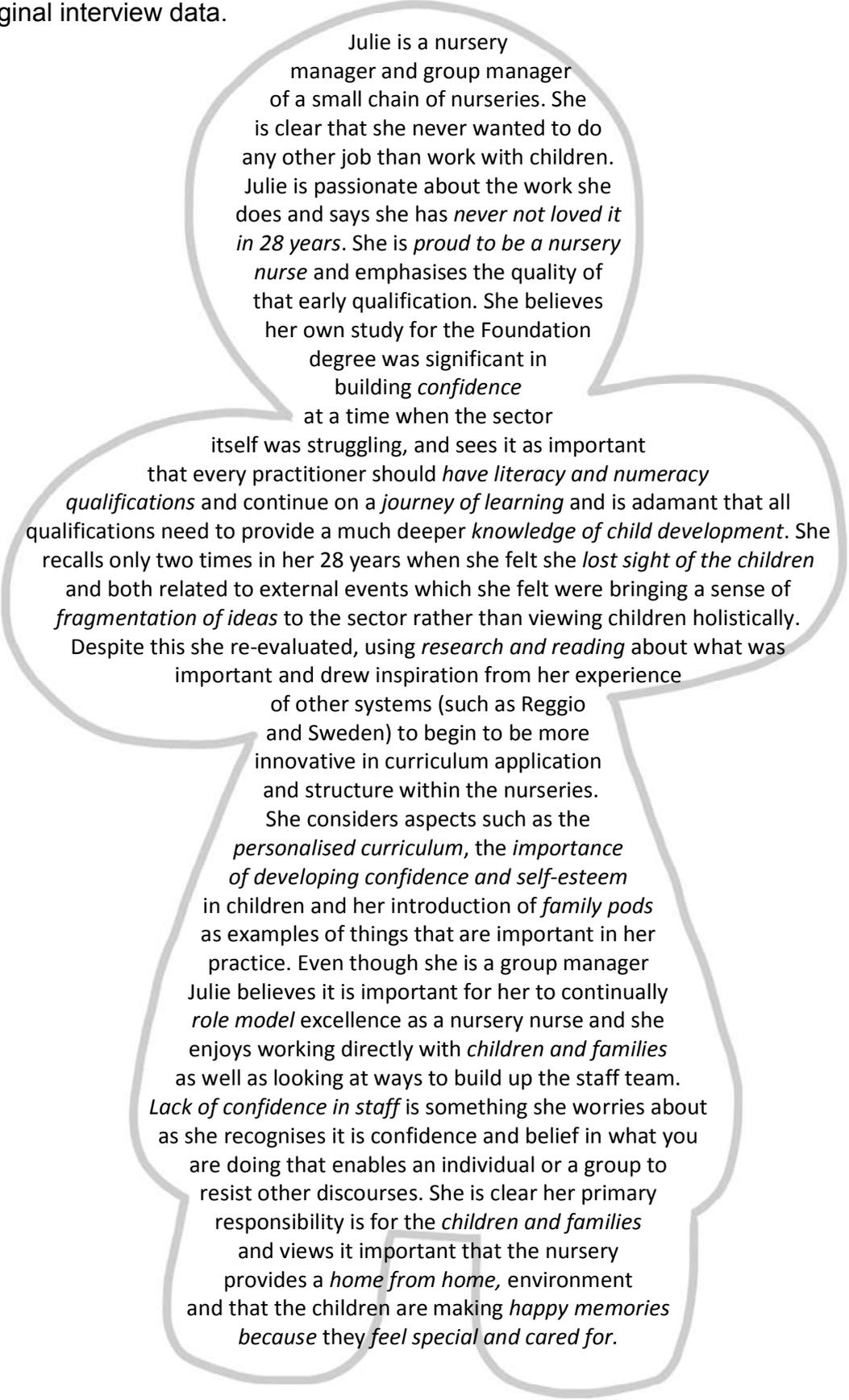
Fig 4:4 My (re)presentation of Debbie's professional identity which combines the key words in italics from the dominant domain themes extracted from Debbie's original interview data.



Debbie started child-minding when both her own children were small and considers she is fortunate to see both sides of the childcare enigma, the need to work and the need for high quality childcare. She is currently manager of a not for profit preschool she established, that offers wrap around care and is set in the grounds of a primary school. Debbie is *passionate about her job and her setting* describing it as *one of the best jobs in the world*.

She is clear that it's important for the sector to improve and that *raising standards* will help to ensure *quality provision* and sees the opportunities for study as vital to improving the sector. She *loved her training* on both the *FDA and EYPS* and is enthusiastic about the benefits it brought to the setting. *CPD* continues to be an essential part of her practice and she links many of the most significant changes made, such as those to do with *boys learning* and the emphasis on *adult /child interaction* to ideas pursued while studying. However Debbie does not want her practice to stand still and reflection is evident showing a *clear link between knowledge and confidence not just personally but for the whole staff team*. She recognises she has to do the 'manager role' but is clear that *children are more important than paperwork*. Her hope is that people visiting the setting will see *smiling* staff and children and recognise that the children are valued and cared for as well as stimulated and educated in their *preparation for school and life*.

Fig 4:5 My (re)presentation of Julie's professional identity which combines the key words in italics from the dominant domain themes extracted from Julie's original interview data.



Julie is a nursery manager and group manager of a small chain of nurseries. She is clear that she never wanted to do any other job than work with children. Julie is passionate about the work she does and says she has *never not loved it in 28 years*. She is *proud to be a nursery nurse* and emphasises the quality of that early qualification. She believes her own study for the Foundation degree was significant in building *confidence* at a time when the sector itself was struggling, and sees it as important that every practitioner should *have literacy and numeracy qualifications* and continue on a *journey of learning* and is adamant that all qualifications need to provide a much deeper *knowledge of child development*. She recalls only two times in her 28 years when she felt she *lost sight of the children* and both related to external events which she felt were bringing a sense of *fragmentation of ideas* to the sector rather than viewing children holistically. Despite this she re-evaluated, using *research and reading* about what was important and drew inspiration from her experience of other systems (such as Reggio and Sweden) to begin to be more innovative in curriculum application and structure within the nurseries. She considers aspects such as the *personalised curriculum*, the *importance of developing confidence and self-esteem* in children and her introduction of *family pods* as examples of things that are important in her practice. Even though she is a group manager Julie believes it is important for her to continually *role model* excellence as a nursery nurse and she enjoys working directly with *children and families* as well as looking at ways to build up the staff team. *Lack of confidence in staff* is something she worries about as she recognises it is confidence and belief in what you are doing that enables an individual or a group to resist other discourses. She is clear her primary responsibility is for the *children and families* and views it important that the nursery provides a *home from home*, environment and that the children are making *happy memories because they feel special and cared for*.

## **Exploring the head: knowledge, reasoning and thinking**

The starting point of this analysis was identifying all references made by my participants to knowledge gained from undertaking qualifications, as well as how they explored experiential knowledge and any other ideas they expressed that related to thinking or cognition. This would align quite closely with Karila's (2008) exploration of both professional knowledge and professional competency as one important element of professional expertise.

This area saw several common topics raised or talked about which included reference to qualifications and the importance of reflection as a tool for exploring knowledge in practice. It is worth noting that usually the way participants used the concept of reflection was as a reflection in or on practice (Schön, 1983), which might bring about change to that practice (Potter and Hodgson, 2007; O'Keefe and Tait, 2004). It was not perhaps the more complex understanding of reflexivity as discussed by Gibson (2013) and Osgood (2006a) which suggests a form of thinking deeply about practice in order to produce new knowledge and understanding. This reflexivity Gibson (2013) argued, as an essential part of professional skills and practice because of its transformational opportunities. There was also a direct link for several participants with the development of confidence and self-esteem linked to knowledge acquisition (O'Keefe and Tait, 2004). Although confidence could perhaps be seen as more of an affective element in terms of the three aspects of head, heart and hands; its close link in most narratives with the acquisition of knowledge meant that I included it in this section.

Zoe (Figure 4:1) a preschool manager appears as the participant most clearly identifying herself from a thinking or 'head knowledge position' in terms of the language she used. The phrase "*I think*" was used throughout her narrative along with examples of questions and questioning. This aspect strongly defined her construction of her professional identity and the pedagogy of her practice. It also demonstrates how this aspect appears to have changed her sense of professional and personal identity over time. She had enjoyed her Higher Education experience and the opportunity to ask

questions and find things out to the extent where she remarked: “*I wish I had gone to university full time when I was 18 or 19 I enjoy studying so much that I regret not being able to do it full time*”. Rachel (Figure 4:2), the child-minder, also tracked a similar path with her education. She talked about having to overcome her poor experience at school in order to engage with undertaking qualifications, but how she found it transformative so that now she described herself as *hooked on studying*. Rachel exhibited evidence of how her engagement with formal learning developed her self-esteem and confidence. In terms of practice she explored particularly how obtaining qualifications changed the way parents of the children she cared for viewed her. This confirmation of professionalism through qualifications is something suggested in the literature (Wild and Street, 2013), that qualification knowledge confirms the right to be taken seriously by individuals and society and endorses Manning-Morton’s (2006) view of the privileging of thinking in constructions of professionalism.

For four participants in my study the influence to study began as an external motivation related to requirements for practice (Wild and Street, 2013), but was seen to shift to a more internal desire to study as preschool manager, Zoe, commented:

*The supervisor encouraged me to do... a PPA or PLA qualification which I think was level 3 in those days and I went to college once a week... I was under pressure to finish the level 3 so I could take over ... then I was encouraged to carry on ...to do the diploma in Childcare and Education which was I think nationally recognised then as the level 3...then I vowed I wanted to go further...so I came ...to [university] and it was the lectures and discussions that I liked so much so that was great ... and then I was encouraged to do the EYPS (Zoe).*

This focus in this narrative illustrates the importance Zoe placed on the process of gaining the qualifications and what these opportunities opened up for her. It is something she talked about and returned to frequently in her wondering about the way others fulfil a child’s needs and where they have got the knowledge to do it from. It indicates a strong link between the acquisition of knowledge and professional practice as discussed by Brock (2012). Julie (Figure 4:5), the group manager, also made the link between

the importance of effective training for understanding how to work with young children. She entered the profession through undertaking the NNEB and argued for the importance of practitioners to have GCSE's in English and Maths, aligning with Nutbrown's (2012) views in the review of qualifications for the sector.

For Debbie, a preschool manager (Figure 4:4), the acquisition of knowledge and qualifications was directly related to her personal practice and that within her setting and included the importance of on-going professional development which fits with Dall's (2008) position. Debbie contextualised learning and knowledge as important for the development of "*quality*". It could be argued that in doing so she is aligning herself with the government discourse Blandford and Knowles (2009) comment on, that positions the ECEC workforce as in need of up skilling in order to provide a quality service. Urban (2008) argued that quality is a problematic concept, however for Debbie quality was related to professionalisation and the gaining of qualifications. She explored this through her communication of a stereotype of the early child care worker when she talked about there being no room any longer for "*old Mrs Jones opening the playgroup in the church hall and the children just run riot for two hours...you've got to stay trained and professional*". This dialogue reflected the changing nature of the effects of policy on practice as discussed by Osgood (2012) in the move for professionalisation of the workforce. It also suggests previous stereotypes of the ECEC worker (Stonehouse, 1989), like the 'Mrs Jones' referred to, that the new professional is replacing. In this narrative Debbie's alignment with the requirements by the government for quality is supporting her own professional identity.

Julie, the group manager (Figure 4:5), is the only participant who talked about a level three qualification as being the most significant in her experience. It was one of the clear markers of professional identity that she used in her references to herself as a nursery nurse on the award of her NNEB. This award was a transforming event for her and in the second interview when I explored in more detail her assertion of being a "*damn good*

nursery nurse”; she created a narrative of identity that related back to when she had passed this qualification.

*It's me, it's not the profession, it's me, my first sense of belonging, the first sense of real pride I remember having in myself was when I passed the NNEB I got my little badge and my dad bought me the silver one with chain on it (Julie).*

This may be of significance in line with Bathmaker's (2010) suggestion that identities shape practice, as Julie explored what it is that she associated with this identity. The depth of knowledge and rigorous training she had to undertake are an important part of the story and emerged in her considerations about current qualifications, that she felt simply do not provide a sufficient foundation for good ECEC. However, she also acknowledged that there is something about who she is, including a historic lack of confidence in herself, which conceivably made achieving the award her starting point for professional development. Manning-Morton (2006) proposed that some women who make childcare a career choice do so because of previously “unmet needs” (p.48), so it could also be argued that perhaps Julie in her expression of belonging, found the NNEB met these needs. The strength of feeling she attached to the award of nursery nurse is indicative of a time in her life when she was rewarded for accomplishing something, that initially her parents had not been particularly supportive of; they had wanted her to pursue teaching, but which her father appeared to celebrate with her in the presentation of the badge. It is probably the complex mix of both the achievement of a long held ambition to work with children, but also the family affirmation that make this a foundation stone in her personal and professional identity. This example illustrates the complexity of individual journeys towards professionalism. It reflects the internal world and experiences of the individual being shaped and changed by the knowledge acquired, which fits with Gibson's (2013) position about the complexities of developing professional identities.

From her narrative it is clear that for Julie especially, her concept of a good nursery nurse was closely linked to a set of knowledge requirements based around child development, which she felt she gained from her NNEB. A

specific knowledge base is argued to be a professional marker of identity (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Evetts 2003) and Julie was equating professional practice to this knowledge acquisition. However there is a tension here in that she did not feel many current qualifications at entry level provided practitioners with the knowledge and understanding required. She saw her year long induction programme for new staff as the vehicle through which she makes up what she perceived as a gap. Interestingly her emphasis on the importance of child development could be one of the aspects that brought her into conflict with current ways of thinking, as Oberhuemer (n.d.) made a case that the reliance on child development for the foundation of ECEC is being challenged. This view was supported by Musgrave (2010) who argued for the changing nature of multicultural practice as a requirement for new ways of thinking about aspects such as child development. May (2013) also contended for the need for a more flexible pedagogy to recognise cultural differences and the limitations of a linear developmental model. However, there is also evidence that Julie drew inspiration from others ideas as she mentioned the influence of both Reggio Emilia (Edwards et al., 1998) and learning about life skills from the Swedish approach (Ozar, 2012) through her own reading. It appears therefore that the emphasis on child development as the foundation for ECEC, and it being no longer a part of training is perhaps a well-rehearsed story (Elliot, 2005) that helped her explain some of the conflicts she felt existed between her view and current requirements in ECEC training and qualifications.

This idea of there being something missing in current training opportunities for early years practitioners occurred in different ways by other participants. As a preschool manager Debbie also talked about a knowledge gap, but situated herself as a qualified practitioner reflecting back to before the NVQ3 became a minimal qualification for supervisory level (Potter and Hodgson, 2007). She was clear how the acquisition of knowledge at graduate level in the form of further qualifications helped her practice *get better and better*, the implication in her narrative is that it is essential for all the ECEC workforce to be trained more effectively (Osgood, 2012). The tension she articulated is in how it is to be afforded and she wondered whether it will continue to be

provided at an adequate level, an issue raised in the literature by Miller (2008). Zoe, also managing a preschool, felt there was a lack in the workforce, but she saw it in the way training becomes applied in practice, for her the tension that existed was that of the failure of practitioners to think about what they are told and apply it to their individual children and settings, instead she implied other local practitioners were in her view unthinkingly adopting everything they are taught. For Zoe this appeared to highlight a view that there was a lack of individuality and interpretation in application of training to practice, both characteristics that could be argued to demonstrate professionalism (Potter and Hodgson, 2007).

Rachel, a child-minder, demonstrated it was possible to also learn through experience (Goouch, 2010). She indicated that her many years in the job and her personal experience as a mother gave her much needed insight into how parents of the children she cared for might feel if they missed important milestones in their young children's development. This empathy informed her practice and the decisions she made about things. She described herself as acting "*unprofessionally*" towards a child because when she felt he may be on the edge of taking his first steps, for example, she would stop encouraging him so that the parents could have the pleasure of witnessing this for themselves. This is a clear example of the kind of conflict, or emotional labour that Elfer (2012) talks about staff having to manage in their negotiation of close relationships with children and parents. This part of the discussion with Rachel also indicated how difficult she found it to communicate her tacit knowledge (Messenger, 2013), about professionalism with parents, which she identified as learnt from experience. She was so used to the focus of her practice being the development of the child that she termed her actions "*unprofessional*" because in this instance she put the needs of the parents first. This illustrates an important aspect of ECEC as a workforce, in that practitioners have to exhibit an ethic of care through a range of relationships.

Helen, a senior baby room practitioner, also offered an insight into what might be tacit knowledge from her own approach, when she talked about the importance of trying to remember what it is like to be a child. She did this in

the context of her work with babies and a situation of conflict with another staff member who wanted to stop the child's exploration. The narrative was about a child getting really messy:

*[she was exploring a] cake pop thing with glittery icing, so she put it up and down her arm, and why shouldn't she its glittery pink icing...and you have to remember she has never seen this thing before and it's amazing and I think you have to try and keep the wonder that children have (Helen).*

Interestingly when questioned if she had always had this attitude, she reflected that perhaps it was something she gained as she developed her pedagogic approach around High /Scope principles (Hohmann and Weikart, 1995), that encourage supporting children in their own exploration. This illustrates Urban's (2010) idea that the way individuals know about things will shape the person's ways of being and acting. In this instance knowledge gained from study and training is seen as pedagogical reasoning that has become translated into professional enactment. Eventually when it has been performed a significant length of time it appears to become part of an individual's professional identity and their tacit knowledge. I use this as an example, because the narrative about the glittery icing suggested an unquestioned approach to young children's learning from Helen, but it was only when questioned that Helen recognised that it may have originally been learnt, not naturally instinctive.

What these narratives show is that the participants interviewed in this study valued the acquisition of knowledge, and could see how it had contributed to their sense of professionalism and specifically how certain qualifications for all of them have given them a sense of confidence and self-esteem. It appears as if gaining knowledge and qualifications allowed them to move from a place of uncertainty to a place of certainty in their professionalism. However, it also indicates that these practitioners do not necessarily agree on a focus for what a knowledge base should be, reflecting one of the dilemmas of professionalisation, which as Milller (2008) suggested needs consistency in its training in order to have an effectively qualified workforce.

## **Exploring the heart: passion, feelings, values and beliefs.**

The literature review identified the difficulties (Taggart, 2011; Colley, 2006; Goldstein, 1998) that remain in the sector because of the feminised workforce and the challenges of working with the affective domain in the realm of emotion (Page and Elfer, 2013; Moyles, 2001). The necessity of constructing an ethic of care (Taggart, 2011) and the role of ‘professional love’ (Page, 2011) remain important as a key professional quality in work with young children, as also indicated by Simpson’s (2010b) work on professionalism and Quan-McGimsey et al.’s (2011) discussions of managing closeness in teacher child relationships. It was important therefore to explore the feelings the participants used in their narratives and some of the metaphors that illustrate these emotions, values and beliefs. Unlike in the previous section around knowledge, when considering feelings, values and beliefs there appears to be a wider range of ideas explored here with initially less commonality between participants. The narratives contain both positive and negative feelings the participants exhibit about not only their role but the way in which they perceive the early years sector is moving.

Of all the participants interviewed Julie, a group setting manager, emerged as the one who has most ‘affectively’ engaged with her career and who still expressed her passion for the work she does in terms of “love”. Julie was also the only individual who volunteered any suggestion that unhappy events in her own personal life as a child may have been strongly influential in developing her desire to “*make a difference*” and her choice of work saying how she wanted children to have “*happy memories*”. Her career choice was established at a very early age as she began:

*I always knew, I always knew, I was going to work with children, from as young as I can remember. I always knew I was going to work with children and they were going to be under five, little children, (Julie 2012).*

The early years of her career spent in a social service nursery in Toxeth, established her passion for working as a nursery nurse and it appears to have set the tone for her future working practice.

*Day nurseries were my passion, caring for them from babies and making a real difference. There's a real difference, they were children on the 'at risk' register, parents with ... real needs, individual needs, some with learning difficulties, some with drug addiction, alcohol a lot of problems...I loved my relationships with the children... I loved that the parents would come and speak to me and we had this relationship that was about their child (Julie).*

This description suggests the extent to which Julie fits the stereotype of the 'good early years teacher' as described by Langford (2007) "as someone who undertakes, through love and caring and natural aptitudes to 'save' children at risk of harm" (p.334). Colley (2006) proposed that college tutors may reinforce the "moral worth" (p.22) of work with children and some of this may have been absorbed by Julie in her early training. However Zoe, a preschool manager, also indicated a similar concern that early years practice should meet the needs of all when she talked about how she felt it was important to "*encourage families that are on the edge of society into the setting and those that have no money*". These ideas reflect the view of Stronach et al. (2003) who argued that the idea of a professional is the sense of someone who is "an agent for good in society" (p.110) and could suggest that in demonstrating this view both Zoe and Julie are acting professionally.

All the study participants were clear about their job satisfaction. Julie said "*I've never not loved it*", Debbie called it one of "*the best jobs in the world*" and Helen, Zoe and Rachel all used positive terminology to talk about their role. Preschool manager Zoe said she is "*happy and content*", Helen a baby room practitioner is "*happy being with the children*" and Rachel the child-minder "*enjoys being hands on with children*". These comments fit with Taggart's (2011) contention that a sense of vocation is an important part of what keeps practitioners like the participants in my study in the workforce. These expressions of enjoyment and enthusiasm in the job appear to justify decisions made about staying in the field of ECEC despite negative feelings about some aspects of the work.

The notion of happiness was not examined in detail in relation to this study. Nevertheless, it is worth noting Alexander's (2010) point that "happiness is a relative and perhaps slippery concept" (p.110) and is related to views about

how children and childhood are constructed which is part of a wider debate. Elfer (2012) considers the idea of happiness when he talks about the requirement for staff to look happy, particularly when parents are shown around, something both Debbie and Zoe as preschool managers suggested they wanted to see in their settings. Elfer (2012) goes on to suggest this emphasis on happiness and smiling faces can make strong emotional demands of practitioners that need to be managed. Julie in her centre manager role gave an example of having to manage this type of experience:

*A mum said something to me last week, "Are you ok you seem really distant?" And I said to her "please don't say that to me" and I'm tired and I need to take some time off. I tell that to them (the staff), your moods impact, your behaviour, your attitudes impact on the whole building parents and everything (Julie).*

Her story here shows not only her own struggle, a struggle with wanting to meet the needs of parents and children and putting them first, but also how she is passing on awareness to the staff that emotional intelligence (Harwood et al., 2013; Goleman, 1996) is an important part of professionalism. Interestingly none of my participants mentioned the difficulties that Colley (2006) discussed of managing the darker side of young children's lives, what she called the " 'puke', 'pee' and 'punches'" (p.16), although Colley was talking about new entrants to the workforce, not experienced practitioners.

While it appears that positive expressions are related primarily to the day to day work, involving the children and families, the negative feelings expressed in the narratives arise or are linked to the impact of external factors over which there is perhaps less personal control. Events which may reinforce the notions of hegemony that Osgood (2012) claimed exist in the ECEC workforce and social constructions of the practitioners that work in it. While this is perhaps a simplistic interpretation exploring the places where negative feelings are expressed helped examine this. In terms of language used, preschool manager Zoe exhibited the most powerful sense of negativity in all the narratives. In her case it was specifically related to Ofsted inspections which challenged her sense of professionalism because she felt unable to explain or justify her pedagogic decisions when the inspector arrived

because it appeared the nerves take over as she talked about becoming “*a bit like jelly*” and not performing well.

Rachel, the child-minder, was also critical of the changes in the inspection regime where it moved from supporting care of the young child to mainly being concerned with education and requiring extensive paperwork. She saw the paperwork as demoralising as nobody except the inspector was interested in it and yet it took up a lot of her time, time she said could be used more profitably with the children. She talked about the “*helpful*” nature of inspections under social services and compared this to the inexperience and lack of knowledge of some of the first Ofsted inspectors of home based care. Baldock (2011) explained how, prior to 2002, inspection of childcare was undertaken though the local authority who had responsibility for registration, support and inspection, which was variable according to local authority structures and systems. In a move by the government for greater consistency, Ofsted became the inspection and regulatory body for childcare. Discussions around Ofsted and regulations are more fully explored in Chapter Five as they formed a significant part of the tensions experienced that challenged or confirmed professionalism in the participant’s stories.

In looking for the unexpected stories (Cary, 1999) the discussion that was most surprising to me in the affective domain was when child-minder Rachel explained the effect of the introduction of the EYFS (DCSF, 2008a) and described it as “*scary*” because it was statutory. She went on to explain that she knew of child-minders who had left the sector because of this. However although she kept emphasising the fact it was scary, she indicated that because she was studying at the time she felt this gave the support necessary to embrace this new requirement. This is an illustration of what a technician or standards approach can produce; as the underlying message here is I have to get it right or I may be punished.

Group manager Julie talked about two times in her life when her confidence about her practice was brought into question and her self-belief was challenged. She identified this as due to external pressures which created what she perceived as a lack of confidence throughout the early years

sector. She felt they had occurred because things were becoming fragmented by the introduction of a range of discrete policy initiatives such as 'Boogie mites', a programme of music through which aspects the EYFS can be extended and delivered (Boogiemites, 2013), and 'Letters and Sounds', a phonics resource published by the Department for Education and Skills (2007). Additionally she said the local authority advisors coming in to the settings were all giving different advice and there was no consistency. Interestingly, although she felt that fragmentation was still a problem, she had resolved the issues for herself by developing the confidence to articulate her views. She suggested that it was the Foundation Degree that gave her the deeper knowledge to make a stand for her beliefs, rather than later qualifications as the following extract shows:

*I think the Foundation Degree had a huge impact on my professional confidence, what I learnt and finding out what avenues to go down has shaped the changes we have made...I think the impact is I have more confident staff members because you can share with them more confidently... I share it with happiness now, I really do now share things I know with happiness to people because I know it's right, it's been tried and tested (Julie).*

Clearly the account here is suggesting a link between the acquisition of knowledge and the affective domain (O'Keefe and Tait, 2004) and illustrates how Julie moved from uncertainty to certainty in her professional practice through the application of acquired knowledge.

These extracts have highlighted how the use of what I have identified as positive aspects of feelings, values and beliefs are reinforcing the value of the job they do and supporting their own views of the professional nature of the task and of being professional. The length of time they have worked in the sector could also be seen as an indicator that they have managed to find equilibrium between the positive aspects and the more negative feelings about the job and the sector that they also have to hold in tension. Zoe was the only one who talked about leaving the sector, "*but if I don't like it I would have gone ages ago*" and discussed how if the government laid down aspects that she could not subscribe to with her ethos she would need to do something else.

The findings in this study suggest that there is a broad divide between positive feelings about the job and negative feelings about the constraints and regulations that surround them. What is clear is that these elements are involved in constructing professional identities and reinforcing or undermining aspects such as value and status which fits with the views of Osgood (2012).

### **Exploring the hands: Performing professionalism in practice**

This section considered the data that emerged from the analysis in respect of how the participants discussed aspects of their practice including the way in which they entered the workforce. If career choice is important in constructing professional identity as Court et al. (2009) suggested, it is worth noting that while both Debbie and Julie appear to have made active choices to enter ECEC the other three participants' routes were more accidental. Helen the baby room practitioner explained she did not have the A levels for entering teaching which was her first choice so the careers advisor suggested nursery work. Zoe actually said she arrived there "*by default*" because no one else was available to take up the role. She wanted a preschool for her children to go to and she liked the ethos where they attended. It is not unusual for parents to become practitioners in sessional care, as Zoe described, starting as unqualified helpers when their children attend and remaining because they enjoy the work (Cameron, 2006; Moss, 2006). As my participants narratives indicated they then benefitted from the opportunity to gain qualifications while working in the field. Equally Rachel said she found child-minding a "*means to an end*" when her own children were small, which is not unusual for home based care (Taggart, 2011) and both Zoe and Debbie talked about undertaking a period of child minding before starting in a setting when they had small children at home.

Despite their different entries into the sector all are now engaging in practice which they view as professional, however the ways in which they express or enact this professionalism do vary (Miller, 2008). What happens in practice is formulated by the knowledge and beliefs that are inherent within individuals (Berthelsen and Brownlee, 2007); these are bounded by the culture of settings, what Karila (2008) terms "working culture" (p.211) as well as what

Messenger (2013) describes as the culture of the wider environment. The proposed identification of those with EYPS in the UK as “leading practice” and as “catalysts for change” (CWDC, 2010a p.17), suggests a recognition that working culture can be a contributor to improving quality in the workplace. The narratives of all my participants working as managers in group settings demonstrated they take responsibility for seeking to establish the culture they want to see in their settings, which may be due to the leadership role they inhabit as discussed by Miller (2008). They talked of themselves as role models and leading by example, suggesting that some aspects of professionalism can be ‘caught’ this way and indicating an awareness of how they see themselves in relation to others in ECEC, as modelling professionalism.

For Julie the group manager, professionalism appeared to be not just about her own knowledge but the ability to “*share with happiness*”, what she has learnt and put into practice. Wild and Street (2013) suggested the ability to articulate knowledge and expertise is important to creating a sense of confidence, as demonstrated by Julie when she was talking about how she no longer allows advisors to make suggestions to her staff that have not been discussed and approved by her first. She said:

*At the end of the Foundation Degree I was able to go, No, this is what I believe, backed up by this. So yes you may think it is fine in a classroom but it isn't fine in my nursery...it gave me that underpinning knowledge to support everything else (Julie).*

Not all participants are secure in their enactments of professionalism however. Preschool manager Zoe for example, discussed her professionalism by frequently referring to how she enacts her “*ethos*” which appears to be how she talks about her pedagogy and ideas about what is appropriate for young children’s development and learning. When asked she described her ethos, as “*home from home, starting from the child and risky, physical and outdoors*” and explained this is something that met her ideas instinctively when she started in the preschool as a helper, and which she also acknowledged comes partly from her experience as mother of six boys. The issue for Zoe with her professional practice is that external pressures,

such as Ofsted and curriculum requirements, appeared at times to be undermining how she enacted her professionalism.

This can be seen from the way she felt the need to justify her approach to practice through her extensive reading and her alignment with particular 'experts' in the early years field. She named well known authors; such as Jennie Lindon, Sue Palmer and Cathy Nutbrown, whose writing she felt supported what she knew instinctively about treating children as individuals and giving them space and time to play. Zoe talked about engagement with these authors, as affirming her and therefore her practice, she explained this through the written responses she has had to letters published in the well-known industry practice journal '*Nursery World*' and went on to say

*Jennie Lindon personally acknowledges me when she comes....to training, because she has written and replied to my letters. I'm honoured I think because if people like that rate me. I must be okay mustn't I? (Zoe)*

This identification with others can be seen as a marker of professional identity formation as explored by Trede, et al., (2011) where there is specific alignment and identification with other members of the profession. It could also be argued that these narratives are examples of "internal reflective dialogue" (Court et al. 2009, p.209) based around the key events of letters and meetings, that help to justify her professional identity and pedagogy. However what is apparent is the enactment of a professionalism at dissonance with the over prescription of activities for young children through regulation, that is seeking to find justification and support from external sources.

Zoe was not the only participant who had what I would call a strong ethos, although she is the only one to use that terminology. Group manager Julie was very clear about what she wanted for the children. Her key aspects of working culture were providing "*security and developing independence, confidence and self-esteem in the children*". She too used the expression "*home from home*" as a metaphor for the way she wanted her practice to feel. Karila (2008) suggested these types of metaphors do not perhaps envisage the settings as primarily a place of education or learning even

though that is strongly evident as what is expected for group settings in the language of policy papers (Parker, 2013). It could be construed that the metaphor 'home from home' fits with Moss' (2006) contention that they are viewing themselves as "substitute mothers" (p.34) carrying out in the setting the work of the parent in the home. This would then clearly link to the maternalism discourse of ECEC (Gibson, 2013; Page, 2011). This discourse would suggest that performing practice that embraces the notion of "motherliness" (Hohmann, 2010 p.131) is about qualities or characteristics that predominately can be associated with female character traits (Taggart, 2011; Belenky et al., 1997). Rachel in her child minding role perhaps examined the notion of 'home from home' more closely than the others. She talked about her home as becoming "*like a second home but it's not their home*". She was very aware she was "*not their mum,*" and described the negotiation of this role as one she handled in a "*diplomatic*" and "*careful*" way suggesting that she was aware of some of the challenges in taking on the role of caring for others' children.

Alternatively the idea of branding a setting 'home from home' could be viewed as a marketing tool to reassure parents. Preschool manager Debbie explored the setting as a place for the provision of a nurturing environment saying, "*the nurturing, the caring, the loving, the giving is as much a part of teaching as everything that goes with it*". She went on to make a link to the fact that, "*if you are a mother yourself you want to give the child you are caring for the love your child's getting*" illustrating again the maternal discourses that hover around professional identity in ECEC as a recurring theme (Osgood, 2012), but also the empathy with other mother's feelings about the provision their children receive as explored by Page (2011).

Nonetheless, the metaphor, 'home from home' could have a multiplicity of meanings to these participants. For example it could also imply less formal or less structured practice when Zoe uses it, relating to her informal and child centred ethos. Or for Julie it may relate to ways she has structured her setting, as she talked about how growing confidence enabled her to be innovative in her practice and try new ways of organisation in the nursery, such as the family pods she has established. The family pod was explained

as a vertically grouped key person group or base that allowed siblings to be together and encouraged the older children to support the younger, so could be viewed as creating a 'home from home' type of setting.

These interpretations about the metaphor 'home from home' are not intended to suggest the absence of emotional warmth between adults and children as less important. Taggart (2011) suggested from his research that practitioners highly value an ethic of care in their informal discourses of practitioner professionalism. This can be seen in the participants own language as Zoe talked about her setting being "*good at care*" as a positive attribute and how "*making time for cuddles*" with the children is a valuable part of practice. However it is possible that what is happening here is the rehearsal of expected dialogues of socially constructed gender roles as explored by Colley (2006), which suggest that caring is natural to women.

Another example of enacting professionalism related to how the participants in my study developed their relationship with parents. They all talked about helping families and parents not just in terms of the childcare provision but something else; an added extra. This fits with Court et al. (2009) who found in their study that professionals believed relationships with parents were important but complex and a challenging aspect of professional practice. Yet, while all the participants mentioned parents they rarely problematized the relationships during the interviews. Child minder Rachel talked of sharing knowledge learned with parents and how she felt the parents changed their view of her because of this demonstration of professional knowledge, in both the ways they talked to her but also the advice they would ask from her. This story is similar to one that baby room practitioner Helen told of parents views changing when they realised she had a degree. The knowledge dimension, therefore, could be seen to be creating professional identity not only because of what it does internally for the individual in gaining knowledge but also because it contributes to external constructions through the ways others perceive someone with a degree as debated by Menmuir and Hughes (2004).

When preschool manager Debbie talked about her setting, she used the metaphor of a stepping stone between home and school, preparing children for school and life and as such she positioned herself clearly in the education field as a professional (Dalli, 2008; Woodrow, 2008) talking about teaching, learning and standards as vitally important. She talked at length about her practice and about work her setting had done to support boys learning especially developing the use of outdoors. She often made direct links to specific tasks undertaken at university, unlike some of the other participants who indicated an underlying pedagogy or set of values or beliefs they started with. What Debbie demonstrated was a pedagogy that had emerged as she had actively engaged in professional development. An example would be when she talked about the boys learning:

*...I remember we were having a group discussion in class at uni about guns and should we have them and it kind of triggered in my head that we are in the centre of a military area and if we told our children that they couldn't play with guns or superhero play we really were in concept telling that that what their parents did as a job was wrong, and that did have a huge impact on me. Actually I remember being quite shocked that I hadn't thought of it before and came back to work and said to the girls, you've got to listen to this ... and... it completely changed the way we thought (Debbie).*

This example illustrates how updating knowledge and new thinking, followed by reflection, lead to a change in practice (O'Keefe and Tait, 2004).

However, the emotive element is also part of the dialogue when she talked about being shocked and about the impact this new thinking had upon her and subsequently her setting.

The need for on-going development (Dalli, 2008) can also be seen as another way these practitioners are enacting their professionalism. Julie stated this explicitly when she said a professional was:

*someone who continues on their journey of learning...it isn't doing your NNEB, or doing your whatever and thinking you are brilliant...I think to be a really good practitioner and a really good nursery nurse you've got to continue on that journey and reflect on where you are and in your day to day you reflect (Julie).*

Julie was not alone in recognising the importance of CPD and reflection as part of professional identity; the concept emerges from everyone's narratives in explicit or implicit ways. Vrinioti (2013) contended that all definitions of professionalism should contain the ability to use reflection in the implementation of what he calls "scientific knowledge" to solve problems (p.158). However the reflection that Julie is talking about in the section above appears to be much more embedded within the 'informal' or practice knowledge (Brock, 2006) of what happens day to day, rather than the critical reflection as a marker of professionalism the literature suggests is required (Potter and Hodgson, 2007; Osgood, 2006a), that will allow resistance to constraints imposed externally (Raven, 2011). The reflexivity talked about by Oberhuemer (2005) "requires a willingness to reflect on taken for granted beliefs and that knowledge is contestable" (p.14), as demonstrated by Debbie in her narrative on play with guns where a new way of thinking emerges.

Zoe talked a lot about being reflective and recognised that the EYPS training gave her "*forced opportunities for reflection*". She went on to consider that completing some of her Self Evaluation Form (SEF); the part of the inspection process where she had to evaluate the impact of what she did (Ofsted 2012), was also a similar exercise but felt it far too time consuming for someone who struggled with the paperwork. The tension of paperwork in practice is one I will return to later (see section on regulation and inspection in Chapter Five). Reflection for Zoe involved thinking for yourself, as she talked about her staff team and not wanting them to be "*robots*" but that she welcomed different ideas and individual characteristics. She implied she would like to see some of them grapple and own some of the ideas she put forward rather than just do it because she said so, or someone else said so. She indicated that she encouraged reflection as a team process that impacts their practice, illustrating this through how they used the *Development Matters in The Early Years Foundation Stage* (DCSF, 2008b; Early Education, 2012) as a team in their planning and discussion.

An example of her personal reflection occurred during her second interview when Zoe reflected aloud as she considered the implications of the new guidance for individual conversations with children. This might be similar to what Simpson (2010b) identified as 'self-talk', or 'transformative dialogue', which he surmised was how practitioners demonstrated their agency through consideration of circumstances that surrounded them. His argument was that individuals although conditioned by external contexts were not determined by them. I believe this narrative of Zoe's shows her beginning to respond to a new external requirement and this initial reflection was her determining how she might proceed through the implications for practice of the requirement. It perhaps can be viewed as an example of the thought processes Zoe engaged in that embedded a certain type of reflection within her practice and how she found agency as a professional in interpreting external guidelines.

*The new EYFS has written down that every key person or every member of staff has to have a conversation with every child in one session ... and that's an eye opener because whether it is physically possible for us to do that...it's going to be a challenge...are we actually having a conversation or is it 'well done' or 'go and wash your hands' and even I have to pull myself up at that...yes it's going to be a challenge but its good though. I knew as soon as I read that bit I thought about where I talk to children and do I do directive talk rather than a two way chat...(Zoe)*

This illustration is unique in the data as an example of this type of thinking aloud. It indicates the nature of a practitioner involving themselves with a change that is occurring and working out the implications for practice, as the guidelines become formalised and therefore exemplifies Simpson's (2010) view of a transformational dialogue.

Like both Zoe and Debbie, Julie the other manager also talked about knowledge, learning and reflection from both a personal and a setting perspective. The management roles of these participants were therefore important in their constructions of professional identity as they are embracing responsibility not just for personal change but for the development of others in the workforce. The ability to reflect, evaluate and respond are professional qualities which Jones and Pound (2008) indicated as important aspects of leadership in ECEC.

## Negotiating Tensions

Having considered the three categories of head, heart and hands it is clear that an overarching theme (Ely et al., 1991) running through all of them is how practitioners managed the tensions that existed and how they resisted or responded to external constraints. Clandinin et al. (2010) recognised tension as part of an educator's workplace, as well as part of the research process so it should not be surprising to find it emerging as a theme. Jones and Pound (2008) also indicated that the field of ECEC is full of tension, suggesting it requires a creative professional to negotiate. Therefore in this section I explore in more detail some of these tensions that appear from the data and note how certainties and uncertainties within the stories develop to reinforce or challenge a particular view of professionalism. In particular I have chosen to look at: the role of loving care in work with young children; what I have identified as the childcare enigma; and the challenge(s) to self-confidence. These aspects appeared in my participant's stories and were evident through the process of analysis using the holistic silhouette approach. The three aspects highlight some of the key issues for professionalisation of the workforce as previously discussed in the literature review.

Negotiating the paradigm of education and care is a well-rehearsed aspect of the literature (Adams, 2008a; Manning-Morton, 2006) and current policy within the OECD (2012), and all participants worked out how they traversed the paradigm in their narratives. Julie's talk about how she searched for the 'right' job illustrated the importance of caring as a fundamental part of her professional identity and practice. As group manager she explained how all the settings she opened had to meet the requirements of working with children and families where she was "*most needed*" and that an important part of her practice was providing "*happy memories because the children feel special and cared for*". This type of caring appears to be part of her instinctive nature and personality not necessarily stemming from a professional quality and would reinforce the notion of gendered caring. However it also aligns with the types of caring motivations that might be

found in other professions, such as health and social work, that require what Taggart (2011) described as a “moral seriousness” (p.85) to caring as part of the way professionals perform the work. Taggart (2011) suggested that it is also important to recognise the ethical nature of the care that would need to be enacted daily in this work, where the motivations for some aspects of caring come from effort rather than being involuntary e.g. feeding and changing babies. Positioning the child and family as ‘in need’ allowed Julie to centre her practice in her defined role of nursery nurse and this example shows how her social constructions of ECEC have allowed her to emphasise the aspect of care in her professional persona.

Helen, in her role in the baby room, explored more specifically the emotional aspect of engaging with young children at length because it caused a tension for her, this time with another member of staff in the setting who challenged the response she was making to the child. Her narrative explored how in her work with babies she had negotiated how I have interpreted Page’s (2011) concept of professional love.

*...and so you always keep a bit of yourself back, but I can really help these children to feel safe and happy and nurtured...but I'm very conscious of the fact that it is her needs not my need, you know and I think doing my Foundation Degree and all the other things I have done have given me the ability to reflect upon my actions because it's very easy to think she's cute, she's little, I want to cuddle her, but I cuddle her if she wants, it's not for me, and I think it has given me that ability to look outside of myself and look at what I do ...*

*some of my colleagues felt that I was giving this child too much attention and she was becoming too attached to me and that she needed to learn to be self-sufficient, my point was she is a nine months old baby, if she comes to me and puts her arms up she wants to be held, and it doesn't stop me from participating with the other children, but that's what I'm going to do because she needs to make an attachment to someone because it's difficult for her because she is not at home any more (Helen).*

I believe this example shows a practitioner skilfully and articulately negotiating the difficult task of providing loving care. In all my narratives this was the most fully expressed example of the idea of professional love (Page, 2011), the example indicates the value of knowledge being applied to emotional contact as Helen linked her practice to her previous learning on

the Foundation Degree. The personal reflection following the challenge from another practitioner also goes on to indicate how she continued to believe in what she did despite this contention when she said: “*but if I believe it's right and what I've learned tells me it's right, I'll do it*” (Helen). This statement illustrates how Helen was enacting her professionalism. It's expressed when the three elements of the holistic silhouette analysis, belief (heart), knowledge (head) and practice (hands) come together. Even so in her working culture this view could be seen to create a tension for her, indicating there are still difficulties even within the workforce in recognising the appropriateness of this type of loving care (Page, 2011). Manning–Morton (2006) also concluded that the view still existed in the workforce that “getting close to children is not professional” (p.48).

Another tension emerged from the analysis aligned to the learnt experience of motherhood and aspects of enacted professionalism (Osgood, 2012). Zoe for example talked about her experience as a mother of boys informing her practice and Rachel explained how she learnt from her experience as a mother. Debbie contextualised the problem of mothering as she saw it by discussing what I have called the childcare enigma. Debbie explained this as trying to find a balance between the need to work; she talked about herself as “*a working mother*”, but also the need to provide high quality childcare and this reflects one of the biggest issues in ECEC policy (Parker, 2013; Tickell, 2013). Debbie saw herself as providing a solution to this tension in the provision she offered and felt she was a pioneer by being one of the first to develop wrap around care in her area. Wrap around care is essential as part of the government's plan for women to return to work (DfE, 2012) as it extends the hours that a child may be cared for in a typical sessional preschool provision. Debbie talked about how her provision included all day care, breakfast and lunch clubs, so that the preschool would “*work from a parent's point of view*”. In this respect Debbie's professional identity narrative appears almost emancipatory as she saw herself as providing a solution for other women's needs.

Another clear tension throughout the narratives is the tension between lack of self-belief or confidence and the sense of being a professional which is perceived as both a personal issue and a workforce issue. Moyles (2001) described this as a “black hole” (p.90) when she explored the fragile nature of practitioner self-confidence and self-belief. In my participants there was evidence that training and knowledge had enabled personal confidence to develop but that there were still occasions when this could be disrupted. Group manager Julie demonstrated a journey to professionalism based upon the acquisition of knowledge which had informed her practice. The evidence of the tension in the workforce was still evident as she talked about her aim to build strong, confident staff teams. Andrews (2009) suggested that change can deskill previously competent people and Murray (2009) also acknowledged the stress of transformational change. It is perhaps this that is evident in Julie’s story as the ECEC context had been full of change. She talked at length about what she felt impacted staff emotions and caused loss of confidence. She said:

*because there are too many other influences, too much external, too many people coming in and saying you are not doing, you should be doing this ... me and a colleague both questioned and said what is this about? We are having to have these people tell us what to do, when we know what we are doing. We reflect on it all the time. We are both doing our degrees, but we are still not trusted to make changes and look at our children and their development and make sure it's right (Julie).*

This dialogue for me indicates Julie as a practitioner who was exploring a way of resisting the dominant discourses not only for her, but on behalf of her staff team. This exploration found a solution based on knowledge acquired, linked to her pedagogy and the underpinning focus she had on child development. She explored in depth how gaining certainty through knowledge was an empowerment in her dealings with local teacher advisors and other external bodies. It was the knowledge that developed her confidence and enabled her to become the gatekeeper of the nurseries she manages, rather than the status of the degree, or EYPS. She no longer allowed external advisors or teachers to talk to staff and suggest things without her involvement to ensure their ideas fit with the ethos and ideas

about appropriate care and education for young children that were promoted in her settings.

*No teacher comes in our door unless they know how we work, what we believe in and what we do with our children, and they do not talk to our staff team about any kind of changes, anything negative before they talk to us, end of (Julie).*

This statement was a powerful declaration of a professional identity that Julie inhabited that ensured she took the lead within the setting and made meaning of what that professionalism looks like (Harwood et al., 2013; Edgington, 2004). However in many of the current discourses it is suggested that it is the qualification that brings recognition of professional status (Wild and Street, 2013). Raven (2011) argues that an assessment of competence and award of qualification should only be the starting point; it is the ability to find ways of influencing constraints that should be the marker of professional competence, something Julie is demonstrating here.

Others had not resolved the conflict of self-belief and confidence issues with external agencies as effectively as Julie. Zoe's ongoing struggle with the spectre of Ofsted appeared to cause a shifting identity. Despite her statements about the strength of her ethos and her confidence in her practice as good and appropriate and well supported by her underpinning knowledge, she described herself as fearful of Ofsted judgments, reinforcing a view of the "hegemonic government discourses" (Osgood, 2010 p.121) power to trouble or silence other forms of professional enactment of practice. She explored how she got despondent every time the same inspector turned up and she described Ofsted as a "cloud" hovering over her and she got "annoyed that she panics" when the inspector turns up and she would think what "are we meant to do? and that annoys me having to be meant to do something" (Zoe). This statement indicates to me an aspect of non-conformity in Zoe, which is another tension emerging. She did not want to be doing things for the sake of a process that she did not agree with as being good for children, but also anxiety because she knew that they had to perform in a certain way in order to meet the requirements of the inspection process. This illustrates the conflict reported by Cottle and Alexander (2012)

of practitioners' discussions about 'quality' and the dichotomy experienced between official discourses and practitioners own philosophies.

Preschool manger Debbie also exhibited something of an unsettling of her professional persona, but in her case it was expressed in relation to a child protection case. She exhibited frustration, rather than anxiety, about the way she continued to be viewed by other members of the multi professional team. She emphasised this point when she said: "*no matter what the qualification, I will always be Debbie from preschool*" echoing the idea Julie expressed about what else needs to be done to be thought of as professionals and indicating that the role of EYPS had not yet achieved recognition in wider spheres. Rachel suggested there was a hierarchy in terms of how her role as a child-minder was viewed by external agencies and within wider society as being somehow less of a profession. She also recognised the challenge for the ECEC workforce to be recognised as professional in wider society, commenting that it was the age of the children that constructs notions about the job (Fleer, 2002). These final examples show again how difficult it is for these participants to challenge the prevailing stereotypes in wider society.

This chapter has discussed how through the use of the approach entitled holistic silhouette analysis the data was reduced in order to identify key elements in each of the individual narratives that illustrated their ideas around the categories of head: knowledge, reason and thinking; the heart: feelings, values and beliefs; and the hands: professionalism enacted in practice. The individual silhouettes gave me snapshots of my participants which I believe remain true to a holistic picture of them that retains individuality and uniqueness, while the key words and phrases have allowed me to undertake some exploration of the ideas that have emerged from this winnowing of the data (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). In processing the data in this way I recognised that my participants cannot be totally known (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000), but that their narratives give insight into some of the ways in which their professional identities had been influenced, constructed and reconstructed and in how they enacted this professionalism in their practice.

This discussion has demonstrated that all three categories provide insight into how practitioners have created ideas about professionalism and that these are not fixed but oscillating identities (Stronach et al., 2003), some of which are dependent upon context. There is evidence to suggest that the acquisition of knowledge plays a large part in encouraging practitioners to develop confidence in their professionalism which is then seen to be enacted in their practice. The practitioner with the most stable professional identity appears to be Debbie and this may be because in her story she focused primarily in the practice and knowledge domains. It may also be because her narrative suggested she had embraced positively all the changes to the sector and aligned herself most closely with the dominant discourses of the wider workforce requirements (Wild and Street, 2013) and therefore had less tension to resolve. For others there was a clear shift at times in how they presented their professional identity. This appears particularly when negative experiences or feelings trouble internal views of identity; as explored in Zoe's narrative about Ofsted, Rachel's view of the EYFS and Julie's concerns due to external changes and pressures. However there is a suggestion that for both Julie and Rachel further training and CPD enabled them to acquire the knowledge that provided opportunity for a shift to occur and a change to practice that produced equilibrium and resulted in a confident professional self in the present. The data indicates that for Zoe the spectre of Ofsted still caused a tension with how she felt able to perform her professional self. Zoe however was perhaps the participant who was most uncomfortable with the dominant government led culture and system of ECEC, and who presented significant uncertainty in her narrative because of what she defined as her strong ethos, which seemed to be in conflict with curriculum expectations. Her story was full of this tension of conformity versus non conformity, with evidence of small steps being taken to bridge the gap in places.

In this analysis all my participants were enacting a form of professionalism through the way they chose to tell their stories (Riessman, 2011) and what I have discussed are only fragments in themselves of the stories they told (Sermijin, Devliegger and Loots, 2008). As I also recognise that I am the

connecting point for these narratives I have made my own thinking clear as part of the process as I have commented on the stories told, to allow readers room to also apply their understandings. I believe the whole provides a resonance so that other practitioners in the sector are able to recognise aspects of themselves, their professionalism and the tensions they manage in performing professionally. The stories as told, analysed and connected to literature demonstrate a strong reoccurring narrative about the pressures that exist in the early years sector about being a professional and responding to outside influences around pedagogy, curriculum and social expectations. The next chapter considers this external context in more detail.

## Chapter Five

### The impact of policy on participant's views of professionalism.

*What is significant in childcare is that it changes so much, so often, so quickly, and I think sometimes I'm a bit concerned that it changes to suit a new government, a new something...without trying properly, giving enough time to what's there to be embedded properly  
(Julie, group manager).*

One of the purposes of my study was to consider how practitioners had positioned themselves and responded to government directives about the professionalisation of ECEC. My research question 'How are early year practitioners resisting or embracing the constructs of professionalisation from external influences?' specifically required exploring the way they talked about the events they had worked through in terms of their professional identities. Looking at the data in this way allowed opportunity to study whether they were accepting or resisting the dominant discourses of the time, thereby linking the personal with the political (Fraser, 2004). This aligns with Court et al.'s (2009) view that the notion of a professional self is something that "develops over time as a result of the interactions of a person with his or her environment" (p.208). As explained in the Methodology (Chapter Three) I created a timeline of the events (Appendix E) to provide my professional life historical context (Bathmaker, 2010; Goodson and Sikes 2001) and allow me to consider how the policy drivers from central government were contributing to opportunities for further development in the ECEC workforce. My participants were reviewing these events from their current professional identity and policy context, but in this analysis I tried to identify whether and what aspects from their professional histories and policy context they might specially acknowledge as making a difference to their own constructs of the professional self. I was also keen to see what these narratives raised about the broader context of the professionalisation of the sector.

The thematic coding had identified four key aspects from the data reduction these were:

- 1) Training and Qualifications
- 2) Nursery Funding
- 3) Regulation and Inspection
- 4) The Curriculum

Following Richards (2009) model meant revisiting extracts of the stories that had been coded under these themes as I sought to elaborate further significance from the patterns within them, blending and combining extracts to discover meaning (Morse and Richards, 2002). The policy context has been examined in detail in the Literature Review (Chapter Two) and I will draw upon this earlier discussion to help explore the narratives that are being produced and provide justification for working thematically rather than purely chronologically with the interviews. I intend to explore the similarities and contradictions that are being raised by the participants in the four areas and although some of these aspects have already been covered in the individual narratives in Chapter Four this rationale is the justification for revisiting them here, and looking at them with a different lens (Clandinin et al., 2010). I have started with the subject of qualifications and professional development as being highly pertinent to the exploration of professionalism and very current at time of writing with the recent changes announced by the government in *More great childcare: Raising quality and giving parents more choice* (DfE, 2013a) to abandon the EYPS in favour of the development of the EYTS. Although my research participants discuss the concept of the early years teacher it is without reference to this latest political change of EYTS in the professional landscape, but refers to the proposal in the Nutbrown Review (2012), which had just been published at the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> interviews.

### **Training and Qualifications**

The importance of qualifications has been a base line in the professionalisation of the ECEC workforce, the timeline (Appendix E) indicates the National Occupational Standards, the National Qualifications Framework and the much advertised agenda of a graduate in every workplace (CWDC, 2006) as examples of policy directives. My participants

echoed these aspects in their stories, as illustrated for example by Julie's comment "*we were told we needed to have a graduate leader by 2010 in every setting originally*", suggesting they were aware of the external agenda and the need to respond to it. In all interviews the acquisition of qualifications was part of the response to the question 'tell me about your work with children?' and so can be seen as integral to the stories of each of the participants and therefore important to their ideas about professionalism.

In looking at the data, what emerged was that these participants viewed qualifications and continued professional development as necessary and appropriate in order to improve practice and raise standards; thereby demonstrating agreement with the policy directive set out in the ten year strategy (HM Treasury, 2004) of the need to develop a highly skilled workforce for young children. Comments such as "*I think it's important to be qualified and I think it's important to continue your professional development*" (Julie) were not untypical. This is in line with the literature that equates qualifications and professionalism (Evetts, 2003) but also that my participants saw themselves and others in the sector as in need of up-skilling (Osgood, 2012) to meet the government vision of a world class workforce (HM Treasury, 2004). However they did not believe this was or would be easily achievable as they described some qualifications as "*like hurdles*" or the "*high jump*" (Debbie), reflecting the challenges associated with further study. The responses in my data suggested there is an acceptance of the viewpoint that a degree level benchmark is a mark of professionalism (Menmuir and Hughes, 2004). There is still ambivalence however about the value of the graduate qualifications outside the sector, as demonstrated in the interview data of Debbie and Julie who are both managers of settings:

*Whatever status we get we will still be teacher in a preschool in comparison to ... (Debbie)*

*Why is it that teacher gives you the status and people think you are good enough, but nursery nurse isn't no matter what you do? So I've done my four years in uni as well as worked full time, as well as run a business, but I'm still not good enough, that's how I feel in people's eyes (Julie)*

There is also some dissonance in my participants' voices in terms of the nature and type of qualification and training that is required and as discussed in Chapter Four this seems to revolve around the content of courses rather than the graduate nature of them. I suggest this could be linked to the changes made to level three qualifications that sought to prepare practitioners for the wider children's workforce and elements such as the Common Core (CWDC, 2010b), as markers of a body of knowledge for the wider workforce (Cooke and Lawton, 2008; Daycare Trust, 2008), rather than specific early childhood qualifications. This change in requirements of entry qualifications for the children and young people's workforce appeared to dilute the need for specialist knowledge as preparation for working with young children thereby undermining the nature of an early years professional.

### ***Foundation Degrees***

The New Labour Government policy from 1998-2001 introduced expectations of higher qualifications for the early years workforce (Appendix E), and my participants indicated that they initially undertook the Foundation Degree because of strong external pressures as these examples from the preschool managers illustrate:

*The Foundation Degree came along and standards said every preschool setting had to have someone at that level, and as this is my setting of course I went and completed it (Debbie).*

*It was being talked about in Nursery World and allsorts (Zoe).*

They were not contesting the external professional discourse of the time, but saw it as a necessary requirement for practice as well as a step in their professional journeys. Undertaking the award of Foundation Degree was instrumental in giving my participants a new sense of their own professionalism as comments from Helen the senior baby room practitioner exemplify: "it *made me a much more reflective practitioner, ...much more thinking about what I do and why I do it*", indicating it had some transformative effect upon how she saw herself as well as opening up further personal and professional development opportunities.

Since the introduction of the Sector Endorsed Foundation Degrees in Early Years (DfES, 2001) there has been considerable government funded research looking at outcomes, undertaken by the National Centre for Social Research (Snape et al., 2007). This demonstrated that students generally found these degrees to benefit them personally in terms of professional development such as increased knowledge and understanding (Snape et al., 2007; Greenwood et al. 2008), as my participants also claimed:

*I think the Foundation Degree had a huge impact on my professional confidence, what I learnt and finding out what avenues to go down has shaped the changes, and we have made lots of changes following the four years since the degree (Julie, group manager).*

There was however little recognition in the sector for them once they had been obtained, O’Keefe and Tait (2004) suggested this was because little thought had been given at the time to what the end of the process was. With hindsight it could be proposed that the Sector Endorsed Foundation Degrees were only going to be a stepping stone to a full graduate status, especially as all Foundation Degrees had to have an articulated route to achieve an honours degree built into their design (Farrelly, 2010). However, I think it is important to recognise the role the Foundation Degree appeared to play in the move to professionalisation; as it provided incremental steps into Higher Education that could be taken by practitioners already in the workforce. What is also evident from my participants was that once the journey towards being a graduate began, they were all willing to continue onto further stages whether this was a full BA Honours or EYPS.

### ***Early Years Professional Status***

The impetus for graduates leading practice in ECEC was indicated in the ten year strategy (HMT, 2004) and initiated the process that lead to the, now obsolete, target of an Early Years Professional in every full day care setting by 2015 (Simpson, 2010). The role of the EYP was discussed by all four participants who had undertaken it. Rachel, as a child minder, had not seen a need to undertake it and was considering the possibility of a Master’s degree as an alternative next step because she had enjoyed her study. What is evident from the interviews is that these participants were mostly early

adopters of new initiatives; Zoe referred to herself as one of the “*guinea pigs*” and Debbie said they were “*some of the first ones*”.

The comments made by my participants about EYPS reveal some of the confusion that abounded in the sector about what the role of an EYP was to be (Payler and Locke, 2013), particularly around what ‘leading practice’ or acting as an ‘agent of change’ looked like (CWDC , 2006). Helen as an EYP working in a baby room reflected that Ofsted did not appear to understand the purpose of the qualification, as the inspector exhibited surprise that she was working with babies. This disconnection between commissioning and regulation in the government is one of the troubling areas for obtaining clarity in understanding, as it causes uncertainty and lack of confidence in the processes by those working in the sector.

My participants also discussed whether or what difference it actually made when EYP Status was obtained, something Simpson (2010) explored but which has become a moot point as it has already been replaced by EYTS. I was struck by preschool manager Zoe’s comment during my first interview with her. When I asked her what it meant to be an EYP she replied “*It’s on my badge I had it printed on my badge, nobody asks me about it*”, indicating the term EYP had been added alongside her name and job role. I found this statement one of the most striking things to come from the first interviews and spent a long time pondering why it provoked that kind of reaction in me. I think it was because the badge which also has her name and her role as supervisor was to me an aspect of how she was presenting her professional identity, but also perhaps a sign of hope for recognition of her professionalism. Zoe explained that she had had it added because “*at the time the government made it sound important*”, implying a link to self-esteem and value that was connected to the role of EYP. It is concerning that despite the rhetoric of increased professionalisation through this policy agenda it had not been perceived as important by those not directly engaged with it.

The fact that Zoe said nobody asked her is indicative of the struggle there has been for EYPS to be recognised, in Zoe’s case by others in the workforce and parents as the ones who would presumably meet her when

she is wearing the badge. This lack of recognition of the nature of professionalism embodied in EYPS is something confirmed in the final report conducted by the DfE into the role (Hadfield et al., 2012). Zoe did go on to say that it did not bother her that she was not asked about it, suggesting she had put it behind her as another government initiative that had come in with a flourish, but now seems to have faded in importance and certainly in her view had not raised the status and value of the professional work done by graduates in ECEC. That this sense of disillusionment was still evident is not surprising given the pace of change around all these initiatives, but what it does demonstrate is the resilience of those in the workforce who have continually responded to the requirements made of them.

When asked specifically why it did not bother her, Zoe replied that she was “*too busy*”. It is problematic to try and unpack meaning from this short response in isolation however she commented in the second interview:

*I always want to be one step ahead; I don't want anyone saying you've still got to do that. I want to be right there at the beginning of these things which I was with the Foundation Degree and the EYP...I don't want anyone to turn round and say you're not qualified.. I want to be absolutely at the top educationally in my field...*

*I did it (EYPS) for myself, I assumed I wouldn't be the equivalent of a teacher anyway, so it was just a rise to the next challenge, so it doesn't bother me... (Zoe)*

Zoe's comments fit with an internal motivation to continue to keep abreast of change, but one that has been shaped by external requirements and regulations. Her willingness to engage in the requirements particularly relating to obtaining qualifications had not changed her fundamental beliefs, but illustrated her responding to the agendas that required her to demonstrate her skill, expertise and knowledge by meeting external standards (CWDC, 2010a). The analysis of her interview suggested her identity was not really predicated by the terminology of EYP, but rather by what she thought was important to provide for children and how the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and the opportunity to partake in reflective evaluation while becoming a graduate leading practice, have

helped make this clear for her. It appears that undertaking EYPS supported her in her own view of what good practice was and her ability to demonstrate this rather than changing her professional identity. But she also commented *“I don’t think Ofsted recognise the professionalism of the EYP”* (Zoe), echoing Helen’s experience of the dissonance between different parts of the accountability frameworks that need to work together to professionalise ECEC.

Group manager Julie appears to have found the EYP the least beneficial, she commented: *“It’s another tick in the box...I felt that about the EYPS, it gave me nothing extra”*, which suggested a lack of engagement with the process and raises questions about its role and value in the professionalisation of the workforce. It highlights a contradiction in the discourse of performativity, which according to Ball (2010) “is enacted through a myriad of measures and targets against which we are expected to position ourselves” (p.125), but which is designed to improve quality and output. For Julie acquiring EYP was performing to meet external requirements but did not transform her own view of her professionalism through the process. It therefore cannot be assumed to have helped her improve practice as she appears confident in what she was already doing.

The main struggle for professional identity appears to still revolve around status in both the education sector but also wider society; some of the narratives make this struggle very clear. As previously discussed preschool manager Debbie’s comments about the nature of hierarchy in a multidisciplinary context indicate her feeling that she is always going to be seen as *“Debbie from preschool”* and Rachel’s views about *“being the bottom rung”* indicate that the issues of professionalism in the workforce may not be solved by gaining a qualification as both these participants were graduates. Goouch and Powell (2013) in their work with baby room practitioners reflected a similar finding of low self-worth because of the age of the children who were being cared for. Messenger (2013) found her respondents shared similar views indicating that status is given by others and not necessarily related to the qualification or knowledge of a specific

person; it has yet to be revealed whether the Early Years Teacher status (NCTL, 2013) will change this perception.

Julie the group manager was the only participant who showed individual evidence of trying to resist current constructions in terms of supporting her staff to feel valued and in praising their practice to others:

*I work really hard to try and make them see how good they are, how important they are, I shout about them to parents and other professionals wherever I go, we're not this lowly crew...and I don't know if there is another sector of employment where people work as hard as they work, for the money they are on and the recognition they get (Julie).*

In relating back to the holistic silhouette analysis, it can be seen that Julie was one of the most settled practitioners in terms of her confidence about her own practice and about resisting some external constraints and this example from her narrative is another indication of a strong professional identity.

Julie is also my only participant who appeared to be working to change the views about the sector one individual at a time, as in her interview she recalled a discussion with a careers teacher. Julie remembered how she had pointed out to the teacher why early years needs good quality students and not just those who don't know what else to do, are non-achievers or who are a bit troublesome. The conclusion of the story Julie told was of the teacher changing her mind-set about the type of students she wanted to refer to childcare courses. I believe this type of professional enactment as demonstrated by Julie is needed to help begin to shift entrenched views and stereotypes. This engagement is exemplified by others in the field such as Penny Webb, who is engaging in the debate about what is important through writing a blog, *One Voice. Speaking up for the children in this country* (Webb 2014).

However, the paradox of the agenda for professionalisation remains when thinking about the aspects identified in this section around training and qualifications; that of the participants willingness to respond to the

government requirements, in order to hold the external label, be that senior practitioner, EYPS or now EYTS, and the lack of recognition for what is involved and therefore no increase in status or recognition or changes to pay and conditions. So while these practitioners have acknowledged the benefit of undertaking some qualifications and can see how increased knowledge has helped them construct a professional identity that they value; several of them appear to hold little hope for a wider recognition of the status and their professionalism. Any future changes they may have to undertake appear to be viewed as something that has to be done in order to stay where they are, not as a vehicle for change.

### **Funding and ratios**

Since 1997 the ECEC sector has received significant investment, as an area whose provision is mostly PVI. This injection of resources has been quite significant in its transformative possibilities (Payler and Locke, 2013). The time line (Appendix E) indicates some of the policies related to funding since 1997, such as the free nursery entitlement, the Transformation Fund and the Graduate Leader fund. Data from the interviews covered a wide range of these funding initiatives including the 'nursery voucher scheme' (DfE, 2013b), the government funding for places for children especially two year olds, funding for training and support for EYPS wages, but comments were often very brief.

Four of the participants in this study held responsibility for viability for their setting or business and therefore were informed about the importance of the funding and all the participants mentioned it at some point in their interviews with two talking specifically about issues of sustainability. They were all clear that funding brought additional requirements for practice, which can be linked to the professionalisation agenda (Osgood, 2012; Cooke and Lawton, 2008), as illustrated by the following examples:

*Having the government funding for the three and four year olds they now want to see value for money (Zoe, preschool manager)*

*Legislation came and nurseries started taking government money...and as soon as nurseries became involved in taking*

*government money, there was an outside body saying you've got to all do this and you've got to all do that (Helen, baby room practitioner)*

However they appear to have all viewed in a positive light the support they and their settings had been given to enable them to complete their qualifications.

*How we got here has been well funded ... we have been quite privileged in that there has been money all the way through from the Foundation Degree (Zoe, preschool manager)*

Preschool manager Debbie was the only one who reflected on what this meant for the on-going professionalisation agenda as so much funding is being withdrawn now.

*And every EYP would have this lovely little amount of money, certain times of the year to enable you to pay them, now that money is gone. Can you still afford to train to be an EYP and can these settings now afford to keep staff on? It doesn't matter to me because... I did it because of my setting, not because I wanted or needed that wage (Debbie).*

There is evidence of a degree of pragmatic decision making when it comes to talking about funding support from the government. It is clear from the two preschool managers that undertaking the award of EYPS had helped keep the setting viable financially. The Graduate Leader Fund had gone into costs and not directly to an individual's salary for example "*Personally I didn't see any of the funding because the preschool needed it*" (Zoe). This might suggest a motive in undertaking the qualifications that is linked to enabling the setting to continue providing children and families with the kind of early childhood education they see as important in difficult economic times when many settings are closing, as indicated by Awford (2013) and Morton (2013).

It could also be argued that this could be seen to demonstrate an element of altruistic behaviour from these two participants, that they undertook the training and continue with the EYP status without any personal monetary remuneration. This may be linked to notions of the willingness of the dedicated practitioner staying in a sector with poor pay and conditions (Brooker, 2007); however it does not demonstrate the type of professionalism understood by society where remuneration is a mark of

professional status. Additionally because they are both managers their approach could also be seen as an indication of what Payler and Locke (2013) found, that managers undertook the training in order not to have to employ somebody at a higher rate and also to avoid feeling 'threatened' in their position as the most qualified. Certainly Zoe echoed this idea in her interview when she said she needed to "*be one step ahead*" although the implication in her comment was in relation to external factors such as policy requirements, not necessarily other members of staff. Decision making relating to financial remuneration is therefore complex and not easy to untangle, possibly because the task of caring is difficult to commodify (Gambaro, 2012). In the case of my participants there was strong evidence to suggest that they also remained 'hands on' with the children while leading practice and were not undertaking EYPS as office based staff. It is therefore reasonable to suggest there was also a degree of value given to the opportunity to undertake the award to enable them to maintain and develop practice.

This concern about the reduction in funding for training is linked to the on-going dilemma of the low pay and status of the workforce alongside the expectations for increased qualifications. This long term issue of affordability has also been discussed by Miller (2008) and Parker (2013), and it represented a real concern for my participants. In Zoe's case it was the on-going sustainability of her setting that emerged as an underlying concern and for Debbie the on-going ability of the ECEC sector to maintain quality if the resources to fund staff to undertake training or become graduates are withdrawn.

Helen the baby room practitioner brought up the issue of wages and conditions in a way that related directly to her personally in how it influenced decisions she made about her professional journey. She talked about currently being settled partly because she recognised she was in a setting that paid good wages and having worked elsewhere for less she felt she would stay where she was. This illustrates another of the difficulties in ECEC, that there are no universal pay scales related to job roles and qualifications

within the sector, with PVI provision setting its own salaries and characterised by lower wages than the maintained sector (Gambaro, 2012).

Zoe and Julie both mentioned wages from the point of view of paying staff and deciding what they can afford for what they are doing. Zoe in particular talked about the kind of dialogue she had with staff who may feel they are on low wages in her preschool setting. She said “*Our ratio is 1:4 and I say to staff it’s hard (financially) but you can go somewhere else and get an extra £1 an hour and work with a ratio of 1:8*”. This suggests she views the low ratios as not only necessary for the type of ethos and pedagogy her setting embraces but also that the ratios themselves make a difference to the working environment for staff. She continued reflecting on this by commenting on her own personal experience:

*Well I’ve always worked in low wages. I work in a shop as well and that has always been minimum wage. I get annoyed that we work so long hours...its hard and then I pay my staff and I pay them the minimum wage and then I think it takes 15 minutes to snuggle with a child in the book corner reading a book and that’s £1.50 ...and that to me is quite a lot of money for reading a book...you can turn it the other way (Zoe).*

I found Zoe’s comment intriguing as it incorporates some of the dilemmas already encapsulated in the holistic silhouette analysis about Zoe’s constructions of notions of professionalisation of ECEC. The suggestion that £1.50 is a lot for reading a book with a child undermines the sense that it is important to know how to do this in a way that provides developmental opportunities for children and reinforces a view of childcare as nurturing and easily accomplished (Bradley, 1989). However, the comment in context also indicated Zoe looked at finances with a performativity edge, as she clearly was setting her dialogue within a wider discussion about sustainability and the Local Authorities requirement that they see “*value for money*” (Zoe) on their yearly audit.

The link between funding and ratios was discussed in relation to the idea that an EYP could have a higher ratio of children and that might be one way of supporting a graduate under the current funding regime. However comments made by my participants suggest the emphasis on maintaining ratios is seen

as really important in providing quality and despite the fact that they themselves are EYPs and could have a different ratio they do not feel this would be beneficial to the children or to themselves. As group manager Julie illustrated:

*Yes it says an EYP can have 13, and that is not a road we are going down...we do a 1:6 ratio in all of our nurseries and we will if you are an EYP or not, that does not mean I am not capable if something happens of standing in and looking after a group of 22 children, absolutely, but I was ten years ago. I would not work my ratios around that, it's not giving a good start in life not at all, is that where they get the money from? ...I would be horrified if we did that.*

These comments about ratios occurred before the highly publicised debate caused when Elizabeth Truss, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education and Childcare, launched her proposals for the future with ratios and affordable childcare (DfE, 2013). Policies that would work in direct opposition to what the workforce perceived as necessary in order to provide quality childcare and which indicated again a dissonance between policy and practice with the implied 'schoolification' of the sector (Moss, 2010) implicated in higher ratios.

### **Regulation and inspection**

The implications of government funding have been that the workforce has become more regulated and also that there has been a change in inspection regimes. The time line (Appendix E) highlighted the change through the Care Standards Act (2000) and the increasing influence of Ofsted. Regulation need not be a constraining factor in the professionalisation of the workforce as Miller (2008) suggested that regulation should also be seen as enabling, with the improvements to standards being one benefit of a regulated workforce. Clearly government policy set out to improve standards and 'quality' of ECEC with its 'transformational reform agenda' for the workforce (DfES, 2006). However even after several years of the new inspection system embedding into practice, the conversations I had with participants in this study still exhibited their concern over the nature of the inspection regime and in some cases evidenced a growing cynicism with government policy and practice.

Feelings about regulation and inspection have been discussed in some detail in Chapter Four. On looking at the data again, through the lens of the policy changes, although there is evidence of a significant amount of negativity that is provoked by this external regulation, the interviews also suggested practitioners used their narratives to seek to mitigate the perceived helplessness, for example by positioning Ofsted inspectors as not all knowing even if they were powerful. Comments suggested a lack of confidence in the inspectors to understand what early years practice is about. Rachel the child minder explained in the following vignette:

*Your grade depended upon your Ofsted inspector...which wasn't very helpful because you began to think oh dear what's going on here, and sometimes depending upon the training of the inspector sometimes they didn't appear to know something that you did, which didn't give you a great deal of confidence. We had one of the child-minders that lived out in the countryside, she said her inspector took out a six inch ruler to measure the depth of the puddle and that's the God's honest truth and when you hear things like that...(Rachel).*

This narrative illustrates the tensions, as it seeks to position the Ofsted inspector in the hegemonic discourse of regulation through exposing lack of understanding about working with young children, while also acknowledging the power the inspector held to make judgements. Helen (baby room practitioner) suggested the way she had found of navigating the tension was to recognise the humanity of the inspectors:

*It's still an individual that they send...it is still what they like to see... and whatever they are into...if you can find out early on... you can work the system...play(ing) the game (Helen).*

This comment demonstrates to me a pragmatic approach to inspection, born from experience it would appear. This conversation emerged in the context of a broader discussion about an Ofsted visit where an understanding of the individual allowed the setting to achieve a better result than Helen thought was typical of their practice. It led perhaps to this idea that 'it's all a game' and we are the 'game players', a notion explored in Cottle and Alexander's (2010) discussions with practitioners. This attitude marks a significant shift from an earlier perspective for Helen, as she had previously commented how when she was in her deputy management role the new regulations provided

an opportunity to develop practice in her setting. It may indicate therefore one way in which regulation has become for Helen just another 'hoop to jump through' and a growing resignation that external monitoring and changes are something that is part of ECEC. Only Debbie commented about being "*proud*" of her results as she had achieved 'outstanding' for the last two inspections, indicating for Debbie the power of a positive inspection to confirm professionalism.

Spending lots of time on paperwork is clearly seen as demoralising, particularly as it is being done just to meet external requirements. The increase in paperwork with the introduction of regulation and changes to inspection is a well-rehearsed narrative emerging for my participants as Julie illustrated, "*we lost sight of the children with all these tick boxes we had to do for Ofsted*". Rachel also commented on the paperwork saying "*Ofsted is paperwork and parents aren't really interested and the school aren't interested and it can get very demoralising*". They felt it served no purpose for effective practice. Finding ways of meeting the requirements without over doing the paperwork became an important part of their resistance throughout the narratives. A reference by Debbie to how local authority advisors come in with new ideas, which she sees as being "*flavour of the month*", is perhaps an indication that those in practice have now witnessed so many changes they are recognising the circular nature of some of these.

My participants indicated that they found ways around these external requests, which involved fewer changes and demonstrated confidence with the systems they were expected to manage. That they found ways to 'beat the system' showed an interesting aspect, and indicates an enactment of practice that in itself could be deemed professional. It called to mind my own experience of inspection when I was teacher in charge of the nursery, in my first naïve approach I emphasised elements I thought were important, particularly as I was working with children who had special needs and I wanted to prioritise more informal individualised learning. However I felt my inspector did not understand these children and their specific requirements and her comments suggested I needed to embed much more formalised approaches. So next time the setting was inspected that is the practice that

was 'performed' in order to meet the external expectations. I too learnt to 'play' the game. The inspection framework has changed since those days, but the uncertainty still remains within me of the value of a system that is about ticking boxes and measuring performance against preselected criteria, and does not allow for some degree of autonomy based upon individual differences and requirements (Mathers et al. 2012; Parker 2013). Lack of confidence in the system was also evident in the transcripts of my participants.

There was evidence that my participants were informed and up to date, in the way they showed awareness of current changes, another aspect of professionalism. Rachel the child minder, talked at length about the government consultation process with new initiatives, demonstrating an interest in what was happening in the sector. However she was critical and cynical of what her experience had shown her.

*You know it's supposed to be a consultation but you know it's actually going to be 'the thing', it may be a cynical view but you do feel a little bit powerless about things (Rachel).*

Osgood (2006a, p.7) suggested that external control inhibits professional autonomy, and it would appear that in several of the participants this is definitely what Ofsted provokes through its regime. It seems to deskill participants such as Zoe rather than providing opportunities for her to demonstrate the practice that awarded her EYPS. If as suggested here, other participants are finding ways to 'play the game', it could be argued they are using their skills and knowledge to meet external requirements successfully through their performativity. It would be interesting to explore this aspect further and I suggest could be an area for further research. This may be particularly relevant with the current new changes to the inspection framework (Adams, 2014; Roberts, 2013) coming into force as I write this.

### **The Early Years Curriculum**

In this final section I intend to spend time considering the place and role of the curriculum in the formation of professional identity, as to some degree it holds an element of the knowledge that the sector needs to demonstrate as

part of its professional identity (Edgington, 2004). Egan (2004) in her discussion linked it to what she described as theoretical knowledge. During their time in practice my participants had experienced the introduction of the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (QCA, 2000), the *Birth to Three Matters* (DfE, 2002), the EYFS (DCSF, 2008) and the revised EYFS (DfE, 2012), all illustrated in the policy time line (Appendix F). They noted the difference in how these elements were introduced, the amount of support and guidance on their introduction and the implications they had for practice. They discussed the challenges of the paperwork that went with the introduction of the new documents and the ways in which they had been able to resolve challenges they perceived the introduction and iterations of the curriculum had raised. Overall the introduction of an early years curriculum had been viewed positively as statements from two managers Debbie and Julie suggested, “I think the EYFS is the best thing that’s happened in years” (Debbie) and the EYFS is “the most important change” (Julie).

Exploring what my participant’s narratives indicated about enactment is crucial to understanding how they engaged with the professional knowledge enshrined within the curriculum. Siraj – Blatchford (2009) suggested that if there was no curriculum it would not be necessary to think about ‘teaching’ and ‘teachers’ in ECEC, indicating that the terminology of a teacher in early years has only arisen because of the need to implement a curriculum. Debbie (preschool manager) agreed with this viewpoint; she used the term teaching throughout her narrative, and talked about teaching in relation to quality, claiming “we are teachers and I will use that word because we are teachers of early years”. However she was the only one to conceptualise her practice in those terms, despite the notion of practice as teaching being introduced with the *Curriculum Guidance for the Early Years* (QCA 2000). Siraj –Blatchford (2009) explored the importance of the interaction between the teacher, the learner and the learning environment as the centre of a pedagogic view. Debbie’s narrative was filled with discussion about these elements suggesting she had adopted the conceptualisations of her role as expressed in the policy documents. When asked about the possibility that she might need to gain teacher status in addition to her EYPS she replied “I

*thought we were the same thing*”, a clear identification with the original discourses from the government about the EYPS (CWDC, 2010a).

Studies such as that by Rockel (2009) in Australia and Siraj-Blatchford (2009) in England indicated that the curriculum shapes ideas about pedagogy and teaching, although many curriculum studies appear to focus on outcomes for children (Clark and Waller, 2007), rather than how the practitioners are responding to the documents. I have taken the view that the curriculum can be seen as a tool that codifies and confirms professional work following the ideas of Ortlipp et al. (2010) while also recognising these authors views that a curriculum can also be a tool that de-professionalises those who use it as it limits opportunities for autonomous decisions if followed too formulaically (ibid). The data suggested that the curriculum can also be seen as a professionalising agent in providing a shared framework for professional discourses as there is evidence of it being used this way in the narratives. Zoe (pre-school manager), demonstrated this and also how the curriculum was the site of resistance with what she perceived as the external forces that influence her professional practice. As she explained in the following vignette:

*What we have never done as a team and it's a bit naughty but I will admit this, it's a document to be used isn't it by practitioners and we have always used the left hand side, which is the development side, but we've always been a bit reluctant to look at the right hand side which gives you ideas about what to look for and what to plan, but when we have veered over to the right some of it doesn't even make sense, doesn't even seem appropriate for what is on the left hand side. So we have been a bit bold and said well that sounds a bit nonsense. So we're going to stick to our own guns and we interpret the left hand side development matters, or stepping stones as it was, as we want to because it's all down to interpretation isn't it (Zoe).*

It is clear that as a professional working with others she felt confident to argue for her own interpretation. This is despite the fact that her initial use of language “*it's a bit naughty*” reflects a different professional construct to that of the confident professional, who knows it is acceptable to interpret the documents and suggests concern perhaps that her interpretation might not fit with that of the regulators Ofsted.

There are other ways in which my participants demonstrated they were enacting the curriculum in their practice and what is clear from these narratives is that all my participants had confidence with this element; to the extent they felt free to interpret it and used it to support their philosophies and ways of working. In this respect, I argue that they professionalised their practice through confident use of the curriculum and the knowledge embodied in the use of this document. Julie (group manager) claimed it was a return to the bedrock of what for her ECEC should be about:

*I think there has been a big hoo-hah about the EYFS and I think some of the outcomes and goals are too specific, but I think for us it was a turning point, in that it kind of fitted with what we already did...so we changed a few bits of our paperwork and our process for recording children's development, now I'm really happy with it (Julie).*

Helen (baby room practitioner) demonstrated a similar view that suggested the EYFS fitted her constructions and practice in ECEC:

*So basically for me ...we'll still go with it and we will still do the same sort of things...we just carry on doing what we are doing...we just call them different things, but I still believe what we do is we are offering children a broader range of experience as we can and I think if we are doing that you'll probably meet whatever...(Helen).*

This comment suggests that despite external pressure Helen did not believe they had changed, but that the documents of the EYFS (DCFS, 2008) support underpinning beliefs in the sector. In Julie's case she considered how the EYFS fitted what they wanted to do in practice and this was an important aspect of being able to support staff to gain confidence. She also talked about how they use the documents to fit an ethos, "*our consideration is the stepping stones...it felt more individual, it felt more realistic, it was looking at a child holistically rather than those tick boxes*"(Julie).

Rachel as the only participant working in home based care illustrated that she still believed her job allowed her freedom and independence and this is what she enjoyed. This is where she demonstrated her professionalism in interpreting the curriculum:

*it's my interpretation and I like that it gives you the freedom though it's not rigid, there is no chart on my wall that says today we will do this*

*this and this, it's more a case of what do the children's want to do and how can I bring maths into it. How can I bring a bit of creative thinking into and how can I do other things without overpowering the children, that's what I've always liked about it, my independence (Rachel)*

Evidence of this type of independence and interpretation shows that when it comes to practice knowledge, these participants feel confident that they know how to act professionally. It could indicate the strength of feeling some of them have about what good early years practice is (Edgington, 2004), or it could indicate that they do not feel practice has changed as much as might be suggested by the implications of a curriculum embodying a more educational agenda. However the fact that the *Development Matters Guidance* (Early Education, 2012) strongly supports the idea of child development as what MacNaughton, (2005 p.30) calls a 'regime of truth', indicates the powerful underpinning of this aspect of ECEC. It could be why Julie was happy to embrace it, suggesting the EYFS was the best thing that had happened recently in ECEC, as it aligned with her strongly held views that child development is the foundation of good early years practice. So rather than exhibiting resistance she was in fact conforming to social norms in her use of the documents and her strong support of them.

There was also general support for the assessment focus within the EYFS although the continual assessment and observation and paperwork requirements were mentioned by several participants as being the most problematic elements as it took them away from what they consider most important, that is time with the children. The ability to focus on and plan for individuals was welcomed and the sense of the holistic approach to children's development was also commented upon.

What is not clear from the study findings is how these participants were distinguishing between the statutory and guidance sections, or whether they make a clear distinction, and exploring practitioners understanding and use of curriculum documents would be an area for further study. Rachel's response reflected an initial concern with the statutory nature of the EYFS, but this no longer seems to be an issue. Similarly both Zoe and Helen gave

examples of early changes to practice that they incorporated, Helen talked positively about establishing a new routine and using the curriculum to support her decision making and explanations to staff. Zoe spoke more reluctantly of her need to increase adult led activities in order to meet requirements. In both these examples the power of the curriculum as a tool to support change or reinforce external constructs of professional practice is indicated. But these narratives were related to early iterations of the curriculum and appear now to have been superseded in practice, being recalled for me only as part of their professional journey. It also appeared that the restrictions of the increased paperwork that the introduction of the EYFS had brought in have all been overcome in the narratives and therefore indicates practitioners whose professional identities have evolved as 'problem solvers' with the curriculum as a tool competently used to exemplify professional work.

At the time of the second interviews the revised EYFS (DfE, 2012) had just been published so I asked the participants about it. Discussions around the revised EYFS suggested practitioners who felt confident in its introduction and that where they held responsibility they had already prepared the paperwork and were supporting staff to be ready for its introduction. The managers Debbie, Julie and Zoe had recognised that they were the ones who were carrying through the change. Debbie mentioned that she felt more responsibility had been passed onto managers of settings and in relation to the two year development check went on to say, "*from 2000 to now it's been pass the buck, pass the buck, definitely ... I remember there being a whisper of it ...health visitors expecting preschools to do health checks...*" This has echoes of another comment Rachel (child-minder) made in the regulation section where she said "*the consultation becomes the thing*", and reflects how in developing their professionalism, practitioners have to be ready for change by being observant of what is coming and preparing for it. In respect of the revision to the EYFS (DfE, 2012) the findings in this study indicate a low key approach to this latest round of change with an implication of not worrying staff with yet something new.

In this chapter I have considered the notion of change across time in the policy context of ECEC to identify some key areas around the professionalisation of the sector in my participants' narratives and consider what they demonstrate about professionalism and professional identity. This involved discussion around four topic areas that all participants mentioned they were: qualifications and training; funding, wages and ratios; regulation and inspection; and finally the curriculum. Although there were some differences in areas, the overall picture created from the interviews carried out with the five study participants is one of practitioners who had continually responded to what had been asked from them and who were willing to continue to embrace change, because they believed in what they were doing and the importance of the provision for children and families. In the vignettes that were selected as illustrative of the themes there are similarities in positive responses to undertaking further qualifications, both individually and to improve the standards in the sector. The overwhelming theme contained in these five stories embraces and aligns itself with the wider discourse of government policy.

The aspect of regulation and inspection also showed a degree of alignment with the more technical approach to professionalisation, although this manifests itself in part in a negative and powerless response. There were the beginnings of resilience in the ideas that it was possible to conform externally by 'playing the game', and this aspect would be interesting to explore further in research to uncover what affordances for practice were being offered by this idea.

There were few surprises about how practitioners viewed financial aspects of ECEC; there is evidence of strong vocational passion that is well documented by others (Cooke and Lawson, 2008; Moyles, 2001). The section on the curriculum gave a most clear insight into the development of a professional identity in the use of professional knowledge as practitioners showed how they had become confident in dealing with curriculum requirements and were making plans for the implementation of the revised EYFS well in advance. The ability to expertly wield this body of professional

knowledge, to adjust paperwork to align to their practice shows they have become confident in this aspect of professional practice.

## Chapter Six

### Conclusion: Developing professionalism

This research set out to use a narrative methodology to explore how early years practitioners are expressing their professional identity in the context of policy agendas that emphasise the professionalisation of the workforce through the process of increased qualification (Parker, 2013). It aimed to do this by exploring these research questions:

- How are early years practitioners expressing their professional identity?
- What factors have influenced and continue to influence early years practitioners professional identity constructions?
- What do early year practitioners narratives reveal about their professional journeys?
- How are early year practitioners resisting or embracing the constructs of professionalisation from external requirements?

In situating myself in this study as both a constructivist and interpretivist I recognise that these findings are 'partial, situated and local' (MacNaughton, 2005 p.23). They arise out of a study of the professional life histories gathered from five early years practitioners in England working with children aged from birth up to four years of age in a range of early years settings; including preschool, day nursery and home based care. In agreement with the views of Kuntz (2010) I also acknowledge that my findings as presented indicate what I believe as "valued and valuable" (p.426) in this research. I argue these findings are important to the field of knowledge about ECEC professionalism because they develop and extend work already undertaken in this arena (Brock, 2012; Osgood, 2012; Simpson, 2010). They also provide new insights specifically because the study took place during a time of change that allowed a unique opportunity for the participants to discuss their responses to the shifting landscape as part of their professional journeys. As Smart (2010) suggested, personal learning journeys can illustrate aspects required of others in relation to professional knowledge and awareness. They can therefore inform practice for educators of the workforce.

The methodology section of this thesis discussed in depth the justification and value of using a narrative approach in collecting professional life histories. The challenge of designing and carrying out a doctoral study situated within a narrative methodology was a time consuming and reflexive task. In particular the ethical responsibility permeated the research process from start to finish. The use of a “purposive sample” (Elliot, 2005) yielded five participants who met the criteria and provided a range of job roles and responsibilities and as such are indicative of practitioners in ECEC with graduate status, however as this study revealed there are many other stories of professional identity which could also be told.

The focus on professional life history meant I did not pursue with direct questioning any factors from my participants earlier lives that may have influenced their ideas and feelings about working with children. In Julie’s case she volunteered this information as part of the response to the question “tell me about your work with children”. It was clear from her example that early family experiences had shaped her ideas and construction of herself and her work with children and this is illustrated in the holistic silhouette analysis. Including this element for all practitioners could have added additional insights; however, it is equally possible to argue that if they had considered it important, as Julie clearly did, the interviews were open enough for them to discuss it.

The major dilemma in this study revolved around the analysis and finding an approach that would allow me to continue to see my participants as individuals, rather than disparate pieces of coding. I wanted a method that was sympathetic to the storied approach underpinning this research and provided a way to create meaning that was “both creative as well as analytic” (Mello, 2002 p.235). The creation of the holistic silhouette analysis then became part of the unique contribution of this study. It provided a method to explore professional identities, by thematically recognising three elements that make the whole person. The iterative analysis of the model allowed a refining from the original interviews to illuminate key words and phrases. These explored knowledge, reason and thinking which were

depicted in the head; passion, feelings and expressions of self which appeared in the heart and finally practice and the workplace illustrated in the hands. This study approached the complexities of professional identity by seeking meaning through the interrogation of these aspects. It considered the way the early years practitioners stories illustrated how they viewed themselves and the work that they do (Meier and Stremmel, 2010). It illustrated the wider view found in the literature, that professional identity is both a composite construction (Mockler, 2011); a multiple construction (Stonach et al., 2003); and a complex role (Page and Elfer, 2013).

In undertaking this study the timescales I took for developing and refining the holistic silhouette analysis meant that by the time the final stage was completed it was over a year since I had completed the interviews and the external context of professionalisation had changed again. Due to this I decided not to return the analysed interviews o participants for comment as they were carried out at a point in time and as a result I felt ethically this timescale was too far removed from their original contribution to be wholly meaningful to them, , and a third meeting for this process had not been part of the original request . However upon further reflection I believe that there is an argument that a more collaborative research process could perhaps have been achieved if I had been able to work with participants on this final stage and any future research using the holistic silhouette analysis would seek to make this part of the process.

I then examined the data in relation to a timeline of events, in order to explore how responses to policy changes had contributed to the development of professional identity. This provided my professional life historical perspective and led to focusing on four key themes. I identified there was some cross over in the thematic discussion between the different approaches to analysis which allowed for an “insight and interpretation within a multiplicity of renderings and meanings” (Doyle, 1997 p.95) to be explored and provided validity for the study. Both processes of analysis were situated within the literature as part of my constructivist approach to building knowledge.

This chapter now explores how this analysis of the data enabled the research questions, indicated above, to be answered. Due to the complexity of life history and professional identity, findings could have appeared as a response to more than one question, so I acknowledge it is my personal interpretation that allocates them in a particular section in the discussion that follows.

### **Factors influencing professional identity construction**

The role of subject knowledge and qualifications in the acquisition of a professional identity emerged strongly from the data. For all of the participants the gaining of a formal qualification marked a point in their journey where they began to see themselves in a more professional way, or to see themselves as able to fulfil the professional practice embodied by the qualification. This is also demonstrated in other literature; Brock (2012; 2006a) identified knowledge and qualifications as aspects in her framework for consideration. Manning-Morton (2006) and Lloyd and Hallet (2010) made it clear that specific subject knowledge is considered a marker in professional identity and hence professionalisation. Moloney (2010) commented on the situation in Ireland and indicated her participants “cited... the need for qualifications” as “the most significant factor in shaping professional identity” (p.180). The fact that for my participants this identity formation was not linked to the EYPS, but to earlier qualifications undertaken, such as the NNEB and the EYSEFD, is an important consideration when thinking about professional identities and would support the idea of the need for a range of qualifications as a starting point for professionalisation of the entire workforce (Nutbrown, 2012).

The example of Julie and the relationship between her qualification of NNEB and her statement “*I’m a damned good nursery nurse*” shows a direct correlation between subject content, qualification brand and ownership of a professional persona. It is a professional identity construction that is recognised and used, for example in job advertisements, so perhaps benefits from a wider understanding of how someone carrying that qualification will

perform professionally. But more significant than that it remained the bedrock of how Julie saw herself and her practice even though she was enacting other professional roles in her position as centre and group manager. The suggestion that a qualification such as the NNEB could have a strong influence on a sense of professional identity is important for consideration in the sector at this time, with the introduction of qualifications for the Early Years Educator (DfE/ NCTL, 2013b) and the type of professional identity they are inculcating. Equally it is disappointing that the government has not followed through the recommendations (Gaunt, 2014) from the Nutbrown Review (2012) that a qualification at this level should be a starting point for the entire ECEC workforce, as it would contribute to the professionalisation of the sector.

Unfortunately the 'branded professional identity' expressed in the role of the EYPS has had insufficient time to be established before it was replaced. Its introduction in 2007 and its demise in 2013 signal an incomplete attempt to move thinking and status even within the sector. The stories of experience from my participants do not indicate a strong allegiance with the branding of EYPS in how they self-talk about their professional identities. This may have something to do with the nature of the award itself, which was achieved on a competency base, but with four routes raised issues about parity in many practitioners views (Hadfield et al., 2012). The unsettling of the EYP identity following the Nutbrown Report (2012) and the introduction of EYTS (DfE/NCTL 2013a) has now reinforced this confusion about the professional identity of EYPs. It also indicates the shift toward teachers leading practice and the privileging of education as the essence of early childhood provision. I argue from my data that professionalisation for the sector must not just rest on EYTS. For my participants opportunities for talking and reflecting, as communities of learners, in a formal setting at level four and above, provided them chances to identify and develop notions of their own professionalism. Consequently this aspect of professionalisation is something that lecturers and trainers should be aware of and seek to facilitate (Chalke, 2013; Osgood 2010).

Reflection featured in all narratives, and is an important part of qualifications in the sector, particularly as the literature recognised this as a professional trait (Potter and Hodgson, 2007). MacNaughton (2005) suggested that reflection as a tool can “allow the development and transformation of pedagogical knowledge” (p.6), so it was important to consider how this factor was used in building professional identities. I discussed how examples of reflection seemed to be focussed around reflection on practice and reflection in practice (Schön, 1983). The narratives also indicated to me how practitioners reflect together and this is something that would be worth researching further. Goldberger et al. (1996) highlighted the importance of dialogue in bringing meaning to woman and suggested there is a role for this type of collaborative reflection particularly in a feminised workforce. In my data there were examples of a sense of corporate professional identity expressed through the process of team reflection and development (see example in the section The Early Years Curriculum in Chapter Five). Tarule (1996) proposed this sort of collaborative discourse is important particularly for women as this type of meaning making can enable them to resist the more dominant discourses. It has also been noted that part of professional identity is having a sense of being part of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and these examples suggest that early years practitioners can find this within settings where they seek to work and progress together. Debbie discussed how her team had developed their practice because many of them were all undertaking training and qualifications together and would discuss these when they came back to the workplace. Rachel emphasised the importance of the child-minder network as a place where ideas could be shared, and there was also evidence of professional dialogue in her conversation with her child-minder network co-ordinator. Zoe considered that as a manager she would benefit from the opportunity to meet with other managers for professional dialogue, rather than just information sharing, which was how she felt these meetings were structured. Ensuring there is time in working practice for these conversations has been recognised as a challenge (Potter and Hodgson, 2007) but something that ECEC qualifications, particularly at level four and above can provide time for and perhaps something that needs to be modelled and developed in new

entrants to the workforce. Building these types of collaborative discussions into degree courses would require providing opportunities for students to access working environments through placement as a compulsory element.

Another key factor that can be seen to have influenced professional identity related to the relationship each of my participants had with the external regulator Ofsted. It was clear from the data that constructions of a professional self can be strengthened by successful encounters with regulation for example Debbie with her “*outstanding*” judgements, or challenged as indicated by Zoe with her self-confessed concerns. Equally the data proposed that participants such as Rachel and Helen had less confidence in the value of the process with Helen’s talk about “*working the system...and play(ing) the game*”. Osgood (2010) argued the importance of the regulators feedback in defining external ideas about professionalism, however the picture that emerged from my participants was more mixed and suggested to me that there is some further research to be done on unpicking how practitioners are negotiating these encounters.

The final significant factor emerging from the data and discussed fully in Chapter Five illustrated how the curriculum could be seen a tool of professionalisation and hence contributing to professional identity. This thesis explored how paperwork requirements and external agencies had historically provoked and challenged the sector. However, at the time of my interviews, even with the introduction of the revised curriculum (DfE, 2012), what was evident in my participants responses was a confidence that changes would be easy to implement, and that some preparation was being made ahead of the revised EYFS (DfE, 2012). This indicated strength in their professional identities in relation to interpreting the curriculum appropriately, in a way that allowed each individual to fulfil their specific pedagogical understandings in their work with children. These findings show that the role of the curriculum in the process of the professionalisation agenda should be seen as an important aspect of the discussions within the field, which have latterly been mostly focused on the role of qualifications.

## Professional Journeys

It is clearly identifiable from the outcomes of this study that being a professional is not something that my participants suddenly arrived at, but that their professional journeys are important as indicators of shifting and changing professional identities. The data collection allowed participants to recall their experiences as part of the early childhood workforce from how and when they started in the sector to their current practice, allowing therefore the notion of experience over time to be explored through their remembrances and the aspects they chose to talk about. Although all four of my participants in group settings have been or are now in manager or supervisory positions their narratives about their working lives as (re)presented in the holistic silhouette analysis, indicated something about how they got there and what motivated them to remain in the sector. There is a unanimous sense that professionalism for all these practitioners is demonstrated in what they do 'hands on' with children and families. Helen even moved away from a more senior position to work directly with children. For all of them whether they came into the sector by choice, having always seen themselves working with children, or whether they came in by default from the position of being mothers making decisions about family and work, it is the work with children and families that shape their daily professional lives.

What is also demonstrated is that all of them at some point made a choice to remain in the sector and that this was often influenced by the strength of feeling they had about the job they are doing. This accords with Harwood et al.'s (2013) findings that passion was cited by the majority of their participants as what inspired them to continue. For Zoe and for Julie there is the indication that if they are not able to sustain the practice in the way they believe fits their ethos and /or pedagogy of what is needed for young children that would be the point at which they leave the sector.

Another aspect of their professional journeys that emerged from the data related to the transformative process that occurs through engagement with study. It enabled individuals to recognise and own knowledge as part of who they are and as an expression of what they do. This is illustrated by ideas

such as those expressed by Debbie about how she considered qualifications have improved childcare because they have allowed her to take the knowledge and ideas back into preschool to share with staff in order to bring about changes in practice. The data indicated the success of academic qualifications which engendered the links between theory and practice and enabled practitioners to enact that transformation within their settings. However transformation also occurred through independent study that enabled participants to be reflective about their practice in a theoretical context, as in Zoe's experience "*doing a lot of reading has made me more confident about thinking about what I do in practice*". This transformation of professional identity through knowledge acquisition is an important part of what the data has revealed about all the professional journeys my practitioners had undertaken.

Also emerging as part of their professional journeys were the motivations behind the role of CPD for the participants. Initially it appeared there was a strong external motivation in gaining further qualifications, this external support was not just through government policy on a macro level which was acknowledged in the narratives; but worked out on a micro level through local advisors who feature in some of the narratives. Sector journals such as 'Nursery World' were also mentioned as playing a part in encouraging decisions to study. Because all my participants were early adopters of the qualification route, there is no suggestion that recommendations from other early years practitioners were a factor, although it would have been expected that this would also be an influence within a community of practice.

There was also a noticeable shift in motivations to learning and study throughout their journeys. Debbie, Zoe and Rachel moved from a position that saw them undertaking study in HE because it was necessary, externally motivated, and therefore could be viewed as performativity; to a strong internal motivation and expression of the joy of learning. They demonstrated a desire for further academic study for personal benefit, which could be viewed as professionalism. These changing views of themselves on a

personal level arguably spilled over into personal study, reading and reflexive practice and contributed to on-going professionalism.

There is also a point, more noticeable in some narratives than others, when CPD is no longer about new practice knowledge but rather seeking knowledge to support their tacit understandings, pedagogy and practice. This type of knowledge appeared to be linked to how they perceived themselves professionally as it was often related to defending their ideas and ways of doing things to external agencies; whether this was parents, Ofsted or local authority advisors. Alternatively there were also examples of seeking a different type of knowledge necessary for the changing nature of the work they did, for example Julie talked about a business coach being employed by the company. This shift is an important aspect I would suggest in how they are constructing themselves professionally and how they have recognised the agency that subject knowledge can provide for them. They no longer see themselves as having to be positioned in a subordinate position, but have recognised the effectiveness that knowledge provides in negotiating positions of power. In any discussion of power, however, I must also consider how this relates to the role they are enacting in their professional lives. Clearly there is power inherent in being a manager or supervisor as three of the participants are, and this role gave them more opportunity to exercise that agency.

What also emerged from my participants' professional journeys is the ability to be flexible and adapt to change, with the suggestion for all of them from talking about the most recent changes, the revised EYFS (DfE 2012) and the EYT (Nutbrown, 2012), that this had become easier over time. This may be because recent changes have been less dramatic, but may also be because they have situated themselves as professionals within a changing environment and they see negotiating the new initiatives as part of what they need to do. Perhaps it is also because they had worked out ways to do this that caused the least stress. For example with the revised EYFS (DfE 2012), they talked about having already changed the paperwork, playing it low key with their staff team to avoid anxieties, or they are already training the staff

team and having discussions. These constructions show confident professionals who are working with resilience to embrace new expectations from policy changes.

### **Resisting or embracing constructs of professionalism**

The fact that all my participants indicated themselves as early adopters of a range of government initiatives from the EYSEFD to EYPS and that they mainly indicated a willingness to undertake any further requirement such as EYT could suggest that they are fully embracing constructs of professionalism from external requirements. However, there are elements of disquiet in the narratives told and some indications that the willingness to continue to respond to external agendas is born of a pragmatic approach to the work they do. It is not because their values and beliefs would necessarily fully embrace the more public discourse. Gooch and Powell (2013) also recognised the problematic nature of how standards are enacted or experienced, as I saw suggested by these narratives from my participants.

Engagement with CPD (Watkins, 1999) was a source of tension in some narratives, as it appeared at times that development was welcome as long as it did not challenge inherent and deeply held beliefs about childcare provision, Zoe being the clearest example of this. Edgington (2003) argued that is important that practitioners in the sector do not compromise on strongly held beliefs about early years practice, but become advocates for what is important. Zoe reflected that she needed to do something about this when she talked about how on attending a risk training session it had been suggested to her *“if you are ... outdoors you should be singing that from the rooftops...so that people know exactly what you are offering”*.

These at times fluctuating identities appeared caught between pedagogy and regulation, but despite this there was also evidence of these practitioners beginning to become advocates and consider themselves in the wider picture of workforce reform. Examples from the narratives demonstrated how they engaged in consultations; made links with local authorities to showcase

examples of good practice; and voluntarily contributed to sector magazines. This type of leading practice can be construed as both engaging with and resisting external constructions of professionalism, as the content of these activities provides for individual passion and pedagogy to be expounded.

The data also clearly indicated for all the practitioners that notions of care and nurturing are still important in the work they undertake with children and their families. While this could be seen to reinforce the discourse of maternalism that surrounds the sector (Osgood, 2013) the examples discussed in the holistic silhouette analysis also suggested that both subject knowledge and tacit knowledge informed how this was enacted. The current emphasis, continually being reinforced by performativity agendas that remain focused on outcomes (Osgood 2006) and the move to the 'schoolification' of the early years (Ortlipp et al 2000; Moss 2010), was not generally supported in the language my participants used. The exception was Debbie who clearly saw herself in the business of preparing children for school and life as she talked about being "*the first part of (a) child's education*", albeit with a clear pedagogy of play and adult interaction as the means of providing this. For Julie and Zoe their specific pedagogies appeared to demand a greater distancing and resistance to the discourses of education and more emphasis on developmental approaches supported by flexibility of provision. However, they illustrated how they believed the EYFS (DCSF, 2008) provided them the opportunity to fulfil these requirements. Personal pedagogic principles are an important aspect to have emerged from the study, particularly as they are all able to be accomplished under current curriculum guidelines, this aspect would be interesting to pursue further.

The common feature of these narratives therefore is of professionals who have all remained in the sector and succeeded to stay interested, involved and enthusiastic about their jobs throughout a period of significant change. The differences illustrate that there are many ways of constructing professional identities that are all valid ways of celebrating the strength of the sector, which has not yet become so strangulated by regulation that it no longer has room for individual difference.

## Conclusion

This summary has identified aspects from the data that have implications for practice and future research. These together with my methodical approach form my contribution to the field of ECEC. In examining professional life histories this thesis has indicated elements of performativity, as explored through the way in which the participants have and are continuing to respond to external requirements. It has also demonstrated professionalism, as exemplified in the practices, values and beliefs that emerged from within their individual constructions of a professional self. The narrative I have written reflects my way of reconceptualising professional knowledge and understanding (Weber, 1993). On the basis of the findings I suggest the complexity of these constructions showed there is not a simple formula of qualification, status and name that will professionalise the sector, but that there is merit for all educators/trainers of early years practitioners at all levels to facilitate the exploration of professional identity as part of equipping the sector with the skills for transformation. I believe that the holistic silhouette model using the aspects of head, heart and hands is one way of supporting the necessary discussions and understandings to emerge as part of ongoing research, initial training and ongoing CPD within the sector.

Having recognised the complexity of analysis of narrative and life history approaches this model has demonstrated one way of ethically and holistically engaging with the process. As a model it could be employed to examine some of the aspects suggested as needing further research such as exploring professionalism with non-graduates or looking at how communities of practice engage in creating professional identities.

Another aspect for this research was to explore whether the personal narratives and experiences of my participants could help me develop the work undertaken with students on the BA Early Childhood Studies that I have responsibility for. The notion of approaching the shaping of professional identity and CPD through an exploratory and reflective focus on the head, hearts and hands identified in the model might provide a useful tool for students. It could help them to integrate theory and practice in a personal

professional identity, something that has been identified as challenging for them in my own experience. The model could also support practitioners to identify and lay claim to their own professional identity that allows them individual expression beyond an external requirement and enable them to articulate personal pedagogic principles. Although I recognise other reflective processes available (Schön, 1983; Appleby and Andrews, 2012) I argue the visual nature of the silhouette figure is easily accessible, especially to less experienced practitioners and the holistic nature of the reflection fits with the pedagogic quality of early years practice.

An approach such as this would require utilising the model and identifying key questions for each section to help focus thinking and discussion. This would enable the identification of aspects of knowledge, beliefs or practice and what influences or determines these aspects and how they interrelate. The model would provide practitioners with three possible starting points for any area they wished to reflect upon or discuss as a group. Importantly this model allows engagement with the heart; feelings, values and beliefs. As I have argued in this thesis this aspect is vitally important to support the development of a professional discourse on the ethic of loving care (Taggart, 2011). The example of Helen illustrates this, the element from her transcript of *“you can sort of love them”*, linked to her knowledge of attachment theory and her willingness to be available for the child *“I’ll cuddle her if she wants”* fits together with her professional identity in this area. For students who are perhaps new to practice, such as students on a BA Early Childhood Studies course, these three elements would be less well integrated and so an exercise that focuses discussion around them could help in the exploration and assimilation of knowledge, feelings and practice.

Engagement starting from a knowledge viewpoint might explore aspects such as indicated in Debbie’s story of the boys learning and the introduction of a new idea, as she recalled *“I remember when we were having a discussion in class at uni about guns”*. This discussion affected her emotionally because she recognised it impacted her children, some of whom had parents in the armed forces and she says, *“I was quite shocked that I*

*hadn't thought of it before*". However she then went back to discuss with her staff team how they needed to change practice and her setting is now known in the local authority for its innovative work on boys learning.

Thinking about Zoe's narrative provides an example that started from practice, when she talked about the importance of the ratio's she employed, linking this to her rationale of being able to fulfil aspects such as the extended and prioritised use of outdoors through taking children on "*big walks...through the rivers and things*". She then supported this professional practice by linking it to her reading and her knowledge gained from training, as well as her tacit understanding about the ways boys learn. This allowed her to express her feelings about this type of learning and suggest she should have been "*singing it from the rooftops*", because it is what the setting offered.

Opportunities for undertaking this research gave participant's moments to recall, recollect and reflect upon changes they had made in their professional journeys and to celebrate again aspects of practice that were particularly important to them. Building reflectivity into teaching and training is almost assumed for professional courses (Potter and Hodgeson, 2007) and ensuring this remains part of future qualifications is important. It requires giving students opportunities for practice knowledge and theoretical knowledge to be explored in relation to values and beliefs. It then needs to be applied to ensure effective engagement in deep learning. I have suggested conceptualising reflection through the model of the holistic silhouette and the varying foci of head, heart and hands could be part of a strategy to support this. I believe this tool therefore has potential value as a working model for both ongoing research and discussing and exploring professionalism with students and practitioners and as such is a unique contribution to the field.

This thesis has demonstrated that there are certain elements which are common to all the narratives, significantly the role of acquiring knowledge through undertaking and gaining qualifications, something which featured

highly as part of the professionalisation agenda (Brock, 2006a) and consequently participant's narratives. It has also illustrated that what may begin as an external motivation to study can become an internal motivation for CPD and lifelong learning if it can be related to things that matter to the individual: such as the ability to improve practice; develop confidence; or learn new skills. However, if the requirements for the qualification are not seen to provide this then undertaking further study becomes performativity rather than a professional trait. It is viewed as a means to an end rather than a transformative process. Funding to undertake qualifications was also seen as vitally important in maintaining successful engagement for a workforce that is low paid, with little flexibility for time off to undertake training (Hordern, 2013). These insights from my study can contribute to ongoing discussions in the sector about the nature and type of awards being proposed and delivered.

This thesis has also found that views about what young children need to experience in terms of adult interaction including affection and care, as well as more educative processes and environments, abounded in the narratives. They emerged differently from personal viewpoints and experiences but all centred on the child and the family. The ability to articulate what they see as important for young children is an essential voice that the sector needs to encourage and channel. It needs to ensure there is room provided for different expressions of pedagogy to be explored, rather than a model that promotes one size to fit all (Woodrow, 2008).

All participants exhibited elements of resilience in the face of a period of considerable change, continuing to represent strongly the needs of young children and their families and evidence the passion which has kept them engaged in the sector. I think it unlikely that this element is something that can be taught; rather it emerges, even when some practitioners only began working in the sector incidentally rather than by design. If the future of ECEC practice becomes one that is purely driven by entrants with qualifications, the potential represented by at least three of my participants, who 'fell into it' as mothers would be lost if they were unable to 'train on the job'. This unique aspect (Nurse, 2007) of early years professionalism where theory can be

added after extensive experience, has demonstrated the opportunity of transformation for individuals who would otherwise not have had access to the benefits of education. I am concerned that these opportunities are fading for women.

I believe this study is important because it suggests there is much to be celebrated in the professionalisation agenda, if these narratives are illustrative of what the up skilling of the workforce has achieved. There is still work to be done, as some of the oscillating identities caught between pedagogy and regulation imply. However, there is also evidence of these five practitioners beginning to consider themselves in the wider picture of workforce reform. This type of leading practice needs to be expressed and developed more widely (Sachs, 2003), and linked to the strengths of a feminised workforce such as collegiality and community (ibid). Perhaps with encouragement and access to effective communities of practice that draw them together, they will believe that their voices can make a difference. They are a significant part of the resistance that is required to prevent furthering the process of a homogenised and technicised professional currently being designed in government policy and enforced on the sector through the reimaging of the EYTS.

In summary therefore this thesis has achieved the following:-

- Conceptualised a methodological analogy for working with life history and narrative as a tapestry that can be woven and rewoven.
- Explored holistic silhouette analysis as a “Gestalt” approach (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000 p.68) to the analysis of professional life history narratives. Recommended it as a tool for use in further research and professional development with students and practitioners to develop notions of professional identity in individuals and communities of practice.
- Supported the understanding of the importance of knowledge and qualifications in the transformative journeys of ECEC practitioners and the development of personal agency.

- Identified the ability of ECEC practitioners to develop and enact personal pedagogies within the framework of the EYFS (DfE, 2012).
- Confirmed that care and nurturing remain an important part of the narrative of ECEC practitioners for children under four.
- Illustrated how effective professional identities can allow ECEC practitioners to resist dominant discourses.

These aspects indicate my unique contribution to the field of study of ECEC and associated research. It is my belief that by telling these five in depth stories of professional identity they can help to inform an understanding of professionalisation. A contribution which I suggest offers an alternative and complementary view to the current dominant policy discourse in England.

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## **Appendices**

- A) Table 1: Zoe: transcript data from the head/knowledge section.
- B) Table 2: Julie: transcript data from domain of heart /feelings values and beliefs section
- C) Table 3: Debbie: transcript data from the domain of practice section
- D) (Re)presentation of participants' keys word analysis in holistic silhouette
- E) Table 4: A timeline of key policy events in ECEC from 1997 to 2012
- F) Table 5: Example of data analysis from theme of curriculum

## Appendix A

**Table 1 Zoe : transcript data from the head/knowledge**

| Excerpts from original transcribed interview data that contains aspects of knowledge and thinking   | Dominant domain themes using key words from original interview data  | My summary of dominant domains. Words from original narrative remain in italics. |
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| <i>...I carried out that ethos throughout I think and just been in charge of taking on more and more staff and carrying on with that ethos which I thought was important for how children were treated by the adults and...</i>   | <i>which I thought was important for how children were treated by the adults and...</i>  | Adult /child relationships   |
| <i>I think by doing so much reading in the different course I've done um has clarified to me what I have been trying to do all these years is the right thing, because I've never read in books that's it wrong to treat children as individuals or to learn through play</i> | <i>by doing so much reading</i><br><br><i>I've never read in books that's it wrong to treat children as individuals or to learn through play</i> | Books /reading   |
| <i>oh dear, but how we actually do it is written in the books. We do it naturally but it's quite nice to read, during the different modules that I've done that the authors would have done the same things.</i>  | <i>do it is written in the books.</i>  | Books /reading   |
| <i>The first course I did things were happening I think nationally and they were starting to recognise that it was the diploma that was the desirable level 3 , then the Foundation Degree was new ... I suddenly wanted to grow up and</i>                                   | <i>I suddenly wanted to grow up and go to university</i>   | Move on academically   |

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| <p><i>go to university...its was being talked about in Nursery World and all sorts so that's what made me want to ...move on academically then</i></p>   | <p><i>move on academically then</i></p>   |   |
| <p><i>We think we are educating them, we are doing it our own way because we are out for two hours through rivers and up castle moats and we think we are doing it ..</i></p>  | <p><i>We think we are educating them<br/>We think we are doing it</i></p>   | <p><i>We think</i></p>  |
| <p>Me In terms of the study you have done you said earlier you felt it clarifies you are doing the right thing<br/>Z yes yes<br/>Me has it given you anything else?<br/>Z Um ( pause) well I can understand more difficult words now<br/>Me Is that important?<br/>Z. It is really because I'm on a higher plain now, with being able to talk to all sorts of different people that I wouldn't be able to talk to before...so I can hold my head up high and chat with everyone really, rather than think...I just work in a playgroup, so yes its personal self-esteem, I think educational self esteem<br/>Me : so you think without the education you might just as well think I just work in a playgroup<br/>Z Um, yes I think so. I wish now I had gone to university full time when I was 18 or 19 I enjoy studying so much that I regret not being able to do it full time<br/>Me Was it a surprise to you when you started studying that it was going to be<br/>Yes ,it's almost like I had the cogs that needed turning and tuning but that's the way life is isn't it?</p> | <p><i>Understand difficult words<br/>Higher plain now,<br/>Talk to all sorts of people<br/>Hold my head up<br/>Educational self esteem<br/>Wish I'd gone to university at 18 or 19<br/>Enjoy studying</i></p> | <p><i>Higher plain<br/>Educational self esteem<br/>Enjoy studying</i></p> |
| <p><i>( on undertaking EYPS) I did enjoy the process, it's good to reflect and think on, when you had to do differ units and you had to do different scenarios ...I managed to fall back on really genuine incidents that happened and I</i></p>   | <p><i>Good to reflect<br/>Sometimes...you haven't always go the time to reflect</i></p>   | <p><i>reflection</i></p>  |

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| <p><i>managed to reflect upon them</i></p> <p>M how important is that opportunity for reflection do you think?</p> <p><i>Z it was forced reflection and that was a good thing because sometimes if you are busy you haven't always got time to reflect, you are almost always on the go</i></p> <p>Me do you think the reflective process is something you would do more of if you had the time?</p> <p><i>Z.I don't know if I do reflect more now, but if I read articles or something has happened at playgroup than I do reflect and I don't just do it in my own head, I'm talking about it with staff ,so they can sort of reflect as well, reflection process is sort of informal debates .</i></p>  | <p><i>I do reflect and I don't just do it in my own head, I'm talking about it with staff ,so they can sort of reflect as well, reflection process is sort of informal debates .</i></p> |  |
| <p><i>I think it's quite sad when I've visited other settings and they have been to the same training as me at different um courses ,you know day courses ,and as soon as they have heard something, of course I've been there so I've heard the same thing, and if I've just gone past there setting or just gone in and they have set it up exactly as the trainer said and I think oh no you haven't thought about it is this relevant to the children? or is this relevant to the environment? we've got you've just done it because somebody has told you it's not set in stone is it , but I bet they're the ones who get outstanding, so I'm wrong in thinking too much Joy?</i></p> <p>Me : Who says?</p> <p><i>I don't know the results isn't it ,but then if I don't like it I would have gone ages ago so I obviously still challenged enough to determine that one day I'll be recognised for what I do or otherwise I'll just have to write a book and they will have to read it and say that's what she was wittering on about all those years</i></p> | <p><i>I think oh know haven't they thought about it</i></p> <p><i>Am I wrong in thinking too much</i></p>  | <p><i>I think ...am I wrong in thinking too much</i></p> |

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| <p><i>Ofsted want the self-reflection SEF, they want you to be reflective, so my training from EYPS should help that. But when I've looked at the SEF it's such a lot to have to think about and reflect on and to write that I've just done about two sections, I've never completed it. Now other settings its not to statutory yet, now other settings do that but what Ofsted is saying if you can do your SEF and send it online they can look at it and then they will only ask specific questions on the next visit , so I don't know if that would help me if I can actually say all my ethos and all my reflection beforehand, then they will only ask certain questions and that might just tip the balance , I don't know, or they might rip me to bits because they have seen my SEF and come in like Rottweiler and attack me, I don't know, but it's such a lot to do to do properly i think that I have given up on it I suppose but I could look at it in the summer holidays</i></p> | <p><i>Self-reflection (SEF)<br/>I don't know if that will actually help me, if I can actually say all my ethos and all my reflection</i></p>   | <p><i>Reflection</i></p>   |
| <p><i>It's true though isn't it if you read in a book it doesn't tell you to do that, it might teach you that as a teacher in teacher training how to teach...but where are these preschool practitioners getting those ideas from because they are not taught at all</i></p> <p><i>Me:But does that go back to your point about how they get told how to do something , they don't think about it</i></p> <p><i>Yes yes and they may be looking at the right hand side of the guidance and not questioning it, just saying the government has said this, so this is what we must do to achieve and leave the developmental matters , I don't know</i></p> <p><i>Me :Have you always been a questioner?</i></p> <p><i>Yes...its because we've been given a brain haven't we. We need to use it. So if gods around he's given me brain and I have to use it, so I'm not annoying him or her</i></p>  | <p><i>Read / books<br/>Questioning /questioner<br/>I just want it sorted in my head and I'll stick to it.<br/>Assimilation isn't it when something comes into my brain to muck that up again and then I think hang on I've got to think about this and then I might change my ideas ...I'm not easily swayed by other people cos I am at a certain point and</i></p> | <p><i>Read / books<br/>Questioning /questioner<br/>sorted in my head<br/>wait to be persuaded by someone I respect</i></p> |

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| <p>Me: So you recognise that as part of who you are but you've brought that into your practice<br/> <i>Yes I expect I irritate some people by constantly questioning things. It's not that I disbelieve them I just want it sorted in my head and I'll stick to it. Assimilation isn't it when something comes into my brain to muck that up again and then I think hang on I've got to think about this and then I might change my ideas ...I'm not easily swayed by other people cos I am at a certain point and then I wait to be persuaded by someone I respect and think they've got a point and then I change my ideas again.</i></p>                  | <p><i>then I wait to be persuaded by someone I respect and think they've got a point and then I change my ideas again.</i></p>  |                |
| <p><i>But I tend to, for me personally I tend to apply for training that I'm really interested in and I think might move my understanding so I'm not going to go for , though there is no such thing as sit down round the table training anyway it's all my sort of training.<br/> So what I will try and do in my thought if I can hear the trainer struggling with trying to persuade the audience, I will go in for it to help that trainer to be on that side to try and give them examples of what we do so that others around are persuaded more to what they are trying to get across so I'll try to help the trainer if they are struggling</i></p> | <p><i>that I'm really interested in and I think might move my understanding<br/><br/> I will go in for it to help that trainer ...to try and give them examples of what we do so that others around are persuaded</i></p> |                |
| <p><i>I think by coming to university and doing a lot of reading has made me more confident about thinking about what I do in practice, I was always doing it but now I've got the back up of trainers and authors and now I think most of my staff team can realise what I'm going on about and it's for real and it's not just silly talk and Zoe talking , it is now starting to creep into nursery world and EYE, so they can read that.</i></p>   | <p><i>doing a lot of reading has made me more confident about thinking about what I do in practice</i></p>  | <p>Reading</p> |

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| <p><i>I quite like it when the staff turn to me and question something I've said , or they have learnt about in training , and that I can usually when I take them off for one to one supervision, I can give them examples of some things,</i></p>  | <p><i>I quite like it when the staff turn to me and question something I've said</i></p>  | <p>Staff questioning</p>               |
| <p><i>I've got more confidence in what I always thought Childcare and education was about because now I've read it and somebody else has said it , as far as status is concerned I don't think, if we were earning £30 000 like a teacher we would probably have higher status , but then I would have to work for the government that I like to be independent on £6 an hour , cos the teachers are on a good wage but they have to do what they are told</i></p> <p>Me The study has been important in terms of giving you confidence in order to carry on the practice you were already doing?</p> <p><i>Yes the reasoning behind it , I realise now, it wasn't just natural. I was doing it and somebody else backs me up.</i></p> | <p><i>I've got more confidence in what I always thought Childcare and education was about because now I've read it and somebody else has said it ,</i></p> <p><i>Yes the reasoning behind it , I realise now, it wasn't just natural. I was doing it and somebody else backs me up.</i></p> | <p>Confidence in what I've thought</p> |
| <p><i>Because I always want to be one step ahead I don't want anyone today you've still got to do that I want to be right there at the beginning of all these things which I was with the Foundation Degree and the EYP ,</i></p> <p>Me: So is that kind of internal motivation</p> <p><i>Yes because i don't want anybody to turn round and say you are not qualified to do this, at one time they wanted a graduate for every setting , but they seem to have quietened down about that , because there is not a</i></p>   | <p><i>always want to be one step ahead I don't want anyone today you've still got to do that</i></p> <p><i>Yes because I don't want anybody to turn round and say you are not qualified to</i></p>  | <p>One step ahead</p>                  |

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| <i>graduate in every</i>  | <i>do this</i>   |                                 |
| <i>I want to be absolutely at the top educationally of my field</i>   | <i>I want to be absolutely at the top educationally of my field</i>  | <i>At the top educationally</i> |
| <i>They are worried I suppose they are not confident in the practice that we do , but they are getting better , at it, so without me bombarding them they realise, what they need to do is go to other places as part of their training to see how others do things and realise that actually they have a good deal where they are, to see the complete difference. They don't want to be like robots do they? I actually ask a lot of them because they have to think on their feet because it is so, I have asked the local authority about the maths and English and they say they will supply it and I will insist staff go on it<br/>Can't blame them really because they must be fed up with People being so unqualified , just the general people , so low isn't it for English and maths, you can read an essay and think that's not correct, but I think it's not for me to say is it. I take pride in my English and maths.</i> | <i>They don't want to be like robots do they? I actually ask a lot of them because they have to think on their feet because it is so</i> | Not robots                      |
| <i>I did it for myself , I assumed I wouldn't be equivalent to a teacher anyway, so it was just a rise to the next challenge so it doesn't bother me, it's made no different to my finance ...</i>  | <i>I did it for myself ,</i>   |                                 |

## Appendix B

**Table 2 . Julie transcript data from the in domain of heart /feelings values and beliefs**

| Excerpts from original transcribed interview data  | Dominant domain themes from original interview data  | My summary of dominant domains. Words from original narrative remain in italics.         |
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| <p><i>I just wanted to make a difference from a very young age it was really important to me, my own childhood wasn't a particularly happy one... Probably It was really important to me to make people, to make children feel special and care for them and love them and really important to me and still is now</i></p>   | <p><i>wanted to make a difference really important to me to make people, to make children feel special and care for them and love them</i></p> | <p><i>Making a difference make children feel special care for them and love them</i></p> |
| <p><i>I also knew that one to one working with children was not going to be for me either so when I came back I started work in um a day nursery , a social services day nursery in T...and that was immediately I came back and I was there for fifteen years and absolutely loved it , loved it and when I was training I'd vowed I'd never work in a day nursery because I had a horrible time as a student. I watched practitioners do things that I just didn't think ( phone rings) were right and I said I'd never work in one.</i></p> | <p><i>Day nursery ...I was there for fifteen years and absolutely loved it , loved it</i></p>  | <p><i>absolutely loved it , loved it</i></p>   |
| <p><i>and that was where I was always going to be then, day nurseries that was my passion, caring for them from babies and making a real difference. There's a real difference, they were children on the at risk register, parents with um real</i></p>   | <p><i>day nurseries that was my passion, caring for them from babies and making a</i></p>  | <p><i>my passion, caring for them making a real</i></p>                                  |

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| <i>needs, individual needs, some with learning difficulties some with drug addiction, alcohol lot of problems and it was</i>   | <i>real difference</i>  | <i>difference</i>  |
| <i>Cos anyone that's vain enough to think it's about them and not about the parents it's not right, it's about you supporting the parent and that child being special. I always think that every child's that has been in my care I hope I've made feel special in some way...<br/>Because they are, they are amazing aren't they and I love it I've never ever not loved it in 28 years.</i>  | <i>every child's that has been in my care I hope I've made feel special in some way...<br/>Because they are, they are amazing aren't they and I love it I've never ever not loved it in 28 years.</i> | <i>Making children feel special<br/><br/>and I love it I've never ever not loved it in 28 years.</i> |
| <i>The only time I had my iffy , I suppose there were two rocky times , one was about eight years ago , no longer than that when Ofsted came in</i>  | <i>two rocky times ,</i>  | <i>two rocky times ,</i>   |
| <i>I felt that we had hit a really bad time with practitioners and their confidence through that. I (interruption) was questioning myself a lot, I know I did, and I know I did in uni ,I sort of questioned things all the time just a thing I had to go through to come out the other end</i>  | <i>hit a really bad time with practitioners and their confidence</i>  | <i>bad time with practitioners and their confidence</i>  |
| <i>it was important to me that they were in areas of deprivation as well, it wasn't about making money at all. It was about serving a purpose that's why I'm a nursery nurse</i>   | <i>It was about serving a purpose that's why I'm a nursery nurse</i>  | <i>serving a purpose</i>   |
| <i>but I'm so happy, so happy , because I'm really involved again, I hadn't realised, I still thought I was and I suppose I was with the staff teams but not to the level I wanted to be and definitely not with my families and that was the bit I hadn't realised how much I missed it until I was back and I didn't know whether I could be group manager and manager, I didn't know whether that could happen but this team here were given the choice</i> | <i>but I'm so happy, so happy, because I'm really involved again</i>  | <i>so happy, so happy, because I'm really involved</i>   |
| <i>So it is how you, it is how you involve them, they might not want to come up with</i>   | <i>they are doing it because J</i>  | <i>Staff beliefs</i>   |

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| <p><i>loads of ideas and be really innovative or whatever, but they still should be involved and not feel they just have to do, they are doing it because J said. I hate that I want them to know why I want them to believe in what we do and understand what we do so that they can tell parents and anybody who comes in the door. So um it's just getting that emphasis</i></p>   | <p><i>said. I hate that I want them to know why I want them to believe in what we do and understand what we</i></p>   |   |
| <p><i>I think if you are a manager in a nursery you have to be a dam good nursery nurse.</i></p>  | <p><i>I think if you are a manager in a nursery you have to be a dam good nursery nurse.</i></p>  | <p><i>dam good nursery nurse.</i></p>                     |
| <p><i>And I think all these separate things are what knocked confidence in the first place, and I think and it is my belief that when I was a nursery nurse, part of being a nursery nurse I trained in making musical instruments, I trained in development, environmental influences , all of that but primarily the child development and observations of children . And um there weren't all these separate things,</i></p>   | <p><i>all these separate things are what knocked confidence in the first place, it is my belief that when I was a nursery nurse... but primarily the child development and observations of children</i></p> | <p><i>separate things are what knocked confidence</i></p> |
| <p><i>first time I properly opened day mouth in uni and shock horror from everybody who had done nvqs and I said at the time that there were practitioners, really good practitioners, who completed their nvq three in child care and who were dam good practitioners but when they then let it, opened it to everyone, that's when and I think we have a lot, an awful lot of practitioners that are not at the level they should be to work with children and certainly shouldn't have had a level three, and as an employer we've had to take that up</i></p> | <p><i>shock horror from everybody who had done nvqs</i></p>   | <p><i>(views of qualifications)</i></p>                   |

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| <p><i>They would have liked me to be a teacher . I think , I feel really happy with the schooling that I had, I'm glad my mum and dad made the choice they did to send me to the school they did , it was an all girls school. I don't know how I would have been if I had been in a mixed school , no idea, maybe I would, have been better , maybe I wouldn't but I was somebody who lacked confidence so I felt safer there</i></p>   | <p><i>I feel really happy with the schooling that I had</i></p>   | <p>( schooling )</p>                            |
| <p><i>I hope that I've left some happy memories with lots of children . I still see children now 17 come back and they talk about things that we did and I think that's the thing I'm most proud of that I'm in children minds that are now adults and they remember some of the fun times we had , so that is what I'm most proud of that I had a positive impact, they had happy memories.<br/>We've just had two and they were our first two in the nursery at Waterlooville and I walked in and they were there, but I had no idea, for there Tridnet 15' they come. Running up as soon as they saw me and they started talking and I just love it, I love that feeling , that's what I came into it for and yes things change and I say now my focus is a lot on my teams the people I work with ,but primarily when I started it was about the children , about leaving some lasting memories, good memories and giving children some happy experiences and confidence .</i></p> | <p><i>some happy memories with lots of children they remember some of the fun times we had , so that is what I'm most proud of that I had a positive impact, they had happy memories.<br/>and I just love it, I love that feeling , that's what I came into it for about leaving some lasting memories, good memories and giving children some happy experiences and confidence .</i></p> | <p><i>Happy/good memories<br/>I love it</i></p> |

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| <i>I think my , what I believe in has not changed but my knowledge has developed , so has everybody else's</i>   | <i>what I believe in has not changed</i>   | <i>what I believe in has not changed</i>                   |
| <i>my sense of I'm doing a good job comes from my parents , more than any body else it comes from my parents... It comes from what they say, it comes firm the fact that we are full, that they recommend you to other people , that they do things, we are surrounded at the moment by gifts and letters and things, if I switched on the computer I have messages that come from parents, I think that is where my biggest sense of affirmation comes from and the kids I love you and I miss you and all that kind of thing. Who are you delivering that service for and too is your parents and your children so that is where did want my feedback from , it's not from anywhere else , it's not from Ofsted or anybody else like that at all, it's from the people</i> | <i>my sense of I'm doing a good job comes from my parents , more than nay body else it comes from my parents<br/>I think that is where my biggest sense of affirmation comes from and the kids I love you and I miss you and all that kind of thing.</i> | Parents important<br>Affirmation from children and parents |
| <i>just because you can share with them more confidently I know they don't do it like that there, it doesn't mean that they are right or wrong or we are right or wrong , but you have to believe in how we do it , or you should be somewhere else. I think they are clear of what's expected and why rather than it just being in my head and I would be shy about saying things sometimes,</i>  | <i>but you have to believe in how we do it or you should be somewhere else</i>   | Shared ethos   |
| <i>I loved doing my Foundation Degree and I think that has impacted on who I am now as a professional and my parents would I think say that and so would my team members , but EYPS gave me nothing extra , and I don't know I'd QTs would and I just think why , why are we always striving to be , why is it teacher that gives you this status that people think you are good enough , but nursery nurse isn't no matter what you do, so I've done. My four years in uni as well as worked full time as well as run a business, but I'm still not good enough that's</i>  | <i>I loved doing my Foundation Degree...but EYPS gave me nothing extra ,<br/><br/>why is it teacher that gives you this status that people</i>   | Loved FDA<br>Only good enough if teacher                   |

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| <p><i>how I feel in people's eyes I'm still not good enough, that's what I feel they would be saying, you know need to do your QTS, somebody would need to be able to tell me that would make me better in what way, at delivering what. I deliver to my parents and children and if it did, fine, but I just am concerned that it probably wouldn't, it just feels like somebody saying, you're not good enough because you are not a teacher yet.</i></p>  | <p><i>think you are good enough</i></p> <p><i>still not good enough that's how I feel in people's eyes I'm still not good enough, that's what I feel they would be saying</i></p>                                       |   |
| <p><i>No that is still the same for me and it is somebody who, I think. It changes because your person changes, so I'm a mum now with three children, myself and have gone through the I thought they were judging me as a mum before my son was diagnosed with ADHD, and had all those difficulties, so you have this bank of your own life which makes me different to who I was all that time ago, but my make a difference is about confidence, I want those children to have happy memories of their childhood. And be as confident as they can be. I didn't have that. I don't have it in my home life and don't particularly remember school very much I was bullied at junior school so I didn't have hugely happy memories as child</i></p> | <p><i>the I thought they were judging me as a mum before my son was diagnosed with ADHD, a</i></p> <p><i>, I want those children to have happy memories of their childhood. And be as confident as they can be.</i></p> | <p>Personal experiences impact beliefs</p> <p>Children to have happy memories, be confident</p> |
| <p><i>I watch children sometimes and parents will say things to them and I think don't say that don't say you make me sad, because what's making Them anxious already storing up this horrible fiery belly like we have when your are anxious, I hate that a two, three or four year old could feel like that, cos I do remember feeling like that, I used to be worried when my dad came in and they and I don't want to go into that, but I was...</i></p>   | <p><i>don't say that don't say you make me sad, because what's making Them anxious already storing up this horrible fiery belly like we have when your are anxious,</i></p>   | <p>Empathy with children</p>  |
| <p><i>I remember when I went to where my children went to school, was my first kind of, particularly with my eldest son, but they used to question how he was, so</i></p>  | <p><i>so they questioned that I was a working mum and</i></p>   | <p>Challenge by others in role of mother</p>  |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p><i>they questioned that I was a working mum and my husband was in the navy and all that kind of thing, did that impact , it made me a bit wobbly, was I being a good mum or a bad mum , and I think now there are all these different professionals supporting parents , I wonder sometimes I wonder.</i></p> <p><i>I do say it , I say to them out here, I would never have set foot into one of these places, a children's centre as a mum , because it would have knocked my confidence because that is the kind of person that I am so I wouldn't have enjoyed them , I'm quite open about that,</i></p> | <p><i>my husband was in the navy and all that kind of thing, did that impact , it made me a bit wobbly, was I being a good mum or a bad mum ,</i></p> <p><i>because it would have knocked my confidence because that is the kind of person that I am so I wouldn't have enjoyed them , I'm quite open about that,</i></p> | <p>Confidence knocked by views of others in role of mum</p>   |
| <p><i>Yeah I did...I think I'm a nursery nurse. It's me , it's not the profession, it's me , my first sense of belonging, my initial , the first sense of real pride I remember having in myself was when I passed my NNEB and I got my little badge and my dad bought me the silver one with a chain on it.</i></p> <p><i>It's far more about me and where I started</i></p>   | <p><i>...I think I'm a nursery nurse. It's me , the first sense of real pride</i></p>   | <p><i>I think I'm a nursery nurse. It's me , the first sense of real pride</i></p>                                      |
| <p><i>That's from me , that is from me, that's from my childhood my adolescence, my early adult hood , it's still sometimes now , not being quite good enough , we've just spoken about it , so some of it is just me, it's my personality of not quite ever being good enough , no matter what I do. Well I want them to be, because I think early years is the poor relation , and I still think it is and I would like people to just be confident . I work really hard to try and make them see how good they are , how important they are , how good they are. I shout about them</i></p>                  | <p><i>, not being quite good enough , we've just spoken about it , so some of it is just me, it's my personality</i></p> <p><i>I shout about them to</i></p>  | <p>Personality and circumstances have impacted views about herself <i>not being good enough</i></p> <p>Pride in her</p> |

|   |   |                  |
|---|---|------------------|
| <p><i>to parents and to other professionals wherever I go, we're not this lowly crew, we are a group of people , very conscientious people , who I think study, and on the life long learning, not every single person, but I do think in general , early years are on this journey for ever and I don't know if there is another sector of employment where people work as hard, as they work , for the money they are on and the recognition that they get , so yeah...</i></p> | <p><i>parents and to other professionals wherever I go, we're not this lowly crew, we are a group of people , very conscientious people ,</i></p> | <p>workforce</p> |
|---|---|------------------|

## Appendix C

**Table 3 Debbie: transcript data from the practice section**

| <b>Stage 1 Excerpts from original transcribed interview</b>  | <b>Stage 2 Dominant domain themes using words from original interview data</b>   | <b>Stage 3 My summary of dominant domains. Words from original narrative remain in italics.</b> |
|--|--|---|
| <i>um I wanted the preschool to work from a parents point of view because I was a working parent myself and had seen life as a childminder but on the other side of the fence needing child care as well, so I set the hours and the preschool sessions around that concept that if I was a working parent what would I want. So really this setting piloted wrap around care in the area ,so the preschool has always offered all day care and sessional care, so we have like a little breakfast club, a morning session, a lunch club and then the afternoon session.</i> | <i>Parents viewpoint ( hours and opening)</i><br><br><i>really this setting piloted wrap around care in the area ,</i>   | Supporting parent s   |
| <i>the foundation stage was just being introduced in 99 / 2000 when we opened so we went and did our training together then and as education and practice has changed over the years we have developed and changed together, because professional development here is a very important part to us , so we will always continuously update training and we all have the same kind of ethos that kind of keeps you fresh and interested in your job</i>  | <i>professional development here is a very important part to us</i><br><i>we all have the same kind of ethos that kind of keeps you fresh and interested in your</i> | Shared ethos keeps staff involved   |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>whoever goes on training whether it's me or them well have a staff meeting and we'll have a theme or topic for our staff meeting, so say of the top of my head we were discussing schemas I'd come back and say right girls next staff meeting we are going to be discussing and that would be implemented. Sustained shared thinking was something I did at the uni and it's one of our main principles here now, that's how we work. The adult child interaction is hugely important to us and whatever we do around the classroom that is central, where is that child is there an adult? and if there is not an adult there that's an opportunity missed and that's how we regard our work</p> | <p><i>job</i></p> <p>we'll have a theme or topic for our staff meeting,</p> <p>Sustained shared thinking was something I did at the uni and it's one of our main principles here now, that's how we work</p> <p>adult child interaction is hugely important to us</p> | <p>Sustained shared thinking one of our main principles here now</p> <p>adult child interaction is hugely important to us</p> |
| <p>we are sort of very open minded and free play the children can get out and play with what they like we also have structure , so that when the child goes on into the reception unit. It's not a huge culture shock.</p>  | <p>free play the children can get out and play with what they like we also have structure ,</p>   | <p>Free play and structure</p>  |
| <p>so parent partnership is very important to us here as well quite a big parental involvement</p>  | <p>parent partnership is very important</p>   | <p>parent partnership is very important</p>   |
| <p>We have a parent committee which is very important to us and um parents come in ... we try to encourage parents to be involved as much as possible really , the emphasis is on our, I did my dissertation on is changes to boys learning , that was</p>  | <p>we try to encourage parents to be involved as much as possible</p>   | <p>Parent involvement changes to boys</p>   |

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|---|--|---|
| <p><i>quite a big part of it being a military area as well because that project kind of started with the introduction of the superhero play and I remember we were having a group discussion in class at uni about guns and should we have them and it kinda triggered in my head that we are in the centre of a military area and if we told our children that they couldn't play with guns or superhero play what we really telling them was that what their parents did as a job was wrong, and that did have a huge impact on me actually I remember being quite shocked that I hadn't thought of it before and come back to work and said to the girls , you've got to listen to this this is what we spoke about today and we were all ...we never thought about it like before and that it completely changed the way we thought. Completely changed the way we thought, the way we thought we should direct our teaching and that really triggered me thinking about our boys mainly and how we were teaching them and that triggered off yes I am going to do my BA honours and this is what my topic is going to be and yeah it had a huge impact on us and that involved the adult child interaction, that involved sustained shared thinking the whole thing kind of meet together and I introduced it to the early years department it had quite an impact on them as well because I started having other settings come and visit to see what changes we were making to the classroom...We restructured the environment so many theories came into it as well because it started making me look at Elizabeth Jarman, enabling the environment , we kind of sat and looked and did a lot of observations on ourselves really on how we were actually teaching and if the boys were playing on the floor with cars or trains or whatever they were doing , why did we feel the need to interrupt that child and take them to an adult led table top activity when they were quite happy in what they were doing, why could we not go to them</i></p> | <p><i>really ,</i></p> <p><i>changes to boys learning ,</i></p> <p><i>Completely changed the way we thought, the way we thought we should direct our teaching and that really triggered me thinking about our boys mainly</i></p> <p><i>that involved the adult child interaction, that involved sustained shared thinking the whole thing</i></p> <p><i>so many theories came into it as well</i></p> | <p><i>learning ,</i></p> <p><i>the adult child interaction, that involved sustained shared thinking the whole thing</i></p> <p><i>so many theories came into it as well</i></p> |
| <p><i>Even little things like what we should put out in the playground and try to sort of to steer away from constantly getting bikes and cars out, yeah the kids love bikes and</i></p>  | <p><i>yeah the kids love</i></p>   | <p><i>Interaction important</i></p>   |

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| <p><i>cars but they are solitary play, if they are whizzing around on a bike and car they are not interacting with anybody especially adults , so what can we do to slightly tweak that and change that and maybe we sort of said maybe one day a week getting the bikes and cars out would be a treat day or end of the week thing, but if we get the bikes and cars out what can we do to the bikes and cars to make it so that it is not solitary , so one of the ideas we had and did was putting numbers on the cars on the front. So say for instance there was 0 to 10 on the cars the adult would have another 0 to 10 and the adult would hold up and say would bike number blah blah come in please so we were sort of introducing recognising numerals and another thing we did when it was warmer and obviously we had to plan and say to parents can you send children wet weather clothes, you know the all in one overalls and Wellies because we set it up a car wash, so we hung loads of hoses up so the children were going through the car wash on bikes and cars and there were some with brushes and you know they got absolutely soaked but loved every minute of it and it wasn't just whizzing around the playground on bikes, it was involving some from of interaction and learning, so yes it's just keeping things fresh and alive I think , new ideas</i></p> | <p><i>bikes and cars but they are solitary play, if they are whizzing around on a bike and car they are not interacting with anybody especially adults ,</i></p> <p><i>it wasn't just whizzing around the playground on bikes, it was involving some form of interaction and learning,</i></p> |                     |
| <p><i>my focus and the staff is that we will deliver the best we will be the best and I'm quite proud to say that our last two Ofsted results were outstanding and I'm I'll hold my hand up ... I know for a fact is down to me doing the EYP and BA, it has raised our standards and I'm highly passionate and I believe that everyone should keep their standards very high ,</i></p>   | <p><i>we will deliver the best , we will be the best</i></p>   | <p>High quality</p> |
| <p><i>If my staff weren't friendly and courteous I'd be horrified , to think that a parent knocked on a door and wasn't greeted with a smile, we have an open door policy here, I don't expect parents to have to phone up and make an appointment I like to think that they can knock on the door and visit you know ,that's how it should be and</i></p>  | <p><i>If my staff weren't friendly and courteous I'd be horrified</i></p>  | <p>Friendliness</p> |

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| <p><i>that's the same with the ...council I would like them to think that we're a friendly setting and they can pop in and visit.</i></p>  | <p><i>I would like them to think that we're a friendly setting and they can pop in and visit.</i></p>   |  |
| <p><i>we do constantly try and simplify things here, sort of like having meetings and thinking how can we make this easier, we work quite visually here so um when you remember with the foundation stage you had your yellow blue and green , when we're making observation notes working alongside which might just be a pad like that, we'd make our notes and colour code it at the top , yellow , blue or green, so we'd sort of know instantly through looking at their folders what stage they were at , we've continued with that so when the EYFS came out all we were really doing was basically changing the wording of our work but sort of keeping those colour codes in order of the age, Obviously we've got 0 to 5 trackers and their learning journeys but we just constantly work together to try and keep all this assessing and observing, not to a minimal that's the wrong, because that's highly important otherwise you miss things, you are always observing and assessing, but really just trying to keep the paperwork as minimal as we can. Which really is difficult but we do try.</i></p> | <p><i>we do constantly try and simplify things here</i></p> <p><i>we just constantly work together to try and keep all this assessing and observing, not to a minimal that's the wrong, because that's highly important otherwise you miss things, you are always observing and assessing, but really just trying to keep the paperwork as minimal as we can.</i></p> | <p>Simplify paperwork</p>                  |
| <p><i>If we can understand it and we know what we are doing and the parents understand it and the school quite clearly understand it then there is not a problem...</i></p>  | <p><i>but our priority is the children</i></p>  | <p><i>our priority is the children</i></p> |

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>No so it's kinda like flavour of the month is fine, but you do think about it...<br/>We have a lot of children come through here , at the moment our roll is 84 so if we were a smaller setting we would have the time but our priority is the children</p>   |   |   |
| <p>because I involved my parents, I kept my parents informed every step of the way of what I was doing what was happening to the setting and what we were doing in the setting</p>   | <p>involved my parents,</p>   | <p>involved my parents,</p>                                     |
| <p>No I'd like to do more, I'd like to , because obviously I've got a whole heap of new parents who don't know about boys learning, the attachment theory, and sustained shared thinking, so no it's continuous ,</p>  | <p>so no it's continuous ,</p>  | <p>Continuous development</p>                                   |
| <p>my main points were that I wanted to express how important I think the changes have been although I know that they have been hard for a lot of people, I do think that the improvements and raising standards were needed but like I said on the other hand I have been kind of left wondering what has happened now all the fundings been withdrawn because I know for a fact this year.</p>   | <p>I do think that the improvements and raising standards were needed</p>                                       | <p>Importance of standards</p>                                  |
| <p>The teaching , cos we are teachers and I will use that word because we are teachers of early years , the teachers to have more knowledge and more qualifications I think that is good and I don't have a problem with that and those that have had a problem with it have left Childcare I think</p>  | <p>we are teachers and I will use that word because we are teachers of early years</p>                          | <p>Teachers of early years</p>                                  |
| <p>The care side is very important cos some of these children we might be the only care they receive, so the nurturing, the caring, the loving, the giving is as much part of teaching as everything that goes with it. We are looking after the most precious thing in someone's life and if you are a mother yourself you want to give the child you are caring for the love your child's getting. When we are talking about children here I</p> | <p>so the nurturing, the caring, the loving, the giving is as much part of teaching as everything that goes</p> | <p>we treat them as we want our own children to be treated.</p> |

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| <p><i>always say to the staff, let us not forget that this is someone's child and the most precious thing in their life, we treat them as we want our own children to be treated.</i></p>  | <p><i>with it.<br/>we treat them as we want our own children to be treated.</i></p>  |  |
| <p><i>New EYFS got to make a lot of changes to the paperwork, I have made the changes to the curriculum and our observation. I swapped everything from 2008 to 2012 and staff are in the know , I've already trained them , so I'm ahead of the game, as I was the last time thanks to you lot and the EYP. Child protection is obviously new standards is the major change , but we update our training anyway, but it frustrates me Joy because these changes do have to be made to avoid these awful things from happening, but what's the point in telling us to do all of this if the people supposedly who specialise in it don't want to listen , I spent all day yesterday trying to report some serious allegations that they refused to take notice of, and I had to go over their heads and get the police involved, cos I couldn't get social services to listen to me,</i></p>  | <p><i>Child protection...but what's the point in telling us to do all of this if the people supposedly who specialise in it don't want to listen ,</i></p>   | <p>Still not listened too</p>  |
| <p><i>I think where each individual child is an individual as we know as adults we all learn in different ways , so we try here to complement all areas , so although we have free flow so the children can access the equipment and basically do their own choices indoors and outdoors, we also try to have structure as well, I very much believe that children have to have structure to feel secure, we know babies like to have routine We have a curriculum , so obviously we have topics an daily activities and set activities , but they don't have to take part if they don't want to they can do their own thing, but I like to have a choice,<br/>We have a daily routine, self-register, sit down , register, circle time, chat about the week , session, share experiences, play, can help themselves sir we will have daily activities set out and they can choose to go to work alongside an adult or they can do their own thing, we have tidy up and snack time together, as I believe we need to</i></p> | <p><i>each individual child is an individual as we know as adults we all learn in different ways , so we try here to complement all areas</i></p> <p><i>I very much believe that children have to have structure to feel secure,</i></p> | <p>Individual children</p> <p>Structure for security /platform for learning</p> <p>Daily routine</p> |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <p><i>have together time, as a lot of children don't have that at home any more , you know I think where we used to sit down and have a meal together, that's what I like to do here...at the end of the day we sit down together and talk about what we've done, otherwise when they go over to school , that's a damn shock to go into school and have to</i></p> | <p><i>We have a daily routine, I believe we need to have together time, as a lot of children don't have that at home any more , you know I think where we used to sit down and have a meal together, that's what I like to do here.</i></p> |  |
|---|---|--|

## Appendix D

Fig 1: My (re)presentation of key words from Rachel's original interview data into aspects of head, heart and hands

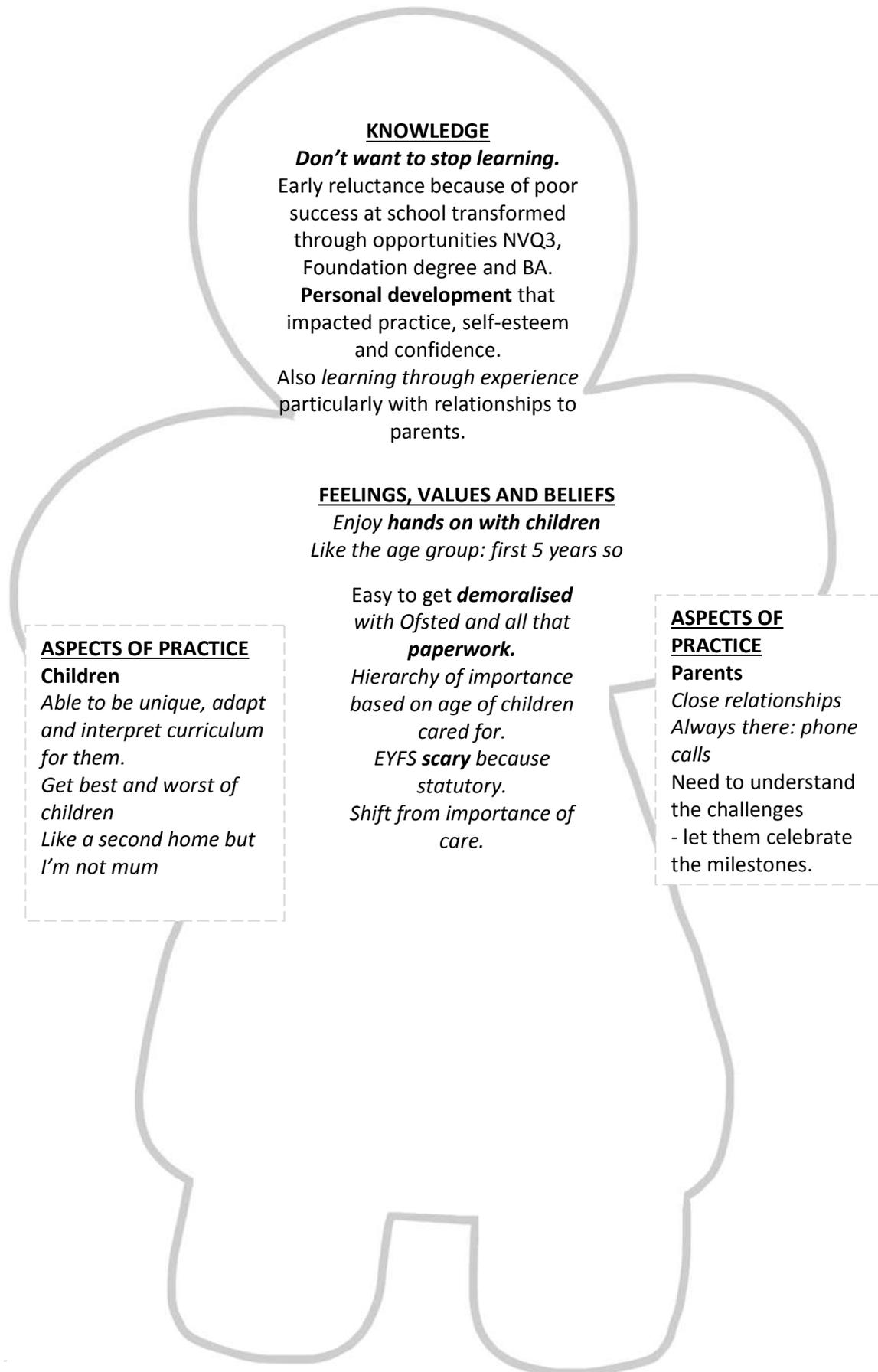


Fig 2: My (re)presentation of key words from Helen’s original interview data into aspects of head, heart and hands.

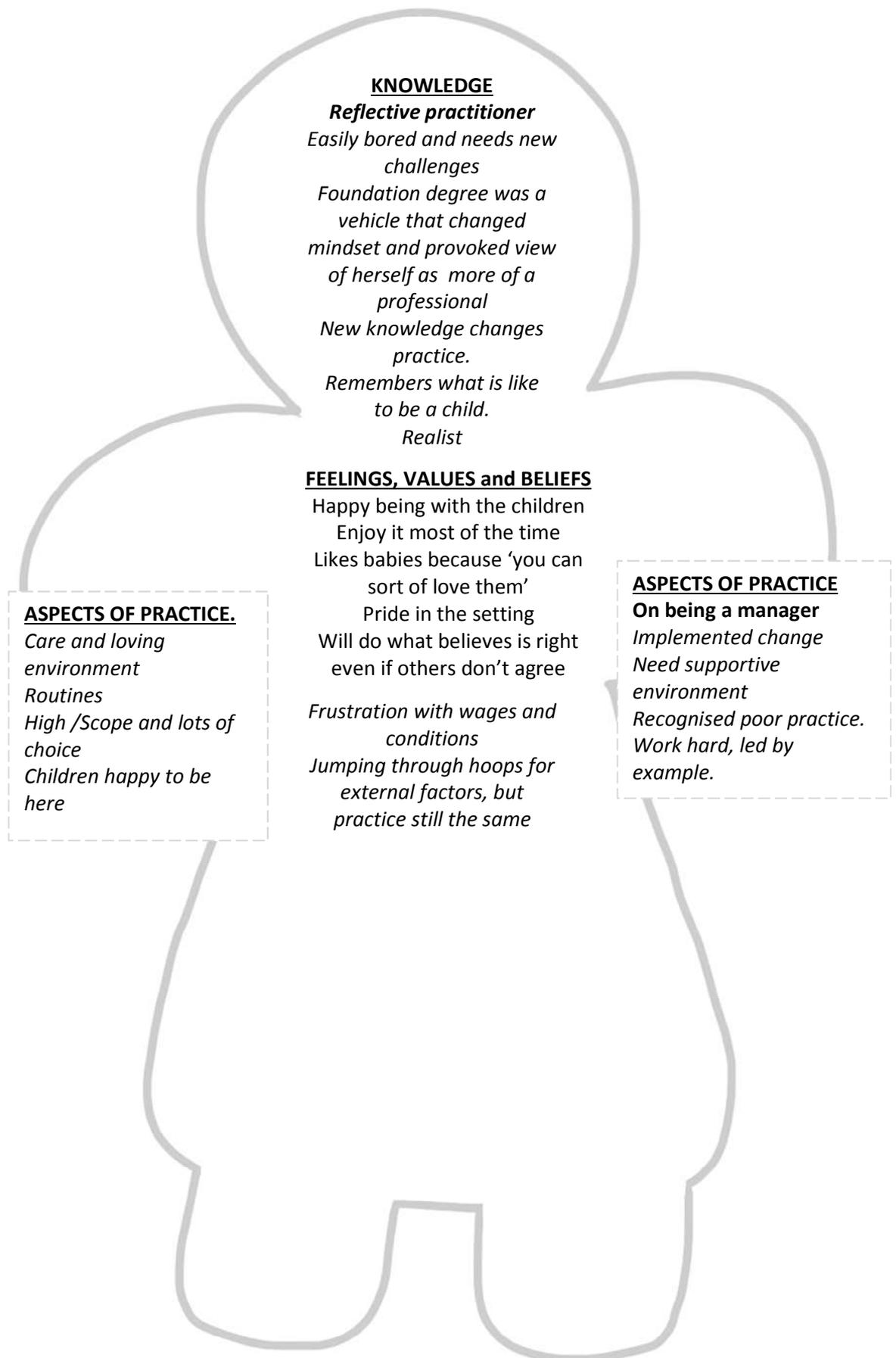


Fig 3: My (re)presentation of the key words from the analysis of the Debbie's original transcript in the key aspects of head, heart and hands.

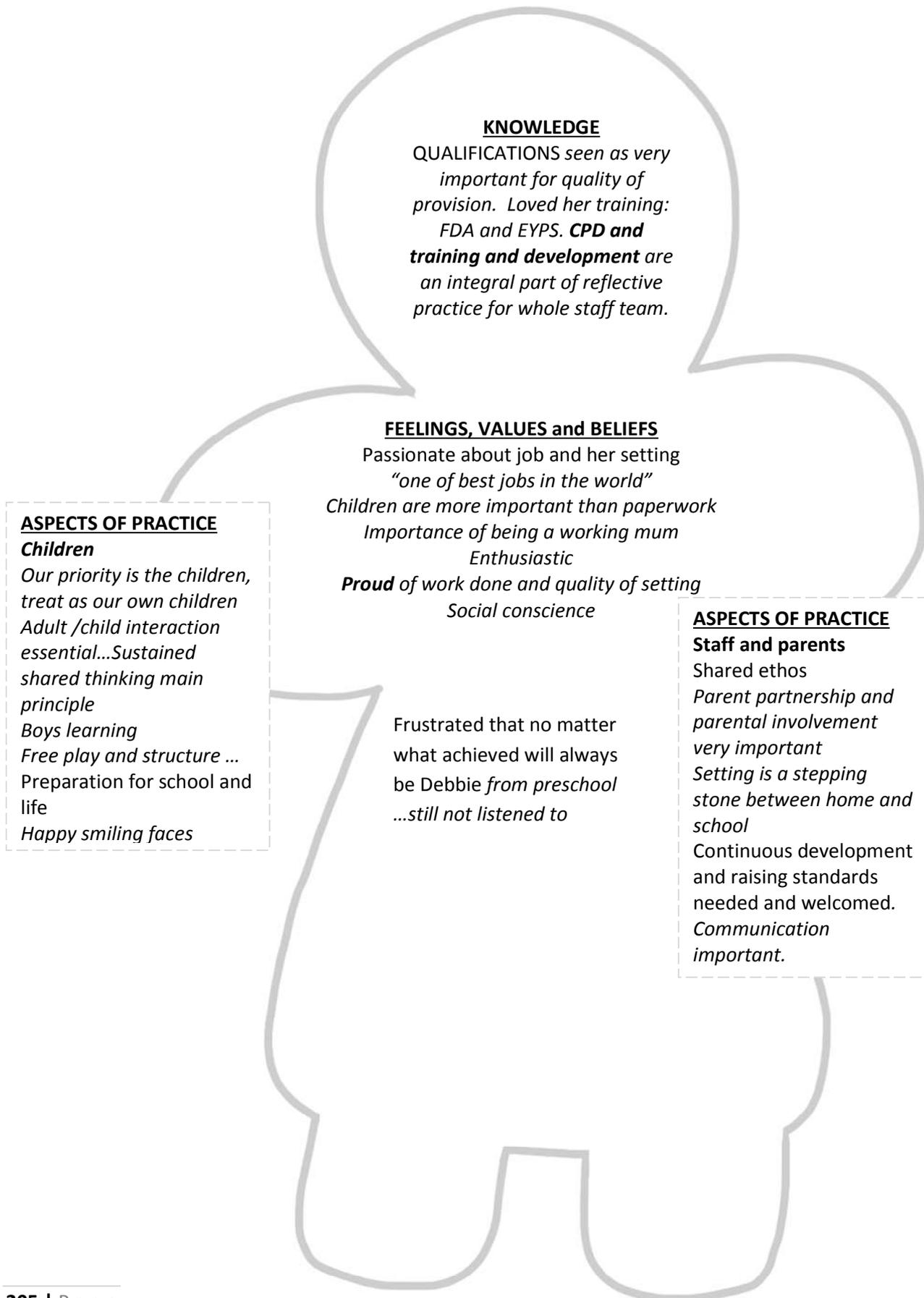
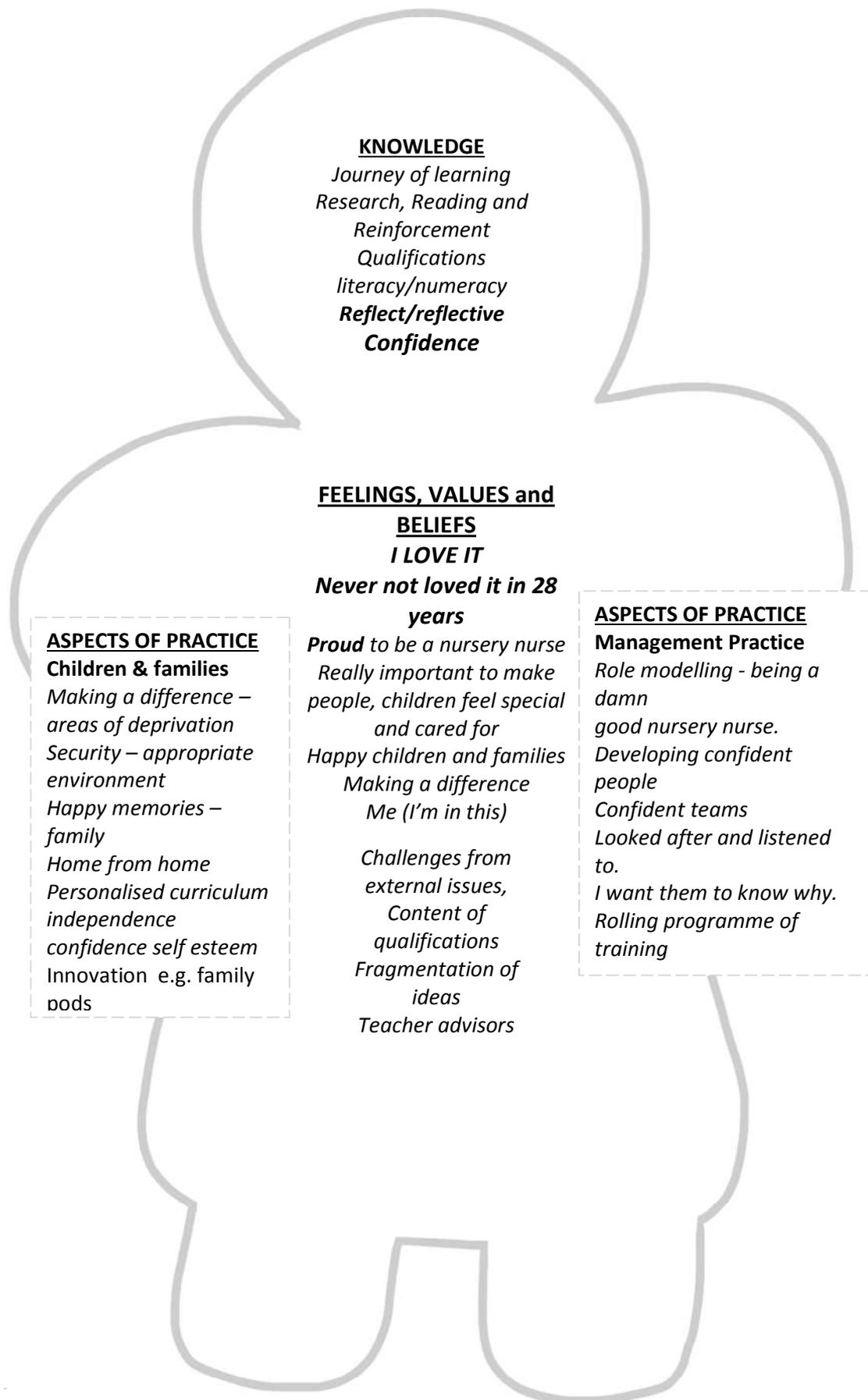


Fig 4. My( re)presentation of the key words from the analysis of Julie's original interview data in the aspects of head, heart and hands.



## Appendix E

### A timeline of key policy events in ECEC from 1997 to 2012

|   |
|---|
| 1998: DfES. National Childcare Strategy. Green Paper <i>Meeting the Childcare Challenge</i>   |
| 1999/2000: National Occupational Standards at level 4 developed. Levels 2, 3 and 4 accredited by QCA  |
| 2000: QCA/DfE. <i>Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage</i> (Early Learning Goals replace Desirable Learning Outcomes.)  |
| 2000: Care Standards Act: Update provision for registration, regulation and training of those providing child minding or day care   |
| 2001: DfES: <i>Statement of Requirement for Early Years Sector Endorsed Foundation Degrees</i>  |
| 2002: DfES: <i>Birth to Three Matters. A framework to support children in their earliest years.</i>   |
| 2002: Education Act: nursery provision inspected by Ofsted . Existing Foundation Stage (age 3 until end of reception to become new stage of national curriculum but not a key stage). |
| 2004: HMT: <i>Choice for parents, the best start for children: a ten year strategy for childcare</i>  |
| 2005: CWDC. Non statutory Guidance. Common Core of Skills and knowledge for the Children's workforce  |
| 2006: Childcare Act: provides for establishment of single high quality care development and learning framework for children from birth to five.                                       |
| 2006: QCA develop National Qualifications framework   |
| 2006: CWDC: <i>National Standards for Early Years Professional</i>  |
| 2006: Free nursery entitlement (12.5 hours a week) extended from 33 to 38 weeks a year  |
| 2007: DfES <i>Early Years Foundation Stage pack</i>   |
| 2007: Transformation Fund to be replaced by Graduate leader fund  |
| 2008: DCFS: <i>Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework and Practice Guidance</i> reprint with amendments   |
| 2008: CWDC Pilots of new routes to EYPS announced   |
| 2008: CWDC Standards for the award of EYPS updated guidance   |
| 2008: Ofsted : Early years self-evaluation form guidance  |

2008: Free nursery education for 2 year olds: pilot extended

2009: DCSF *Next steps for early learning and childcare* . Building on the 10 year strategy. Proposes that all early years staff have level 3 and settings have early year graduate from 2015

April: 2009 2500+ graduate level EYPs and further 2,400 in training.

Sept: 2010 extension of free early education entitlement for three and four year olds

2011: Education Act: made statutory entitlement to 20 per cent of two year olds from 2013

2011: Tickell. *The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning. An Independent Report on the Early Years Foundation Stage to Her Majesty's Government*

2012: DfE: *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundations Stage: setting the standards for learning, Development and Care for children from Birth to Five* (revised version)

2012: Nutbrown *FOUNDATIONS FOR QUALITY The independent review of early education and childcare qualifications*

Adopted and adapted from Baldock, Fitzgerald and Kay (2013 p.29-31)

## Appendix F

Table 4: example showing data from the theme of curriculum.

Reading form left to right. The first column indicates who was speaking; the second column is taken directly from the transcripts of the original interviews. The third column reflects any additional themes I felt might be emerging and the final column is my thoughts and notes about what I was identifying.

| <b>Who</b> | <b>What was said</b>  | <b>Sub Theme(s) emerging</b> | <b>My thoughts /questions</b>                                       |
|------------|---|------------------------------|---|
| Zoe        | <i>Like changes to the curriculum documents, because I'm not sure we have changed (ah) do you see?</i>  | Documents changed            | Documents changed – not practice?                                   |
| Julie      | <i>I think the EYFS is the best thing that's happened in years...I'm hoping the new one will go even further back to PIES which is what I did when I trained in college...<br/>I think there has been a big hoo-hah about the EYFS. and I think some of the outcomes and goals are too specific , but I think for us it was a turning point, in that it kind of fitted with what we already did...so we changed a few bits of our paperwork and our process for recording children's development, now I'm really happy with it.</i> | EYFS<br>Paperwork changed    | EYFS received positively because it aligns with views of childcare? |

| Who    | What was said  | Sub Theme(s) emerging                                   | My thoughts /questions  |
|--------|--|---|---|
| Helen  | <i>It's been all my career, it's been oh look here we've got the early learning goals, you just get used to that, oh look , here's the birth to three and they are going to change it again now and so basically for me ...we'll still go with it and we will still do the same sort of things...we just carry on doing what we are doing... we just do the same things but we just call them different things, but I still believe what we do is we are offering children a broader range of experience as we can and I think if we are doing that you'll probably meet whatever.</i> | Changing labels   | Labels changing – practice the same?<br>Is this also what Zoe is saying above?<br><br>Does this reflect confidence in practice? |
| Zoe    | <i>I'm not sure it had an impact on me (CGFS) I was too busy trying to learn to be manager</i>   | CGFS  |   |
| Rachel | <i>The birth to three cards you had, you felt that was a friendly what do I do... CGFs was guidance the EYFS is statutory ...it frightened a lot of child-minders...fear about breaking the law.</i>   | Birth to three /friendly<br>EYFS statutory /frightening | Views of curriculum – is this linked to training of practitioners especially child-minders?                                     |
| Zoe    | <i>It's a document to be used isn't it by practitioners and we have always used the left hand side which is the development side ... some of the right did not make sense , doesn't even seem appropriate... So we ...interpret the left hand side development matter, stepping stones as it was, as we want to because it's all down to interpretation isn't it</i>   | Using the document (EYFS) interpreting in practice      | Making sense of the documents – interpretation a professional skill?  |

| <b>Who</b> | <b>What was said</b>   | <b>Sub Theme(s) emerging</b>  | <b>My thoughts /questions</b>  |
|------------|--|---|--|
| Julie      | <i>I think the EYFS might be the most significant change, or does it just feel like that to me...in our nursery the consideration is the stepping stones and it felt more individual and more realistic than anything that was there before, it was looking at a child holistically rather than these tick box statements</i>                      | EYFS<br>Assessment<br>Holistic /individual approach to the curriculum | Is this about assessment? or about interpretation as above ?   |
| Helen      | <i>I wanted to make the changes anyway but it was a good tool for me to be able to do it...we had a big meeting and we had different areas and people in groups looked at it themselves, which do we meet, what don't we meet? If we don't how can we meet it?</i>   | EYFS<br>Collaborative working   | Similar example of collaborative working to that mentioned by Zoe in interpreting and making meaning of the document requirements? |
| Debbie     | <i>Huge improvement with the EYFS... I prefer the um even though the foundation stage is learning through play, the EYFS implements that more and I also like the fact that with the EYFS its ) upwards whereas the foundation stage(CGFS) was three upwards, so then you had to implement birth to three where this is just the whole package</i> | EYFS learning through play..0-5 whole package ...                     | Positive responses to introduction of EYFS 0-5 positive  |
| Debbie     | <i>We do try and simplify things... We work together to try and keep all this assessing and observing (paperwork) to a minimum</i>   | Paperwork /assessment   | Overcoming challenges of assessment requirements   |

| <b>Who</b> | <b>What was said</b>  | <b>Sub Theme(s) emerging</b>   | <b>My thoughts /questions</b>  |
|------------|---|--|--|
| Helen      | <i>That's the thing with the EYFS a lot of the statement's for the younger children ask you to know what they are thinking and I can't know what they are thinking...I ask parents what do you think? Is your child different outside from what they are in here ?</i>  | Assessment for babies<br>Working with parents  | Overcoming challenges of assessment requirements   |
| Debbie     | <i>From 2000 to now it's been pass the buck , pass the buck , definitely .. Part of the standards change is that we have to do a 2 year old progress check before they turn three, well we will do that anyway, but is that sort of a health visitor thing?</i>   | Assessment /2 year old check   | Does this reflect higher expectations from the workforce<br>Policy cuts? Early intervention?                               |
| Debbie     | <i>When the EYFS came out ...there was money for training and things, if you wanted the new standards you could have ten packs per setting, you just phoned up and had it sent...yes we still have the government making all these decisions but the only way you can get the review is by downloading it yourself, so god help the setting who has no download facility....we've got to know all these changes, but there are so many cuts we have to do it ourselves.</i> | Financial cuts impact delivery of revised EYFS   | Change in expectations – does this reflect professionalism in workforce or just cuts?<br>EYP confident to adapt and change |
| Rachel     | <i>When all the changes came about last time with the EYFS coming in some of the child-minders weren't even aware of it... but I was because of doing the Foundation Degree , because we were there on the website looking at it weren't we?...it was very scary because we had a curriculum like they did in schools...</i>  | Childminders not as well informed<br>Scary curriculum<br>Link to FDA as reassuring preparation | Role of training in keeping practitioner abreast of changes?   |

| <b>Who</b> | <b>What was said</b>   | <b>Sub Theme(s) emerging</b>                         | <b>My thoughts /questions</b>   |
|------------|--|--|---|
| Debbie     | <i>New EYFS got to make lots of changes to the paperwork, I have made the changes to the curriculum and our observation. I swapped everything from 2008 to 2012 and the staff are in the know, I've already trained them, so I'm ahead of the game, as I was last time thanks to you lot and the EYPS</i>  | Revised EYFS/<br>Early response<br>Link to EYPS      | Confident preparation for revised EYFS – linked to EYPS (and having done it before? ) |
| Zoe        | <i>I've a member of staff who is starting to panic about the revised EYFS ...All the trainings been cancelled by the local authority...I said to this member of staff , if our policy is all geared to the welfare requirements and we will have reviewed our policy, we will only have to look at the new welfare requirements to see if any more needs to be slotted in and if the standards are changed we can change our learning journeys according to developmental matters. As far as I can see it's not a big problem because we have finally got ourselves organised with that bit...but I hope I get a paper version I don't want to scroll online it'll give me a headache.</i> | Revised EYFS<br>Preparation and confidence in change | Confidence in managing change exhibited   |
| Julie      | <i>We are going to tweak the paperwork a little bit, feels like it is just fine tuning or enhancing what was already there...we have really played it down in the nurseries</i>  | Revised EYFS<br>Preparation                          | Confidence in managing change exhibited   |

