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Early years teacher status trainees' placement experiences: a creative interpretative phenomenological analysis

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EARLY YEARS TEACHER STATUS TRAINEES'
PLACEMENT EXPERIENCES

A CREATIVE INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL
ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Trainees on the Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) Graduate Employed Pathway are graduate practitioners working in the school or Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sectors of early years services. On this one-year pathway, trainees undertake a placement in the alternate and unfamiliar sector to complement their workplace practice.

There is little published research on teachers' lived experience of placement in early years services with children aged between 0-5 years. This longitudinal study sought to address gaps in the research literature by focussing on the placement experience for EYTS trainees using a novel approach of combining Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) with creative methods and semi-structured interviews. Five trainees represented their lived experience through multi-dimensional models using Lego and playdough.

I discuss my findings in relation to two worlds, a world of learning and development that promotes a predominantly relationship-based pedagogy, partially overlapping with a world of schooling that promotes a predominantly readiness-based pedagogy. The trainees' perceptions of commonalities and differences pertaining to enactments of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfE 2014) suggest that these two distinct worlds exist, despite a single statutory framework, indicating that the historical split in early years services in England continues today. The findings suggest a dichotomy of professional identity for EYTS trainees that rests on the different teaching cultures of each world. This dichotomy troubles the current policy concept of a single graduate practitioner successfully teaching across the different worlds.

The study has implications for professional practice in the field of early years, specifically for the preparation and support of EYTS trainees undertaking placements. Wider implications include the need for greater clarity and guidance in early years policy.

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GLOSSARY

CoEL	Characteristics of Effective Learning
CSE	Compulsory School Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECERS-E	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale: Extension
ECERS-R	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale: Revised
ECM	Every Child Matters
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYP	Early Years Professional
EYPS	Early Years Professional Status
EYT	Early Years Teacher
EYTS	Early Years Teacher Status
FEL	Free Early learning
F1	Foundation 1. Children aged 3-4 years
F2	Foundation 2. Children aged 4 -5 years
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Approach
ITERS	Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
KS1	Key Stage 1. Children aged 6 - 8 years
KS2	Key Stage 2. Children aged 9 - 11 years.
LA	Local Authority
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This research study arises out of my own professional experience and background in early years services. The thesis focuses on the placement experiences of 5 Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) trainees in the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) and school sectors in England, using a creative phenomenological approach. Key meanings from those placement experiences were made from perceived commonalities and differences in policy and practice and the influence on their professional identities. I chart how two systems that have previously been identified in academic literature as ‘education’ and ‘care’ continue to exist today. Based on these two systems and the trainees’ key meanings I posit there are two worlds of early years services, both operating in a single statutory framework.

This chapter introduces the graduate status of EYTS and explains how placements form an integral part of training. A brief context of early years services in England provides an indication of the historical divide between ‘education’ and ‘care’ that has led to a split workforce. I then introduce myself through explaining my background and positionality, before I outline the selection of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a qualitative inquiry method for this study and introduce the participants. Key concepts central to my research follow and the chapter concludes with an overview of the thesis.

EYTS in Early Years Services

EYTS developed from Early Years Professional Status (EYPS), originally introduced to the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) workforce by New Labour in 2006. The Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition government made significant changes to the award in 2013, creating the EYTS title and closer alignment to existing teachers’ standards with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

In current policy, EYTS trainees are required to teach children between the ages of 0-5 years and expected to support the learning and care needs of very distinct and varied

stages of development. Trainees must have a good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfE 2014), the revised statutory framework intended to integrate the historical division between education and care when first introduced (DfES 2008). Trainees are also required to gain knowledge of expectations, curricula and teaching in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 for children up to 11 years old.

There are four training routes that lead to the award of EYTS. In this study, trainees were recruited from the 'Graduate Employment' pathway. These trainees enrolled in September 2014 and entered as skilled and experienced practitioners, although their experience was restricted solely to either the PVI sector with children 0-4 years, or the school sector with children 3-5 years. To enable trainees to gain experience of the full 0-5 age range they undertake separate placements to complement their existing workplace practice. For many, the additional placement is 'unfamiliar' in many ways, for example in terms of geographical location, socio-economic status of children and families, organisational culture and pedagogical approach.

Traditionally, most English services have been divided into 'education-focused' settings or 'care-focused' settings (Bertram and Pascal 2000b, p7). The division of services is found in many countries internationally. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2001) offers an explanation of these concepts in that 'care' or 'childcare' often represents looking after children whose parents are at work, whilst 'education' represents the enhancement of child development and prepares children for school (school readiness). This explanation could be contested as undervaluing care services that seek to offer both care and support children's learning and development. Nonetheless, the broad concepts of 'education' and 'care' have underpinned the development of England's ECEC services, which can be broadly categorised into two related sectors: those 'maintained' financially by LAs, typically schools and nursery schools offering 'education'; and those which receive funding from other sources, usually referred to as the 'non-maintained' or PVI sector offering care, typically child-minders, day nurseries, pre-schools, and other 'age-integrated' centres for children under and over 3 years (Moss 2006, Basford and Hodson 2011). Given the current trend of maintained

schools, academies and free schools moving out of 'maintained' status, I use the term 'school' sector in the thesis rather than 'maintained'.

The Early Years Workforce

The historical divide between ECEC services has led to a tension in the workforce, between 'education' services delivered in the school sector by teachers, and 'care' services delivered in the PVI sector by lesser qualified and unqualified practitioners. Issues of disparity continue over differences in pay, terms and conditions and professional identity (Moss 2006, McGillivray 2008). Teachers with QTS receive better pay and opportunities for promotion than their counterparts outside schools. Additionally teachers are perceived to have easier workloads, due to their shorter working days and longer holidays. Furthermore, teachers with QTS have comparatively greater access to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities, increasing their potential to develop knowledge and skills which improves their professional identity, compared to limited training opportunities and career paths for practitioners in the PVI sector (Moor et al 2005). As EYTS and QTS are both set at graduate level, the contentious debate continues as the two roles become increasingly aligned, yet significant differences in pay, conditions and professional identity remain (Osgood 2012).

School and PVI sectors each have their own distinctive culture, for example staffing hierarchies and operating systems. Differences between the sectors may be based on, for example, socio-economic factors, leadership styles and external pressures, leading to potentially idiosyncratic and unfamiliar contexts that may provide significant challenges to trainees from an alternate sector. The challenge of negotiating and combining ingredients from different contexts can result in hybrid situations where the development of intersecting identities and practices can take place (Engestrom, Engestrom and Karkkainen 1995).

EYTS Placements

Traditionally, trainee teachers undertook placements in schools and settings as 'teaching practice', as a way to practise their teaching skills. Presently, a greater emphasis is placed on placements as sites for 'experiential learning', a term widely considered to mean the underpinning process to all forms of learning (Beard and Wilson 2006). Placements for EYTS trainees aim to:

extend the knowledge, skills and understanding of the trainees and provide opportunities for them to demonstrate, through their teaching, how they meet the Teachers' Standards (Early Years). (NCTL 2015)

The training requirements for EYTS specifies that trainees must have taught in at least two early years settings and taught for two weeks in Key Stage 1 prior to gaining the award (NCTL 2015). Davis (2011) asserts that providing an opportunity to experience a professional work situation can be complemented with openings to engage in reflective practice and to enrich academic study through the linking of theory and practice. Placement is a 'rich experiential learning resource' (Murray 2006, p67) as student practitioners are initiated into working practices, involved with children and have professional relationships with staff members. Of significance in the professional relationships is the 'guided participation' that Rogoff (1989, p91) explains as 'joint involvement with more experienced people in culturally important activities'. Experienced practitioners are commonly assigned to student practitioners as 'mentors' to provide sensitive support and guidance in the joint construction of knowledge (Wood 1986). Mathers et al (2014) advocate this pre-service model of support for trainees to apply theory in practice, proposing practical support from an experienced mentor continues in-service.

Whilst successful mentoring and tutoring can provide support and positive encouragement to facilitate a trainee's developing knowledge and understanding of the relationship between theory and practice, negative experiences can also be developmental (Hirst and Hodson 2011). In reality, placements can be sites for encountering tension, difficulty and predicaments, with the potential for student

practitioners to implement pedagogical approaches that sit uncomfortably with their own values and principles (Basford and Hodson 2011). This is particularly salient to EYTS trainees who are likely to experience different pedagogies, from child-led to adult-directed learning approaches, in a climate of increasing focus on school readiness.

My Background

Prior to working as an early years lecturer, I gained 30 years of experience working with children aged 0-6 years, mainly as a nursery nurse in the school sector. As I started my own family, there were periods of time where I worked part-time and was able to take on short-term supply work and temporary support roles providing 1:1 support for children with special educational needs. I viewed such opportunities to experience different nurseries within the school sector as a privilege, in terms of broadening my professional practice, whilst being able to experience the practice of others and witness how other settings operated. Such opportunities provided me with relevant experience and an interest in how it feels as a practitioner in an unfamiliar setting.

Whilst still in my nursery nurse role, I became an assessor of students undertaking a NVQ in Early Years, enabling me to work with adults. In 2002 I moved into a new role to support a wide range of early years settings in the PVI sector as a quality improvement officer for a Local Authority (LA). As part of a team operating a quality assurance scheme, I held the position of 'expert' in terms of supporting settings to achieve a standardised concept of quality. I now reflect back on this role, in light of later learning and my current thinking about broader concepts of quality, to see a tension in relation to contrasting concepts of quality. I currently position towards a concept of quality that includes important and interested stakeholders as promoted by Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2013) and so distance myself from the process whereby small numbers of experts lead in terms of defining and evaluating quality. Instead I see quality as being a subjective and value-laden concept.

Through the LA role I experienced the diversity of early years services in my locality. Particularly as I experienced the less familiar PVI services, I began to reflect more deeply

on the differences between the two sectors. The disparity within the ECEC workforce became increasingly apparent to me. I recall the injustice I felt when working alongside more highly qualified colleagues, who received higher salaries despite our roles and responsibilities being virtually identical in practice.

I learned more about ECEC workforce issues as I returned to study at foundation degree level. Engaging in higher education motivated me to achieve the missing GCSE in mathematics that had limited my early career pathway. My late academic trajectory continued apace and I achieved the graduate EYPS in 2009. Having previously achieved a City and Guilds Assessor Certificate to assess NVQ childcare practitioners at level 3, it seemed a natural progression to move into assessing EYPS candidates. I worked as a peripatetic assessor for the following four years, maintaining a strong professional interest in EYPS. I hold a firm belief that all early years practitioners should have opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge, but particularly those practitioners without QTS, who should have access to a just and appropriate qualifications framework. I champion this belief through my current area of work on the EYTS programme. My role as a Course Leader and Senior Lecturer involves teaching and assessing trainees, with an additional role of placement co-ordinator. I bring my knowledge of local early years services to support my role in placing trainees in settings where they will be effectively supported and given prime opportunities for experiential learning. I also bring my experience of working in many different schools and settings, as I understand how it feels to experience unfamiliar early years services.

Early in my doctoral studies I also undertook training in the 'Thrive approach' (Thrive FTC 1994). 'Thrive' is a specific way of working with children to develop their social and emotional wellbeing, enabling them to engage with life and learning (Thrive 2015). Please see appendix 9 for further information on Thrive. I undertook the training course as a CPD opportunity to extend my expertise in working with young children. The Thrive principle that I found fascinating is that children's healthy development, emotional wellbeing and learning are crucially dependent on, and promoted through, positive relationships (Thrive FTC 2015). My positionality in relation to my research was influenced as I increasingly

viewed children's emotional development within a close adult relationship as paramount. Professional experience suggested that this context may be present more in PVI settings and with under 3s than in the school sector with 3-5s. I was alert to the potential for bias towards data related to practice in this area and aimed to keep an open mind when in the stages of analysing and presenting data.

Drawing on personal experiences of working in and with different schools and settings has been helpful in supporting EYTS trainees and early years settings to manage the placement process effectively. Whilst my professional experience and personal communication skills enabled me to establish a positive rapport with the participants in this study, I remained alert to my positionality when assuming the roles of a researcher and a lecturer, as both roles are separate, yet inextricably linked. It was necessary to move seamlessly between the two and manage any tension.

My research rationale into the lived experience of the unfamiliar placement for EYTS trainees has evolved over time in the context of my professional trajectory within early years services and in Higher Education.

Research Aim

Placements are an important, yet complex, aspect of EYTS training. My aim is to research how the EYTS trainees make sense of their placement experience in an 'unfamiliar' category of early years services to explore:

- commonalities and/or differences between the school and PVI sectors; and
- ways in which the placement experience influences the formation of trainees' professional identities.

The research questions are listed on page 60. An established way to explore any lived experience is through phenomenological research and my choice of approaches is explored in the next section.

Interpretative Phenomenological Approach and Creative Methods

IPA is most often used to research issues of health psychology, and has spread to clinical and counselling psychology and social and educational psychology (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). I was introduced to the approach by a doctoral Educational Psychology student, which led to an exploration of Smith, Flower's and Larkin's (2009) seminal text. This informed my methodological thinking as they clearly outline a rigorous approach to examine how people make sense of important life experiences. I felt it was suitable to apply the IPA process of detailed examination to the EYTS trainees' lived experience of the unfamiliar placement, to explore what it means to them and how they make sense of it and this selection is justified further in Chapter 3.

As previously mentioned, I attended Thrive training (Thrive FTC 1994) and found that I began to notice the principle of emotional wellbeing positively influencing my listening skills and interactions with the trainees in this study. A further influence was that Thrive advocates the use of creative arts as a means of expression and reflection, enhancing my own understanding of the therapeutic value of creative activities. I witnessed the powerful and effective communications made through creative image and metaphor, for example through sand-play, drawing, painting, clay and stories. I learnt more about creative activities from academic literature (Merleau-Ponty 1962, Gauntlett 2007, Buckingham 2009) and discuss these in more detail and explain the influences on my research methodology in Chapter 3.

The Participants

The individual trainees are introduced here in the spirit of visual representation and creative approaches. The following models were generated by the participants to represent themselves and their professional roles. It is perhaps unusual to include participant data in the first chapter of a doctoral thesis. However, it is in keeping with the both the nature of IPA and the creative methods used. In Chapter 4 I introduce the participants more fully.



Figure 1.1. Anna, an experienced PVI manager



Figure 1.2. Beth, a newly qualified practitioner in a PVI nursery



Figure 1.3. Cara, an experienced teaching assistant



Figure 1.4. Debs, an experienced PVI deputy manager



Figure 1.5. Fran, an experienced teaching assistant in school

Positionality

Within this IPA study I view myself as engaged in a double hermeneutic circle (Smith 2004) as I try to make sense of the trainees making sense of their placement experience. As such I am central to the research, yet with a dual role (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009). Like the participant, I draw on my everyday human resources to make sense of the world, but unlike the participant I do not have first-hand access to the lived experience of placement. I thereby apply my 'experientially-informed' lens to the participants' first order account to provide a second order interpretation of their placement experience (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p36). I recognise that my own interests and understandings of early years practice provide a fore-structure of knowledge, and outlined these earlier in explaining my background and relevant experience. Whilst my substantive experience as an early years practitioner is in the school sector, my recent knowledge of Thrive's approach to relationship-based pedagogy may mean that I have a tendency to identify with the PVI sector, as practice is more likely to align with the Thrive principles than in the school sector.

My Position in the Study

Managing my roles of researcher and lecturer centred on the consistency of respectful and positive interactions with trainees and the development of trusting, working relationships. Through genuine interactions, where trainees felt valued and heard, I aimed to observe in a naturalistic way to explore how trainees make sense of their lived experience.

A traditional phenomenological research approach calls for researchers to bracket their own assumptions and experiences in order to be able to view the phenomenon as it appears. IPA researchers are encouraged to re-evaluate the role of bracketing and acknowledge that in reality it can only be partially achieved (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009). I thereby draw on my own knowledge and understanding of the early years field and some imported theoretical perspectives in my interpretations, whilst staying close to the trainees' own accounts of their placement experience. I return to the issue of

bracketing in Chapter 3, and now introduce key concepts central to the research study, guided by the phenomenological approach.

Key Concepts in the Study

Identity is often a central concern in IPA studies as participants ‘link the substantive topic of concern to their identity’ (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009, p163). Whilst many IPA studies are related to major life transitions, my study is concerned with a professional transition from one sector of early years services to another, where the substantive topic of concern is the unfamiliar placement experience. This transition might be viewed as relatively minor, however, as will be seen in this thesis, it was of great significance for most of the participants.

The literature of the relational-self seems most applicable to this and other IPA studies. Mead (1934) offers a theory on identity in the notion of the relational-self. He promotes the concept of the self as symbiotic, coming into being through social interaction with others. Smith (1999, p295) builds on Mead’s theory to suggest that ‘interpersonal contact can lead to a changing conception of self as related to others’. I return to this concept in the next chapter when discussing *constructs of professional identity* and the sub-topics of *ethics of care* and *professional love*, as notions central to the phenomenological study. The issue of professionalism for EYTs is complex and rooted in the historical development of ECEC services. I align myself with Manning-Morton’s (2006, p42) view that:

professionalism in the early years must be understood in terms of the day-to-day detail of practitioners’ relationships with children, parents and colleagues; relationships that demand high levels of physical, emotional and personal knowledge and skill.

The relational demands on practitioners are often discussed in terms of ‘care’. I seek to distinguish between care as deontological, which is based on adherence to rules or duties, from care as an ethic-of-care, which is based on ‘*I want*’ to care (Noddings 1984, Kay 2016). I draw on Page’s (2008) notion of professional love that arose from her study to examine how practitioners can safely express the caring and affectionate behaviours that young children need. Professional love denotes an intellectual approach towards

sustaining deep and respectful relationships with children and reflects a social pedagogical approach. Social pedagogy is based on preparing children for life, prioritising children's early emotional and cognitive development to equip them with executive functioning and self-regulation abilities (Whitebread and Bingham 2012). This approach argues against an alternate pedagogy that seeks to prepare children for compulsory school education and work life. I return to these concepts in more detail throughout the thesis, and now provide a chapter overview.

Overview of the thesis

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides a brief review of the historical development of early years services to show how the PVI and school sectors evolved over time as separate systems. The chapter includes 'grey literature', which can be produced by government, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers (NYAM 2016). I use grey literature to show how successive government policy has aimed to unify the historically split sectors of 'education' and 'care'. Additionally I show the role of policy in the creation of a new graduate status in the ECEC workforce.

I continue Chapter 2 with a critical review of the literature and research pertinent to *school readiness, quality and constructs of professional identity*, as issues most pertinent to EYTS and the phenomenological nature of the study. With schools now accepting 2 year olds there are new issues in the *school readiness* debate over appropriate curriculum delivery and pedagogy. In terms of *quality*, I focus on studies showing EYPs' positive contributions and examine differences between PVI and school sectors. The *constructs of professional identity* section considers how concepts of care and ethics of care contribute to the debate on professionalism. I use ethics of care to mean that this is a form of professional identity that informs professional practice. That is not to say people in the early years field do not care, but that care means something different in practice. Page (2011) asserts the notion of professional loving practice as appropriate for babies and young children.

In Chapter 3, I report on the development of my methodological thinking, providing a rationale for choosing IPA alongside a discussion of key principles of the approach. I identify my research aim and questions designed to explore the lived experience of EYTS trainees as they experience an unfamiliar sector of early years services. I outline the design of my research, as influenced by a pilot study and ethical issues followed by detail of data collection and data analysis processes. Chapter 4 consists of idiographic analyses of PVI sector and school sector trainees. I then summarise my findings in terms of convergence and divergence between the two sectors and relate these to literature in Chapter 5.

The thesis concludes in Chapter 6 as I relate the findings to the research questions. I suggest key implications for policy and practice, along with ideas for further research. Finally, I identify strengths and limitations of the study and reflect on my individual learning and the quality of the study.

A glossary on page 12 explains terminology relevant to the field of early years.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL CONTEXT and LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter comprises of two parts. The first part begins with an overview of the historical development of ECEC services in England, focusing on the development of the mainly distinct education and care systems. An understanding of the past can help us to make sense of the complex provision of services and the diversity of the workforce in England today. I consider the most recent policy initiatives that have shaped current ECEC services, explaining the corresponding development of the workforce with a particular focus on EYPS and EYTS.

The second part presents a review of the academic literature relating to how that policy then manifests in practice. I cover three critical issues pertinent to EYTS, guided by the phenomenological approach to the study. Firstly I explore the issue of *school readiness*, important due to the increased emphasis the revised EYTS standards (NCTL 2013a) place on preparing children for school. Secondly, I examine the issue of *quality*. Early research evidences the positive impact of EYPs on raising quality in the PVI sector; yet there appears to be significant differences in measured quality between school and PVI sectors. Finally, I consider *constructs of professional identity*, covering issues with deeply rooted tensions relating to the roles of graduates with EYTS and those with QTS.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Early Development of the Education and Care Systems in England

As discussed in Chapter 1, most early years services for young children have traditionally been divided into ‘education-focused’ settings and ‘care-focused’ settings in England. The concepts of ‘education’ and ‘care’ have underpinned the development of two related sectors: those maintained financially by LAs, typically offering education to 3-4 year olds; and those non-maintained or PVI, typically offering care, for children under and over 3 years (Moss 2006). Divided services are not unusual in the context of international ECEC services, for example, in Australia, Belgium and Portugal. However, unified systems are

also evident, for example in Sweden, Norway, and the Netherlands (OECD 2001). A comparison of 12 countries concludes that an individual country's policy and provision is based on the cultural and social beliefs regarding the roles of families, young children and the purpose of ECEC services OECD (2001).

Bertram and Pascal (2000a) suggest the origin of both the education and care systems in the UK can be traced back to a single point in 1819 when Robert Owen established the Institution for the Formation of Character in Scotland. The Institute opened on the site of Owen's New Lanarkshire mill to serve the workers' families. At the official opening Owen outlined his underpinning philosophy for the development of ECEC services, which was for his workers to earn a living, whilst their children received an education. Owen's development of a nursery and school drew from Pestalozzi's belief that nature and the outdoors is of central importance to children (Blackwell and Pound 2011). Consequently, young children spent many hours outdoors, expected to amuse themselves without toys and 'not to be annoyed by books' (Donnachie 2000, p166). Bertram and Pascal (2000a) note that, as Owen's work led to the development of infant schools throughout the UK, tensions between teaching approaches began to emerge. One style modelled the influences of foundational educational theorists such as Pestalozzi, Froebel, Steiner, and Montessori, promoting the 'individual child' approach. Another style was the mass transition of knowledge approach, developed by Joseph Lancaster. This 'Lancastrian' or 'Monitorial System' was promoted as a low cost method to teach large numbers of pupils, often seated in tiered rows of desks, with older children delivering much of the teaching (Constitution Society 2015).

The 1870 Education Act was important in establishing compulsory elementary schools for children aged 5-13 in Britain (Parliament 2015). Under-5s were admitted to allow mothers to work, or to protect them from the unhealthy conditions of slum housing (Kwon 2002). Between 1873 and 1904 some kindergartens were established in English industrial cities, providing educational and health interventions for children living in impoverished conditions. An example was the outdoor night camps in Deptford founded by Margaret and Rachel McMillan who went on to establish an open-air nursery school, a large garden

with shelters where children from 18 months to 7 years could live, work and play (Blackwell and Pound 2011). However, more narrowly educational state primary schooling remained as the dominant form of provision in England (Bertram and Pascal 2000a). By 1905, concerns over the inappropriateness of the curriculum and the rigidity of the Lancastrian system in state schools were raised by Board of Education inspectors, which led to under-5s being officially excluded from elementary schools (Kwon 2002). Bertram and Pascal (2000b, p9) note:

The historical theme of what type of setting best provides for young children and the concern over 'too early admission to formal schooling' is still debated in the UK.

The end of the First World War in 1918 marked the significant separation of care and education services as local education authorities attained legal powers to establish education provision for pre-school children, with health authorities able to set up day nurseries or childcare services (Palmer 2011). The Education Act of 1918 was regarded as 'ground breaking' in creating a need for nurseries to deliver 'bodily, mental and social training' for children between 2-5 years (Leibovich 2014, p534). Nursery schools, as self-contained schools offering services aimed at fostering children's physical, social and cognitive needs, were the ideal option of decision-makers to deliver services (Palmer 2015). However, nursery classes, as part of an infant or primary school, became a more affordable alternative, accepting children for an academic year before admission to school (Palmer 2015).

By 1945, the Second World War had driven an expansion of ECEC services. However, the crisis of the situation meant that some wartime nurseries provided services that were often inadequate (Palmer 2015). After the war, childcare services reduced as many mothers returned to traditional roles in the home. LAs made decisions on whether to close nurseries or continue funding, allocating responsibility for services to either Health or Education departments. This led to a multiplicity of arrangements across Britain. Health Departments focussed services on children with disabilities and, with few PVI settings

services available, education was the only service left for the remaining children (Bertram and Pascal 2000b).

The Post-War Period

The post-war period was significant for the development of England's split education and care system. The Plowden Report (CACE 1967) specified that nursery provision, as a form of pre-school education, be reserved for teachers' children and children in need of intervention or support. A perception that long days posed a danger to young children led to educational provision being reduced to a part-time basis. The report signalled a shift towards a child-centred approach in primary and early years education (Anning 1997).

Private services expanded to meet the needs of working parents and employers, offering full-time education and care for 0-5s, but typically for under-3s as more women began returning to work in the 1970s and 1980s (Bertram and Pascal, 2000b). Parents who wanted a valid alternative to state education services formed voluntary groups. For example, the Pre-school Playgroup Association (PPA) originated as a stopgap measure, until adequate nursery schooling was made available (Kwon, 2002). Such voluntary groups and organisations were often locally run by churches or community groups but joined together to form national charities, creating umbrella groups to provide support for 'sessional' (offering half day or less), 'occasional' (operating some days of the week) and 'full-day' services (Bertram and Pascal 2000). The PPA became a large umbrella group with charity status, positioning play as the central component of the curriculum, and was recognised and partially funded by Government grants (PLA 2016). Childminders became the main providers of care services for under-3s, forming the National Childminders Association (NCMA) in 1977 to provide support for its growing numbers. Both groups went on to change their names in reflection of their changing roles in early years services. PPA became the Pre-School Learning Alliance, in consideration of the educational value they offer to young children from 2 years. The NCMA reflected a sense of professionalism in its change to Professional Association of Childcare and Early Years (PACEY 2016).

In 1972 a White Paper (DES 1972) proposed nursery education should be available to all who wanted it, promising an expansion in nursery services by 1980. However, economic

recession meant the promise remained largely unfulfilled, leaving non-statutory pre-school provision as 'neglected and underdeveloped' (Kwon 2002, p1). Basford and Hodson (2011) note that, by 1988, Government thinking clearly placed responsibility for childcare with parents, with state funded childcare settings generally only available in socio-economically deprived areas, resulting in patchy services across the country.

The discussion of historical developments up to the 1980s illuminates how modern day early years services evolved as separate strands. Childcare services aimed largely at supporting working parents, whilst nursery education aimed to meet children's physical, social and cognitive needs (Palmer 2015). I now explore contemporary service development from 1997 onwards, with a particular focus on workforce development initiatives that led to the creation of EYPS.

1997 Onwards: Developing ECEC Services and Reforming the Workforce

As the foregoing account evidences, the evolution of ECEC services in England up to the 1980s led to a diverse and complex system, with some services split between a focus on care or education. The split system in England was reflected in the ECEC workforce at this time, described by Moss (1999, p233) as a 'disparate mix'. Within the workforce there were deeply rooted tensions between graduate teachers and childcare workers due to perceived differences in pay, conditions, training and status (Moss 2003; McGillivray 2008). Graduate teachers received higher pay and worked shorter days with longer holidays than their lesser-qualified and unqualified counterparts in the workforce, who were generally poorly paid with only limited access to training and career progression opportunities (Baldock, Fitzgerald and Kay 2013). Furthermore, a plethora of qualifications existed within the workforce aimed at academic levels 2, 3 and 4, which created confusion for practitioners, parents and employers (Osgood 2012).

The topic of ECEC services and workforce in England became particularly important to policy makers when a new Labour Government was elected in 1997, signalling a significant shift in social policy (Campbell-Barr 2015).

New Labour Government

The New Labour government from 1997 to 2010 followed the international trend of placing ECEC policies within wider systems of policy and support, related to promoting the wellbeing of children and families (OECD 2001). New Labour's aims were to: reduce child poverty; facilitate mothers to participate in the labour market; foster child wellbeing and development; enhance school readiness and children's later educational outcomes; and raise the quality of early childhood services (OECD 2001). Childcare services for 0-3s were viewed as supporting parental employment, with education places for 3-5s viewed as the foundations for lifelong learning (Campbell-Barr 2015). New Labour attempted to bridge the split system with the introduction of 'educare', which I discuss on page 32.

The restructuring of childcare services and workforce reform was manifest in government policies and initiatives with the principle objectives of expansion, affordability, accessibility and quality in the provision of early years services (Osgood 2012). The National Childcare Strategy (DfEE 1998) signalled the Government's early intention to expand both nursery education and childcare services and to increase parental choice of providers. The government encouraged voluntary and private providers to establish early childhood services, rather than supplying more expensive state services. The strategy (DfEE 1998) was significant in signalling the newfound centrality of the early years sector in national economic and social policy. To achieve the above aims, New Labour set out a parallel strategy of workforce reform, partly informed by the findings of research initially funded by the previous Conservative government.

The key study informing government policy, The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) study, was funded by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) between 1997 and 2003 and carried out by a team of researchers from the Institute of Education, University of London. The EPPE study found that practitioners with higher levels of qualification i.e. level 6, were associated with improved outcomes for children and also with the better quality practice of lower level qualified practitioners in the setting (Sylva et al 2003). The study also identified the maintained sector as providing higher quality provision than the private and voluntary sectors. Other findings included the

positive effects of high quality pre-school provision on children's intellectual and social development, through traditional teaching pedagogies where children's learning was extended through sustained shared thinking (Sylva et al 2003). Blunkett (2000) notes how quantitative studies, such as the EPPE project, are preferred by governments due to their authoritative nature, as derived from using objective methods. Workforce reform measures were heavily influenced by the EPPE project as Sylva et al's (2003) findings of trained teachers improving outcomes for children led to significant changes in government thinking. Eisenstadt (2012) suggests national policies became increasingly evidence-based after the EPPE study. The Every Child Matters Green Paper (ECM) (DfES 2003) and the Ten Year Childcare Strategy (HMT 2004) led to the creation of a new graduate leader role for the non-maintained sector.

The policies that followed the National Childcare Strategy (DfEE 1998) included the Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (DfES 2004), which indicated the Government's significant intention to integrate nursery education and childcare into an offer of 'educare' for pre-school children aged 3-4 years. The introduction of the EYFS (DfES 2008) was announced in the Childcare Act (2006). The EYFS aimed to eliminate the care and education distinction by integrating children's learning and development from 0-5 years in a single framework. This move aligned with a growing international consensus that concepts of education and care could not be separated in quality services for children (OECD 2001). Moss (2006) comments on the Government's use of two competing discourses regarding provision, i.e. the childcare discourse, as apparent in the naming of Government policy, and the pedagogical discourse as iterated in the aim to integrate education and care through 'educare' and the EYFS, suggesting this duality creates contradictions and tensions.

The Development of Early Years Professional Status

In terms of workforce reform policy discourse in England in the 2000s, this included aspirational terminology such as 'international excellence', and promoted a vision of a professionalised and world-class workforce at all levels (DCSF 2009). The creation of a new

graduate workforce that could deliver quality services, as outlined above, at a lower cost than teachers with QTS, seemed key to fulfilling the Labour government's policy aim of 'affordable' services. Osgood (2006, 2012) argues that the government created a discourse of 'crisis in childcare' in order to refashion the workforce in a particular way. She notes that the government's wider policy of improving national economic prosperity through encouraging mothers to return to work, results in nursery workers being positioned as the crucial mechanism for societal and economic success.

The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) was formed in 2005 to support the ECM agenda with an aim to simplify and streamline the ECEC workforce through the provision of explicit career pathways and progression opportunities. As an executive, non-departmental public body, the Council was funded by the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and aimed to develop a workforce to reflect the community it was to serve (CWDC 2009a). In other countries, there were examples of effective graduate practitioner roles reflecting their communities, for example, the Nordic role of 'pedagogue' providing continuity for children from birth to school age (OECD 2012, Moss 2013). Moss (2006, p74) championed for this role to be taken up in England, due to the perceived advantages of greater autonomy in the interpretation of practice and 'a more general application of practice'. The CWDC rejected the ideology and name of 'pedagogue' in favour of 'Early Years Professional' (EYP) (DfES 2005).

The policy rationale of an EYP in England was that of a 'practice leader' and an 'agent of change' to improve quality and to effectively deliver the EYFS within the PVI sector and children's centres (CWDC 2006b). A growing demand for graduate leaders was emerging from the expanding childcare market in England, reflecting a worldwide trend reported by UNESCO (2008) of increasing pre-school provision between 1999 and 2006. As only 4% of PVI staff held graduate level qualifications, compared to 45% in the maintained sector (DCSF 2007), the CWDC announced government targets of every full day-care setting and children's centre to have a graduate leader by 2015, and for settings in the most disadvantaged areas to have two graduate leaders. This move shaped demand for graduate leaders further and was influenced by research that evidenced improved

outcomes for children in graduate-led settings (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni 2007, Sylva 2010).

The EYPS Pilot Programme

The EYPS programme was piloted in 2006, with the status formally accredited on successful demonstration of 39 competency standards (CWDC 2006a). The EYPS competency process was widely criticised as 'performative professionalism' (Osgood 2006). Taggart (2011) explains performative professionalism as a focus on how and when practitioners perform, rather than who they are. He and Osgood (2006) oppose approaches to performative professionalism, drawing from Foucault's (1979) theory of 'competent technicians' to assert that the government was socially engineering the standards agenda as a means of regulating and controlling the workforce. However, the CWDC (2009b) defended its design of the EYPS award stating;

CWDC has invested in a high level of control in the early development of EYPS to protect quality and reputation. In the long-term, quality controls will be eased as training and assessment practice normalises and processes become embedded within each provider's institutional frameworks.

Hevey, Lumsden and Moxon (2007) evaluated one of eleven pilots which they judged as successful, although their evaluation raised a number of concerns. Firstly, they noted the government target of having an EYP in every full daycare setting by 2015 as over ambitious, given that only 5% of the workforce held a level 6 qualification in 2001. Secondly, the contentious disparity between pay and conditions for EYPS and QTS was unresolved, and likely to result in graduates pursuing QTS training rather than EYPS. Thirdly, the levels of expectations of EYPs were considered higher than their QTS counterparts, on the grounds of EYPs leading practice and being agents of change. Additionally, whilst newly qualified teachers (NQT) have a year of intensified support in post, this privilege was not available to EYPs. In response to such criticisms, the CWDC (2009b, p1) attempted to clarify the legislation and regulatory requirements of employing teachers with QTS in the maintained sector, admitting to a 'de facto restraint of trade' against EYTs. The statement seemingly illuminated on-going contention between EYPS and QTS without any attempt to address the problematic issues.

The new EYPS was soon questioned by the Association of Professionals in Education and Children's Trusts (ASPECT). As a trade union affiliate, ASPECT (2008) was quick to acknowledge the crucial function of EYPs in the workforce, whilst drawing attention to issues of confusion between EYPS and QTS, the limited support for CPD and potential problems in EYPs holding a clearly defined professional identity. Despite the CWDC (2006b) intention that EYPS should be broadly similar to QTS, ASPECT (2008) called for changes to EYPS to ensure the status could meet the demands of the regulatory requirements of every daycare setting employing an EYP by 2015. Their recommendations to improve the EYPS programme included a national pay and conditions framework, the creation of a Newly Qualified Early Years Professional and a high profile publicity campaign to raise awareness of the new status.

Policy Changes to EYPS

In 2010 the newly elected Coalition government imposed changes to the EYPS programme. The direction of their early years policy was stated in 'Supporting Families in the Foundation Years' (DfE and DoH 2011). Here, the role of the EYP in the PVI sector and children's centres was applauded, based on findings from Mathers et al's (2011) impact study. A further policy document, The Business Plan (DfE 2012a) recognised the quality of the foundation years workforce as being fundamental to all other reforms and so pledged to reform teacher training, professional standards, pay and conditions.

After a review of the EYFS (Tickell 2011) and a public consultation, a streamlined version of the EYFS (DfE 2012b) was implemented in 2012, which in turn informed the development and revision of the EYPS standards (TA 2012). Whilst a concise version of the revised EYFS (DfE 2012b) was broadly welcomed in the early years sector, it also drew criticism as being 'ill-thought through' on many fronts, including the denial of practitioners' professional autonomy across pedagogical areas (House 2011). The CWDC was also abolished and responsibility for the EYPS programme transferred to the Teaching Agency. The number of EYPS standards was reduced from 39 to 8 and brought closer to Teacher's Standards.

The Nutbrown Review

The Coalition government commissioned an independent review of early education and childcare qualifications in 2011. The Foundations for Quality review (Nutbrown 2012) highlighted the on-going issue of disparity between the EYP and QTS roles as the root of considerable tension. The review made several recommendations for the development of the ECEC workforce, including the creation of an early years specialist route to QTS as a replacement for EYPS working across all sectors. Nutbrown (2012) asserted that the concept of a 'teacher' is understood by all. Furthermore, she advocated the role should have a year of mentoring, as is the case for other NQTs. This proposal addresses one aspect of the tension between the roles of EYP and teachers, in that EYPs enter the workplace as 'change agents' whilst NQTs have one year of mentoring from an experienced colleague and a reduced workload.

The Nutbrown report ignited considerable controversy. High profile organisations in the early years sector, such as the National Day Nurseries Association and the National Children's Bureau, broadly welcomed the recommendations as a means of raising the quality of childcare. The charity, 4Children, similarly welcomed the recommendations as a clear plan to raise the status of the PVI sector, urging the government to accept and implement them properly with appropriate investment (Longfield 2012). However, opposition to the report was more specific, with TACTYC (2012) welcoming some recommendations but claiming the reporting of the contribution of EYPs to the ECEC workforce as underplayed. They suggested that the hard-won momentum of the EYPS programme should receive further support and be clarified, rather than be removed. Also arguing against the Nutbrown Review recommendations, Lumsden (2012b) suggested that the role of the EYP should remain to evolve alongside the proposed new QTS role, given the complex and diverse needs of young children and families. Hevey (2012) acknowledged the distinctions between the roles of EYP and QTS as 'different but unequal', and argued for a 'different but equal' approach with equal remuneration and job opportunities. She warned against the creation of a teaching role without QTS as resulting in graduates being regarded as a 'second class citizens' (Hevey 2012, p2).

The qualification debate was particularly important to graduates in the ECEC workforce, as issues of professional identity rested on the use of the title of 'teacher'. The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) (2012b) was keen to protect the reputation of teachers with QTS as highly qualified and trained staff, and so urged the government to bring a greater equivalence between the PVI and school sectors through more extensive and robust national standards on issues including staffing levels, qualifications and skills for practitioners in the PVI sector.

Early Years Teacher Status

The government's response to the Nutbrown Review (2012) was published in 'More Great Childcare' (DfE 2013a), which pledged to raise the status and quality of the ECEC workforce by introducing the 'Early Years Teacher Programme' to build upon the strengths of the EYPS programme. Nutbrown's (2012) recommendation that a new qualification should cover the years from 0-7 was rejected in favour of the 0-5 age range, the same age group covered by the EYFS (DfE 2012b). The rapid implementation of policy meant that the EYPS programme became EYTS from September 2013. Nutbrown (2013, p7) personally criticised the government's decision as 'simply changing the name on the tin', citing the new role of Early Years Teacher as 'insulting' to both EYPs and teachers with QTS.

The announcement of the changes from EYPS to EYTS triggered another review of the EYPS standards (TA 2012). In response to the ensuing public consultation, NCTL (2013b) reiterated the aim of a well-qualified, well-respected and well-led workforce and announced that revised standards would have parity with classroom teachers' standards to support the concept of teaching in the early years. Accordingly, the second revision, Teachers' Standards (Early Years) (NCTL 2013) is more closely aligned with the Teachers' Standards (DfE 2011), reflecting a greater emphasis on teaching and learning to prepare children for school. Existing EYPs have equivalence to the newer award of EYTS, a move strongly opposed by the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT 2013) on the basis that EYPs have not had the right teacher training due to their focus on care rather than education. Yet others, such as Taggart (2011), had previously critiqued the phrasing of the

EYPS standards, noting they omit the words 'caring' or 'care'. He cautioned that the exclusion of 'caring' in the EYPS standards would lead to the view that 'care' is not part of the EYP's professional role. I explore the subject of 'caring' in more detail on page 47. The election of a new Conservative government in May 2015 resulted in a re-affirmation of a policy commitment to 'a high quality ECEC workforce that is fit for the future' (DfE 2015), the policy aim at the time of writing.

In the first section I described the historical development of the range of young children's services in England that provide non-parental education and care to children between birth and statutory school age. I outlined the context of EYPS as a graduate status within the wider ECEC workforce and explained the development of the status up to the current form of EYTS. The centrality of the early years field to successive government agendas helps to explain why the provision of services and the ECEC workforce reform measures have remained important over time.

In the second part of this chapter, I consider a range of empirical sources related to the graduate leader role and identity of EYPs and EYTs, along with a discussion of some current critical issues that are relevant to the context of this study. On-going debates in the field of early years are wide ranging and, for the purpose of this thesis, the review considers key issues most pertinent to EYTS and the phenomenological nature of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A first critical issue impacting on the graduate leader role is *school readiness*. The revised EYTS standards (NCTL 2013b) and the EYFS (DfE 2014) place an increased emphasis on preparing children for school. A second critical issue of relevance for graduate leaders is *quality*. Early research evidences the positive impact of EYPs on raising quality in the PVI sector; yet there appears to be significant differences in measured quality between school and PVI sectors, potentially rooted in the historical divide between education and care. A third critical issue of relevance to graduate leaders is *constructs of professional identity*, with deeply rooted tensions relating to the roles of graduates with EYTS and those with QTS.

School Readiness

The first of three critical issues, school readiness, is a topic of debate that began with the development of ECEC services in the late 1800s as outlined on page 28, although the terminology has developed more recently. The Conservative government's school readiness agenda is significant for EYTs. Firstly, Standard 3.3 requires trainees to:

Demonstrate a critical understanding of the EYFS areas of learning and development and engage with the educational continuum of expectations, curricula and teaching of Key Stage 1 and 2. (NCTL 2013a, p3)

This standard shows a continuum of children's learning from EYFS into compulsory schooling. Secondly, the purpose of the EYFS is to:

promote teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life (DfE 2014, p5).

These requirements position EYTs as more focused on a school version of education than a holistic approach of education and care. However, despite the requirement for EYTs to focus on school readiness, it appears that defining this term or 'readiness for school' is problematic. Whitebread and Bingham (2012) explain how definitions centre on differing

concepts of the purpose of early years education. For example, the Ofsted Early Years Report (2013a) states the Coalition government's aims for early services as threefold. The first aim is to improve children's outcomes, enabling success in later life; the second is to enable parents the choice of returning to work; and the third is to enable early identification of potential problems and implement intervention strategies. Moss (2016) views this approach as treating children as human capital for economic growth in contrast to developing citizens who can interconnect with society and the world. He draws attention to an OECD (2012) study, which explains a continuum of ECEC practice, with school readiness as preparation for compulsory school education (CSE) at one end, and Early Childhood Education (ECE) as a social pedagogical approach, seeking to support the broad development needs of children, at the other.

In contrast to a school readiness approach, a social pedagogical approach focuses on preparing children for life, rather than work-life. It prioritises children's early emotional and cognitive development to foster long-term wellbeing and success at school through satisfying children's needs for feelings of autonomy, competence and 'relatedness' (Whitebread and Bingham 2012, p3). Relatedness and interconnectedness are considered by Moss (2016) to be vital elements of ECE.

A growing body of professional and academic literature supports social pedagogy as an alternative to school readiness, with some suggesting that the emphasis should not lie with the child being ready for school, but the school being ready for the child (Chilvers 2013, Reardon 2013). Moss (2016) argues for a move to the social pedagogical model in England, as practised in Nordic countries and espoused by Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the world-renowned Reggio Emilia practice. The OECD (2006) proposes a balanced partnership between systems traditionally based in care and those based in education, on the basis that strengths from both sides could lead to a more unified approach to children's learning.

The school readiness agenda in England was clearly evident in the Coalition government's expansion of the Free Early Learning (FEL) scheme for 2 year olds, which I discuss as a sub-topic in the next section.

Education for 2 Year Olds

The FEL scheme for 2 year olds was originally piloted in 2006 under New Labour. The Coalition government announced their intention in 2010 to increase entitlement to improve the cognitive, social and behavioural development of the most disadvantaged children. A main target was to close the attainment gap, evident between poorer children and children achieving at an average level. As poorer children were less likely to access early education than their better-off peers due to the financial costs, the scheme aimed to provide some free entitlement in 'quality' settings.

The Coalition government in 2013 commissioned an evaluation of the early education pilot project for 2 year olds, focussing on children's outcomes aged 5 years. The findings conclude there is no overall evidence of better outcomes for children who attended the pilot as compared with children who did not; yet children who accessed high quality education performed better than those attending low or adequate quality settings (Maisey et al 2013). The evaluation project raises questions about the school readiness policy since early education can only benefit disadvantaged children in the highest quality settings which are not available to all.

In response to the need for increased numbers of places, the Government introduced legislation in 2012 to make it easier for schools to accept 2 year olds. Sir Michael Wilshaw (2015), HM Inspector of Schools, endorsed the change from existing practice, stating that skilled practitioners with degrees already existed in schools and parents could recognise and access schools easily. The benefits of 2 year olds in schools are particularly promoted to school leaders as:

- Helping children arrive into compulsory schooling with good levels of development
 - Improving transitions
 - Supporting parents to encourage their children's learning and development
- (Moylett and Grenier 2014).

These arguments are strongly focused on preparing 2 year olds for compulsory education, yet teachers with QTS in schools are trained to work with children aged 3 – 7 years. It

seems unlikely that schools could achieve such aims without an appropriate workforce. The move to place 2 year olds in schools is significant for EYTs as they are positioned as graduates with the most appropriate training to work with 2 year olds. However, EYTs cannot be employed as 'leaders of practice' in maintained schools, although there are no such limitations in academies (DfE 2014). Employment regulations that appear to devalue the EYTs in maintained settings seem to further exacerbate disparity issues with QTS.

The DfE (2013b) requirement for 2 year olds to access good quality provision leads this review to examine the contested concept of quality in the next section, exploring the relevance to EYTS and to early years services in England.

Quality

As a broad and multi-faceted concept, quality is a contested notion and discussed here as a second critical issue relevant to EYPS and EYTS. Siraj-Blatchford and Wong (1999) suggest there are two theoretical concepts underpinning approaches to quality, which are objectivist and relativist. The objectivist approach defines quality as a group of 'measurable characteristics in the childcare environment that affect children's social and cognitive development', whilst the relativist approach considers multiple perspectives of say, children, families and practitioners which recognise and accept diversity in reflecting on what 'they want their children to be and how to bring them up' (Siraj-Blatchford and Wong 1999, p10 and p13). The two approaches are not dichotomized; Siraj-Blatchford and Wong (1999) consider that quality in early years settings might be objective in pedagogic aspects of practice, yet subjective in regards to the curriculum goals and content. Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2013) argue more strongly that quality is neither neutral nor natural. They question the process of defining quality as arguably restricted to small numbers of experts that exclude important and interested stakeholders, leading to quality as a subjective, value-laden and relative concept. In this section I discuss studies of quality across both sectors of early years services and EYP's contribution to raising quality in the PVI sector. Firstly, I briefly outline the ECEC policy discourse of quality in the early years.

Drawing on expert-led definitions of quality, benefits arising from high quality childcare and education are consistently recognised internationally by the OECD (2001, 2012) as leading to better child wellbeing and learning outcomes, poverty reduction, increased social mobility and higher female labour market participation. It is argued that such benefits lead to better social and economic development for societies as a whole. In England, the need to address quality has been a long running claim of policy makers, but Gourd (2014) suggests the complex concept of quality is lost on politicians who take a simplistic view. One study impacting on politicians was the EPPE project (Sylva et al 2003), as discussed in Chapter 2. EPPE was the first large-scale European longitudinal study to provide policy makers with evidence of the positive effects of high quality provision on children's learning and development. It helped to clarify what quality might mean, through identifying key characteristics of settings and practices.

Influence of the EPPE Project

The EPPE project (Sylva et al 2003) provided clear evidence of differences in quality, as defined by experts, between the maintained and PVI sectors. The 141 settings involved in the project between 1997 and 2003 were drawn from a range of providers across both sectors. Sylva et al (2003) found that quality was higher overall in integrated settings, nursery schools and nursery classes. Greater quality, linked to children's progress, was also associated with highly qualified staff (Sylva et al 2003). Playgroups, private day nurseries and LA centres were found to have lower quality scores, as measured with the ECERS tool (The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale), (Harms, Clifford and Cryer 1998), designed to assess provision for children from 30 months to 5 years. Whilst using ECERS, Sylva et al (2006) identified limitations in that they were found to be insensitive to important pedagogical processes considered conducive to children's cognitive development in England. This led Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart (2006) to develop an extension, the ECERS-E, to the ECERS and the revised edition, ECERS-R, comprising tools to provide greater depth in the following educational aspects of provision for 3-5s: literacy, maths, science and environment and diversity. The ECERS-E provides a narrower, school-based definition of quality, linked to the Early Learning Goals, than the more holistic view of ECERS-R.

As explained in Chapter 2, the EPPE study notably brought attention to the lack of graduate practitioners in the PVI sector and influenced government thinking in terms of workforce reform. Sylva et al's (2003) findings include that maintained settings, employing qualified teachers, achieved better outcomes for children than their PVI counterparts, highlighting the lack of parity between education and care sectors within the split system. The project findings provide a particular definition of quality as real, objective and knowable through the use of universal measurement tools. Such a definition is appealing to policy-makers but contested by others, such as Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2013), who suggest that quality should be contextualised to reflect the diversity and complexity of ECEC practice and to value democracy and experimentation.

The Millennium Cohort Study (Mathers, Sylva and Joshi 2007) also that found quality in maintained settings was highest overall across the sample of 301 settings, confirming EPPE findings. This study used ECERS (Harms, Clifford and Cryer 1998) and ITERS tools (Harms, Cryer and Clifford 2003), designed to assess provision for children from birth to 30 months. They found that whilst all sectors made improvements in quality since the late 1990s, the voluntary sector made the largest gain.

EYP's Role in Raising PVI Sector Quality

The introduction of EYPS in 2006 positioned EYPs as a central component in policy agendas aimed at improving quality in the PVI sector (Lumsden 2012a). Early evidence from both small and large-scale studies identifies the positive impact of EYPs as effective leaders in this respect (Hallet and Roberts-Holmes 2011, Lumsden 2010, Mathers et al 2011). In a large-scale study, Mathers et al (2011) found that EYPs were effective in leading quality improvement for pre-school children (aged 30 months to 5 years), but there were no measurable improvements with EYPs working with under-3s. Mathers et al (2011) explain this might be due to the limited number of hours that EYPs spend hands-on with under-3s, averaging only 4.7 hours per week as opposed to 18.4 hours per week spent with children aged 3-5.

Hadfield et al (2012) also found that EYPs had a significant impact on the quality of practice for children of 30+ months but more contradictory findings in relation to ECERS-E

mathematics sub-scales. All findings are categorised by the age groups and not by types of provider, meaning quality in individual sectors is unclear. Whilst comparison of sector quality is relevant to the wider debate on quality in the early years, the introduction of FEL for 2 year olds led the focus of official concern to shift from setting quality to social disadvantage.

Quality and Social Disadvantage

Social disadvantage became important to the Coalition government from 2010, as policy moved away from New Labour's 'educare' approach, towards education services as a form of early intervention (Campbell-Barr 2015). The Ofsted Early Years Report (2013) asserted that children living in deprived areas were less likely to attend a good or outstanding school. Only nursery schools in disadvantaged areas were found to offer the same, or better, quality than provision in wealthier areas. Childminders were found to be considerable weaker in areas of deprivation, and also less likely to be located there (Ofsted 2013). The Nuffield Foundation commissioned research into claims of poorer quality provision in areas of socio-disadvantage in 2014. Mathers and Smees (2014) found, contrary to the earlier Ofsted report, that maintained schools in deprived areas offered comparable, and sometimes higher, quality early years provision than schools in more advantaged areas. Quality in the PVI sector was lower in disadvantaged areas. However, PVI settings with a graduate staff member scored more highly on all quality measures and reduced the attainment gap more effectively than non-graduate settings (Mathers and Smees 2014). Overall the findings confirmed the trend, identified by Ofsted (DfE 2013b), that the maintained sector offered better quality provision for the children in deprived areas than the PVI settings (Mathers and Smees 2014).

There is an abundance of literature focussed on issues of quality in the early years, particularly those using measurement tools such as ITERS and ECERS, which have to date been largely predominant in discussions of quality. There are some qualitative studies, in particular the Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) (Siraj-Blatchford et al 2002), focused on 12 effective settings from the EPPE project, adding rich detail to the debate. For example, findings include that qualified staff were the most effective in

their interactions with children, using the most sustained shared thinking interactions (Siraj-Blatchford et al 2002). The study also asserts that a balance of child-initiated play and teacher-initiated group work best provides for learning (Siraj-Blatchford et al 2002). There are no qualitative studies focused on practitioners in a position to compare perceptions and experience of quality across the two sectors. My study aims to contribute to this gap in the literature.

Having discussed the two critical issues of *school readiness* and *quality*, the review moves on to explore *constructs of professional identity*.

Constructs of Professional Identity

This third critical issue considers three sub-topics of *care*, *professional identity of EYPs* and *nomenclature as relating to constructs of professional identity*. Before discussing these, I consider a more generalised view of professionalism and identity and how these concepts have influenced the ECEC workforce.

Professionalism has been explored extensively across the disciplines of education, history, sociology and philosophy, with a range of models developed to represent different stand points, such as occupational, activist, functional, process, postmodern and social relationships (Brock 2012, p29). The concept of professionalism is universally complex, and, even in the context of the early years sector, professionalism is variously constructed and widely contested (Osgood 2012). Friedson (2001, p17) defines professionalism as a 'legal, gainful activity' in which the work is so specialised that it is not accessible to 'those without the required training and expertise'. He asserts that it is the degree of specialisation in a particular job that determines the social and symbolic value given to it. Simpson (2010) suggests that professionalism concerns the dispositions and orientations of professional individuals and groups to their status and work.

Identity is often a central concern in IPA studies as participants 'link the substantive topic of concern to their identity' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009, p163). As stated in chapter 1,

I align myself with Mead's (1934) relational-self theory that seems applicable to this and other IPA studies.

Selves can only exist in definite relations to other selves. No hard-and-fast line can be drawn between our own selves and the selves of others, since our own selves exist and enter into our experience only in so far as the selves of others exist and enter as such into our experience also (Mead 1934, p164).

Smith (1999, p295) builds on Mead's relational-self theory to suggest that 'interpersonal contact can lead to a changing conception of self as related to others'. Whilst many IPA studies are related to major life transitions, my study is concerned with a relatively minor professional transition from one sector of early years services to another, where the substantive topic of concern is the unfamiliar placement experience. One could go further in terms of identity and theorisation but for the purpose of this chapter I limit my discussion to literatures pertaining to the relation-self. The first sub-topic relating to the construct of professional identity is *care*. The section begins with a consideration of how *care* has influenced professional identity in the early years.

Care

The historical divide between education and care in early years services has resulted in an on-going and complex struggle for professional identity for the ECEC workforce outside schools, exacerbated by ambiguous job titles, qualifications and the expectations of national standards and competencies (Brock 2012). Work in ECEC services has historically been viewed as a 'caring' and 'female' and is one of the most highly gendered of occupations (Moss 2000, Osgood 2010). This highlights a tension between maternalistic and professional discourses, as ECEC work is promoted as a mothering role that females can undertake due to their maternal instincts or predisposition (Moss 2006, Osgood 2009). Page and Elfer (2013) challenge the notion of attachment work as a naturally intuitive and readily occurring in practice. They acknowledge the emotional complexities for practitioners in facilitating attachments with under-5s, arguing for greater attention to the 'differing and difficult emotions evoked in early years practitioners' (Page and Elfer 2013, p556). Davis, Tor and Degotardi (2015) draw attention to the specialist nature of work with under-2s, arguing for increased recognition of the professional skills required to

support the distinctive learning and development needs of this age group. There is confusion over how being 'a professional' fits with the intimate, personal relationships that babies need (Elfer and Page, 2015, p1777).

It is useful to compare the identity formation of EYPs/EYTs with other caring occupations. For example, Vincent and Braun (2012) acknowledge that females have traditionally dominated nursing and social work and both occupations have successfully developed professional identities. They suggest that ECEC work demands a combination of brains and brawn, and thereby disturbs the dichotomy of professional and manual labour. Vincent and Braun (2012) concur with Moss (2003) and Osgood (2006) in that the prevailing discourse supports popular belief that the ECEC roles are derived from natural female mothering and nurturing skills, with further knowledge and skills deemed to be unnecessary. The review continues with a consideration of caring social interactions that can be framed as an ethic of care.

Deontological Ethics and Ethic of Care

Although caring is recognised as important in work with young children, the omission of 'care' in the EYPS and EYTS standards represents a failure to recognise ECEC professional work as compassionate (Taggart 2016). Miller and Cable (2011) suggest that dominant political discourses play down, and fail to value, the ethic of care because emotional behaviour is not rational and cannot be measured or categorised. As mentioned in Chapter 1, I align myself with Manning-Morton's (2006, p42) view that:

'professionalism' in the early years must be understood in terms of the day-to-day detail of practitioners' relationships with children, parents and colleagues; relationships that demand high levels of physical, emotional and personal knowledge and skill.

I distinguish here between care as deontological ethics, which is based on adherence to rules or duties, with care as an ethic-of-care, that is based on '*I want*' to care (Noddings 1984, Kay 2016). Noddings (1984) uses the terms 'ethical caring' and 'natural caring' to illustrate a continuum of care. Natural caring comes without effort, and is associated with

'I want' to care, whereas ethical care is associated with *'I must'* care. The latter is what Noddings (1984) considers as going through the motions as an appropriate response.

Similarly, Collins (2015, p65) identifies differences between 'caring attitudes' and 'caring actions'. In the early years there are many 'caring' routines that require practitioners' actions in terms of children's physical development needs in feeding, toileting and dressing. It is likely that some practitioners are required to take caring actions with or without a caring attitude (Noddings 1984, Collins 2015). For example, a practitioner could 'care for' a child by changing their nappy without 'caring about' the child. Noddings (2002, p24) asserts that 'caring-about is empty if it does not culminate in caring relations'. Indeed, many call for both caring attitudes and caring actions as requisites for working with young children (Elfer and Page 2015, Taggart 2016). Noddings (2002) takes this a step further in discussing motivational displacement. She explains this as a carer's 'motive energy' flowing towards the person receiving the care, leading to a degree of connectedness. In terms of work with young children, this would involve reciprocity between a practitioner and child, both gaining from the encounter (Noddings 2002). Personal interactions are promoted by Elfer and Page (2015) as an open and accountable aspect of professional practice. This position builds on a long-standing call for ethics of care and 'passion' as integral to the professionalism of the workforce (Moyle 2001, Elfer and Dearnley 2007, Taggart 2011).

Brock (2012) notes that ECEC workers use a different discourse to official policy, in expressing a passion for their work with children. Page (2011 p313) takes the notion of 'passion' a step further and creates a new term of 'professional love' to mean an intellectual approach that requires motivational displacement alongside 'deep, sustaining, respectful and reciprocal' relationships with children. She asserts that 'professional love' should have the same importance as other elements of childcare and education such as 'leadership and management', 'phonics' and 'cognitive development' (Page, 2008 p187). 'Love' is a word that everyone will know but is problematic to define, Campbell-Barr, Georgeson and Varga (2015) use love as 'a powerful reference for emotional and attitudinal competence' for work with young children. However, a perceived danger of

close relationships is 'getting too close' (Manning-Morton 2006, p48) with the consequence of behaving in an unprofessional manner. A difficulty for ECEC workers is to attain a professional identity that allows the ethic of care to be embraced, rather than be viewed as inhibiting the physical and emotional dimensions of practice (Dalli 2008). Furthermore, a discourse containing emotion gives a slant that other professions may perceive as feminine. Taggart (2011, p85) suggests that the out-dated view of caring being associated with female irrationality is now an obstacle to the gendered disposition to care becoming a 'central plank of professionalism'.

Stronach et al's (2002) theory of professionalism takes account of an alternative aspect of ethics of care when looking to 'virtue' ethics. Beck and Young (2005) draw on Bernstein's idea of occupational identity being formed through 'inner dedication' and 'inwardness'. This idea highlights that being part of a professional body is probably more likely to be perceived as sharing 'inner dedication' with a group of like-minded and similarly qualified people. Stronach et al (2002) draw on the work of Dawson who expresses similar notions of 'inside-out' and 'outside-in' professional virtues. A professional with an 'inside-out' ethic has much more to give than any code of practice could ever reflect, whereas an 'outside-in' professional follows given set principles of belief and conduct (Dawson in Stronach et al 2002).

This section has sought to explore a tension in the debate over suitable pedagogical approaches for young children that call for an ethic of care, such as professional love and compassion, with the difficulties of emotional work being recognised as professional practice for ECEC workers. With issues of identity rooted in complexities of opposing pedagogical approaches, potentially linked to the historical split of services between education and care, I move to focus on studies that have sought to understand the EYP's professional identity.

Professional Identity of EYPS

The second sub-topic within the discussion of *constructs of professional identity* focuses on EYPS, as explored through empirical research. Hadfield et al's (2012, p25) longitudinal study of EYPS' progress, leadership and impact acknowledges the broad construct of

professional identity as covering multiple aspects of individuals' sense of self in addition to 'how they are constructed and perceived by others'. Hadfield et al (2012) focussed on the EYP's role as leader of practice, and found that the impact of gaining EYPS on EYP's professional identity could be categorised into three stages, depending on the maturity of their existing identities. The first stage of 'becoming' captures the trainee EYP when developing confidence, skills, knowledge and understanding, with less experienced practitioners perceiving greater impact on their professional identity (Hadfield et al 2012, p25). The stage of 'being' denotes an EYP as an established professional, with the Status recognised both inside the setting and externally (Hadfield et al 2012, p25). The stage of 'developing' means the established EYP takes on new roles and responsibilities, engages in new relationships which facilitates an increasing sense of professional identity (Hadfield et al 2012, p25). The study found 85% of participants reported an increased sense of professional status, although there was concern shown that many parents, carers and the general public did not know what an EYP was. To address this issue, a change of name from EYPS to EYTS took place in 2013, and I now explore the topic of nomenclature and the influences on professional identity.

Nomenclature

As the third sub-topic within the discussion of *constructs of professional identity*, this discussion of nomenclature builds on the earlier section on page 37. The DfE changed the name of EYP to EYT in response to the Nutbrown Review (Nutbrown 2012), claiming one title of 'teacher' would increase status and public recognition (DfE 2013b). However, some unions were keen to protect the title of 'teacher' for their QTS members and actively opposed the government's introduction of EYTS. For example, the NASUWT (2012a, p8) asserts that conceptual distinctions between 'education' and 'care' are important and that teachers should raise standards whilst other members of the children's workforce concentrate on 'protecting and enhancing the wellbeing of children'. Such views reinforce the perception of care as being inferior to education, and provide clear opposition to the name of 'teacher' being widened across the early years workforce.

The DfE made entry requirements for EYTS the same as primary teacher training, announcing EYTS as equivalent to QTS (DfE 2013b). The equivalency decision was viewed as divisive, although Nutbrown (2012) recognises the contentious effect of disparity between EYTS and QTS was already evident in earlier studies. Since 2013, there seems to be a paucity of literature and research on the numbers of EYTs who have completed their training, or of EYTs' perceptions of possible disparity in relation to pay, terms and conditions, given the same entry requirements now exist for both routes. The director of NCTL in 2013, Brian Tytherleigh reported to the Education Committee that over 12,000 EYPs were working in the early years and he expressed the Coalition government's stance in regard to QTS:

QTS is a proxy for discussing pay. The vast majority of these people work in the private, voluntary, independent sector and QTS does not mean anything in terms of employment in those settings...In fact, what we really want is our early years teachers and leaders to be paid appropriately for that work, and I think we all recognise they are not (Tytherleigh 2013).

The statement seems a public admission of the disparity issues between EYTS and QTS, despite attempts to raise the status of EYTs by using the title of 'teacher'.

A recent White Paper (DfE 2016, p32) announces the current Conservative Government's intention to replace QTS with a 'stronger, more challenging accreditation based on a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom'. It is unclear how this attempt to 'raise the bar' for the teaching profession will influence the relationship between the graduate roles in the ECEC workforce. Professional identity has been a contentious struggle for EYTs since the inception of EYPS in 2006, and seems set to continue.

Conclusion

In the first section, this review explored the historical development of young children's services in England and outlined the context of the new graduate EYPS. The review charted the development of the status up to the current form of EYTS, highlighting the centrality of the early years field to successive government agendas. Critical issues of school readiness, quality and constructs of professional identity related to EYPS and EYTS

were interconnected. The review drew on a range of empirical sources, mainly centred on the role of EYPs, to indicate a paucity of published research since the renaming of EYPS to EYTS in 2012. However, the critical issue of professionalism for EYTs remains entwined with the graduate role of EYP, as deeply rooted issues of disparity in terms of pay, terms and conditions continue to the current day. These tensions are rooted in the historical and cultural separation of education and care in England as discussed in the first part of the review. To date, there is little evidence that the concepts of education and care have been influenced by the DfES (2008) and DfE's (2012b, 2014) efforts to unify them into a holistic approach within the statutory framework of the EYFS. Despite the new title of 'teacher', this chapter evidences how EYTs continue to struggle with issues of professional identity as they work within the PVI sector without a recognised structure of CPD, and without the perceived more favourable pay, terms and conditions of their QTS counterparts.

The EYT role has a clear focus on preparing children for school (NCTL 2013a). However, school readiness is a contested concept that speaks to individuals' ethical practice and pedagogical considerations. With the planned roll out of the free early learning entitlement to increasing numbers of 2 year olds, EYTs are positioned as the only graduates with training, knowledge and skills for working with this age group. As schools are encouraged to accommodate 2 year olds in the expectation they will provide a quality service, a dichotomy arises over the employment terms of EYTs.

As a multi-faceted and contested concept, quality is difficult to define and often is thought to be in the eye of the beholder (Moss 2006). The review addresses only a narrow aspect of the broader debates on quality. Research, from the EPPE and REPEY projects (Sylva et al 2003, Siraj-Blatchford et al 2002) to more recent studies such as Mathers et al (2011, 2014) show that quality is consistently better in the school sector than in the PVI sector. The differences in quality provide evidence to reinforce the long-standing view of the maintained sector as superior to the PVI sector. However, longitudinal studies exploring the role of EYPs have evidenced their positive impact on raising quality in the PVI sector since the status was introduced in 2006. Interestingly, the OECD (2012) advocates that

qualified practitioners need professional development opportunities, competitive rates of pay and conditions, and a good physical working environment to develop quality in settings. These factors link to the issues of disparity between EYTS and QTS as discussed in the section on professionalism.

The Relevance to this Study

The policy developments of successive governments in England since 1997 have led to significant changes in the ECEC services and workforce. My interest lies specifically with EYTS and the requirement to teach children between 0-5 years, effectively bridging the development needs of these distinct age groups that have often been separated into education-based settings for over-3s and care-based settings for under-3s.

EYTS trainees must evidence their practice in the 0-3 and 3-5 years age groups. The course requirements mean trainees will experience practice in sectors historically rooted in education or care. My area of research interest is the lived experience of trainees who are currently employed in one sector, school or PVI, and thereby experience the alternate sector through a placement. In the next chapter I explain the development of my methodological thinking and present my research questions.

CHAPTER 3: DEVELOPING THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In the last chapter I identified that my interest was to understand the lived experience of EYTS trainees in an unfamiliar placement. An established way to explore any lived experience is through phenomenological research and in Chapter 1 I outlined my choice of IPA. Here I set out the particular approach to IPA that I used, beginning with a brief discussion of interpretative approaches to research and an examination of philosophy and theory of phenomenology, to show how theoretical constructs are applied through IPA

I move on to justify the methods selected for the pilot project, arguing that creative methods synthesised with individual semi-structured interviews offer an effective approach to answer my main study research questions. I explain how my methodological thinking developed and provide a summary of a pilot project, detailing the iterative process of data analysis. I show how a consideration of research ethics contributed to the design of the main study, and explain the longitudinal nature of the research through three staged data collection points. I explain how the inquiry was conducted to conclude with an account of idiographic case study development.

Interpretative Research Approaches

During the EdD course, various visiting speakers described and explained both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to provide doctoral students with a foundation of knowledge from which to explore inquiry methods. In considering philosophical approaches to fit with my area of interest, I was drawn to the constructivist paradigm and to interpretative research that focuses on meaning and making sense of the social world, as this resonated with own belief that knowledge is socially created.

There is some philosophical and theoretical overlap between interpretive approaches, with narrative research also viewed as a way of understanding human experience through stories and accounts (Savin-Baden and Major 2013). As with other broad approaches to research, a number of diverse narrative approaches have developed within the constructivist paradigm to study, for example, life histories and autobiographies, which

share common ground with ethnography and interpretivism. I considered the broad choices of paradigms and theoretical approaches and felt drawn to the philosophical stance offered by phenomenology. Schwandt (2000) explains how meaning is shaped through an individual's experiences of the world, thereby differing perspectives, or biases, of the social world exist and there is no single obvious and universal truth. The phenomenological focus on the lived experience and the importance of the embodied experience as integral to cognitive processes resonated strongly with me. Whilst the philosophy of phenomenology underpins qualitative approaches to research such as ethnography, conversational analysis, grounded theory, and narrative approaches, phenomenological research differs from these in that it is the subject experience that is the centre of the enquiry (Mertens 2010). Giorgi (1989) notably promoted the long established approach of phenomenological research as having four main features: the first being that it is rigorously descriptive; the second is the use of phenomenological reduction i.e. bracketing previous knowledge to see the subject of research for what it is; the third is to explore the intentional relationship between people and phenomena; with the fourth as the aim to reveal the structure or essence of the experience. Giorgi's work became a major focus in phenomenology psychology before Smith developed IPA in 1994 (Howitt and Cramer 2014).

IPA shares common ground with other phenomenological research approaches and I now explain how it is positioned conceptually in relation to a few of these, in justifying my choice of this methodology over other approaches.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA was developed in the field of psychology and used to research issues of health psychology, spreading to clinical and counselling psychology and social and educational psychology (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). To date there is a substantial body of IPA studies covering a wide range of subject areas, indicating the flexibility of the approach for other disciplines, although the main corpus of work still lies in the health psychology field and in the English-speaking world (Smith, 2011). IPA is described as an:

approach to qualitative, experiential and psychological research which has been informed by concepts and debates from three key areas of philosophy of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p.11).

Within the remit of this thesis I am unable to provide a full discussion of the philosophical and theoretical foundations of IPA but I will show how the approach is positioned in relationship to important phenomenological and other qualitative research traditions. I begin with a brief summary of some leading figures in phenomenological history followed with a short discussion of relevant theoretical concepts, hermeneutics, symbolic interactionism and idiography.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the study of conscious experiences, introduced by Edmund Husserl in 1931 (Howitt and Cramer 2014). Husserl believed it was important to isolate the conscious experience from the thoughts of that experience, and to know the pure experience requires the 'bracketing' off of all preconceptions in order to see a phenomena clearly, without being influenced by past experiences (Savin-Baden and Major 2013). Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) consider how Husserl's student, Heidegger, believed bracketing to be impossible as he developed the concept of 'worldliness' as recognising the:

embodied, intentional actor a range of physically grounded (what is possible) and intersubjectively-grounded (what is meaningful) options...The term intersubjectivity refers to the shared, overlapping and relational nature of our engagement in the world (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009, p17).

Merleau-Ponty shared a phenomenological interest in understanding our being-in-the-world with Heidegger and developed the aspect of embodiment to emphasise how people are embedded in the world and knowledge is thereby interpretative (Shinebourne 2011). The concept of embodiment chimed with the 'Thrive' training (Thrive FTC 1994) on children's social and emotional development that I attended in 2012. Thrive promotes an awareness of bodily sensations and emotions, and this seemed to make sense in light of the literature I was exploring. Merleau-Ponty (1962) asserts the body and mind are inseparable, and I will return to this concept in more detail on page 84. Sartre (1948)

extends the idea of a person's engagement with the world and looks to develop a sense of an individual as becoming. Kierkegaard (1974) explains this as an existing person always being in a state of becoming. This aspect of phenomenology links to exploring a person's sense of self/identity (Shinebourne 2011). IPA draws from the work of these phenomenologists to recognise a lived experience invokes an:

unfurling of perspectives and meanings, which are unique to the person's embodied and situated relationship to the world (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009, p21).

In researching how EYTS trainees make sense of their lived experience in an alternate sector of early years services, I am taking an interpretative stance as I try to understand their placement experience. In the next section I consider interpretation through hermeneutics, which forms a major theoretical underpinning of IPA.

Hermeneutics

Heidegger developed hermeneutic phenomenology, the theory of interpretation. Historically, hermeneutics developed from interpretations of biblical texts but Heidegger believed in interpretation as a conceal/reveal dynamic, as shedding light on what might appear or lay hidden (Shinebourne 2011). Heidegger viewed all interpretations to be influenced by a person's background, in that their historical, social and cultural contexts mediate and constrain their perspective of events or objects in the world (Savin-Baden and Major 2013). Thereby, interpretation is the interplay between the object of research and the researcher (Shinebourne 2011). Hermeneutic approaches exist in other research methodologies, but in IPA it is the researcher's analysis that can lead to meaningful insights, which subsume and exceed participants' claims and provides 'added value' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009, p23). Howitt and Cramer (2013) describe the IPA researcher's questioning of participants' own interpretations as tantamount to critical deconstruction.

The hermeneutic circle refers to the dynamic relationship between the parts and the whole at various levels, in that to look at any part you must consider the whole, and to look at the whole you must consider the parts (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009). In IPA the

hermeneutic circle underlines the iterative process of analysis, highlighting the necessity of moving backwards and forwards between parts and the whole. Analysis of data is mediated through a researcher's understanding of cultural and social context, in my study this encompasses the field of early years services in England. In the next section I consider how I might understand the trainee's lived experience in an early years setting and what part symbolic interactionism might play.

Symbolic Interactionism

Howitt and Cramer (2014) explain symbolic interactionism as the theoretical concept of the mind and self as emerging from social interactions between people through meanings interpreted from communications. The belief that people constitute their social worlds highlights that meaning making is subjective and influenced by biological and material conditions plus linguistic and social processes (Eatough and Smith 2008). Social communication can occur through the use of significant symbols; Howitt and Cramer (2014) explain this as when both the sender and receiver of the communication have a shared understanding of its meaning. How people understand their experience is thereby socially and culturally situated, and IPA recognises that researchers need to have some cultural competence to understand participants' experiential claims (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009). I judge my experience of the PVI and school sectors to provide me with sufficient competence to conduct research with EYTS trainees and to have a shared understanding of early years services. In IPA research, there is a further theoretical underpinning of idiography to consider.

Idiography

An idiographic theoretical approach focuses on the particular, rather than the universal, by intensive concentration on an individual in their own right (Eatough and Smith 2008). Often research is nomothetic in that it focuses on groups or populations, whereas idiographic, or single study cases, offer an opportunity to learn about a person's lived experience in depth and make connections between aspects of their accounts (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009). It is also possible to use idiography as a fine-grained approach with a small number of participants who share the same experience by looking closely at

each individual before drawing from other cases to identify significant dimensions (Smith 2004). I saw how this approach could fit with my research interest, and how an intensive focus on just a few trainees from the school and PVI sectors could potentially highlight connections between aspects of early years services that have traditionally been split between education and care.

Justifying the Choice of IPA

IPA is committed to a sustained engagement with 'individual personal lived experience and the individual's attempts to make sense of that personal lived experience' (Eatough and Smith 2008, p192), meaning that I could apply this approach to explore the trainees' experience of the unfamiliar placement. Whilst IPA shares similarities with phenomenological research, I felt IPA offered an opportunity to apply a more microscopic lens (Eatough and Smith 2008) by applying idiography to view each individual trainee's placement experience in depth. Similarly, IPA shares a common approach to meaning making as both narrative and phenomenological research approaches (Crossley 2007) but I felt IPA's openness to taking a critical and questioning stance offered me an opportunity to provide a more insightful interpretation of the trainees' experience rather than a descriptive approach, or a focus on the account structure. IPA offers a centre-ground positioning between phenomenology and discursive approaches (Shinebourne 2011). In adopting an interpretative phenomenological position I am taking an epistemological and ontological stance of considering the relationship between people's cognition, account and behaviour (Eatough and Smith 2008), in that I believe what EYTS trainees think, say and do in making sense of their placement experience are important aspects of socially constructed and culturally situated forms of knowledge and worth capturing. Having justified my selection of IPA, I state the research questions for this study.

Research Questions

My first research question aims to explore the lived experience of EYTS trainees in the unfamiliar sector:

How do graduate EYT trainees experience an unfamiliar placement during their training year?

I aim to explore the trainees' experience of an integrated approach to children's learning and development, as expressed in the EYFS (DfE 2014), in an unfamiliar sector. Therefore my second question is:

How do trainees experience commonalities and/or differences between the familiar workplace and the unfamiliar placement?

Finally, my interest in the split training system between education and care and the on-going tension between EYTS and QTS leads me to explore the trainees' emerging identity as teachers during their training period. My third question is:

How does the EYT trainees' experience of the unfamiliar placement influence their professional identities?

In the next section I discuss the design of a research study to address these questions and explain how the methods fit with IPA.

Methods

Semi-Structured Interviews

Data for IPA studies is commonly collected through semi-structured interviews in which an individual uses language to make sense of their experience. More widely, interviews offer a qualitative researcher an opportunity to access a participant's every day world, their 'life world' (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). In phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty (1962) draws attention to knowledge as built from direct experiences in the world and argues that to scrutinise and assess the meaning of such experiences, they must be re-awakened. In this way, he asserts a phenomenological science starts from the primary experience. I explain how the methods for this study were operationalised to re-awaken the trainee's experience on page 65.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that a semi-structured interview seeks to obtain descriptions of a participant's lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the phenomena. They assert the process is neither an everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire, but a professional interview with a purpose and with a focus on certain themes. The metaphor of a 'traveller' illustrates the epistemological positioning of an interviewer who 'wanders together with' the interviewee in a process of knowledge construction (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). In IPA, a semi-structured interview allows the participant a strong say in where the interview goes, allowing the phenomenological endeavour to bring to light the unexpected (Eatough and Smith 2008). The traveller metaphor seemed a suitable approach for this longitudinal study, in contrast to the metaphor of a 'miner', where the interview process is seen as knowledge collection through the uncovering of objective, real data or subjective authentic meanings (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Qualitative 'mining' interviews might focus on comprehension of specific concepts or processes of discursive construction in a dialectical approach. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) explain a dialectical approach as an analysis of text to explore linguistic structures and meaning.

Language is the tool of the interview process; whilst I could see the potential to elicit detailed, first-person accounts of a trainee's lived experience of placement, I was aware that IPA is not restricted solely to this method (Eatough and Smith 2008). My wider studies had also entailed an introduction to visual and creative methodologies that interested me because of my recent experiences during Thrive training, as discussed in Chapter 1. The training involved using tactile resources to elicit deeply held thoughts and feelings that might otherwise remain unspoken. I saw an opportunity to develop an innovative IPA methodology by synthesising visual/creative methods with semi-structured interviews.

In the next section, I offer an explanation of visual and creative methods. I then explain the underpinning theory that has led to the establishment of these methods as a non-cognitive way of gaining access to individuals' interpretations of an experience that goes beyond the medium of language in the construction of social knowledge.

Creative Methods

Merleau-Ponty's (1962) work is significant in the development of creative methods, as he asserts that the mind and body are inseparable. He opposes the idea of individuals being regarded as the sum of their brains, suggesting that experiences cannot be spoken about without including the body as a central component, which is often termed as the mind-body problem (Howitt and Cramer 2014).

In arguing for using the body and mind together, that is bringing cognitive and non-cognitive processes together, Gauntlett (2007) suggests that visual and creative activities can help individuals to reflect on, and understand, their own experiences. That is not say the body operates without thought. Gauntlett (2007) clarifies his view of the cognitive process as a person's conscious thoughts, that are then expressed verbally or through the body as a non-cognitive processes. Perhaps a more helpful view is to consider Merleau-Ponty's (1962) idea of the mind and body as inseparable, in that creative methods allow a person to draw from their whole self, without limitations. For example, when a person's communication is limited solely to language, as is often the case when asked a direct question, their response could be viewed as using only the mind.

The broad field of creative methods includes visual, performative and sensory methods. Performative methods create a performance, such as a dance, play or poem. I restrict my discussion of the broad field to visual methods, as means of representations through creative activities such as drawing, painting, model-making, taking photographs and making videos.

Visual Methods

Visual methods are processes that involve the hands, bodies and minds in creating something (a photograph, a scrapbook, a model), which is then used in the research process, most often to elicit data (Bengry-Howell et al 2011). The use of such methods may enable individuals to express their views more freely and Buckingham (2009) notes this is often claimed as 'empowering' for participants. Creative methods are frequently considered suitable for children and young people (Clark and Moss 2011, Howes and

Kaplan 2004), as enabling and facilitating participants' agency in research (Reavey and Johnson 2008). With adults, creative research methods have mostly been used in the discipline of media and communication studies with Jarvis (2008) focussing on metaphors to harness 'imagination' as a tool for exploring identity within the context of multi-professional teams.

Spencer (2011) discusses the 'visual turn' and notes how academic knowledge is shifting from the logo-centric, that is from the emphasis on the spoken and written word, towards a more voyeuristic society. There is a long-standing tradition in sociological, historical and anthropological research in the use of visual data, in photographs, paintings, drawings and films. A renewed emphasis on visual methods is emerging in psychology and education, marking a broader move towards participatory research (Buckingham 2009).

My studies introduced me to the potential of using Lego® as a research method. I learnt about its wider use by consultants/trainers in the business sector as an experiential process to enhance performance (Lego Serious Play® 2013). In other research studies, Dixon (unpublished 2009) uses Lego® as a tool for exploring the placement experience of trainee teachers in colleges of further education. Hylton (2007) applies the Lego Serious Play® method in a study exploring the benefits of play as a tool for developing creative leadership and organisational skills. At the time of writing, Dixon is using Lego® as a creative method in researching the workplace experiences of volunteers in a hospice.

Lego® seemed to offer a viable creative medium for this study and I considered playdough as a contrasting soft and pliable mode. I considered their playful links to the early years field as frequently used resources in trainees' workplaces to be a beneficial aspect. Pragmatically, both media are relatively manageable to use, store and transport. Lego® and playdough presented an appropriate package for visual creative methods in my research. I planned to take photographs of the models created and use these as conversation prompts in the subsequent semi-structured interviews. I remained alert to the possibility that some people might not wish to participate on the grounds that they viewed themselves as '*not creative*'. Creativity is a difficult concept to define; however, Gauntlett (2011, p730) helpfully offers this view:

Everyday creativity refers to a process which brings together at least one active human mind and the material or digital world, in the activity of making something which is novel in that context, and is a process which evokes a feeling of joy.

Additionally, I considered the aspect of power relationships in regard to using creative methods. Of most significance for this study is the interpretation of the end product, or model, as produced by the trainees. Gauntlett and Holswarth (2006) suggests that it is the participant's voice which should be dominant and that the researcher acts more as a guide for the interpretation. I chose to follow this suggestion by asking for individuals' own interpretations of their models and then analysing these descriptions with ensuing interview data, rather than interpreting individual products solely myself.

Whilst literature highlights many benefits of using visual and creative methods, Buckingham (2009) warns against the idea that these methods in themselves provide a more accurate representation of individuals' experiences, in that data cannot be viewed as transparent psychological processes, any more than language can. He asserts that all research data need to be analysed in terms of the context in which they were gathered, considering any social relationships between the participants, and the 'expressive' resources (whether linguistic or visual) that are used. As IPA involves a systematic and detailed approach to data analysis, I justify my use of creative methods in light of Buckingham's (2009) caution by arguing for their use along with the semi-structured interview method. Together, the methods create a suitable means to re-awaken the trainees' experience through providing opportunities and time to focus on that experience, as Merleau-Ponty (1982) recommends. Additionally, the methods create a suitable context, enabling participants to speak, to create and to represent how they have made sense of their lived experience of placement.

At this point of the methodological design, I planned a pilot project to trial the use of creative methods and also the IPA analytical processes with EYTS trainees studying on a Graduate Entry Pathway between 2013-14. Whilst these trainees would not be truly representative of participants in the main study in terms of their employment status and more limited experience of the early years sector, they did share the typical experience of

an unfamiliar placement and thereby comprised a group from which to identify a purposive sample (Savin-Baden and Major 2013).

The Pilot Study

The small pilot project was the focus of one module of the EdD course. I submitted a written assignment of the planning and execution of the project with reflections on the process and outcomes of trialling creative methods with a group of four trainees. I summarise the main points of ethics, recruitment, data collection and data analysis here and show how the pilot project informed my thinking for the main study.

Ethical Considerations

I obtained approval from the SHU ethics committee to conduct the pilot study. I prepared an information sheet and a consent form (see appendices 1 and 2) to aide potential participants to make an informed decision in choosing to take part in the project. IPA calls for a high-principled approach to ethics as found in other forms of qualitative research, and issues of gaining informed consent are widely considered to be essential (Mertens 2010).

From developing the pilot consent form and information sheet, I learnt that for the main study I would need to provide information on how I would manage a situation whereby an excess of volunteers outnumbered the intended sample size of 8 participants. Newby (2014) advocates researcher awareness of potential problems. I developed a strategy to manage the possibility of over subscription in the main study by dividing the volunteers into sectors before making a random selection from whichever group was oversubscribed (Punch 2014). The aim was to provide a fair selection system and to balance participants from the PVI and school sectors.

Recruitment

Participants for the pilot study comprised a purposive sample. Shinebourne (2011) notes this is the usual form of recruitment for IPA studies, in that participants need to be able to offer insights into the particular experience that is the focus of research. At the time, the

university was operating one EYTS course and, whilst trainees on this course would experience an unfamiliar placement, they represented a different pathway to the proposed main study. In part, this was a pragmatic decision to progress the pilot study in a sensible and realistic way by using the cohort that was readily accessible to me at the time. The justification was that the trainees would experience the phenomena that I was interested in exploring.

I aimed to recruit participants to the pilot project through communicating information on the virtual learning environment, but quickly found this did not generate any interest. I learned that face-to-face interactions are more effective in recruiting trainees, as they are more likely to become engaged and have an opportunity to ask direct questions about the project before making a decision. I resolved to approach the cohort of EYTS trainees for the main study by arranging an appropriate time in their taught sessions to speak to them myself. I judged the timing of this as an ethical decision, in that the trainees should be allowed a settling-in period to adjust to the new course and to be able to consider the opportunity to participate with an awareness of their academic and professional commitments.

I recruited 2 male and 2 female participants to the pilot study. I developed two questions to explore their experience of the unfamiliar placement in order to keep the enquiry manageable and suitable to trial the use of creative methods:

- *How do trainee Early Years Teachers experience the 'unfamiliar' category of early years services on placement?*
- *How is the trainee's experience conceptualised and embodied?*

I conducted two lunchtime sessions to trial each creative resource. I selected Lego® for the first session and I offered a selection of drawing materials and playdough for the second session. The participants unanimously chose playdough. In terms of beneficence (Punch 2014), I expected that providing choice would increase the likelihood of participants benefitting from the thoughtful, physical process of creating a model or drawing.

On-going Ethical Considerations

Whilst I saw the potential of creating a model as a positive experience, I was also alert to the ethical consideration of how sharing model making with others can be a revealing and emotional experience. Gauntlett (2007) advises how individuals may generate models with many meaningful and emotional elements, which can be a positive and powerful experience, yet conversely may release adverse emotions. I considered the possibility of a trainee revealing a disturbing or unsettling experience, potentially an issue of maleficence. Punch (2014, p49) defines planning for non-maleficence as minimising the risk of causing harm. I planned to limit the potential consequence of a release of adverse emotion by establishing an emotionally safe environment where trainees' contributions could be made in confidence. I arranged for the data collection sessions to take place privately in the trainees' teaching rooms. I planned my potential response in the event that any trainee showed signs of upset or distress, for example, by withdrawing the trainee to a separate area to allow time and space for him/her to regain composure. For more complex issues I would contact the University's student services for access to counseling services. I was mindful of Savin-Baden and Major's (2013, p333) recommendation of a researcher's 'excellent treatment of individuals'. They explain this to mean that a researcher should move beyond minimal standards of what is required to make respectful and beneficial choices in how best to treat their participants.

I reflected on my research skills throughout the pilot study, acknowledging Fontana and Frey's (2000) assertion that how a researcher presents themselves is problematic. I could have presented as a researcher, a lecturer, an EYP or simply as a learner. I aimed to present myself as a 'researcher' and achieve a suitable level of 'active participation', which Silverman (2011) recommends in order to establish enough rapport for participants to feel comfortable and at ease. This approach to positionality informed my thinking for the main study as I also considered the integral aspect of the power relationship between myself as a 'researcher' and the trainees as the 'researched' (Punch 2014). I decided to restrict the invitation to participate in the study to those trainees with whom I had no direct tutor relationship, considering that this would minimise the power relationship effect.

Data Collection Sessions

I conducted two 'creative sessions' for the collection of data on days that the trainees were attending University, during lunchtime to cause least disruption to their timetable. I borrowed sufficient quantities of Lego®, playdough, paper and pencils to facilitate the sessions. Please see appendix 3 for a full account of the creative sessions along with photographs of participants models A1-A4. Both sessions were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by myself. IPA requires a semantic record, that is all words spoken by those present (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009). The transcription process informed the main study in that it was important that I transcribed all data collected, to fully immerse myself in the data and ensure the participants were the focus of analysis (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009).

I conducted member checks by emailing the pilot study transcripts and photographs to all four participants as Savin-Baden and Major (2013) suggest that allowing participants to verify information helps to give interpretive research projects credibility. None reported any errors in the data. I used the email communication opportunity to thank the participants again for their time and contributions. I then began the process of data analysis.

Data Analysis

IPA is a subjective, iterative process that involves flexible thinking, reduction, expansion and creativity (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). The application of IPA processes is intended to be systematic and rigorous. Whilst the focus of my analysis was the participants' lived experience of a placement in an unfamiliar setting and the meanings that trainees made of that experience, the findings of the pilot study are my own interpretation of how the participants were thinking, thereby creating a double hermeneutic circle (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

As IPA was a new process to me, I followed Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) guide to develop my skills. The steps provide novice researchers with an opportunity to develop proficiency in analysis and are intended for use as an adaptable framework as researchers

gain a fuller understanding of the approach. The first step of the analysis was to transcribe the audio recordings of both sessions and re-read to identify general themes and specific details. I coded the data, naming the trainees as Participant 1, Participant 2 and so on. I later reflected that this was a detached and seemingly impersonal system of ethical practice, and so decided to use pseudonyms in the main study to be more in keeping with the qualitative approach, whilst protecting the participants' identity in line with BERA (2011) recommendations for anonymity. I explain the process in detail here as the following analytical process was important in informing my approach to the main study. Table 3.1 illustrates the first step of analysis.

Table 3.1. Extract from the first step of analysis.

Who	Line no	Dialogue
R	1	Would you like just to play with it? Are you used to playing with Lego?
P2	2	I got a set, got a set for Christmas when I was 18.
P1	3 4	I still got my little from childhood, I still get it out from time to time, it's therapeutic.
P2	5	Yes I think Lego is therapeutic, I use it a lot.

Key: R = myself as Researcher, P1 = Participant 1, P2 = Participant 2.

Using the transcript of the first session, I decontextualised sections that related solely to descriptions of participants' models. This fracturing of the narrative flow is usually intended for interview data, but I judged this to be a good opportunity to trial this approach to analysis of descriptive comments. With just the deconstructed text, I then employed step 2 of Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) analysis process of 'initial noting'. This step involves three discrete processes to examine the semantic content and use of language: descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments. Table 3.2 shows a colour coded extract of a participant describing her model of home.

Table 3.2. Extract from the second stage of analysis.

	Original transcript	Exploratory Comments
P2	Well it's quite big because we've got quite a big house, it's only got a partial roof because partly I couldn't get enough bricks to do it and partly because were having quite a lot of building work going on at the moment, so it's chaos everywhere, it's got a chimney because it's winter now, And we've got a fireplace. It's on pretty much from about seven in the morning right through until seven at night to keep the house nice and warm without leaving the heating on and we've had trees cut down in the garden so we've got plenty of wood.	<p>Big house We, our – views home as a place for her and her partner/family</p> <p>Building work going on Chaos everywhere – even tone, accommodated calmly, taken in her stride? Fire going most of the day Warm Is keeping warm without spending too much money is important? Wood for fuel</p>

Key: *Descriptive comments* Linguistic comments *Conceptual comments*

Step 3 of the process aimed to develop emergent themes. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) note how this involves an analytic shift from working with the transcript to working with notations, whilst simultaneously maintaining the complexities of connections and patterns between notes. Table 3.3 shows a colour coded extract of the analysis of a participant describing her model of the unfamiliar placement.

Table 3.3. Extract from the third stage of analysis.

Emergent themes	Original transcript	Exploratory Comments
Embodiment – scary, nervous Boundary crossing from loved, adored placement to this one Adult relationships key to reducing embodied emotions	I've got a frog and a lily pad and there is a couple of sharks swimming around, you know the scary bit, but actually there's a safe path to the land. But it was quite scary. When you first went in there you were nervous, thinking, oh, you know, 'What's it going to be like?' I loved my short placement, I absolutely adored my short placement, whereas the one I'm at now is different to that one, and I'm not sure how I'm going to take to this, and I was a bit nervous for the first couple of days and then I realised that, you know, that it was different but it was okay and the staff were lovely and everything.	<p>Frog, lily pad, couple of sharks binary danger/safety Scary Safe path, quite scary repeats scary – overriding impression Nervous What's it going to be like? Questioning what the experience will be Loved, adored short placement Different Comparing of placements, both unfamiliar Not sure unsure Nervous repetitive, indicates overriding feeling? Different but okay Staff were lovely adult relationships are key</p>

Key: *Descriptive comments* Linguistic comments *Conceptual comments*

I repeated steps 1 to 3 with data from the second session and was both surprised and pleased at the depth of interpretation I was able to achieve. For example, Table 3.3 shows my interpretation of adult relationships as a key factor in the reducing of the participant's emotional state.

Step 4 of the process involved taking emergent themes from the data and searching for connections. I extracted data that I thought most pertinent to my research questions, and collated these to develop 'super-ordinate' themes, which means grouping similar themes together and creating a new name for the cluster (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009).

Through this systematic analysis I identified 4 super-ordinate themes, of which these three were most pertinent to answering my pilot research questions:

- The embodiment of the 'unfamiliar' placement
- Conceptualisation of identity
- Experiences related to practice issues.

Evaluation of the Pilot Study

Overall, viewing the trainees' experience of the unfamiliar category of early years placement as a phenomenon seemed to be worthwhile and significant because it generated some interesting and complex data about the trainees' thoughts and perceptions of their lived experience. I felt that the use of creative methods was both suitable and effective to address the research questions in giving the trainees time and opportunity to clarify their thoughts and feelings.

The strengths of using creative methods in this pilot study included the participants' enjoyment of using Lego® and playdough, a factor perhaps increased as they had some agency in choosing the playdough over art materials. This informed my thinking for the main study as I chose to replicate this choice and provide a selection of media rather than a single mode. The positive social atmosphere, evident in both pilot sessions, was also a key factor in keeping the trainees engaged and focused. Given that the social dynamics seemed to be important in both sessions and positively affected the engagement and involvement levels, I noted that a reduced level of group cohesion could negatively impact

on the use of creative methods. The diversity of the models produced in the pilot study suggests that the participants did not copy each other; however, I considered that this might not be the case with a different group of individuals.

The timing and length of each session, planned for when the trainees were timetabled to attend University, appeared to work well. Participants indicated the lunchtime period and the room choice was both time-efficient and convenient, so I resolved to repeat this aspect in the main study. The group size of 4 participants was also successful, as each trainee had sufficient time to explain their models within the allocated timeframe. However, my intention to have 8 participants for the main study highlighted a potential limitation of this method and informed my thinking to operate two smaller groups of 4 participants.

The practical aspects of taking photographs proved a useful part of the pilot project that I learned from. I was already alert to the confidentiality aspects of ensuring participants were not captured in any photographs, but reflected that the quality and angle of some pilot photographs was poor. Accordingly, I resolved to take more time in ensuring the photographs of the main study models were adequately focussed and well framed, in order to do justice to the trainees' creations and to be able to use the photograph effectively as a visual means of stimulating discussion in the ensuing interviews.

An unexpected aspect of beneficence arose in that some data may have been used by individual trainees as evidence towards meeting EYTS standard 8.5 '*reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of provision, and shape and support good practice*' (NCTL 2013b). Each trainee received photographs of their own models and of the transcribed sessions and was permitted to use their own contributions at their discretion.

To summarise, I found that the IPA approach extremely useful in analysing the data. Whilst Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) stepped process is meant as a loose guide for novice researchers, I was able to interpret data systematically and rigorously, and achieve depth. Overall, it was a time-consuming approach, from transcribing the sessions to identifying super-ordinate themes. However, the process led me to establish a clear audit

trail that provides some degree of procedural dependability (Guba and Lincoln 1989, Flick 2011). On reflection, the effort to analyse the pilot study data was worthwhile, as I learnt a new process and felt the depth of interpretation was rewarding. Accordingly I felt justified in choosing IPA for my main study.

Rationale for the Main Study

As the foregoing account shows, the pilot study was a vital part of developing my methodological approach. I made a justified choice of IPA primarily because it is consistent with the epistemological position of my research questions, seeking to explore how the trainees make sense of their experience and how their professional identity is influenced through their perceptions and reflections. Furthermore, my selection of visual and creative methods combined with semi-structured interviews appeared to be a justified means of exploring the trainees' lived experience of the unfamiliar placement in ways that use both the body and mind, aligning with my belief that trainees' perspectives of the experience are located conceptually and are embodied. I planned to incorporate an optional sociomapping exercise with the trainees, using Lego® to represent their perceptions of professional identity. Sociomapping is often used to analyse and represent complex relational data and to generate qualitative data (Hawkins 2014).

I now detail the methodology of the main study, including the recruitment of participants, a timetable and chronological account of the data collection sessions, concluding with the strategy for data analysis.

The Main Study

I gained ethical approval from the University to conduct the main study with the 2014/15 Graduate Employed Pathway cohort. These trainees were employed in the PVI and school sectors and were a group from which a purposive sample (Shinebourne 2011) could be recruited, as they would experience an unfamiliar placement as part of the course. The decision to recruit from this cohort was also pragmatic, as this was the only Initial Teacher Training course for EYTS trainees that the University was operating and access to the group was relatively straightforward.

Recruitment

I aimed to recruit 8 participants, ideally 4 from the school sector and 4 from the PVI sector. From an all-female cohort of 18, I excluded 5 trainees from the invitation to participate on ethical grounds, mindful of Howitt and Cramer's (2014) advice on power relationships. As these trainees would be working with me as tutees, they might be regarded as vulnerable and should be protected from any potential adverse effects of a tutor and tutee power relationship.

The remaining pool of 11 trainees comprised of 7 practitioners from the PVI sector and 5 from the school sector. Initially, 4 trainees from the PVI sector and 3 from the school sector volunteered to participate. However, one trainee withdrew from the course before the study began, leaving a balance of 3 trainees from each sector. This number fitted with sample size recommendations of 3-6 participants for IPA studies (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009). I allocated pseudonyms to protect the identity of the trainees (Mason, 2002), selecting short names. Trainees 1, 2 and 3 became Anna, Beth and Cara, trainees 4, 5 and 6 became Debs, Erin and Fran. This allowed me to retain a clear and logical system, and yet present my findings in a more qualitative way than in the pilot project. Soon after the start of the research Erin withdrew from the course and her data is excluded from this thesis.

A Summary of Trainees' Professional Backgrounds

The mature trainees in the study, Anna, Cara, Debs and Fran have in-depth experience of their roles in their respective sectors. As discussed on page 50, Hadfield et al (2012) define three distinct stages of practice leadership for EYPs as emergent, established, and embedded. The judgement is based on how their leadership is aligned with their settings' needs and how well they improve and maintain the quality of practitioner interactions with children. I would suggest that Anna and Debs could be categorised as 'embedded' at the beginning of this study, given their experience in the roles of deputy managers in the PVI sector. Cara and Fran as Teaching Assistants (TA) had comparatively fewer responsibilities in schools, yet might be considered as 'established' practitioners. Although Hadfield et al's (2012) concept does not extend to TA roles, the idea seems

useful to apply here. Beth might be described as 'emergent' (Hadfield et al 2012) given her relatively novice status and role as a relief worker. The trainees' personal and professional selves are all multiple and diverse and particularly so for the mature trainees as they hold domestic roles and Anna also is a school governor.

Methods and Data Collection Points

I planned the data collection phases for the main study with a longitudinal approach to the phenomena of the 'unfamiliar' placement. Holland, Thompson and Henderson (2004, p1) describe a longitudinal study as 'predicated on the investigation and interpretation of change over time and process in social contexts'. I planned to collect data from the trainees before, during and after the unfamiliar placement experience. I timed the first data collection for one week before placement began to capture a sense of trainees' anticipation and expectations of the experience when relatively imminent. The second phase was timed for when the trainees had completed six days, over two weeks, in placement to gain their perspectives whilst the experience was still fresh and potentially still 'unfamiliar'. I timed the final phase for five days after trainees returned to their home setting, judging this would allow ample time for reflection on their full and recent experience.

A timetable was diarised according to the cohort's placement timetable, as shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4. Timetable of data collection points.

Timeframe	Methods
October 2014 – Phase 1 Before placement commences <i>'Anticipation of placement'</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creative methods with 2 groups of participants: Lego, malleable materials (30 mins). 2. Individual semi-structured interviews with photographs of models to use as a visual stimulus (20 mins approx)
January 2015 – Phase 2 On commencement of placement <i>'First impressions of placement'</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Creative methods – informed by effectiveness of 1st session with 2 groups of participants: Lego, malleable materials (30 mins). 4. Individual semi-structured interviews with photographs of models to use as a visual stimulus (30 mins approx)
March 2015 – Phase 3 End of placement <i>'Final impressions of placement'</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Creative methods – informed by previous sessions for 2 groups of participants (30 mins). 6. Individual semi-structured interviews with photographs of models to use as a visual stimulus, (50-60 mins approx)

In consideration of BERA's (2011) recommendations for ethical practice in gaining informed consent, I prepared and supplied letters of information and each trainee signed a consent form before data collection began (see appendices 4 & 5). I prepared a session plan to aid the smooth running of the session along with some personal prompts to help me elicit information and ensure data was as detailed as possible (see appendix 6).

Phase 1 – Anticipation of Placement

I arranged two creative sessions to run concurrently during one lunchtime, each attended by 3 trainees. For this first phase of data collection I used Lego® and then playdough for warm-up activities, asking trainees to represent themselves and how they felt about their current workplace role. For the third and final model, the trainees represented their anticipation of their forthcoming placement, choosing between the two media.

By the end of the creative sessions in phase 1, 6 trainees had made 3 models each; all were photographed and explanatory comments audio-recorded for transcription. I

arranged individual semi-structured interviews for the following week to accord with the trainees' university timetable.

The individual interview schedule for the trainees was disrupted due to unforeseen circumstances. I achieved 3 of the 5 intended interviews, but as the disruption occurred at the end of the teaching semester and the trainees were not due back into University until after the Christmas break, in consideration of the excellent treatment of participants I made new arrangements for the 2 remaining interviews (Savin-Baden and Major 2013). To minimise time and travel costs to the trainees, I arranged to conduct the outstanding interviews using a telecommunications application software at a mutually convenient time. The resulting interviews were both shorter than the average length of the face-to-face interviews, and both trainees were subject to on-site distractions as neither could arrange an interruption-free time/environment. For example, Fran had her young daughter with her, whilst Debs was situated within her busy workplace office. I audio-recorded the interviews in the same way as the face-to-face interviews and stored the audio files in line with BERA (2011) ethical guidelines on confidentiality and data protection legislation.

All 5 interviews were duly transcribed and member checks performed by emailing each trainee with individual photographs (Savin-Baden and Major 2013). No errors were reported. Please see appendix 7 for my reflections on the first phase of data collection.

Phase 2 - First Impressions of Placement

The trainees' placement in an unfamiliar sector of early years services began mid-January 2015. As in phase 1, I planned the creative session and interview structure asking the trainees to represent a similarity between home setting and placement, and then a difference. Finally, the trainees were asked to represent how they experienced being in the unfamiliar placement. Please see appendix 7 for a reflective account of the session. I conducted 5 semi-structured interviews as planned.

Phase 3 – Final Impressions of Placement

After 6 weeks in placement, the final collection point took place 5 days after returning to their workplace. I prepared a prompt sheet and interview schedule (see appendix 6) and arranged one creative session with all 5 trainees together. I provided the original media of Lego® and playdough, plus paper and pencils as an additional media. I asked the trainees to make three models: the first to represent how they felt on return to their workplace; the second to represent an important aspect of the workplace and placement settings; and the third to represent how they experienced the unfamiliar placement.

I audio-recorded the session and photographed the models and drawings. After the session, I prepared individual summaries of each trainee's models and transcribed comments to use as visual prompts for the interviews, which I conducted the following week. As these were final interviews, I also used summaries from phase 1 to allow trainees to draw comparisons between the start and end points of the data collection, to review how they had made sense of their lived experience.

When planning the final interviews, I allowed a longer period of time to explore the trainees' experience of the unfamiliar placement. I completed 4 individual interviews on University premises, leaving 1 outstanding. As there were no further University timetabled sessions until after the Easter holidays, I arranged to conduct the last interview at the trainee's home. I felt it important that the interview followed the creative session within a maximum interval of two weeks. Once the interviews were fully completed, I transcribed all and performed member checks (Savin-Baden and Major 2013).

Data Analysis

The data analysis process began with the transcription of each creative session and the 15 individual interviews. As with the pilot project, I performed all transcriptions to immerse myself fully in the data and to ensure the participants were the focus of analysis (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009). I attempted to use Nvivo software, alert to the positively reported capabilities of the programme for analysing data. I imported the audio recordings and used the transcription tool to segment the data (please see appendix 10).

As the segmenting process on Nvivo seemed slow, I used an alternative format in a simple Word document to capture my transcriptions. I imported this text format into the software and began to create ‘nodes’ according to descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) that I identified in Anna’s data. Appendix 10 shows an extract of the colour coded nodes, or categories of analysis, that I created. Whilst this was largely the way I intended to analyse the data, I found the NVivo format did not allow me to sufficiently engage or connect with the content. I felt unable to establish a fluid process of analysis. Thereby, I chose to revert to the simpler Word format used in my pilot study, which enabled me to engage more fully with the initial noting stage and to establish the necessary process of analysis into the development of emergent themes. I would suggest other researchers be cautious of qualitative data software if doing similar research in the future. I organised data into Word documents to establish a fluid process of analysis, adding transcript numbers before proceeding to the initial noting step for Anna, as described on page 70. This stage involves exploring the semantic content and language used (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009).

The next stage of data analysis was to develop emergent themes for Anna. As Figure 3.6 shows, I developed colour-coding techniques from the pilot study to identify descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments in the data.

Initial coding - Anna		
Emergent themes	Original transcript	Exploratory comments
Descriptive comments e.g. key objects events experiences linguistic comments e.g. pronouns, pauses, laughter, metaphor, Conceptual comments interesting feature prompts more questions		
Event – educational training after school was early years focussed, the only ‘suitable’ path Event - Competed college course and found work straight afterwards Event – temporary post then on to overseas work	P1 It's all I've ever done. All I've ever done, I've only ever worked in early years. I left school and wanted to do an early years course at college and everybody said to me 'if you don't get on it, I really don't know what you're gonna do' and I probably didn't know what I was gonna do. Er, did the two year course at college, found a job as soon as I'd finished college, er, in a day nursery [0.43] and although it were probably a really good experience for me, at the time, I were told that I'd not got enough experience to work within the unit that I'd been employed to work in and I were asked if..I were told that there wouldn't be a	R repeat, reinforce the importance Recount the words of others – they all see early years as the field for P1, no-one has any idea of an alternative career path E vent -Competed college course and found work straight afterwards L ack of experience was barrier yet she proved capable, but the decision shaped her career

Figure 3.6. Extract from data analysis showing initial coding and emergent themes

I followed the same procedure of analysis as described earlier for the pilot study, working through Anna’s data to develop super-ordinate themes from connections identified in the

emergent themes. I developed three super-ordinate themes for each phase of the data collection points, as shown in Figure 3.7.

P1 Developing super-ordinate themes

Phase 1

PVI role – professional values, processes and responsibilities	<p>Processes of home role</p> <p>Value – children as family</p> <p>Value – work life closely tied to family life, wok/life balance</p> <p>Value – 13 years in the role</p> <p>Value – being in comfort zone</p> <p>Value – investing in the next generation</p> <p>Value – role, educational attainment to protect it</p> <p>Value – ambition to teach but powerless to achieve</p> <p>Values/principles – tenacity, resilience</p> <p>Process of home role – burdening responsibility</p> <p>Process - EYFS</p>
PVI role – professional values, processes and responsibilities	<p>Education and care – education with a family feel, an all round package</p> <p>Education and care – development with nurturing, caring, attachments</p> <p>Emotion- passion for the early years</p>
PVI role – professional values, processes and responsibilities	<p>Principle/Relationships – children’s social and emotional well being</p> <p>Principle - Relationships with families x 2</p> <p>Principle – empathy, sympathy, caring, nurturing and trust a professional emotions</p> <p>Principle – empathy for parents leaving children for first time, apply emotional intelligence</p>

Figure 3.7. Extract of data analysis showing Anna’s super-ordinate themes

I then brought the super-ordinate themes together within a draft summary document, and began a draft narrative account to tie my interpretation of how Anna made sense of her lived experience of placement to her own words and meanings.

After analysing Anna’s data I moved on to the next trainee, Beth, mindful of Shinebourne’s (2011) guidance of keeping an open mind, considering each case on its own terms and bracketing the ideas and concepts that arose in Anna’s case. I was alert to my own positionality in the process of analysis and the need to bracket my fore-structures of knowledge, to some extent, to avoid overly influencing the identification of themes in the data. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) emphasise the importance of allowing new themes to develop with each new case but acknowledge that a researcher will inevitably be influenced by each set of findings.

Further Ethical Considerations

At this point in the process I shared draft summaries with the trainees as a group on their final day of the course at the University. I had two ethical considerations in mind for the meeting: the first was to gain their feedback on and validation of the data summaries; the second was to mark the closure of their participation in the project (BERA 2011). As a small token of reciprocity (Mertens 2003), I baked biscuits and muffins for the occasion to

demonstrate my appreciation for the trainees' time and contributions to my study. Debs was unable to attend the meeting due to a family bereavement. I did not audio-record the meeting but asked for permission to include any comments in the thesis.

Developing Idiographic Case Studies

After gaining trainees' approval on the draft summaries, I continued to develop each one into a detailed idiographic case study report without reference to extant literature. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) pronounce this part of the process as the most exhilarating as unexpected themes can arise. I found the process compulsive, as themes seemed to rise up and burst forward. In the same way as Gee (2011) expounds, at least a third to a half of the interpretative nuance was developed through the writing of each case study.

After completing the three case studies of trainees from the PVI sector, I then looked for patterns across their cases. This was more complex and time consuming than I anticipated as new themes emerged within the idiographic cases that led to me reconfiguring and relabelling the themes. I prepared a master table of themes for the PVI trainees, (see appendix 8) to inform my discussion chapter. Trainees' individual contributions were identified to ensure a transparent evidence trail.

I then began the case studies of the remaining 2 trainees from the school sector, taking care to treat these on their own terms. I chose to use extensive quotes within the case studies as the credibility of each case is derived from painstaking attention to detail (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). I prepared a master table of themes for the school sector and then merged with the PVI themes (see appendix 8). The themes informed the structure of the discussion chapter, another iterative process of moving from the tables to the case studies and back to the interview data and photographs of models.

The discussion in Chapter 5 draws from the convergences and divergences across the idiographic case studies, using extant literature to illustrate, complement or problematize the themes arising in this study (Shinebourne 2011). Table 3.5 shows the transcription notes for the idiographic summaries.

Table 3.5. Transcription notations

Transcription notation used in Chapter 4 and 5	
...	Material omitted
[child]	Explanatory material added by researcher
(Interview1)	Data collection source

Conclusion

This chapter has charted the development of my methodological thinking from choosing phenomenology as an established way to explore any lived experience, to selecting IPA as an appropriate way to examine EYTS trainees' lived experience of the unfamiliar placement. A novel combination of creative methods combined with semi-structured interviews was designed to explore what a placement experience means to the trainees and to understand how they make sense of it. A pilot study was helpful in trialling the combination of methods and in familiarising myself with the rigorous and systematic process of data analysis. The main study was designed to collect longitudinal data at 3 key points, generating 45 models and drawings that were captured on photographs, along with 15 individual interview transcripts. Data were analysed in an iterative process to develop themes and superordinate themes that informed the development of idiographic case studies. The next chapter presents each trainee's case study, beginning with Anna, Beth and Debs from PVI sector workplaces and concluding with Cara and Fran from school sector workplaces.

CHAPTER 4: IDIOGRAPHIC CASE STUDIES

In this chapter I present the idiographic analyses for Anna, Beth and Debs as trainees from PVI sector workplaces, followed by Cara and Fran from school sector workplaces. I include some key data on individual trainees as introduced in Chapters 1 and 3. I attempt to stay close to their lived experiences of their workplaces and their 'unfamiliar' placements in my interpretations of their professional background and roles. I then move on to illuminate how these trainees make sense of their anticipation and experience of placement and how this influenced their professional identity. Each case study follows a similar structure but is adjusted according to the themes most important to that individual. I conclude each case study with representations of each trainee's arrival back in their workplaces and provide an individual summary.

Anna - an Experienced Practitioner and Manager in the PVI Sector

Professional Background

Anna describes her professional trajectory as beginning when she left school aged 16. She embarked upon early years training, reporting her interest in working with young children meant that this was the only 'pathway' for her, a view confirmed by close family and friends. After completing the early years course at college, Anna quickly found a temporary post as a practitioner in a day nursery. Whilst she felt she had proved herself capable of holding a role that demanded more experience, the temporal nature of this job prompted her to find work in early years services overseas. Anna reports that, on her return to the UK five years later, she immediately secured a post as a practitioner in a day nursery and achieved a promotion to deputy manager within six months. Anna reports how her professional knowledge continued to develop through part time study whilst working full time:

I'm not a confident person at all, however, when it comes to my job role and my knowledge about early years then I am very confident. (Anna, Interview 1)

With 13 years of experience in the field and holding the position of manager, Anna describes her role as to:

support, lead, deliver, model...constantly communicating different ways of delivering practice, modelling practice, communicating with staff, children, parents, management. (Anna, Creative session 1)

Anna's use of official discourse, such as '*support, lead, deliver, model*', in describing her role suggests to me that she does have a secure knowledge of Early Years policy in terms leadership and management roles. It seems that her ability to draw on and articulate such discourse contributes to her sense of confidence. Anna conveys her setting's holistic approach to children's development:

...so we put a lot of focus on the attachment and building relationships, not only with children but with parents and families...and its not just about a focus on education. It's looking at the bigger picture... (Anna, Creative session 1)

I notice Anna's assertion of her practice as '*not just a focus on education*' seems to infer this might be assumed as a priority over 'care'. Her clear identification of the two elements of 'education' and 'care' are combined to create the 'bigger picture'. Anna makes a connection between '*attachment and building relationships*' and children's development. The nurturing aspect of Anna's professional role and sense of responsibilities is clearly shown in Figure 4.8 as she views the children in her care as her second family:



Figure 4.8. Anna's second house

Commenting on her model Anna explains:

...all these little balls here just represent the extended family that are the children as such so I had just limited it, but each and every one of them are part of our family within the nursery.

Anna combines home with work in her image of a 'family within nursery' and this appears to demonstrate that she gives herself completely to her professional role as she does to her own family. Anna names specific emotions of 'empathy', 'sympathy' and 'trust' as being extended to all children, but places some limits on her emotional investment in relationships with children at nursery:

I don't carry the full emotional feelings that I would for my own children. (Anna, Interview 1)

The distinction between work and home life is less clear when Anna admits the work-life balance has tipped towards work:

...it's a massive part of my life that, at times, maybe, become a priority over me, but again that's my choice. (Anna, Interview 1)

'At times, maybe' indicates her cautious acceptance of this as an occasional, yet negative consequence of giving herself completely to the role, whilst 'that's my choice' shows to me that Anna experiences a sense of agency in relation to her actions.

I asked Anna if she viewed herself as an EYT trainee:

...I don't see myself as a trainee in the home setting, I see myself as the practitioner that I've always been... (Anna, Interview 1)

Anna explains that she undertook further academic study in response to new policies that threatened her position in the workforce:

...because there was no way that somebody was gonna take my job role away from me or the opportunities I worked so hard for just because I'd not got the qualifications that I needed...well I up skilled myself and did my foundation degree and topped it up, here I am today, but throughout that process I've always worked full time as well. So, its been challenging. (Anna, Interview 1)

I realise Anna's strength and resilience is evident in what I consider to be a vigorous defence of her job role and a seemingly unerring commitment to academic achievement over time. Anna's reference to 'challenging' denotes the on-going struggle to combine her leadership role and family life with the added pressure of academic study. With a responsibility for quality improvement in the setting, Anna describes the extent of these pressures:

I've taken a lead role in leading that and moving those changes forward, but again that's additional pressure on top of doing my day to day job, the day to day management, the workload of implementing the changes and putting these changes into place and their university work as well, is just extortionate when you combine it all together, working full time and having a family as well. (Anna, Interview 1)

The Oxford dictionary (2015) defines *extortionate* as a price that is much too high. I take it that Anna's academic and professional trajectory has cost her physically, emotionally and economically. Such competing demands on her time and personal resources might mean that the high price she paid could have been either personal or a family related, or both. Anna seems to deflect any notion of price being connected to her own children, as she cites them as the very reason for her tenacious efforts:

so its been a long process, a long challenging process personally, professionally, but I'm here and I'm still going – just, for them. (Anna, Interview 1)

There are a number of professional principles that Anna articulates as important in her practice; these include children's social and emotional wellbeing and building positive relationships with children as she explains below. Anna recognises and actively promotes the development of a supportive relationship with parents and families as being an integral part of developing relationships with children.

...you build, or I build individual relationships with individual families and individual parents because they all need to be treated differently depending on what their needs are, depending on what their experience is, depending on any additional support they might need regarding the children or any concerns they might have so we do take time, and I personally take time to get to know parents and families. (Anna, Interview 1)

I find it interesting how Anna moves between using the second person 'you', then the first person 'I', the collective first person 'we', and then reverts back to 'I' in this description of her practice. The changes between pronouns cause me to wonder if she wanted to make her own practice really clear within the broader picture of the setting's approach. Perhaps the underlying message here is that she can, and does, 'walk the talk' and this further underlies her professional confidence.

Anna's early career aspiration was to become a teacher:

I suppose early on in my career the ambition was to teach but the opportunity never arose and the path took me down early years and day-care and I've kind of stuck with that. I like to be in my comfort zone. (Anna, Interview 1)

I take this to mean that Anna is aiming to realise her teaching ambition by embarking on the EYTS course, whilst still enjoying her 'comfort zone' of the familiar workplace. However, a recent event at nursery shook the very foundations of Anna's 'comfort zone', interrupting what seems to have been a smooth and progressive trajectory in professional identity. Anna's planned absence from work to attend placement caused unpredictable tensions with the owner of the setting:

I don't think anybody realised how much of an impact that it would be for me to

*be released from my setting to go on to placement...I think panic's setting in.
(Anna, Interview 1)*

The issue resulted in a distressing period of turbulence for Anna, which led to increased workload and pressure whilst simultaneously disrupting her ability to cope with the burden and anxiety.

*I feel that...I should have a crash helmet on, everything's just crashing down,
everything's just falling apart... (Anna, Interview 1)*

Anna's use of the metaphors 'crashing down' and need for a 'crash helmet' conveys a powerful sense of danger in the rapid change she experiences. Her relationship with the owner had previously been extremely close and strong, and was now shaken and unstable, leaving Anna feeling uncertain, both personally and professionally.

*It's made me question the other person, it's made me question myself
professionally and it's made me question myself personally which has been quite
difficult really. (Anna, Interview 1)*

Whilst Anna acknowledged that the setting personnel were panicked about coping without her, she viewed placement as an opportunity for adventure. She expected to be happier and more confident as a practitioner, representing this to be a journey of varying speeds in Figure 4.9.

Anticipation of Placement

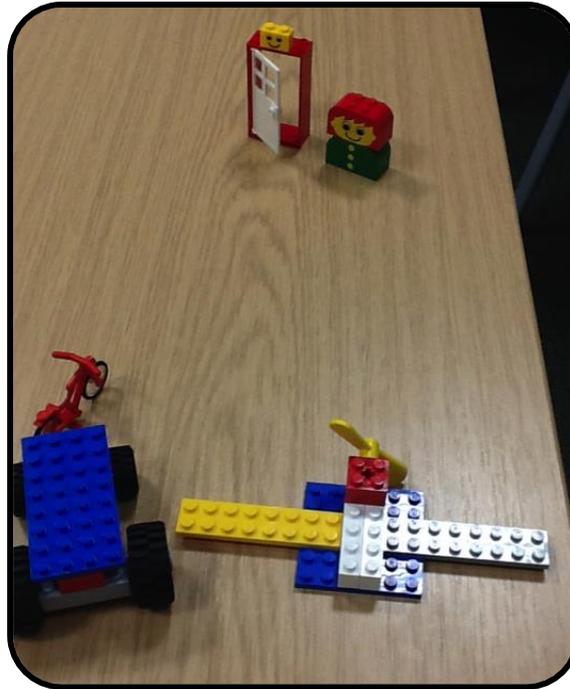


Figure 4.9. Anticipation of placement

Commenting on her model Anna explains:

I see it as an new experience, a new opportunity and that's probably going to be quite a slow journey (points to bike pulling a trailer) that will get faster (points to aeroplane) but it is a new adventure that could lead to many different things but could make me also reflect on what I do and why I do what I do now, leading to quite a small but happy person going through a new doorway but hopefully...I'll be a lot more happier and confident, having widened my knowledge and experience. (Anna, Interview 1)

I found Anna's description of herself as a 'small but happy person' very interesting. I wondered if the happiness was related to leaving behind the upset and distress of the recent event at nursery and moving on to less troubled times. The word 'small' could mean she views herself as insignificant, a single practitioner amidst the wider ECEC workforce. Yet I am drawn to the idea that 'small' is connected to the education and care divide, in that she feels inferior as a PVI practitioner. 'Widening my knowledge and experience' would suggest that she views herself as *becoming* a more complete practitioner. The extra 'width' gained through a wider knowledge and experience would

surely contribute to increasing her '*small*' size and possibly a greater degree of parity with her school sector counterparts.

As Anna is poised to begin her unfamiliar placement experience, I conclude that she presents as an accomplished, confident and experienced early years practitioner, despite her feeling small, and perhaps insignificant within the wider workforce. She is a strong advocate of child-centred pedagogy and of building supportive relationships with children and parents. Anna is further equipped for placement with life skills and some experience of schools as a parent and school governor. Despite the upsetting event at nursery, Anna was prepared to enter the alternate sector of early years services with a positive disposition and anticipation, into a school Foundation Stage 2 class with children aged 4-5.

The School Placement

Anna commenced her placement in school in January 2015. This was the same school that she attended in the previous semester for a five-day literacy placement as part of her EYTS course. She was thereby already aware of differences in how the school fosters parent partnerships as compared to her own setting. Anna also expected education and care to be separate approaches in school, rather than the holistic pedagogy she applied in her workplace. However, at the same time and perhaps in a somewhat contradictory way, she anticipated that the EYFS (DfE 2014) would provide a framework with similar processes to guide her practice.

Anna initially made sense of her lived experience of placement by describing it as a boat ride, rocking, bumpy and unstable.



Figure 4.10. A rocking boat

Commenting on her model Anna explains:

My boat that's rocking along the sea and I could tip either way and some days I feel like I'm sinking and I've fallen into the sea and then other days...I'm not quite sinking... (Anna, Interview 1)

Anna's early experience of placement in a school was manifest in a mixed range of emotions, from being unsettled and fearful at times to calmer periods of feeling confident and comfortable. These latter feelings could probably be attributed to the commonalities Anna identified between school and her own PVI setting, as described in the next section.

Commonalities between Workplace and Placement

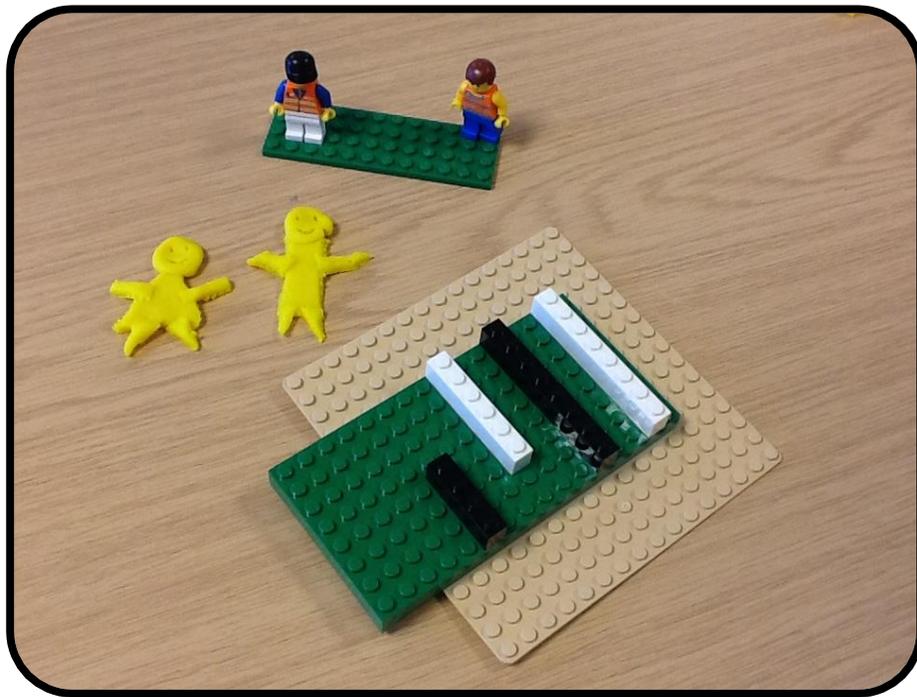


Figure 4.11 Commonalities between workplace and school placement

Commenting on her model Anna explains:

I've made the children out of playdough because I still think that whether they're in day-nursery or school that they're still of a young age and quite vulnerable ... I've got people here as teachers, practitioners, that we're still working to us aims of the EYFS so we've still got the goals...but then I've done this here and its kinda black and white because wherever you are...you've still got your policies, your procedures and you're governed by Ofsted.

Anna used the softness and pliability of playdough to represent children within the hard and rigid Lego environment of school. This gives a powerful indication of the disjunction between 'vulnerable', malleable children within an unbending, hard school environment. Interestingly the teachers are made of Lego, perhaps indicating they are congruent with the strict structures, and are hardened to school practices. I take it that Anna found policies and procedures in school dictated practice in a more authoritative way than in her own nursery, and that the spectre of Ofsted loomed large in school. However, Anna's own

observations of staff led her to conclude that the school teaching team mirrored her own passion for working with young children:

They do have their passion for what they're doing and they do want the best for these children. (Anna, Interview 2)

Anna believes that 'passion' is an essential professional value for an EYT. She judged that the children were happy and settled in school, despite the lack of pastoral care Anna perceived as related to the school's intensive focus on academic results. The school's predominant focus on literacy and maths was identified as a major difference in practice. Figure 4.12 shows Anna's model to represent differences between her workplace and school practice:

Differences between Workplace and Placement

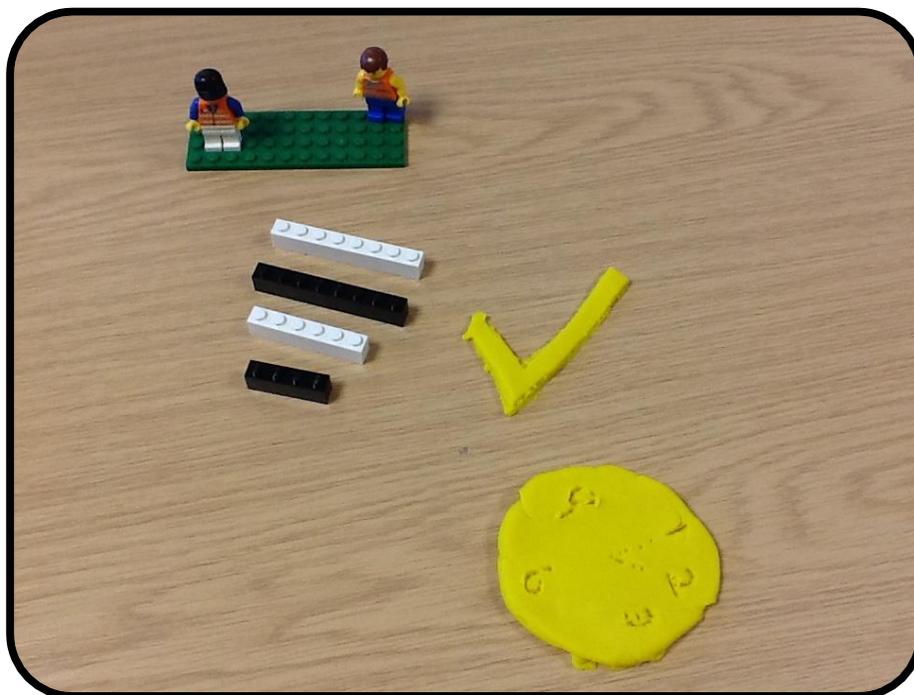


Figure 4.12 Differences between placement and PVI practice

Commenting on her model Anna explains:

I find that my differences...it is just structured focused completely and considering that we're working along the same guidelines, the same EYFS document...but for me its just a ticking box exercise, they want results...which represents my black and white policies again with this ticked because we've got to achieve the results

by the end of the year and I've put a clock in because everything is structured to a 'T' from when literacy starts and that runs through the whole morning and then maths starts in the afternoon.

I am struck by Anna's repeated use of the phrase '*black and white*' and the straight lines she uses in her models to represent both similarities and differences in practice. I hear her phrase of '*black and white*' as 'school is inflexible', 'school is overly structured', 'only policies and results matter to school' or 'school runs on predetermined lines'. This is clearly a difficult pedagogical approach for Anna to accept, and is contrary to her PVI experience as it conflicts with her professional principle of prioritising children's social and emotional well-being. She perceives the school's intensive focus on early literacy and early maths as resulting in teachers' expectations of children to be '*unbelievably*' high. I hear this as Anna's shock at the implementation of intense teaching pedagogies that she finds alien to her child-centred practice in the PVI sector.

Additionally, Anna struggled with the differentiated grouping of children according to their identified academic ability. She perceived that the group judged as 'low' were increasingly left behind, as they did not make as much progress as other children. Anna viewed the 'low' ability children as not yet having developed the skills to sit and concentrate for extended periods of time. She felt these children were subjected to an inappropriate level of intense teaching, another pedagogical practice that opposed her own professional principles. Furthermore, a lack of teacher autonomy in the relentless drive for results prevented any possibility of relief for this group.

although the teacher's aware of it, her goal is to get as many children to achieve and exceed the expected targets. (Anna, Interview 1)

As Anna expected, the school's approach to building relationships with parents did not match up to her own professional principle of developing positive partnerships to support the child and family in a holistic way. The fact that teachers could signpost parents to another school colleague indicated to Anna that parents were neither duly respected nor viewed as their child's first and most enduring educator.

We have so much time for our parents because we feel that its really

important...we had even more time for your vulnerable parents and your vulnerable children whereas what I've seen in school we've got less time for your vulnerable children and your vulnerable parents. (Anna, Interview 1)

I take the repeated word '*vulnerable*' to indicate the depth of feeling and passion that Anna has for supporting children and families who she judges to be '*vulnerable*'. Anna uses '*we*' as she talks of practice from both the nursery and the school perspectives, however she switches between '*our*' for the general term of parents, and '*your*' for parents and children termed as '*vulnerable*'. I wonder if '*your*' indicates the tricky and sometimes temporal nature of categorising parents and children in this way, and the use of '*our parents*' represents a much more tangible and defined set of known people.

In reflecting on other differences between PVI and school practice, Anna judged that teachers' relationships with children lacked the warmth and affection that she was used to in the PVI workplace. Anna perceives a paucity of understanding, sympathy or empathy for children and few opportunities to hear their voices. Whereas in her own setting, Anna would use meal and snack times to develop relationships, the school routines proved to be very different. She describes the school's routine for milk and snack as:

The children have got to get their own and clear up after themselves – you cannot touch anything to tidy up, the children have got to be responsible for it themselves. (Anna, Interview 2)

I surmise that Anna feels prohibited from interacting socially with children and is prevented from using opportunities for individualised learning that could arise at snack times. At lunchtimes Anna takes a complete break, again feeling restricted from social engagement with the children:

...we're no where near the children, dinner ladies come in at 12 o'clock and bring them back at 10 past 1. (Anna, Interview 2)

The use of exact times here seems to re-iterate Anna's earlier imagery of the clock, and her view of school structure. Yet the underpinning principle of the EYFS Unique Child (DfE 2014) seems missing to Anna through the execution of such routines. Along with a

perceived absence of a play-based curriculum in school, Anna observes that children have no opportunities to guide their own learning:

...it doesn't matter what they're doing, if they're called to that group they've got to come to that group, they've got to stop what they're doing and come and do that. (Anna, Interview 2)

The differences between school and workplace pedagogy caused Anna to question the school's practice. The tension caused her to wrestle with her personal and professional perspectives to make sense of the school's approaches:

...well, I can see why they're doing it and I can see that they get results but is that the best way to do it? And whether we like it or not, you are led by your school or your nursery and their own philosophies and aims so it's really difficult... (Anna, Interview 2)

Here Anna concedes there is no easy answer to the tension between policy and practice and accepts that the overall '*philosophies and aims*' of school and PVI settings are there to be steadfastly followed.

After completion of placement, Anna represented her experience of placement through the metaphor of a weighing scale, as shown in Figure 4.13.

Experience of Placement



Figure 4.13 Early impression of the placement experience

Commenting on her model, Anna explains:

I'm kinda on a weighing scale and there were lots of policies and procedures in school that didn't lie very well so I felt myself jumping off the weighing scale, however, as placement's gone on and I've built my confidence, I see, I've accepted that whether you're happy with policies and procedures sometimes you've just got to get on with them.

This tells me that Anna made a significant shift in her thinking as she came to accept the rigid structure of school and the strict adherence to policies and procedures by the end of the placement. She bracketed her professional values to 'get on' with the day-to-day practice. It seems that Anna explains this shift in thinking as increased confidence, although I suspect there could be other contributing factors at play here. I wonder if the weighing scale signifies that she has 'weighed things up', that she has taken time to reflect and come to terms with the situation. Anna goes on to confirm she has learnt much whilst on placement, and has indeed become a happier person as she had predicted in Figure 4.9.

*I'm a lot happier about myself now than when I was on placement, just with the knowledge that I've gained has allowed me to kinda see the bigger picture.
(Anna, Interview 3)*

I considered Anna's explanation of the 'bigger picture' as she compared school to her own setting, run by a small committee:

Whereas schools, you've got the whole wide bigger picture, you've got your senior leadership team you've got your head teaching team and if in my case... I've got an academy to work by, so there's always the hierarchy. (Anna, Interview 3)

I mused over the possibility that there was more to the idea of a 'bigger picture' than numbers of personnel and hierarchy as Anna returned to this phrase a further five times. To me, one possibility is that 'bigger picture' might also include an overview of the continuum of education between the ages of 0-5+ years. Anna has experienced the 4-5 year old section of that continuum for the first time. She can now see a fuller picture than the one she viewed from the PVI sector, pre-placement. Another possibility is that the 'bigger picture' might be an understanding of early years services as comprising the PVI

and school sectors. Anna's model in Figure 4.14 clarified my thoughts further in this direction.

Important Aspects of Workplace and Placement

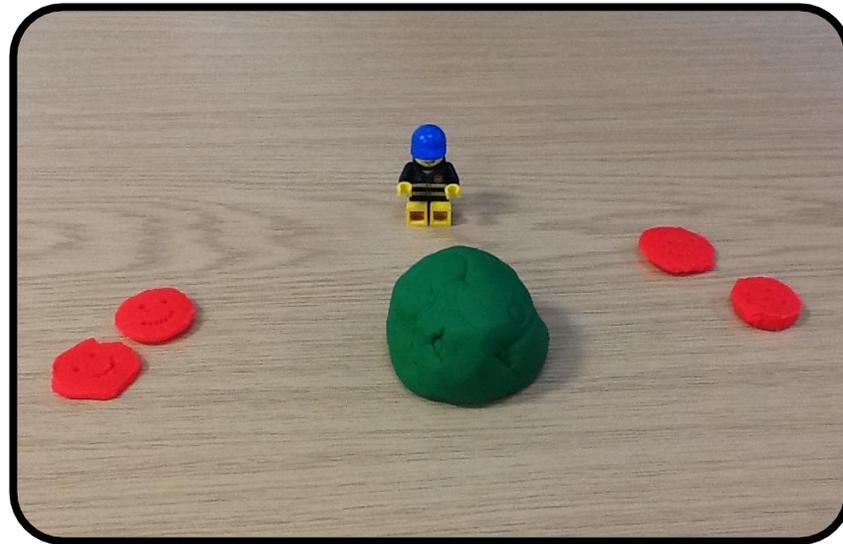


Figure 4.14 Important aspects of the home setting and placement

Commenting on her model, Anna explains:

The most important thing about my home setting and my placement being the children and whether I'm at home or in placement, the mountain that they've got to climb and the...high expectations for them all and I kinda, I put myself in the middle more so, because I couldn't divide myself really, to be at one side or another.

This shows a significant and clear statement of her shift in thinking, from a determined champion of child and family centred practice to a more reflective and accommodating stance. From her central position Anna can see, even weigh up, both sectors of early years services. She knows they both support children's learning and development and that children are valued first and foremost. She knows she is now able to practice in either sector. Perhaps the model presented in Figure 4.14 represents part of the 'bigger picture' for Anna, which is the children and their expected levels of achievement as viewed from two very different sectors.

Anna describes the placement experience as 'daunting'. She portrayed three other negative emotions she experienced:

*When I first went into placement I was really...unhappy...
I've done the emotional roller coaster, I've been at the lowest point of low.
...its been the hardest seven weeks ever. (Anna, Interview 3)*

Citing the experience as '*the hardest seven weeks ever*' indicates to me the enormity of the challenge this placement presented to her. Overall Anna found it a struggle to maintain a proportion of her PVI duties, in addition to her family commitments:

I was still working, I was relying on my mum to have my boys, my boys were saying 'how long is this gonna last?' so it was tough. (Anna, Interview 3)

However, Anna's determination to complete the placement prevailed. She identifies some positive aspects of the experience:

I suppose it has given me a little bit more confidence (pauses) I suppose it's widened my confidence professionally... (Anna, Interview 3)

In the following section I focus more closely on the influences of Anna's increasing professional confidence and, more specifically, on her developing identity.

Developing Professional Identity

I noted on page 84 how Anna presents at the beginning of the study as an accomplished, confident and experienced early years practitioner, despite her feeling '*small*' before her placement began. Her initial enrolment on the course and new label of 'trainee' had not caused Anna to feel any differently about her identity. In her workplace, she was continually immersed in her leadership role and day-to-day running of the setting. On moving to the school sector she immediately felt out of her '*comfort zone*'. Anna's identity is influenced by the change of role from experienced practitioner to novice as she assumes the position of a 'student' in the classroom.

I'm waiting to be kinda led on what to do...when I'm not teaching small groups...I want to just sit and observe these children and listen to what they're doing and thinking 'well actually, yeah, we could do this and we do that', that's taken away

from you. (Anna, Interview 2)

Whilst Anna felt she was acknowledged as a professional colleague in school through leading small group work and taking the end of the day session, she also felt like a novice.

*...when I think 'oh I've got five minutes, I can just sit with this group of children and follow their lead' I've got a tap on my shoulder "Mrs. ****, would you like to go and do this small group?" (Anna, Interview 2)*

Having to be directed to daily tasks and to follow the teacher's instructions meant the power relationship between herself and the teacher was positioning her as a subordinate, waiting for direction and at times being physically prompted to take action. Additionally, being called by her surname, rather than her first name, in school caused Anna to reflect on the complexities of practitioner status as perceived in the school and PVI sectors;

...it's difficult really, probably so because you're seen as an adult aren't you? And, not that Anna's not seen as an adult or somebody to respect, it's just how society sees you, isn't it really? I don't really know. (Anna, Interview 2)

The use of confirming questions, 'aren't you?' and 'isn't it really?' tell me that Anna is struggling to make sense of her different identities across the PVI and school sectors. In using her PVI name, Anna speaks of herself as a separate person, a PVI practitioner. It seems she has two distinct identities, and is trying to rationalise this by drawing on society's view of early years practitioners as differentiated between the school and PVI sectors. This strategy fails, as she concludes with, 'I don't really know'. I hear this as 'I give up' or 'it's too complex to work it out', indicating the unresolved nature of her dual professional identity.

Anna is aware of her own conflicting views as she judged school practice from personal and professional views:

I think, I'm seeing it a bit too personally as well because my little boy has just gone into foundation...but in a different school and I just think, 'oh my gosh', if that is what he's doing on a day to day basis I can understand why he gets up in a morning and he says to me 'is it an off day today, mummy?' And if I say 'no it's a school day' the look on his face just changes. (Anna, Interview 2)

The tension between the 'mother' and the 'professional' was creating a dichotomy for Anna, and this was further complicated by her experience as a school governor which served to highlight that maintained sector practices differ between schools:

I suppose I'm in a lucky position because I'm on the governing board at my local school and quite recently I did a learning walk the whole way through school and I saw the complete opposite [of placement practice], I saw that the morning sessions were an adult-focus but the afternoon sessions are child-focused, child initiated and the staff follow the children's leads. (Anna, Interview 2)

Initially, Anna's impression of placement caused her to doubt her long held ambition to teach. She questioned whether she could work in schools when the differences she experienced seemed to contradict her intrinsic professional values and principles formed in the PVI sector:

I am telling myself it's a short period of time, I've got to look at it in a professional view and I know why it's like it is, however, it doesn't have to be like that. (Anna, Interview 2)

There is a tension evident as her internal voice struggles to rationalise this sudden change of ambition with the reality of working with a result-driven pedagogy in schools. However, over time in the placement, Anna restored her ambition to teach and was encouraged by a teacher in the school:

...and having the support of the class teacher who was telling me "well you could start applying for positions within school and you'd fly through it"... (Anna, Interview 3)

Notwithstanding these complex and conflicting factors that influenced Anna's sense of identity, by the end of placement Anna felt she had moved closer to her idea of a professional EYT:

I feel I'm very, very close to it, I don't feel that I'm fully there, er, but I don't think I ever will...and that's really strange because I could be an early years teacher within day-care but I don't think I could do it in the setting I'm in now because I feel that the role that I do is completely different to the teaching role and you have to juggle so many different elements that my focus is not just purely on teaching, its on everything... (Anna, Interview 3)

Interestingly, Anna views the role of an EYT as two distinct occupations between the PVI and school sectors. It seems the PVI role carries a much broader range of responsibilities and tasks than is borne by a teacher in school. She restates this viewpoint more succinctly;

...it's the same job but it's a completely different job... (Anna, Interview 2)

I take it that Anna's placement experience in school is so radically different from her PVI role that it is problematic for her to amalgamate the two identities under the single title of EYT.

Return to the PVI Workplace

Anna uses paper and pencil for the first time in this project to represent how she feels about her role on her return to her home setting. She creates a book and returns to the metaphor of a journey in the form of a story as shown in Figure 4.15.

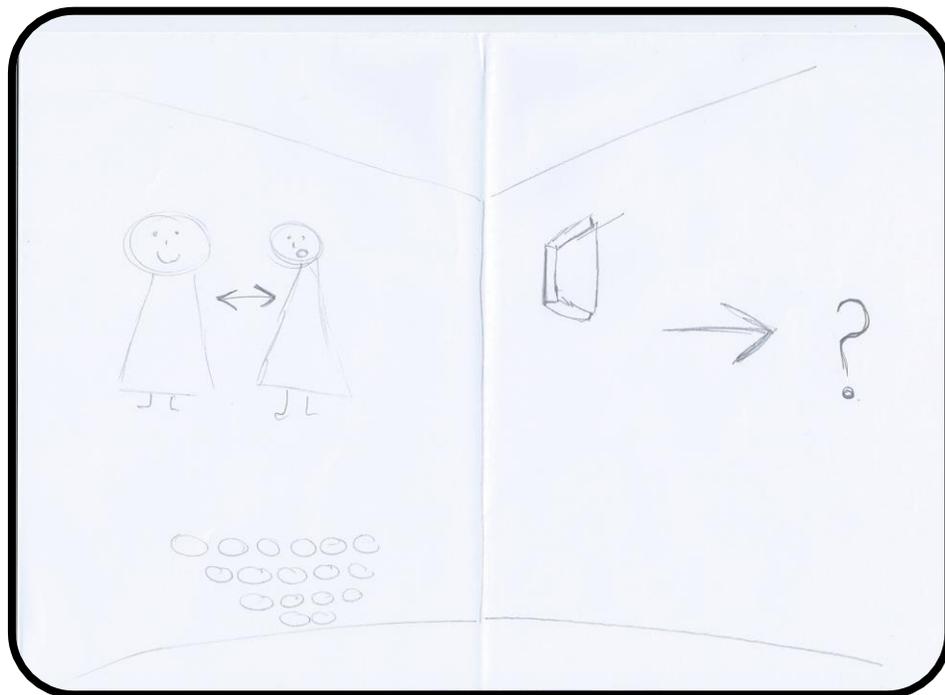


Figure 4.15 Book of feelings about returning home

Commenting on her drawing Anna explains:

I made a book because I feel like I started a journey and it's not quite at the end of the journey and we're at the middle part of the story.

Anna's notion of a *journey* and going through doorways is evident here and in Figure 4.9, showing me that this is one way she makes sense of her lived experiences. I wonder what her overall *journey* is, and consider there are at least two possibilities. The first could be the *journey* of the EYTS course, a contained period of time with specific goals and targets to be completed. The tangible achievement of the status at the end of the process could signify the end of the journey. The second possibility is the *journey* could mean Anna's career, as this is clearly a significant part of her life. Revisiting thoughts of her long held ambition to teach and then temporarily letting go, only to recover her dream once more, would represent a much longer, more significant but turbulent journey.

Thoughts of a teaching career are heightened as Anna's return to her PVI setting involves working with a different age group.

I'm a little bit apprehensive about stepping down to the under-2s although I have got some experience I realise that's not where my passion actually lies. (Anna, Interview 3)

Anna's use of the term '*stepping down*' causes me to question if she sees the new age group as a stepping down in terms of their younger age. It may be that '*stepping down*' for Anna represents a change from a frenetic pace of school to a gentler, less pressured environment. Interestingly, Anna used the same phrase to describe taking '*a step down*' from the pressure of her role of manager into the role of student on placement. As she goes on to describe her realisation that the under-2s are '*not where her passion lies*', this indicates to me that she is now sure of the age group that she would like to work with. I take it that her preferred age group is now 4-5s in school.

Post-Placement Identity

Her role of manager in the PVI setting was somewhat changed after her placement experience. The owner and practitioners she had left behind had experienced changes of their own, having coped without her:

So my role's changed because as management said, 'they've had to do without you for seven weeks, we've managed, just, but we have' so actually they can continue to manage so everybody's role's changed, although they're relieved I'm back and its me that's got to stop myself falling back into that role and kind of moving forward in the new role. (Anna, Interview 3)

To me, this indicates a fresh start for Anna's role. With distributed leadership now evident amongst the whole team, there is the potential for all staff members to benefit professionally from the changes. Anna faces the prospect of a leader's role that is more manageable than before. With less time pressure and more support from the staff team, she is ready to settle into a more novel identity of PVI manager.

Summary of Anna's Case

Anna's initial experience of placement highlighted the unstable nature of moving out of her '*comfort zone*' and into the school sector. She struggled to fit into a pedagogical approach where children's academic progress seemed to be prioritised over emotional wellbeing and the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum. Anna's fundamental professional principles and values were challenged as she sought to make sense of the school's approach to education without the element of '*care*' that she valued so highly. Over time, Anna came to terms with the unfamiliar pedagogical approach in school. In doing so, she regained some sense of stability and peace of mind that had been lost in the early '*roller coaster*' days of placement. As placement came to the end, Anna conveyed a sense of relief at having '*juggled*' family commitments and acknowledged the difficulties of completing placement as a working mother. Anna returned to the workplace with an increased sense of confidence and more belief in her own professional abilities. She faced a new role on her return, in working with a different age group to before placement. Additionally, the workplace offered a welcome decrease in her managerial responsibilities and workload.

Beth - a Novice Practitioner in the PVI Sector

Professional Background

Beth is the youngest trainee in the study. Since leaving school, Beth has continued with her education and she completed her Early Childhood studies degree in 2015. She secured her first post in early years just eight months before embarking on the EYTS course. Her role involves providing cover for staff absences and break times, meaning that Beth moves between the different rooms in the nursery as and when needed. She describes the majority of her professional experience as being derived from course placements. This extends overseas as she spent two weeks in a Canadian school. Beth also devotes some of her free time to coaching children in dance and trampolining, extending her experience of working with children. It was Beth's manager, who herself completed the EYPS course, who suggested Beth might enrol on the EYTS course.

...well I hadn't got any other plans for this year and...I thought, well, I may as well get another qualification while I'm (laughs) not sure where I'm going. (Beth, Interview 1)

I take this as a first indication that Beth is unclear of her future career plans. Viewing the EYTS course as an opportunity to gain 'another qualification' indicates to me that Beth is secure and confident in her identity as a 'student'. She may see the course in academic terms as a next and entirely achievable step of her university trajectory. However, Beth is intrinsically drawn to working with children:

I just enjoy working with children...they're just spontaneous, energetic and they just, they have, it's that fun, isn't it? It's just like being with them and everything. (Beth, Interview 1)

Whilst Beth shows enjoyment in working with children, the indication that she is not sure where she is 'going' suggests to me that Beth has not yet decided on a career pathway. Another possibility is that she may want to work in another location or return overseas. Beth's laugh could indicate that she realises this is an unusual position for an EYTS trainee. She has compared her situation to that of her peers and finds others are more settled in, and sure of, their roles:

I listen to everyone else talking and they've got such responsibilities and like they're managers or they're even just like full workers with all their key children (Beth, Creative session 1)

One reason that Beth may be unsure of her career pathway could be due to the temporal nature of being a relief worker. Beth moves between rooms to cover for staff breaks and absences.

I haven't got any like particular responsibilities because I go in all the different rooms so I get to just sit down and play with their kids and forget like, all the actual nitty-gritty of the role. (Beth, Interview 1)

Beth seems to imply an unfettered role that brings both advantages and disadvantages. The phrasing '*I get to just sit down and play*' causes me to wonder whether Beth is authorised to play freely, whereas her colleagues have 'key person' responsibilities and have to undertake the '*nitty-gritty*' aspect of the role. Whilst some would consider the term '*nitty-gritty*' to be politically incorrect due to perceived links to head lice and slavery, the Oxford Dictionary (2015) defines the term as meaning the most important aspects or practical details of a subject or situation. I take it that Beth uses the term to mean the aspects of the key person's responsibilities that include observing, assessing, planning for children's individual needs and working with parents. For Beth to be devoid of such responsibilities promotes a sense of freedom to '*just sit down and play*'. This notion of freedom and possibly even relaxation comes through strongly in Beth's model to represent her home role as shown in Figure 4.16.



Figure 4.16 Beth's home role

Commenting on her model of herself sunbathing, Beth explains:

...it looks like I'm really on holiday... I just flit about wherever I am needed really... so it's nice.

Whilst it seems clear to me that Beth enjoys the relative lack of responsibilities in her role, she also shows an appreciation that she may be at a disadvantage in terms of meeting the course requirements:

...at the same time there is that other side of it...it worries you whether you can actually get all the things that are needed for this. (Beth, Interview 1)

I take it that Beth is referring to building a portfolio of evidence to meet the Early Years Teaching standards when she talks about '*all the things needed for this*'. The standards demand a broad evidence base of professional practice and of leadership, which would be a challenge for any trainee limited to the role of relief worker. One aspect of practice that Beth expressed a particular concern over was working in partnership with parents:

I think that's probably the trickiest one because I do speak to them sometimes and I do feed back if I'm in the room...I can read it out of the diary and that...but I can't offer any further information to them...but that is probably the area that I lack

most in, the partnership with parents, really. (Beth, Interview 1)

The elements of unpredictability and inconsistency in her role would be likely to create barriers to building relationships with parents and colleagues too. Beth seemed to be in the early stages of building relationships with her peers, a process inhibited by the transitory nature of her role:

I think that's another tricky one as well, because I'm not based in a room I've not got that, like, other colleagues that I see every single day, I see them...but then on the other hand I see all the colleagues every single day...but I suppose I've got to know them all on a like, medium level, well, if that makes any sense at all. (Beth, Interview 1)

Beth uses the term 'tricky' again here to describe her relationships with colleagues and I take it she perceives some complex nuances. I wonder if Beth anticipates a potential struggle in meeting the EYT standards that call for collaboration with colleagues. I take it that she is still developing her thoughts as she weighs up the situation as she verbalises it, using the phrase 'on the other hand' to express an alternative view that perhaps she herself had not considered before. Beth concludes with 'if that makes any sense at all' and this seems to suggest to me that she is quite tentative in understanding and representing her own position.

I conclude that Beth presents as a novice practitioner who has largely maintained her identity as a 'student' or 'learner' at this early stage of her career. The indication that Beth is at an early stage in building relationships with colleagues and the lack of relationships with parents could be factors that are inhibiting the development of Beth's professional identity and thereby allowing the 'student' identity to dominate at this point in time. Beth's anticipation of a placement in an alternate sector of early years services seems to support my interpretation of her dominant 'student' identity further. This particular school placement is already familiar to her, having previously attended there to gain experience with children aged 11. Additionally, as Beth has experienced a number of placements as part of her undergraduate course, I take it that these recent experiences mean that she is relatively used to moving between university and placement

environments. To represent her anticipation of placement, Beth created the following model as shown in Figure 4.17.

Anticipation of Placement



Figure 4.17 Anticipation of school placement

Commenting on her model, Beth explains:

I know the school quite well, so I wouldn't say I felt relaxed about going, but I do feel calmer knowing the people...even though I've not been in the class that I'm going to...I'm happy and excited...hopefully, it's going to open my eyes to more knowledge.

Beth uses positive words in making sense of her anticipation of placement. To say she feels 'calmer' could be in comparison to her peer trainees, or relative to a placement where she did not already know the school. This relatively calm state further validates Beth's identity as a 'student' and experienced in unfamiliar placements, which is different to the majority of her peers who are experienced practitioners yet novice in unfamiliar placements. Beth anticipates gaining new knowledge from her experience on placement, using the metaphor of 'open my eyes' to accompany her model. I found it interesting that

Beth included the model of herself sunbathing as an aspect of her anticipation of the placement. It seems to bring together her present and future selves to indicate the placement as a journey to a more knowledgeable person.

The School Placement

Beth expected to encounter differences in how long children would be asked to sit down for more formal learning in school than she was used to in her PVI nursery.

...at nursery they're allowed to choose their own play throughout the day other than our focused activities we do with them, but, like, they'll only sit down as a group for if we're doing singing together or if they're having 'good morning time' that only lasts about 15 minutes whereas at school they are sat more often aren't they? (Beth, Interview 1)

Beth shows her preconception here of a more formal structured school environment. Alongside this, she shows curiosity in the different school ratio of 1:30 as compared to the nursery's ratio of 1:8 wondering how this would look in practice:

...just one teacher with 30 kids, like, we think its crazy when we've got like 16 kids in a room never mind when you've got 30. (Beth, Interview 1)

Beth initially made sense of her lived experience of placement by considering the emotions she felt and the learning she saw herself as accruing as shown Figure 4.18.



Figure 4.18 Early impressions of placement

Commenting on her model, Beth explains:

It was a happy face, a question mark because I'm happy to be there and I like learning new things about that, learning...different ways of teaching the children and the different format... it's just about learning and I'm happy to be there, I'm enjoying it, it's been really good.

I am struck by Beth's repeated use of the word 'happy' to describe herself as emotionally positive and stable, perhaps in comparison with her peers who were experiencing placement as a more turbulent process. In the moment my interpretation was that Beth's placement experience was very positive. Only later, when Beth described her experience in more detail in the following interview, I found myself reflecting on her model and wondered if the strong affirmation of her own emotional state was masking some professional unease about the emotional state of the children in school. My thoughts on this possibility developed as Beth described some the differences between school and PVI practice she had experienced.

Differences between Workplace and Placement



Figure 4.19 Differences between placement and PVI practice

Commenting on her model, Beth explains:

...its an angry face, but they're not angry, but the teachers are definitely a lot more strict...I brought the clock back because it's a lot more structured and 'we do this then' although they still do have the choices they still get all the free play they still get to pick what they want, it's a lot more structured...such a difference of expectations there are for them when they're there.

Beth struggles to accurately represent the teachers' emotional approach to the children as she chose a Lego person with an 'angry' expression, yet it was not anger that she wanted to portray. In describing the teachers as 'strict' but 'not angry' I wondered if Beth's underlying impression was a lack of positive emotion towards the children. However, Beth went on to shed more light on her interpretation of 'strict':

I think its more about the louder voice (laughs) more of a, not shouting at them but that louder, sterner like voice rather than perhaps just talking to them about what they've done wrong like what I do at the nursery. (Beth, Interview 2)

I take it Beth finds the 'strict' approach unfamiliar and somewhat uncomfortable. I wonder if her laugh is a way of lightening the issue. Despite softening the notion of a 'shouting' to a 'sterner like voice' Beth goes on to divulge that shouting does occur in school:

*...when they really properly do shout then I sometimes do think *we didn't need to go that far"... (Beth, Interview 2)*

In addition to the 'strict' nature of stern and shouting voices, Beth was uncertain in knowing how to respond to children's physical affection:

...because like a little boy just came up to me the other day and like grabbed me and hugged me and I did think 'oh can you do this?' because in nursery it's just like well you can, because that's how it is in nursery but you question it, don't you? Whether it's alright in school, so it is different...So it's knowing what that school says is okay to do. (Beth, Interview 2)

Beth's uncertainty about responding to a display of emotion in this example seems to link with the 'strict' approach she describes of the school staff. Overall I gain an impression that Beth experiences the school learning environment as lacking the nurturing emotional tone she is used to in the PVI workplace. Furthermore, Beth's uncertainty in how to respond to the hug and the need to seek the school's policy indicates her 'student' identity. She needs the confidence of ascribing to school's procedures to inform her professional practice as her own values and principles are over-ridden by those of the school.

A further uncomfortable incident that Beth describes notes the academic expectations of children:

a child started crying because they didn't want to do the writing that their focused activity was...and I was really like 'oh my gosh' so it's just showing that they're being almost forced into doing this but it's maybe not coming from, it's the teacher, it's from the head teacher it's from the government its all pushing down on them...when I was at placement like because I probably thought "well, they've got to do it" but when I've come back to uni I've seen that other places do it differently, then you almost think "well, why are you putting that much stress on the children if other schools are managing to do it different ways?" (Beth, Interview 2)

I am struck by Beth's reflective approach as she tries to make sense of the academic expectations placed on children. She was clearly uneasy with the situation the crying child was in and, at first, tries to justify the situation in light of pressure from government to head teachers to classroom teachers. This stance is questioned when she reflects on her

discussions with peer trainees about their school practices. I take it that Beth accepted the situation at face value in school at the time but that her ensuing reflections have caused her to question the ethics of this pedagogical approach.

Beth appeared more comfortable in describing some of the commonalities she had observed between school and her PVI nursery.

Commonalities between Workplace and Placement



Figure 4.20 Commonalties between workplace and placement

Commenting on her model, Beth explains:

I was just thinking that they still have their choices, they still have the time to go and pick what they want to do and they're still given different areas, erm, like within the nursery you've got your water area and all the different areas, they've still got all that...The children have got the time to choose, although they still have the other side, they still do have that time to choose what they want to explore and stuff.

I found Beth's reference to '*the other side*' to be an interesting way of moving the expectations of children into the background as she focussed on activities and resources

as commonalities. I noticed how listening to peer trainees' experiences influenced Beth's thoughts about other similarities between her PVI setting and the school placement:

I thought the same as her ideas how its like you've still got to follow your EYFS and you've still got to get your targets and stuff, even though its more in the school setting I think that is still in, you've still got to have all your policies in place, safeguarding and everything, I, when she spoke about that I did see there was some similarities that way as well. (Beth, Interview 2)

Beth reflected more deeply on the way the EYFS framework was used differently in school, with the focus on children achieving the early learning goals rather than learning through play. Beth identified a group of children that she perceived to be particularly limited in their access to free play:

...the children with the lowest ability which perhaps need play the most were being involved in the focus activities in a morning like the whole class was and then in the afternoon when all the other children were allowed to play that's when the interventions were done so then them children were pulled out "you come to me and do this, you can then come to me and do this, then come to me" so they got even less time to play than the rest of the children did. (Beth, Interview 2)

Beth's identification of children who 'need play' reveals a professional value around the importance of play to me that she had not verbalised before. I wondered if her professional principles were just beginning to form as she gained more experience and engaged in reflective discussions with other trainees. I considered that this could be a sign of her moving away from her 'student' identity towards a 'practitioner' or 'teacher' identity. The way Beth recounts the teachers' verbal instructions to the children 'you come to me' indicates a commanding and controlling style of teaching. The lack of names seems to indicate a lack of consideration of children as individuals, where children's voices are unlikely to be sought or heard. The metaphor of children being 'pulled out' implies physical force, yet I take it that Beth is conveying the teachers' power relationships over children through physical separation of the individual child from the group at the teacher's will. Beth's disapproval of this type of approach is indicated in her description of a maths activity she witnessed:

They had this five minute box which the children would come and, so for numbers its "right, can you put the numbers on there?" Which they were making progress but I felt that if them children needed that more why don't you just go and engage with them in their play and involve counting the sheep that they're playing with in the farmyard rather than, I know they might not, they might think "I can tick all them off" and "I've done the five minute box with them" but I don't know. (Beth, Interview 2)

Beth's example of the 'five minute box' illuminates an aspect of practice that she feels could be more effective if the practitioner had focussed on the child's interest. To say 'I felt' suggests that Beth witnessed the practice but did not share her feelings or suggestion of counting animals in the farmyard with the school staff. In her position of a 'trainee' on placement with little power, I hear Beth's 'I don't know' at the end of this passage as a symbol of an internal struggle. It suggests to me that there is an emerging practitioner within Beth who is positioned without agency to challenge practice in school. This seems to further indicate Beth's developing identity as a practitioner with her own values and principles who is now internally questioning practice, rather than taking a more passive and accepting stance of a 'student'.

Beth was also aware of power relationships between school staff. She observed a leadership hierarchy and style in school that was very different to her PVI setting. She noticed how the foundation stage teacher would use her power to resolve issues:

...if something was discussed and they couldn't find an answer to it, it would be what the foundation leader teacher said and that would be it. (Beth, Interview 2)

Beth noticed the roles and responsibilities between teachers and TAs were clearly defined. She discussed the implications of differentiated pay and conditions with the teacher following an issue over suggested changes to the key person system:

I think its also based on pay...the TAs in foundation stage leave before half past three every single day without fail...I think that's the issue they had with the key worker system as well because I spoke to the teacher about that as well and she said erm, "if I suddenly went in and said to my TAs you're in charge of these ten, I'm in charge of these ten"...they'd be like "so I've got to observe all these children I've got to do all this for this but my pay's not changing?"...and "that's not my job role...that's the teachers". I think, yeah, roles and responsibilities are perhaps more defined... (Beth, Interview 2)

Beth's use of quoted speech for the teacher's comments seems to present an argument showing two perspectives. As Beth did not show any clear sign of support for either the teacher's or the TAs' stance, I was curious to know her own views on pay related issues so I asked her directly to explore this further:

I think if you are expecting them to do more then you should erm, show that with the pay as well, if teachers are getting that much for doing that and you're expecting TAs to do a similar sort of thing then why should they still get paid less?
(Beth, Interview 2)

Whilst Beth seemed to recognise a tension in school over pay and responsibilities, I felt she was somewhat removed from an issue that has implications for her now and for the future. When I asked Beth if she felt any professional disparity with the TAs in school who earn more than she does, she replied:

I've never really thought about it to be honest. (Beth, Interview 2)

Whilst Beth had not considered underlying disparity issues in any depth at this point, she had assumed the same working pattern as a TA in school:

...it was a shorter day at school a lot shorter than what I do at nursery, I started at 8 and finished before half past 3, whereas at nursery you do like 8.45 'til 6, or 7.15 'til half 4, so much longer days. (Beth, Interview 2)

Beth seems to experience placement initially as a continuation of her student journey. I take it that her regular placement experiences as an undergraduate student combined with her 'relief worker' role in the workplace have supported Beth to adapt quickly to the placement school routines and personnel. Whilst she largely describes emotions of enjoyment and happiness in her lived experience of placement, I felt the instances of unease with school practice had darkened her overarching positive view. The unease led her to reflect on practice and to form her own values and principles. Such reflective practice signals Beth's changing identity that suggests to me a shift from 'novice' practitioner and student towards an EYT identity.

Professional Identity

I explored Beth's own perspective on identity formation through the use of mapping with Lego figures, as shown in Figure 4.21.

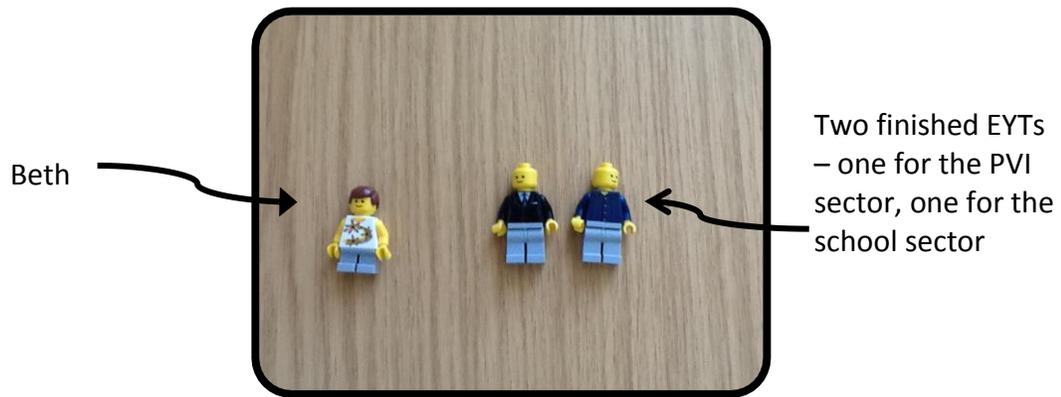


Figure 4.21 Beth's identity mapping

Commenting on her map, Beth explains:

I think I was quite far away 'cos I didn't have many responsibilities...its definitely getting closer, but how close I don't know, we'll see!

I am struck by Beth's use of two models to represent EYTs. Beth represents two distinct roles, showing a clear dichotomy between the school and PVI sectors. She explains why:

...they're different the EYT in the home setting and the EYT in the, a school setting ...because when you're in school setting its taking charge of 30 children and yes you do have a teaching assistant...whereas in the nursery its 1 to 8 ratio...and they'll all sit together for about five minutes in the day and the rest of the time its working in little groups or one-on-one, so I think it does differ...(Beth, Interview 3)

Beth is able to map her progress in moving closer to the identity of an EYT, and explains the experiences that have contributed to this position:

...while I've been at the school...I've done a guided reading session, I've done groups, a couple of groups like for their interventions and different things like that so I think I am starting to take on more of the roles like that anyway, erm, so I have moved on. (Beth, Interview 3)

I notice Beth returns to an informally dressed model to represent herself in the same way as Figure 1.2. There is an underlying message here of ‘informality’ which I am struggling to make sense of. I am torn between the informality of a ‘novice’ practitioner unfettered by responsibility and the informality of a practitioner who values a play-based approach. I wonder if the formal appearance of the finished EYTs would thereby represent responsibility and more formal teaching approaches. My thoughts remain unresolved as Beth represents herself differently in Figure 4.22 in which she sums up her lived experience of placement.

Experience of Placement

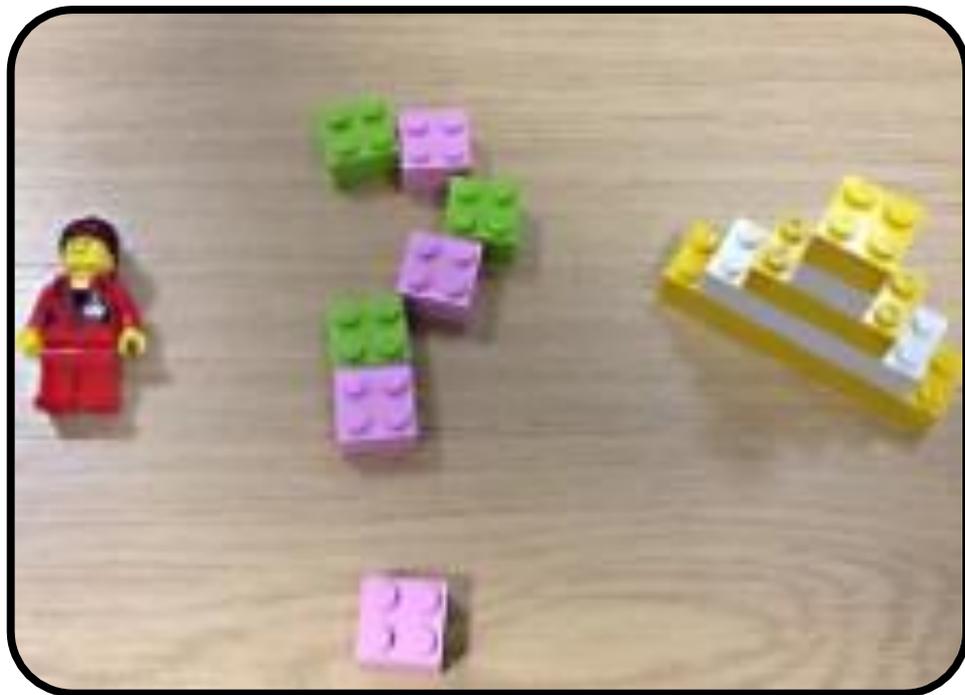


Figure 4.22 How Beth experienced placement

Commenting on her model, Beth explains:

I've chose this one... 'cos some of them have got quite angry faces but then I just wanted this one because it's a smiley face... there's also a question mark at the same time "so where do I go forward from here?" If I still enjoy doing both age ranges and both types of settings... I know I enjoy working in nursery now but I can also see that I enjoy working in a school as well so it's just building it up and seeing where it takes me next.

Beth returns to the notion of 'angry faces' and is certain about avoiding this stance for herself by choosing a smiley face. I wonder if this 'smiley' or happy disposition is also linked with her choice of informally dressed Lego models in Figures 1.2 and 4.21. Furthermore Beth returns to the imagery of a question mark as in Figure 4.18 to symbolise the uncertainty of the future. Perhaps one way that Beth makes sense of her lived experience is to acknowledge an element of the unknown, to recognise that the future is yet to be discovered. From Beth's statement of her enjoyment in working across both sectors, I take it that the placement experience has broadened her outlook on working with children across the whole 0-5 age range. Consequently she faces a new range of potential career pathways, which remain unknown to her at this point. The last element of Beth's model is a platform to symbolise a rising of accumulated knowledge, taking her upwards. I believe the upward movement signals progress and elevation, perhaps to a higher level of professionalism, yet the destination of this advancement remains unknown.

Important Aspects of Workplace and Placement

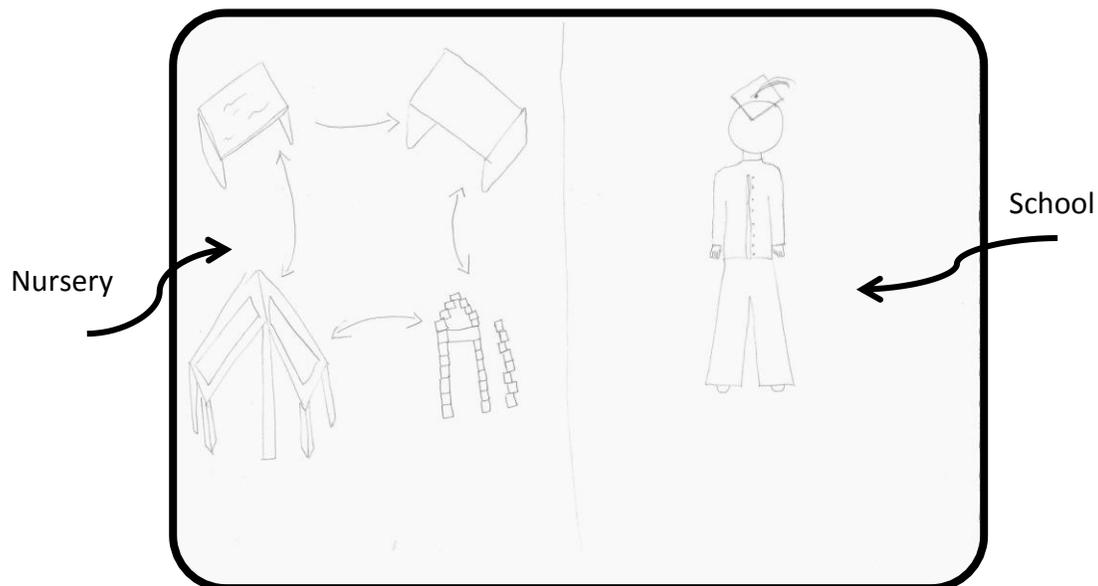


Figure 4.23 Important aspects of the workplace and placement

Commenting on her drawing, Beth explains:

So, this side's supposed to be at the nursery...that's supposed to be your water, your sand, your easel, your building, its supposed to be all the different resources and opportunities that we give to children so that, erm, they're allowed to free play, whereas when I was at the school there was a big push on making sure the children were ready for year one so, and it was a lot about making sure that they were building on their independence and making sure that when they went into year one they were ready basically to be able to sit down for the majority of the day and what was expected when they moved up there.

Beth's drawing clearly dichotomises the experiences of children between the PVI and school sectors. I find it interesting that Beth depicts the sand, water, building blocks and an easel to indicate a play-based PVI environment, compared to the sole image of an academic child to represent the school. Furthermore, her double-headed arrows indicate movement back and forth between the PVI activities, suggesting accordance with the EYFS Characteristics of Effective Learning (CoEL), in particular active learning (DfE 2014). I find further links to the EYFS principle of the Unique Child (DfE 2014) as she describes her PVI nursery practice:

...we're allowed to find out about their interest, everything we find out about is through them doing that and then we build on the focused activities and that and everything. (Beth, Interview 3)

Beth compares PVI practice with the school placement practice:

...although they did have a lot of these resources in the room the children were limited to the amount of time they were given to use it, so they were asked to sit down and do literacy and maths and phonic sessions and things like that so they were limited to the amount of time they did this, not a lot of planning was based on the children's interests either. (Beth, Interview 3)

What I notice in Beth's comparisons of pedagogical practice at the end of her placement experience is the use of 'we' and 'they'. The 'we' indicates her sense of belonging in relation to PVI pedagogy and the use of 'they' describes the school pedagogy in terms of what it meant for the children. I see a clear affirmation for the child-centred pedagogy of the PVI practice and a detachment from school pedagogy. I surmise that Beth's thinking has evolved over her time in placement as she has distanced herself from the school's practice. I wonder to what extent Beth's thinking was influenced by her return to her

home placement and her re-integration into the staff team after seven weeks on placement. I move on to explore this in the next section.

Return to the PVI Workplace



Figure 4.24 Feelings about the home role on return from placement

Commenting on her model, Beth explains:

I'm back with the team that I know and I'm friends with everybody so it's nice to be back, be comfortable...although I felt comfortable there...it's definitely nice to go back to what you know and what you're used to doing.

Beth expresses a close team ethic here that was not evident before placement. I wonder if the context of familiarity and her return to feeling comfortable has strengthened her peer relationships. An additional reason could be that Beth's role is less transitory than before:

I have been working in a room more so now for like my key persons and stuff like that, I had been for a bit before, like in the one-to-two's room, although I still sometimes do work round they try and get me in there as often as I can... (Beth, Interview 3)

This increased stability in Beth's role also provides more opportunities for Beth to develop relationships with parents:

I see them a lot more often get to speak to them and handover and everything... (Beth, Interview 3)

Post-Placement Identity

Such improved relationships would be a significant factor in the formation of Beth's professional identity. Interestingly, Beth's own views on her professional identity were changing. She reflected on her earlier representation of two dichotomised roles for EYPS and considered it possible to have a singular role:

...because I like to think that they would be able to bring the stuff from the nursery...an EYT would be able to pull that focus, we all know the importance of play and how much children learn through play erm, and I think that an EYT would be able to continue that through maybe a little bit more. (Beth, Interview 3)

Summary of Beth's Case

Beth made sense of her placement experience through the development of her own professional values and principles. Using her recent experiences as an undergraduate student may have enabled Beth to manage the lived experience of the unfamiliar placement without encountering any specific low points, unlike other participants. Although Beth had felt some discomfort when witnessing certain practices, she seemed able to reflect on the experience and identify a change in her professional principles. She explained this as cementing her belief in play. By the end of placement, Beth appeared to be aligned with the same preference for a play-based pedagogy as her fellow PVI workplace trainees. Beth returned to the home setting with more knowledge and confidence. Additionally the workplace offered a move from her transient worker role to a room-based position, providing more stability to meet the course requirements.

Debs - An Experienced Practitioner and Deputy Manager in the PVI Sector

Professional Background

Debs came to a career in ECEC services after working part-time as a care-worker to elderly and disabled adults whilst studying at college and then university. She became a full-time parent in 2006, when she started a family shortly after gaining her degree in medical sciences. In 2008 her son began attending a PVI nursery. Now diagnosed with autism, her son's SEN needs resulted in her working closely with staff at the setting. A close relationship formed with the nursery staff and Debs developed a passion for working with children. She volunteered at the setting over a period of 6 years, during which time her family expanded with the addition of 3 children. Whilst volunteering, Debs undertook the unpaid role of a practitioner and gained experience of the 0-5s but also experience of working with children up to 11 years at the breakfast club and after-school provision. As the setting expanded in 2013, Debs was offered a permanent paid position as a practitioner, rapidly working her way up to lead practitioner and now deputy manager. The nursery manager recently achieved EYPS and suggested Debs enrol for the EYTS course.

Debs' setting uses the Thrive approach (Thrive FTC 1994). I can see links between the Thrive principles, which prioritise children's emotional and social wellbeing, and the values and principles Debs describes as being important to her. Debs made a model from playdough to represent how she feels about her role in her home setting as shown in Figure 4.25.



Figure 4.25 Debs' love heart

Commenting on her model Debs explains:

Mine's a love heart 'cos I love my job, I love my role and its made up of all different parts because there's all different aspects of my job that I like, what make it altogether...probably the biggest bit would be playing with kids, there's little bits such as leading the team, I enjoy that...

Debs' model of a heart is a powerful representation of her love for her PVI practitioner role. She describes the 'biggest bit' as 'playing with the kids', which places engaging with the children as her main passion. Debs describes her relationships with children in more detail:

I'm really close with a lot of kids, erm, if I've had a day off and I walk into the room I tend to get a lot of them coming and diving on me for a cuddle, so yeah, I think I'm really close to them. (Debs, Interview 1)

I take it that the physical contact and expression of emotion highlighted here is important to Debs, a principle supported by the Thrive approach used in her setting through the notion of embodied emotions and the promotion of safe touch and holding. Debs describes a particularly close relationship with one child:

...we've got one little boy, he's got complex aggression needs and things and he'll only come to me and when I'm down in the room he's a lot better. (Debs, Interview 1)

This example suggests to me that Debs is skilful in developing relationships with children and that it is important to her to meet the complex needs of children. Her desire to support children with additional needs seems likely to be linked to her own experience as a mother of a child with autism. Debs describes a current situation with her son:

...my little boy 'cause he's in reception class and he's really needy, he's got big attachment issues, he needs, he has to have somebody who can cuddle all day and I do worry... (Debs, Interview 1)

I take it that Debs applies her personal skills as a mother to her professional work with children and is passionately engaged in both these areas of her life. It is likely that Debs would identify children in the setting who display similar behaviours to her own children and feel drawn to comfort them. I notice the importance that Debs assigns to 'cuddles'. Providing emotional comfort to children through physical contact appears to be fundamental to her practice. It seems that she develops reciprocal relationships with children that, to some degree, meet her own needs for physical contact and to provide loving care for children. I see a link to Debs' former study of nursing. As nursing is often cited as a caring profession, her selection of nursing as a career pathway would seem to confirm that Debs has an intrinsic desire to 'care' for others.

In addition to her relationships with children, Debs also describes her relationships with adults. She portrays strong relationships with her nursery colleagues:

...it's only a small nursery so there's not that many of us and it helps to be friends if er, if we weren't it would be very uncomfortable... (Debs, Interview 1)

Debs describes her relationship with nursery parents as:

Really good, I actually live in the area so I already know quite a lot of them so it's been [pauses] one of the difficulties I've had is getting them to see me in a different light, so seeing me in my professional role rather than the just 'know me' role... (Debs, Interview 1)

In these explanations about relationships with adults, I begin to notice that Debs includes both positive and negative aspects. For example, when Debs describes how living in the locality is an advantage, she counters this positive aspect with a perceived difficulty. When discussing her relationships with children, I notice she does not counter the positive aspects she describes. I wonder if her use of contrasting perspectives when discussing adult relationships is a sign of her consideration of the broader picture, or if her relationships with children are less complicated and more straightforwardly enjoyable for her. In the moment my interpretation was that Debs might be more ambivalent about her relationships with adults; however, as I gathered more data, the importance of her peer relationships became clearer and features more significantly in later sections.

As Debs had already alluded to some conflict between her personal and professional identity in the wider community, I enquired about her identity as a 'trainee' in her home setting:

...to be honest with you it's been quite difficult integrating that into work...I've read a lot and I've been fetching that into the setting, I've really enjoyed that aspect of it, my knowledge's growing all the time... (Debs, Interview 1)

Interestingly in this extract, Debs starts with a negative aspect and then moves to a positive aspect. I wonder if this means that Debs is comfortable in sharing her identity as a developing practitioner. I hear that Debs enjoys her work and increasing knowledge as I gain an increasing sense of her intrinsic passion for working with young children. Debs shows a sense of humour and a 'down-to-earth' approach as she jokes about needing to 'split up fights' between children. I take this as an acknowledgement that the practicalities of working with young children are not always straightforward. I gain a sense that Debs is wholly committed to her role but that she masks this by presenting herself as relaxed:

...sometimes I find that I'm right laid back and I'll just say 'whatever'... (Debs, Interview 1)

I wonder if her 'laid back' manner is in fact a mask to her deeply caring approach to her role that avoids drawing attention to herself. The idea of Debs' low profile in practice keeps returning to me and grows stronger. I see her identity of a mother and a

professional as entwined at this early point in her journey to EYTS. Debs uses playdough and Lego to represent how she felt about going on placement as shown in Figure 4.26.

Anticipation of Placement

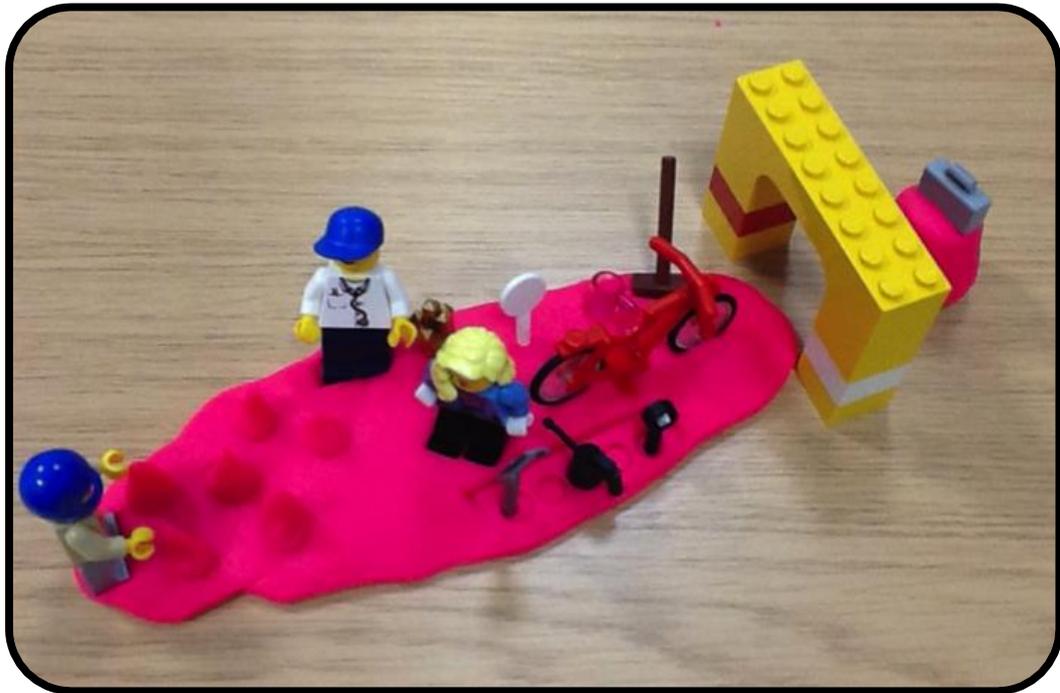


Figure 4.26 Anticipation of school placement

Commenting on her model, Debs explains:

I know I'm going out of my comfort zone, so I'm going in guarded... these represent a lot of the obstacles I know that I'm going to face when I go in because it's a new challenge... This is what I'm hoping I'm going to get when I'm there, loads of experience, different experience, meet new people and then hopefully when I come out of the other side I'm going to have lots to take away with me...

Her model of an archway to the 'other side' and use of a bicycle indicates to me that Debs views the forthcoming placement as a journey to an end goal of having 'lots to take away with me'. I am struck by Debs' use of the term 'I'm guarded' as this seems to confirm my thoughts about her masking the strong principles and values she holds. Alternatively, being 'guarded' could mean that Debs feels hesitant or apprehensive at the prospect of an unfamiliar placement, given that she has worked exclusively at her PVI setting. Debs acknowledges she is moving out of her comfort zone by leaving her home setting, yet she

prepares to enter the alternate sector of schools with a pragmatic view of facing 'a new challenge'.

Experience of School Placement

Debs expected the school environment would be different:

It'll be a lot more structured than we are and when we did that literacy placement I found that...they had a really structured day...they'd got set areas for set purposes to them areas where we tend to have resources and see what kids want to do with it... (Debs, Interview 1)

Her anticipation of 'more structure' was based on her one week of experience to focus on literacy practice in another school as part of the EYTS course. She hoped her experience of supporting children with additional needs would be useful:

I'm used to working with statements so hopefully that will help because I know what they're working towards. (Debs, Interview 1)

Debs commenced placement in January 2015. She initially made sense of her lived experience by modelling the places of her workplace and school placement as shown in Figure 4.27.

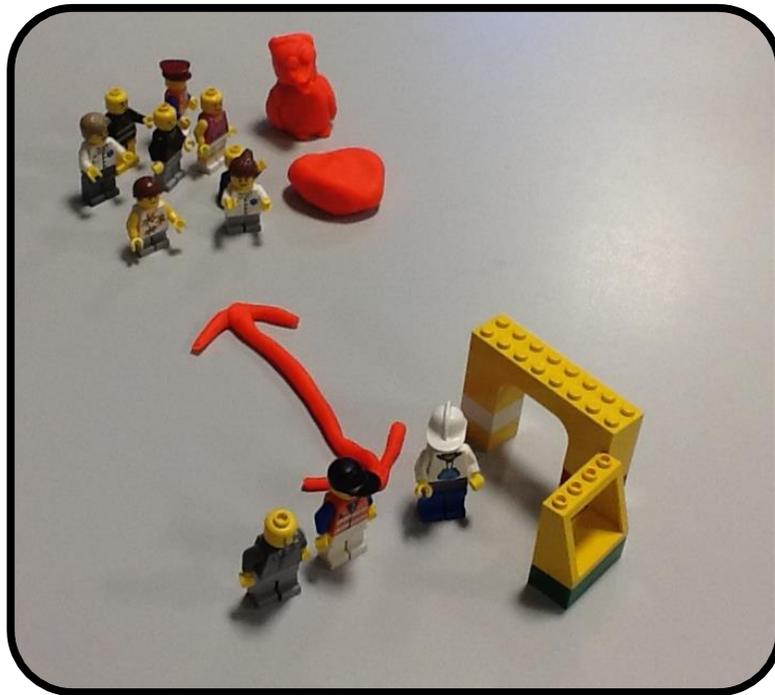


Figure 4.27 Initial impressions of placement

Commenting on her model, Debs explains:

I'm really enjoying the new people they're all very nice to me. And the kids, it's nice to meet some new children and make bonds with them. This is my little owl. I'm enjoying all the knowledge I'm getting in from there and being able to contrast it and things so...I'm really enjoying placement but I feel really torn. I'm missing my home setting. It's awful. I think it's a long time to be away especially when it's, my job's my life and its, eight weeks is a long time. I'm home-sick already so, there I am.

Debs conveys some positive emotion of enjoyment in making affirming relationships with the adults and children in school. The positive aspects she describes are then followed with negative aspects. Whilst this follows the emerging pattern of Debs' descriptions, I am most struck by the intensity of Deb's emotions. Her assertion of 'my job's my life' quite powerfully indicates to me that the PVI nursery means much more to her than a 'comfort zone' might represent. The resulting separation anxiety she feels whilst parted from her home setting is manifest as feeling 'home-sick'. In addition to her expression of strong emotions, I notice a theme of numerous relationships through the use of Lego figures in her models e.g. 4.19, 4.20 and 4.23. Perhaps Debs makes sense of her lived experience through a focus on relationships. Her valued relationships with adults and children seem

to form the basis of her strong attachment to the home setting and her newly formed relationships in school seem to support her to cope with her early experience of the unfamiliar placement.

The importance of relationships is further evidenced as Debs creates a model to represent adult-child relationships as a common feature of the workplace and school placement, shown in Figure 4.28.

Commonalities between Workplace and Placement



Figure 4.28 Commonalities between workplace and school placement

Commenting on her model, Deb explains:

There's quite a few similarities between my home setting there, the main one is that everyone who's involved in working with the kids are really passionate about, this is for a big trophy because there wasn't one, these kids succeeding...and the wellbeing of the kids as well, they're really, you can see, we love our kids in our setting I can see that in the staff at that school they're really passionate about the kids.

Debs focuses on relationships as she compares the passion of the school staff with the love she and her PVI colleagues feel for the children. Debs' inclusion of a 'big trophy

because there wasn't one' tells me that she views adults' work with children as deserving of recognition, yet unrewarded. I asked Debs for more detail about the trophy:

...in both settings everybody's bothered about kids' outcomes and wellbeing...this kind of job's definitely a vocation, isn't it? You don't do it for the money, well I don't 'cos I don't get paid much (laughs). (Debs, Interview 2)

Debs' explanation begins with a focus on adults' attention to children's '*outcomes and wellbeing*' then moves to describing the job as '*a vocation*'. The term '*vocation*' suggests that Debs sees working with children as an occupation that is worthy and requires dedication. As she acknowledges that she does not receive much in the way of remuneration, Debs seems to be confirming her earlier stated intrinsic love for her job. Indeed, as she switches between '*you*' and '*I don't do it for the money*', Debs seems to appreciate she might not share the same view towards pay as others. I wonder if her laugh at the end of the sentence is an acknowledgement that other members of the ECEC workforce receive better pay than she does.

Another similarity between school and PVI practice that Debs identifies is the practice of observing children and tracking their progress. However, she also acknowledges some differences in the practice. Debs commented on the use of the EYFS:

...its similar in both, I think, they do bits different in that...they're very learning objective focused whereas ours is a lot more incidental... (Debs, Interview 2)

Also, Debs' consideration of similarities led her to describe the differences she had encountered in the school's practice in planning for children's learning, as shown in her model in Figure 4.29.

Differences between Workplace and Placement

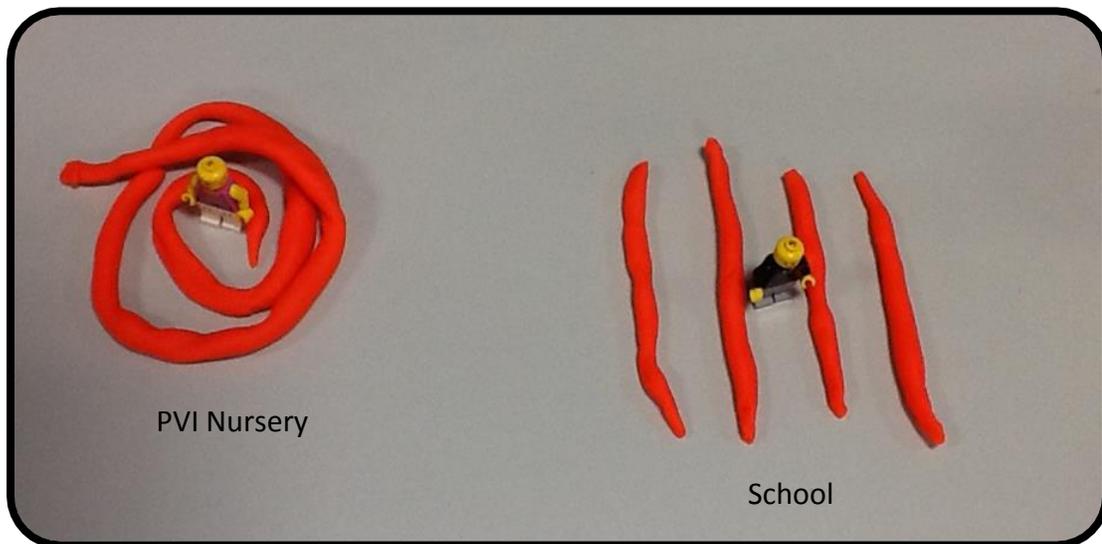


Figure 4.29 Differences between PVI workplace and placement

Debs comments on her model:

...this is all straight (school) and “this is what we’re aiming for” whereas ours is a bit more “we appear to be going this way but this child is taking us this way”... We tend to mould the objectives around our kids where (school’s) more moulding kids around the learning objectives.

Debs’ explanation of the different approaches to children’s learning objectives is clear and succinct. Pedagogical practice seems to be a subject she feels strongly about now she has experienced an alternative to the only approach she knew in her workplace. Debs expands on differences between approaches to individualised learning:

...(schools) don’t incorporate a lot of the kids’ interests into much of the planning...whereas ours is all completely, “this kid likes this so let’s get this in”, “these kids like this so let’s do it”... (Debs, Interview 2)

Debs notices the biggest difference between placement and her PVI nursery is the school’s structured approach to children’s play:

...children are only allowed to play in certain areas in certain numbers, it’s got to be four. They’re not allowed to take things from one thing to another area, it tips staff over the edge. (Debs, Interview 2)

To say it *'tips staff over the edge'* conveys to me an image of inflexible school staff who cannot cope with unstructured and potentially untidy play. I sense a joking, playful element in Debs' term *'tips staff over the edge'*. Yet I am aware she is conveying her view that untidy play is an aspect of child-centred pedagogy that others should be open to. The issue of pedagogy has become a serious one for Debs as she admits how the school's approach conflicts with her own practice, particularly in regard to children with additional needs:

I don't like that, yeah, it goes against everything I do so, for me I think its one aspect that I'm finding difficult, like with this little autistic girl she's a big transporter and she's got a really big transporting schema, she wants to take from here to over there and she's not allowed to do it at all and it kills me 'cause normally I'd be like "yeah, go and take it". (Debs, Interview 2)

Debs' strength of feeling is evident in saying *'I'm finding it difficult'*, and then a stronger assertion of *'it kills me'* conveys the enormity of the conflict to her. Additionally, Debs found the school's approach to discipline difficult to comply with:

I don't like to see kids on time-out and left on their own. I've only seen one incidence where a little girl threw sand and...nobody actually saw it but this little girl was made to sit in this corner and she were on her own for a good five minutes...and I wanted to go up and give her a cuddle and I wasn't allowed (laughs)...but it was just completely different to the way we'd address it... then she was told off for what she'd done wrong, made to say "sorry" and sent on her way. I didn't like it (laughs). (Debs, Interview 2)

'Time-out' is a behaviour strategy that conflicts with the *'time-in'* approach as promoted by Thrive and applied in Debs' workplace. Debs is able to state her discomfort clearly in stating *'I didn't like it'*. Yet there seems to be an underlying issue of power as she describes not being allowed to physically comfort and cuddle the child. I take it that the difficulties Debs experiences as conflicts to her professional values and practice are heightened by a lack of power in her role as a *'student'*. Debs confirms her identity as a student has been difficult throughout the duration of the placement:

...its really hard for me because obviously I'm a student, I'm there short term...I was really uncomfortable as to what I was allowed to do and I had to speak to staff to say "look, what can I do with this little girl?" er, and that did make me feel

*really uncomfortable and to be honest, a lot of the times I still feel like that.
(Debs, Interview 2)*

Professional identity

Debs noted how others' view of her as a 'student' changed when they learnt of her PVI deputy manager role:

*...when I explained to her that I was a deputy manager...it was as though her view of me switched...and I have seen it in other staff...and they've asked me what I've done it's as though you can see it switch, I think in them few days when they think I'm just a student I think it made me feel like a student, does that make sense?
(Debs, Interview 2)*

Debs' use of 'does that make sense?' indicates Deb's awareness of the complexities of professional identity and entwined relationships that she is aiming to convey. Perhaps verbalising the situation is an opportunity for Debs to make sense of it herself. It seems that building relationships with school staff whilst holding the temporary identity of a 'student' is fraught with pre-conceptions and judgements on both sides. Debs experienced a significant shift in her identity when she felt like a student. She was only able to redress her professional identity with others through conversation and some ensuing interactions:

It's made me feel a lot more confident and able to erm, put my opinions across. They've just started with 2 year provision erm, and with the teaching assistant, I've been talking to her about it and she's been quizzing me and when we were in the staffroom one day she says "oh this is so-and-so and she knows what she's on about, have a chat with her" and that made me feel like, a lot more valued other than just being a student and they were there to teach me... (Debs, Interview 2)

I take it that this instance was particularly meaningful to Debs, both in terms of developing a reciprocal relationship with a colleague and in the verbalised recognition of Debs' professional knowledge and experience.

Another means of recognising and respecting professional knowledge in schools is through the use of titles and surnames. This aspect of practice was unfamiliar to Debs:

*They've got to call me Mrs.**** but I keep forgetting and telling them... "come on with Debs"...I don't like it! (laughs) I really don't like that, that's one thing I hate...I don't like it, it doesn't feel, it's as though it's a barrier, it might just be a name but*

to me it does feel like a barrier. (Debs, Interview 2)

What I find interesting in her critique of this aspect of practice is that she identifies the use of formal names as *'a barrier'*. I take it that she means a barrier to developing close and personalised relationships, as these are core professional and personal values for Debs. To express her discomfort in terms of *'I hate it'* shows the depth of her emotion and I suspect her laugh is a way of lightening the situation and making it a socially acceptable way to convey her negativity.

A Problematic Situation

As Debs anticipated, the school were keen to use her skills and experience in supporting a particular child with additional needs. In supporting the child consistently on a one-to-one basis, Debs did not have many opportunities initially to interact with other children or staff, or to build any new relationships. As a consequence she became isolated and increasingly unhappy:

I think a lot of the low points were when I felt like I was just there as a dogs-body where I was following (child) around and it was really hard work and because I weren't part of the team, I wasn't, I didn't have same support as a member of staff would have, does that make sense?

When I was struggling, in my setting when you work with people all the time they know when you're struggling and they can see when you need help obviously they didn't know me so they didn't know when I was struggling...

...and it was one of the TAs... she went to the Setting Based Tutor and says "Debs should not be doing this, a student can't do it". Erm, and that's when they stopped and they got a TA from another class to come in and then it obviously got better. I think part of the problem was I didn't feel confident enough to go and say "no" which is quite surprising for me (laughs). (Debs, Interview 3)

This 'low-point' was quite significant for Debs. I take it there were several contributing factors that made this experience so uncomfortable for her. Firstly, the fact that she felt like a *'dogs-body'* is an undesirable experience and clearly impacts negatively on Debs' professional identity as she expresses a reduced sense of confidence. Secondly, she did not feel *'part of the team'* and, thirdly, felt she had no support to draw on. These feelings alone can be isolating but together with Debs' assumed identity as a powerless 'student',

they combined to make a weakening situation. With no established relationships with adults to draw support from, Debs endured the situation until someone took action. Debs' temporary identity of a powerless student seemed to limit her agency, causing her to act in a passive way that she refers to as 'unusual'. She describes the way she assumed the temporary identity of a student as:

'I think I entered into the mentality of it'. (Debs, Interview 3)

During this same period of time Debs experienced some difficulty in her personal life too:

A lot of the struggles I've had have been my own life with my kids and that, my oldest son's autistic and I've had a lot of problems based around that and normally work's my escape and obviously when I was one-to-one-ing (child's name) it felt like I was 24/7 dealing with this and then even when I finished with (child's name) I still didn't have my support network at work what I've got, so it were quite difficult. (Debs, Interview 3)

This explanation of Debs' predicament in school overlapping with her own family further underlines the importance of personal and professional relationships for her emotional stability. Once the problematic situation on placement was resolved, Debs experienced positive interactions. As placement neared completion after seven weeks, she declared that she '*felt like more part of the team*' and was able to identify both positive and negative emotions:

...it was good, I learnt a lot from it erm, but there were some times where I really enjoyed it and some times where I really wanted to go home (laughs). (Debs, Interview 2)

Experience of Placement

To sum up her lived experience of placement Debs returns to the metaphor of a journey as shown in her model using playdough and Lego, illustrated in Figures 4.30 and 4.31.



Figure 4.30 Debs placement experience (front view)



Figure 4.31 Debs' placement experience (side view)

Debs comments on her model:

...this represents my journey in placement, I started off here – not a clue what I'm doing, getting to the middle – hit a bit of rough ground, it was a bit dodgy at times but some things I struggled with and being away from things...and then these represent people on placement...so to start off with they were all stand off-ish, I was like the student, erm, but as placement got going and I got to know them it gets closer...I really, really like the staff, I could work with them, especially (colleague's name).

Debs seems to make sense of her lived experience of placement in two ways. Firstly, she does this through the use of a journey as a metaphor, similar to an earlier model shown in Figure 4.26. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Debs focuses on relationships. In this model these relationships with adults develop from distant and 'stand off-ish' to emotionally and physically close. Debs has a particularly close relationship with one school colleague and could envisage on-going working relationships with all. However, as Debs reflects further on her lived experience of placement, she is clear in stating that she does not want to work in schools as she explains with her next model, illustrated in Figure 4.32.

Important Aspects of Placement and Workplace

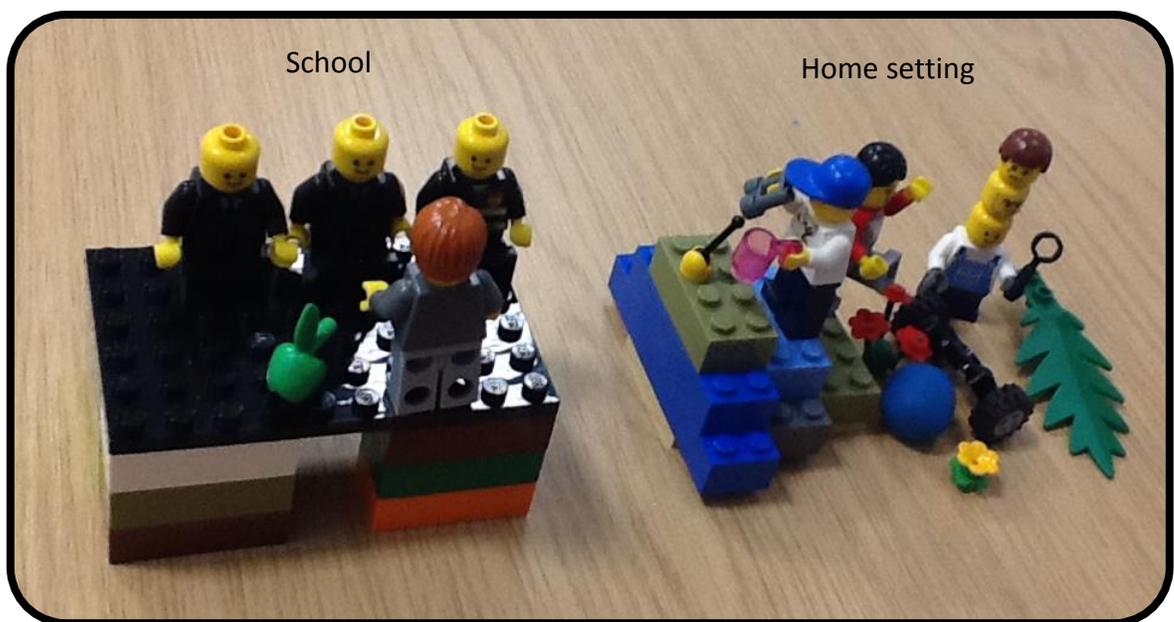


Figure 4.32 Important aspects of the home and placement settings

Debs comments on her model:

This is me (figure with blue hat), this is where I want to be (laughs) I'm not going over there again! (laughs) over to the dark side!... I feel like in school the most important thing for them is attainment it's a lot of attainment...but I think sometimes kids' emotional wellbeing's not took into account while we're pushing them. This represents what I think's important in ours...emotional wellbeing, it comes before everything else at this age, definitely...I've learnt loads on placement that I'm gonna take back, I just don't know what yet, that's why it's all a bit higgledy-piggledy, but I feel like I'm back in control now...

Whilst Debs' jocular tone is evident in laughingly saying, *'I'm not going back to the dark side'*, her message is clear, identifying her workplace as *'this is where I want to be'*. Debs represents the school placement as *'dark'* and rigid and her PVI home setting as more colourful, varied and *'higgledy-piggledy'*. Debs re-iterates her professional value succinctly in expressing that children's emotional wellbeing is paramount. She expresses a critique of the school's focus on attainment as overlooking the need for emotional wellbeing, which she believes is essential before learning can take place.

She also remarks upon the *'loads'* of learning she is taking from her school placement, an outcome Debs had anticipated prior to commencing the experience. Whilst she has not yet planned how to use her newfound learning, Debs adds that she is *'back in control now'*, indicating to me that she is positioned to consider how and when to apply this new knowledge. Yet I also wonder if being *'back in control now'* might have further meanings. Perhaps it could mean she is resuming her role and identity of deputy manager, a position with power in contrast to the powerless student identity she has put behind her. Perhaps she is *'back in control'* of her emotions too. Having endured both negative and positive sensations during the placement she is likely to feel more emotionally secure now back in her familiar workplace.

Debs cites the most important thing for the schools is *'attainment, lots of attainment'*. I asked her to explain more in a following interview:

Yeah, because they tend to be more focused on outcomes, it's all outcome, outcome, outcome and I think sometimes they do forget that, they forget the kids, yeah, whereas if we were doing something and that kid sat and cried we'd be like "forget the outcome, you come here" whereas I think, I feel like they'd be like "right, there's a tissue, you carry on" I think it'd be the outcome that come first, and I don't think that's the people I just think it's the culture of the school. (Debs, Interview 3)

I hear a clear message of concern in relation to outcome-focussed practice that comes at the cost of children's wellbeing. The desire for Debs to provide physical comfort seems implicit to me in her response of *'you come here'* to a crying child, suggesting that she would cuddle them. This appears to be the opposite approach of school colleagues, who might only proffer a tissue to the crying child. Debs links the school's lack of empathy with

a focus on outcomes. Furthermore she attributes the drive for 'attainment' as a top-down pressure from Ofsted:

I did attend an inset day and they were discussing Ofsted and one of the things that really surprised me was Ofsted are no longer looking for er, praising children and supporting them emotionally and it just felt like Ofsted was just saying in schools we want to see attainment, we're not so bothered about all this other stuff and that just completely goes against the early years, I don't get, I just don't get it to be honest. (Debs, Interview 3)

Debs experiences a tension in her child-centred approach and Ofsted's expectations of good practice. She seems unable to reconcile the two approaches, as they appear to sit in contention with each other.

As Debs missed some placement days in school due to illness, she was making up the lost days by attending for some days in the week whilst other days were spent back in her workplace. Debs' reflections on her feelings about returning to the home setting were thereby tinged with feelings about the process of completing placement and parting from the school children and staff. Debs' model to represent her feelings is shown in Figure 4.33.

Return to the PVI Workplace

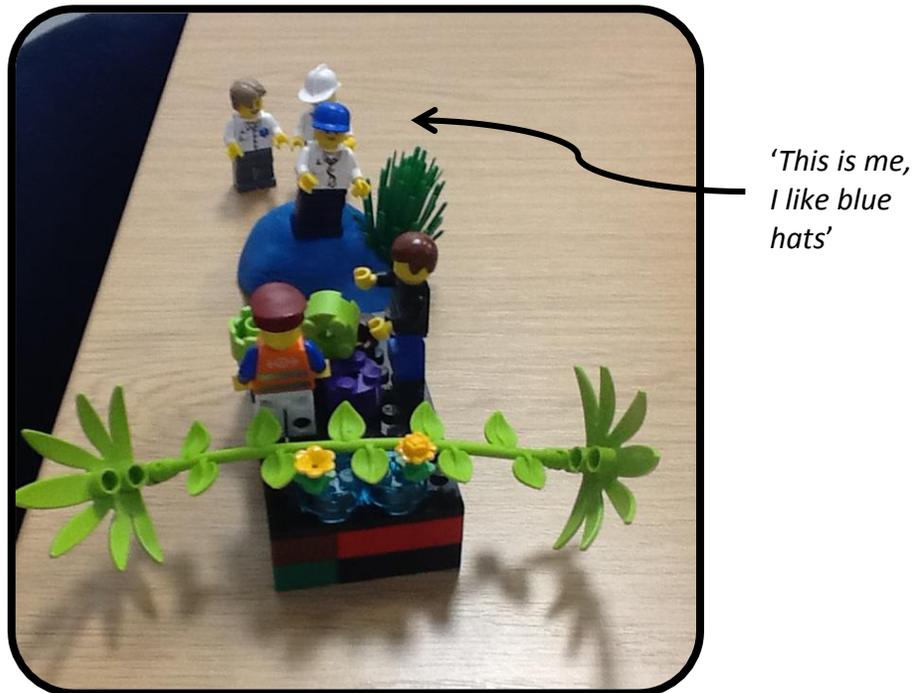


Figure 4.33 Debs' feelings about her workplace return

Debs' comments on her model:

This...represents like, the struggle of placement and things...these are the people in placement I am gonna miss them...this represents my setting and going back and I expected it all be on an even-keel and to go back and I've found it isn't...stuff I've learnt up there I'm taking with me and I want to look at how we can put it in so these are people messing with practice and seeing how we're gonna do it. But it's a bit raised because...it just seems to have gone a bit AWOL while I've been away...I know I've got some work to do when I get back...this represents what it's gonna be like and it's all going to be flowery and lovely but its covered because I don't know yet.

Debs' model physically positions her between leaving the school placement behind and looking ahead to her workplace. Whilst this represents her experience as a journey as in models shown in Figures 4.26 and 4.30, I also notice that she uses a rounded playdough ball to represent her home setting, in a similar way to an earlier model shown in Figure 4.28. I wonder if this rounded shape is to convey a softer, more pliable image of her setting in contrast to the hard, rigidity of the Lego bricks she uses to represent the school here and in the model shown in Figure 4.32.

As Debs recommences her role in the workplace, she finds practice is not the same as when she left. Whilst expecting to find things on '*an even-keel*', she describes the absence of such stability as '*AWOL*' (absent without leave). Debs identifies there is work to be done to '*put it all back in place*'. I sense it would be important for Debs to restore her setting back to the familiar state it was in when she left and to resume the close relationships with children and colleagues. After the '*struggle*' of the placement experience, it would seem natural for Debs to want to be immersed in familiarity again. Yet she also expresses a new vision of the future, one that is not yet fully known to her. Whilst she is sure that the outcome will be '*flowery and lovely*', having not yet decided how to use her new knowledge, she remains alert to an element of the unknown.

Post-Placement Identity

When Debs reflects back on her placement experience she describes it overall as a '*struggle*' and comments that the school only expected her to fulfil the role of a TA:

...obviously a TA's role is completely different to an Early Years Teacher role and I think, I don't think that staff were necessarily aware what I was there for, they saw it as just a placement, if that makes sense. (Debs, Interview 3)

I will return to this point in Chapter 5. In spite of the expectation for her to function as a TA, plus the problematic situation Debs experienced during placement she reports an increased sense of professional identity:

I can feel the difference in my practice definitely I feel a lot more confident and confident to do what I think and know why I'm doing it because a lot of the time before, I'm still doing a lot of the same stuff with kids, I'm really good at forming bonds with kids and seeing what they need and before I knew to do certain things but I didn't know why they worked whereas now I've got that understanding "I'm doing this and this is because this child's feeling this"...so, yeah, made me a lot more confident in my role and things. (Debs, Interview 3)

Summary of Debs' Case

Debs made sense of her placement experience as a journey. She struggled to conform to a pedagogical approach where children's academic progress seemed to be prioritised over emotional wellbeing, restricting the demonstration of physical affection that was central to her workplace practice. Debs' found the identity of a student difficult to manage, feeling uncomfortable with a lack of power and agency. After initial turbulence and difficulties, the key aspect that helped Debs to cope with placement was the relationships she developed with peers and children. Debs regained a sense of stability and gained peer support as she coped with the demands of her family commitments. She returned to the workplace with an increased sense of confidence and more belief in her own professional abilities, keen to restore order in her workplace and to make positive use of her new knowledge.

The section concludes the data on Anna, Beth and Debs as trainees from the PVI sector experiencing a school placement. I draw together some emerging patterns across these cases through a re-configuration and re-labelling of themes (see appendix 8). In the next section I summarise the data from Cara and Fran, EYT trainees from the school sector workplaces who experience their placement in the PVI sector.

Cara - An Experienced Teaching Assistant in the School Sector

Professional Background

Cara began her career in Human Resources after gaining a degree in Management and a postgraduate diploma Human Resource Management. She reports that her career ended when she was made redundant. She used the event as an opportunity to spend time at home with her two young sons as a career break. Cara recalls that a friend told her of a free TA training course. As Cara enjoyed being with young children her response was, “*Oh right, okay, I’ll have a go while I’m off*”. She consequently arranged a voluntary placement at her children’s school and completed the course, finding that she ‘*loved it*’. Cara then secured her ‘*ideal*’ part-time post of TA in the same school and, after careful thought, decided a career in early years was the career she now wanted. Cara describes her keen interest in expressive arts, which she draws from to conduct musical activities in school. Additionally, she enjoys engaging in children’s imaginative play. After two years of working in a reception classroom, Cara sought to extend her professional and academic skills and was drawn to apply for the EYTS course.

Cara made a model to represent how she feels about her TA role in school, as shown in Figure 4.34.



Figure 4.34 Cara's model to represent her home setting

Commenting on her model Cara explains:

...mine is me, my face, just like a smile 'cos I always like to be smiling for the children in the setting and just create like a happy environment and atmosphere so always trying to be as happy as I can be for them and then the heart represents like I'm very caring with the children...and I do care about them and then that's just erm, like me or somebody in our class like holding hands with a child...really just supporting them really and kind of nurturing. That kind of environment, that's what I've tried to represent. (Cara, Interview 1)

Cara clearly articulates her professional and personal values as being 'caring', 'nurturing' and supportive of children. She re-iterates these values as she describes her relationship with children:

I feel like I've got quite good relationships with the children...I'm very, like, caring with them and things and er I like to say...get down to their level and speak to them like, a bit like I would say "how are you?" you know. Things like that. Just to engage in conversation really... (Cara, Interview 1)

The same values underpin her relationships with other colleagues in school:

We have really good relationships between us we've worked together for a couple of years now...the two teaching assistants that I'm working with, we are friends as

well...we banter off each other and we're really happy and we work together really well...and then the new teacher we're working with, she's just come in and fit in really...so that I think comes across to the parents and I think that really helps with the atmosphere for the children... 'cos they can see us being caring with each other and happy with each other and that really helps. (Cara, Interview 1)

Cara repeats the words 'happy' and 'caring' as she describes her relationships so these emotional states appear to be a priority for her. A positive emotional environment is clearly important and Cara's drive to create and maintain one seems based on her own needs. She confirms this when she later states, 'I like to be liked'. Cara's description of her relationship with parents provides more evidence of her preference for positivity:

I've tried to build a rapport with parents as much as I can...I'll go out into the playground, erm, after school with them, just to comment and just say "oh he did really well, he's working on this and he really enjoyed it"...so I'm quite confident in approaching parents. I do need some more training on how to deal with parents that get angry and things. I don't like it if there's kind of an issue, have to deal with something that's really negative, erm, and confrontational. (Cara, Interview 1)

Cara states her dislike of negative interactions clearly and admits a lack of confidence in dealing with confrontational issues. She believes that training will enable her to address this gap in her practice. Cara reports on her strategies to avoid conflict with parents through building relationships based on mutual respect:

I really try and make them feel reassured, and, erm, try and empathise with them really in that way so they don't see me as, oh, you know, "she's at school, she's official". They see me as kind of equal to them really. That's how I try and come across and I have found that it does seem to work for me. (Cara, Interview 1)

Developing Professional Identity

Whilst Cara seems able to project an identity of a non-threatening person at the parent's level, adjusting to the identity of an EYTS trainee with the newly appointed class teacher was more difficult to achieve:

...it's difficult because the new teacher that I work with has just done it [EYTS], so she's obviously got her own ideas...so I'm kind of having to hold back a little bit..at the minute I'm just kind of treading a little bit carefully... (Cara, Interview 1)

The formation of a new relationship with the class teacher seems to be preventing Cara from transitioning from her identity as a TA into her new identity of an EYTS trainee. This situation is further complicated as the school's newly appointed senior management team were unaware of Cara's place on the EYTS course as the new academic year began. Consequently there was no one available within school to act as her setting based tutor:

So I'm in a bit of a difficult position really...because obviously its new senior leaders and they don't know me...so it's all, really, a little bit awkward, but I feel okay about it, I don't feel like it's a problem, I'm absolutely fine. (Cara, Interview 1)

I wonder if Cara's repeated assurance of feeling 'okay' and 'fine' was an attempt to convince herself that this situation would not become problematic. Perhaps she is avoiding facing up to the possibility that a negative situation such as conflict could arise, as these are undesirable aspects given her desire to be liked by all. I take it that Cara feels comfortable in her familiar identity of a TA and that she has a clear understanding of the hierarchy in school that positions others with power over her. The identity of an EYTS trainee is perhaps much more difficult for Cara to envisage, given that the school seem largely oblivious to this aspect of her professional trajectory.

As Cara continues in her familiar identity of a TA in school, her unequal power relationship with the class teacher is particularly evidenced in relation to a recent change to practice. The class teacher chose to discontinue the practice of allowing parents to enter the classroom at the start and end of each day:

...she stopped the parents because she wanted the children to just wait outside and then come in on their own in December...and for us TAs to stay inside and look after the children...and I just thought, "No, I don't agree with that, why are you doing that?" And she said..."its to get them ready for year one" which I still thought was a very silly time before Christmas... (Cara, Interview 2)

Cara is positioned as powerless in this change to practice. She seems unable to contribute to decisions that have implications for her daily professional practice. As Cara is opposed to excluding parents from the classroom, yet has to carry out the class teacher's decision, I summarise that Cara remains positioned in her identity of a TA at this early stage in her

journey to EYTS due to her role in school continuing as before. Cara uses playdough to represent her anticipation of placement in the PVI sector as shown in Figure 4.35.

Anticipation of Placement



Figure 4.35 Anticipation of placement

Commenting on her model Cara explains:

So mine was just me with my hands up like that as if 'urghhhhhh'. That kind of face saying worry, apprehension, you know. Unfamiliar placement, it's just that kind of grimace type feeling...what we're expected to do, will I be able to do it? How will I manage? Will I like everybody? Will they like me?

Cara's model of herself seems to focus entirely on her emotional state of anxiety. There is a clear link with the model shown in Figure 4.34 and I begin to wonder if Cara makes sense of her experiences through a focus on emotions and positive relationships. Her anticipation of a placement in the PVI setting is manifest in feelings of 'worry' and 'apprehension'. Cara seems to express her fears of the unknown elements of placement through her questions. Most notably for me are the questions focused on liking others

and being liked, which confirm my thoughts that Cara places a high value on positive relationships. Cara voiced her fears of potential difficulties she might encounter in building new relationships with staff and children:

I don't want to start feeling isolated and like I don't want to go 'cos I do think it's really important who you work with that you get on, really. So that is important to me...So that's one barrier to overcome and so it's just getting to know them and the children really. (Cara, Interview 1)

The PVI Placement

Cara's placement took place in the PVI nursery where Debs is employed. Debs was able to show Cara around beforehand and introduce her to the staff team. Cara reports that she expected to slip into Debs' role of deputy manager. However, as she was required to gain practical experience of working with the 0-3s, Cara was placed in the toddler room with children aged 24-36 months.

As some of the toddler room staff were absent through illness at this time, it became necessary for Cara to be counted in the required staff-child ratios. The ratios are determined by the EYFS (DfE 2014) and require 1 adult to 4 children aged between 2-3 years. Inclusion in the staffing ratio restricted Cara somewhat as she was constrained to the room. EYTS trainees are usually considered to be supernumerary, meaning they are not counted in the ratios and thereby have more freedom to move in and out of the room. Cara also found that being in staff ratios hindered access to her setting based tutor, meaning that she could not easily gain support from her. On her very first day in the setting Cara was finding it difficult to cope with the unfamiliar environment and age group:

It was very hard 'cos I just, at lunchtime I ended up ringing [university tutor] actually...I ended up ringing my mother in law, my husband and I said "I can't do this." I said "I can't do it'...I just can't believe it. I was literally just like thrown in as part of the ratio and that's it. And that's how it's been. (Cara, Interview 2)

What I found most interesting in this explanation of Cara's first day was her need for emotional support. This need lasted for three weeks. Cara's sources of emotional support

extended from her university tutor and close family to peer trainee, Anna, who was also able to provide some practical guidance in working with 2 year olds. As Cara reflected on the situation as '*a real bad time*', she and others found strategies to help her to cope with the stressful situation, including rewards:

...[chocolate] minstrels, I have my minstrels in my handbag and my husband promised that we could go to Legoland at Easter (laughs). And just my husband and my mother-in-law and people like Anna...really just talking to me and saying "just get through day by day and cross it off and then you just get through it."
(Cara, Interview 3)

Cara seemed to rely heavily upon these support strategies to be able to continue in the unfamiliar placement. I noticed that she laughs after divulging her husband's promise of a trip to Legoland as a reward for her completing the placement. I take it that Cara is acknowledging that this might seem an unlikely adult treat to be offered but that it is meaningfully tailored to her needs.

Experience of Placement

To represent her initial experience of placement, Cara returns to a focus on facial expression of emotions as shown on figure 4.36.



Figure 4.36 How Cara initially experiences placement in the PVI sector

Commenting on her model Cara explains:

I've done a pizza in the middle 'cos it's all in slices...and so I've done like all different faces because I've experienced so many different emotions I've just, you know, I smile with the children. I smiled when I went in and I was like 'hmmmm'. And I was like 'oh my goodness, shock'. And I was like 'oh and I'm very sad about this, I don't want to do this' (laughs). And I was like 'oh no' again. And I was like shocked again and then I was just like 'hmm'. So like a range of emotions going round and round.

Cara seems to make sense of her initial experience through a focus on the range of positive and negative emotions she experiences in the first few days on placement. This initial period of uncertainty and instability was clearly a very difficult time for her. Cara represents the differences she found between her school workplace and the PVI toddler room in a Lego model, as shown in figure 4.37.

Differences between Workplace and PVI Placement

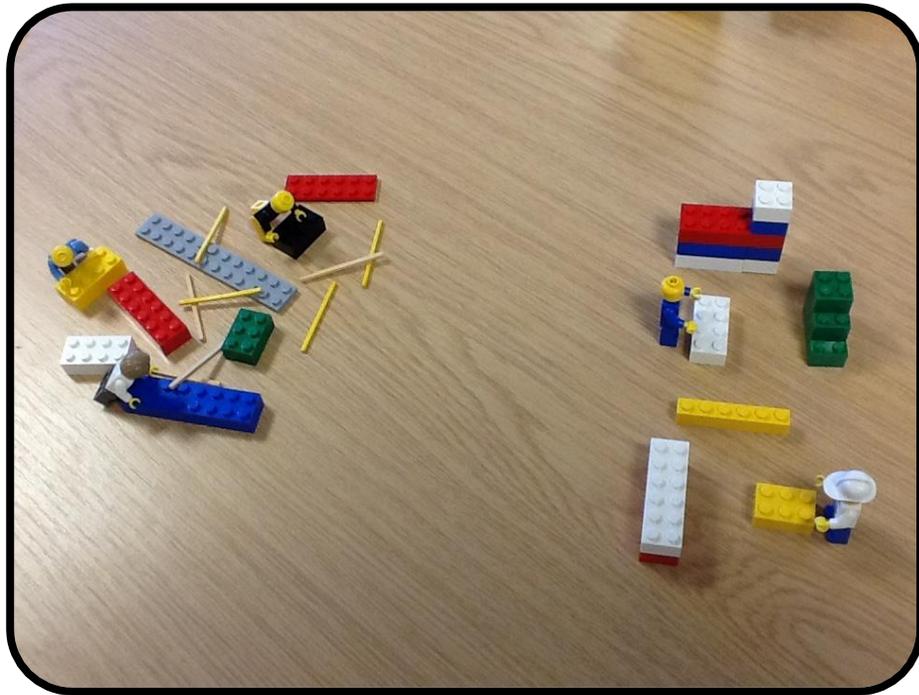


Figure 4.37 Differences between school and PVI placement

Commenting on her model Cara explains:

I've gone into nursery, into the 2 year room...when the children are playing everything is just everywhere and all over the floor and children are falling over it. I'm like tripping over things having to step over and then I tidy it away and then they get it out and they tip it all over the floor again...I thought "oh no, this is just all over, this is a nightmare!" So that is my complete difference...so for me it's been a very, very big culture shock.

Cara's use of the term '*culture shock*' seems to convey the enormity of the contrast of the new experience for her and is further emphasised by the adjectives '*very, very big*'. Cara found it difficult to adapt to a different style of learning environment, which was much less orderly than the familiar school environment. She expands further on the disorder she perceived in the room:

...quite chaotic and obviously as they all say "you've got to have eyes in the back of your head" whereas they're more independent when they're at schools so even though they're [school children] only still little and you've got to teach them when they first start about the routines and the rules and things and just keep an eye on generally, they can speak to you, so they can communicate with you and they

know really what's right...whereas the little ones, they really don't know some of them. (Cara, Interview 2)

Cara's description of the 2 year olds' room as 'chaotic' seems to be a sweeping description that may not fully recognise the dynamic and busy nature that often characterises work with this age group. The chaotic state she perceives demands a vigilant response, hence the need for 'eyes in the back of your head'. What I find interesting in this extract is how Cara draws on her school experience of teaching children about routines and rules when they first attend. In her comparison of practice I take it that she is still adjusting to the limited level of communication skills the 2 year olds have. She seems to be unsure of how to address the disorder in the room without effective verbal communication.

Furthermore, Cara indicates that the 2 year olds may be too young to understand right from wrong which means she cannot utilise her familiar school-based strategies and apply them with this age group.

Another aspect of working with 2 year olds that Cara found very different to her work in school was nappy changing. The prospect of changing nappies caused her to worry and to describe the issue as a 'low point':

I'd been really worried about the toileting, nappy side because I've not had any training and was I expected to do then because she said, "Are you okay with doing nappies?" when I first got there. And I said "oh I don't know I've not done them for such a long time, I really don't know". And she said, that room leader, "Just see how it goes. If any one, if any start attaching to me or anything" so I thought "oh hopefully I'll try and avoid it". And yesterday...one of the younger girls that works there...says "oh Cara, so-and-so needs her nappy changing"...and I said "oh no", 'cos it's a little girl and I've got boys...I know it's not rocket science but I just felt really like I needed somebody to show me or something so I just said "oh no...I've not done it before" so the room leader just said "oh I'll do it" and I just felt like there was a bit of conflict. And I don't like it when there's any conflict or any issues. (Cara, Interview 2)

There are two aspects to this event that I take to be equally problematic for Cara. The first is the physical act of changing a nappy. As a mother of two boys this might seem an unlikely barrier for her to encounter. Cara felt particularly unsure about changing a girl's nappy. She suggested that 'training' would be a possible answer to this dilemma in the same way that she identified a need for training to deal with parental conflict. In the

school sector, training is more likely to be an accessible solution for a greater number and wider range of issues than in the PVI sector.

The second problematic aspect of the event is the potential for conflict with other practitioners in the room over her non-participation in this regular, daily routine. Cara was keen to diffuse any potential for conflict and describes her ensuing actions the same day:

So I thought "I'm going to have to bring it up, what shall I do?" So a bit later on I just said to the room leader..."So what shall I do about the nappies?"...she says, "Well do you have to do them for your course?" I said, "Well, I don't think so but its not a requirement that you have to, you know, meet a Teachers Standards for doing them or anything". And she says, "Well for me you don't have to do them". She says, "You're doing everything else, as long as everything else gets done in the room, you know, I'm happy to do them"...so I just said to the other girl..."Is that okay with you?"...just 'cos, you know...I wanted her to be involved as well. So that kind of, er, made me feel a little bit less anxious about it... (Cara, Interview 2)

Cara's actions show her agentic approach to achieve and maintain positive working relationships with her colleagues in the same way as she strives for positive parental relationships at school. What I notice in this and previous extracts is the way that Cara recounts conversations to explain the interactions that were important. Her preferred style is to include the detail of others' speech and make her explanations into a story or a narrative account. This suggests to me that interactions and relationships matter greatly to Cara. It could also mean that Cara prefers to give explicit detail of past conversations so the listener can draw the same meanings as her.

Naming conventions provide another aspect of unfamiliar practice for Cara to adjust to as she describes the use of first names rather than surnames in placement:

*...so I've just called myself Cara because whereas at school I'm Mrs. **** but they call them by their first names in the setting so...then I started saying 'do you want Cara to help you do that?' so they getting to know my name 'cause I can't say Mrs. **** because obviously that'd be too hard for them and also the others don't do that, so I've just fitted in...it's a bit strange because I'm not used to saying my name (laughs) (Cara, Interview 3)*

Additionally, lunchtimes in the PVI setting prove to be a routine where Cara needs to adjust her practice to 'fit in'. However, eating routines are stressful experiences for Cara as she holds a fear of children choking.

I'm always on a heightened sense of alert really when they're eating....I'm worried about choking and that are they okay eating, but I try and be more relaxed...and I'll show them how to use a knife and fork and try and encourage them because they don't eat a lot, some of them they all just...and then they'll go off and play and...so [I'm] still learning in that respect...So it's quite, a little bit stressful but then once everybody's had it I think "phew, a bit relieved". (Cara, Interview 2)

I notice that some of the difficulties that Cara faces in the PVI setting are grounded in the physical care routines of working with very young children. Children's feeding and toileting routines are much more fundamental to practice with the 0-3s than Cara has experienced in school. These physical aspects of practice have challenged Cara personally and professionally and she has found ways to overcome her anxieties and be able to role model eating with a knife and fork to the children.

Whilst the differences Cara has encountered seem significant and challenging to her, there are other aspects of practice that she identifies as familiar. One such commonality is represented in her next model, as shown in Figure 4.38.

Commonalities between Workplace and PVI Placement

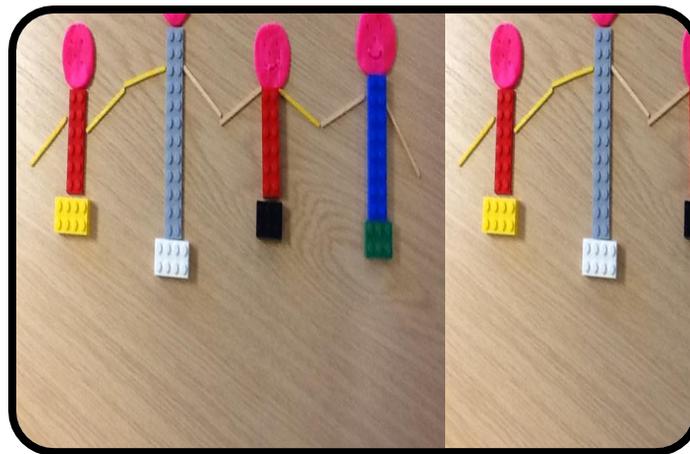


Figure 4.38 A practice commonality, nurturing and caring relationships

Commenting on her model, Cara explains:

I've realised that I'm representing through feelings and face and things like that, showing people...so I'm representing like children and the adults in both settings where we're happy and we're really welcoming and, like, nurturing type of environment and kind of just really caring with the children. I realise that's similar in the work setting and the setting where I am now, and how we are with the children.

Cara shows an awareness of her theme of relationships, feelings and facial expressions that are evident in her earlier model shown in Figures 4.34-4.36. I notice that she combines the use of playdough with Lego for the first time. I also notice the connectedness of the adult character with the children through hand-holding, as also evident in Figure 4.34. Cara re-iterates the professional values and principles as voiced in her description of her TA role in school as she describes emotions of being 'happy', 'welcoming' and 'nurturing'. This focus on positive relationships underlines the importance they have for Cara. Indeed, she describes a high point of her placement as being able to physically hold and comfort children:

...just when, you know, playing with the children and things and some of them, or if they've been upset and they've wanted a cuddle and I've made them feel better, things like that...well obviously they're more connected at the setting because they're so little and they'll like, they want you to pick them up a lot... 'cos the babies are sometimes in with us as well...so we'll pick them up and things...you are closer to them in the kind of caring and nurturing side but at school, as I say, its not as hands-on as such, erm, but I like to have the caring and nurturing approach and attitude but you're just not as touchy-feely as such with the [school] children. (Cara, Interview 3)

I am struck by Cara's use of the word 'connected'. To me, her use of 'connected' signifies the depth of the relational bonds with children that she observes in the nursery and builds for herself. She seems to convey a sense of the adult-child relationships being stronger than those she describes in her school practice. I wonder if the freedom to build warmer and closer relationships in placement is quite liberating or even fulfilling for her. Perhaps she is freer to express her professional values of being caring, nurturing and happy in the nursery than in school. I am drawn to her metaphor of 'touchy-freely' and wonder if this indicates a physical closeness and acceptance of touch that seems to be less apparent in

Cara's own experience of practice in the school workplace. Yet this sits at odds with her avoidance of the nappy changing routines and the awareness of this opportunity to develop close relationships with children.

The PVI nursery setting follows the Thrive approach and thereby practitioners prioritise children's social and emotional development through loving relationships and interactions as caring adults. I appreciate how this commonality of caring and nurturing practice that Cara has identified must be extremely important to her and meet some of her own needs for positive relationships.

Professional Identity

I return now to the emotional difficulties in placement that Cara described and represented in Figure 4.36, as these seem to particularly influence the formation of her professional identity. Cara found herself with two incongruous roles of 'student' and 'practitioner'. Being positioned as a practitioner within operational ratios was an unexpected aspect of the placement for Cara as she explains:

I expected to go in more as a managerial side and overseeing the teaching...I just didn't realise...I'd be classed in the ratio either...I was just like thrown in... (Cara, Interview 2)

The surprising aspect of her role as a practitioner working within the room's adult-child ratio was manifest in both her practical day-to-day duties and the emotional instability she reports. To be '*thrown in*' denotes the immediacy and physicality of the situation. Furthermore it links to her powerless position as a student as she could only comply with the setting manager's direction. The situation generated some negative emotions for Cara:

I feel used and then I feel a bit resentful about it and then I feel a bit trapped because I can do what needs to be done in the room...I find it boring, you know, I find it really boring and a bit like "is this it" I'm clock watching all the time (laughs). (Cara, Interview 2)

I am struck by Cara's claim of being bored in this extract. This seems to contradict her earlier comments of a busy environment and a need for 'eyes in the back of her head'. I wonder about the cause of such conflicting thoughts and feelings. Cara explains more:

...you're just caring for them...I think I've found it boring, its boring to me 'cos I'm used to being challenged, I'm used to like teaching the children and stuff ... I think my difficulty is going from detailed planning to quite simple planning, and that's another thing I need to, I feel like I'm not doing enough when I'm doing my change to kind of make it feel like it's right, if you know what I mean. You've got to kind of break, come right down, simplify it... I'm not really sure how to do that yet either... (Cara, Interview 2)

In this extract Cara seems to dichotomise caring as 'boring' and education as positively challenging for her. She moves seamlessly from speaking about the challenge of planning for individual children to planning to meet the EYTS standards through making a change to practice in the setting. The two issues seem connected as Cara identifies her struggle to plan appropriately for such young children. I see her identity as a practitioner in carrying out daily care routines that she finds boring and I see her identity as a student who is in the process of learning. I asked Cara how she views herself:

So I still see myself, I see myself as a trainee EYTS erm, but I feel they view, they, at both settings actually, just as like a TA or a practitioner. That's how I feel. (Cara, Interview 2)

Cara's view of the nursery practitioners viewing her just as a 'TA or practitioner' seems to be evidenced in her account of the nursery's photograph day.

A Problematic Situation

As an annual event in many nurseries, photograph day is often a busy time for early years practitioners and an emotional time for young children. For Cara, this busy day was exacerbated by some staff absences due to ill health.

...so they closed the baby-room off to do photograph day...they took some staff out to kind of, to manage the photo day to manage the children, to get nice photos but at one point I remember thinking "I want to walk out" because I had two babies on my knee in the main big room, some parents were in the room that had dropped their child off but the child was crying...so they kept looking at me with these two babies but there was only one other practitioner dealing with

somebody else at the time...I thought "what is going on?...this is just awful. I just don't like this. This is just too much for me this"...I kind of felt like I was being a bit used and then when they all came together to have their snack erm some of the practitioners were talking and I was kind of left to sort the children out and one of them said to me, "Can you give snack out, please?" so I said "okay" but no-one else was helping so I started giving snack out, I'd not done it in that room before erm and snack was late so it was nearly lunch time so I just gave a little bit of the peppers out and she said "no, give more than that, you give more than that" but her manner to me at that point when I already felt like I'm gonna walk out and I feel like crying... (Cara, Interview 3)

The event was another low point for Cara, as before, she was quick to discuss the incident with the room leader who was able to apologise for the situation:

...she said "you shouldn't feel like that when you're on placement that's not fair you shouldn't have been left in that position" so when the manager came in she said "are you okay?" and we both said "no" and I said "its been awful, I've nearly started crying". (Cara, Interview 3)

I sense a disposition of resilience in Cara as she able to recover from the low points she describes and repair her relationships with other adults in order to continue with the placement. Yet this resilience seems at odds with her earlier need for relational support from her family and peers at the commencement of the placement.

As she reflects on the important aspects of the recently completed placement, Cara makes a complex representation of her experience using Lego, as shown in Figures 4.39-4.41.

Important Aspects of Placement and Workplace

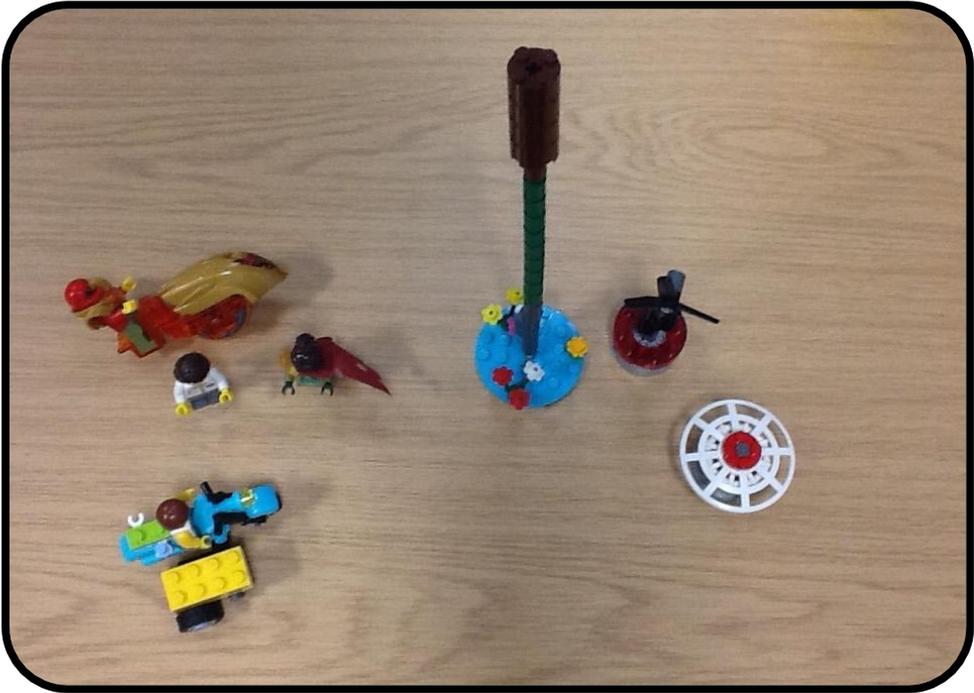


Figure 4.39 Aerial view of important aspects - whole model



Figure 4.40 Front view of important aspects (left side)

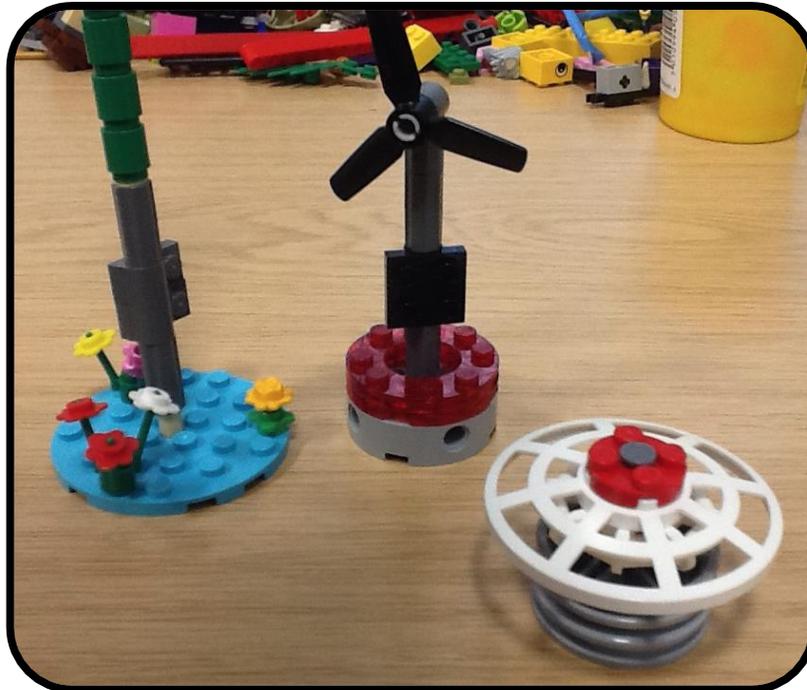


Figure 4.41 Front view of important aspects (right side)

Commenting on her model Cara explains:

I wanted to go in like this 'whoooo' (makes action noise) going like 'go on get it sorted out, get it done and make the change and all this'...but I had to go [pauses] slower and gradually [points to Lego person on vehicle]...and build up relationships and build up my knowledge. Keep it going like a windmill, keep going with some power. And then this is a circle. It's a continuous cycle of learning, for me, for the children...And that's me, how I look, like normally, but that's me again with this power [Lego person with cape]...I look like that but I think really want to be like that but I'm not the teacher and I'm not the manager of the setting so I can't be that leader.

This representation and descriptive commentary covers many aspects of Cara's experience. I am most struck by the dichotomy depicted by her 'normal' image and her aspirational image with 'power'. The metaphor of her caped super-hero conveys a strong message to me that epitomises the energetic work of an EYT as a champion for young children. I find it sad that she feels unable to retain that inspirational identity as she states her position 'but I'm not the teacher...so I can't be that leader'. She prepares to return to her former and 'normal' identity of a TA in school. However, Cara is able to identify her

learning from the placement and uses the metaphor of a continuous circle to indicate this is an on-going process she intends to maintain. Cara explains her learning in more detail:

They don't have a topic like in a school but they did have like a weekly kind of theme that they just based the rhyme of the week on just for the children so I tried to link it in with that but then learning about how to how their routines and protocols were and how their planning worked and how they tracked children as well at the same time was so new to me that I had to learn all of that. (Cara, Interview 3)

To summarise her lived experience in placement, Cara uses the same Lego people to represent her changing professional identity as shown in Figure 4.42.

Experience of Placement



Figure 4.42 Experience of placement

Commenting on her model Cara explains:

So, when I first started the placement, this bit's an alien. This is just to represent that it was, like, it was alien to me in terms of it was so different to what I'm used to and to like a school setting...I had to really quickly adapt myself to the situation...this is me then at the end and I feel like I've got to the top I've achieved what I wanted to do, had a successful placement and...I've just learnt and developed and grown.

I am struck by Cara's use of the word 'alien' to describe the magnitude of the unfamiliarity of the placement experience. An 'alien' environment conveys a stronger sense of the unfamiliar experience than I had previously considered. Cara uses the metaphor of a journey to show her progress in adapting to the alien environment and her attaining a high level of achievement by the end. Cara also notes her confidence levels were also raised at this point:

...my confidence levels by the end were really raised and I felt really confident then I came back into school and then they dropped right back down again... (Cara, Interview 3)

Cara uses paper and pencils to represent how she felt about her return to her home school as show in Figure 4.43.

Return to the School Workplace

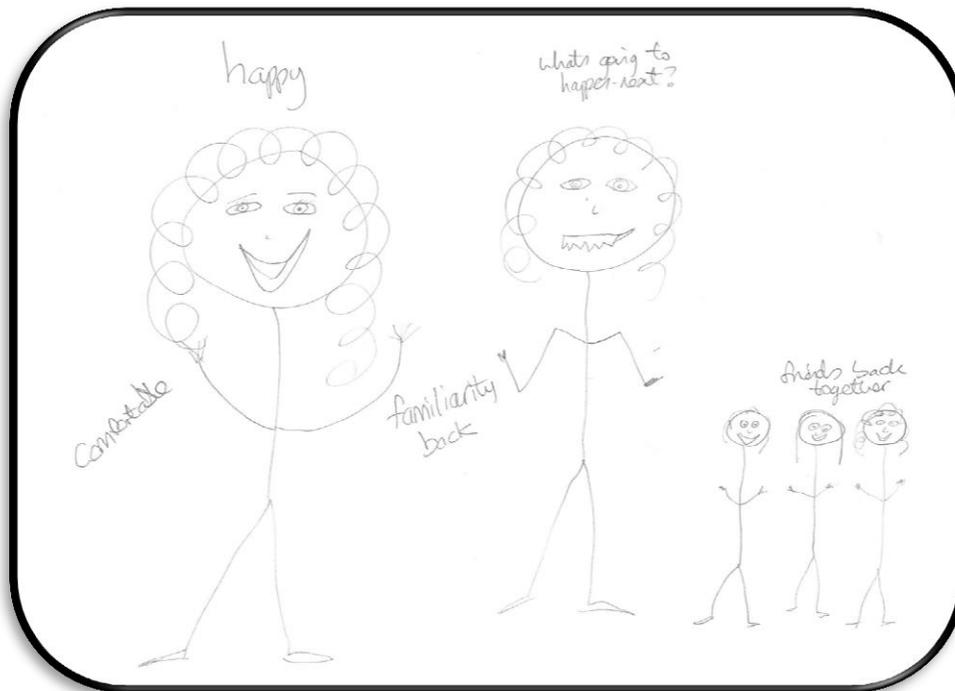


Figure 4.43 Cara's return to school workplace

Commenting on her drawing Cara explains:

I feel happy because I'm back to where I enjoy working, I feel comfortable because I'm back to the familiarity of my home setting where I'm used to being and where I know what I'm doing...but then I also feel like 'what's going to happen next?' I've not gone back into the class that I was in...they've put me in Year 1...the school's still going through changes and new teachers and things and where will I fit?... I am really good friends with the team that I work with so it was like big hugs and things when I came back and that was really nice to see them.

What I notice in Cara's commentary here is a similar pattern of conflicting emotions as she expressed before commencing placement. Her questions, 'Where will I fit?' parallels with her pre-placement questions, 'Will I like everyone? Will they like me?' Within a few days Cara's excitement of returning to her home school had disappeared and the return had become an emotional low-point:

I'd have gone back into my class I'd have been like brilliant, like let's get going and everything...I was so excited. I was told "you're going in Year 1...we need extra help in there"...I have had some experiences where the head teacher has chastised me in front of the children because she thought I was teaching something in phonics wrong...that was a real upset and I just dropped straight back down, really low, so its not been great there...and I just thought "oh it's only two days a week so I can manage that, that's fine". (Cara, Interview 3)

Post-Placement Identity

As Cara reflects back on her placement experience, she describes it overall as 'a challenge' and 'a culture shock'. She acknowledges the huge amount of effort she put into making a change to practice through introducing musical activities. Whilst she reports a gain in confidence in playing her guitar and singing in front of adults and children, Cara has mixed views on how the whole placement experience has contributed to her developing professional identity:

I think it's not changed me but it's made me realise that I can get through challenging situations somehow. Even if it is with support of other people or chocolate at the end of the day. I can do it and I can get through it even though it might be really, really hard so I'm really pleased I didn't give up and its made me feel like I can kind of conquer anything if I put my mind to it. And I've got the support there so I think that's kind of a personal and professional...level really, professionally its not changed me a lot...I think the change professionally has been

the knowledge and understanding of everything that comes before they come to school which is just great, it really is. (Cara, Interview 3)

In this extract Cara seems to be making sense of her developing identity as she moves from saying the experience has not changed her, to admitting a small change and then confirming a change in professional knowledge and understanding. I hear that Cara has gained a great deal of personal and professional confidence from the unfamiliar placement and now positions herself as a conqueror, indicating a positive shift in her thinking about her professional identity.

At the end of the placement I asked Cara if the EYFS had provided a familiar framework for practice across both sectors. Her response was ambivalent:

Erm, its so different, even though it's a short, small age range birth to 5 and they develop so fast in that time so many different things that its quite complex really. I find it quite complex and again I find it...because I'm used to working toward the early years goals coming right back down I feel like I should be doing more but you can't because they're only at that level, so its like coming backwards if you know what I mean. If I was going the other way I might think "oh right, I can see that's where they get to coming back", so I'm not sure, not sure really. (Cara, Interview 3)

I take it that Cara was struggling to make sense of children's development in this unfamiliar age range with 0-3s and that, for her, the EYTS framework had not provided a bridge to support her transition as a practitioner across the two sectors.

Summary of Cara's Case

Cara experienced her placement as a culture shock. She drew on support from family members and a peer trainee to help her to cope with the magnitude of the experience. Cara struggled with the messy learning environment and initial difficulties brought her close to leaving placement and the course. She regained stability through avoiding conflict and negativity, ensuring positive interactions with placement staff whenever possible. Cara enjoyed the freedom to hold and cuddle children in placement, as this fitted well with her professional values of nurturing and caring. Yet Cara came to view working with under3s as 'boring'. Completing placement revealed a newfound resilience that felt empowering to Cara, and she returned to the workplace school with increased confidence and knowledge. Her excitement on returning to school was soon curtailed when she was assigned to a different class in Key Stage 1.

Fran - an Experienced Teaching Assistant in the School Sector

Professional background

Fran reports her career in ECEC services began in 2009. With a degree in Hotel and Tourism Management in 1984, she first began working in the leisure industry. She changed careers in 2005 to become a cinema manager before leaving her position to both start a family and to join her family's shop-keeping business. Fran notes that it was when her first son started school that she decided on another career change and trained to become a TA. She achieved levels 2 and 3 City and Guilds Supporting Teachers qualifications in 2009. Fran then secured a permanent post at the local primary school where her two sons attended. Since the birth of her third child, in 2012, Fran has worked part-time, spending the mornings in school with a Foundation 2 (F2) class, with children aged between 4-5 years. Fran spends her afternoons at home with her daughter. She recounts how she held an ambition to teach but was unable to afford the costs of giving

up work to study full-time. The head teacher suggested that she should apply for the EYTS course, which Fran considered 'an ideal opportunity'.



Figure 4.44 Fran's representation of her TA role in school

Commenting on her model Fran explains:

I've done a heart because I'm loving work at the moment actually. I'm sort of more in F2 all the time and so got to know the teacher. I'm quite enjoying work now...I would like to do full time because I feel I can't totally get my hands in there, totally get a grip of it at the moment but I can't do full time because its just not practical because of my daughter...it just doesn't pay for me to do full time because of my childcare costs. So, that's why I did a little house to say that I would like to spend more of my time in work and not at home so I could feel more part of the team at work.

Fran's model of a heart is a powerful representation of her love for her role in school. Her model of her own home represents a barrier to her being able to work full time. Her desire to 'get my hands in' and 'get a grip' of her TA role gives me a sense of an active, hands-on practitioner. This resonates with Fran's description of herself as being 'always busy and whizzing around'. Fran explains that the positive feedback she received on her

active disposition and professional practice in school led to her supporting Roma children with English as an Additional Language (EAL).

I'm quite articulate, right, with your facial expressions because its very difficult when you're working with children that don't understand the language...they [school leaders] felt that erm, the Roma children might respond better to someone who was a bit more bubbly and a bit more smiley...so I do think I'm, yeah, quite a bubbly sort of smiley sort of person, joke about a lot (laughs) (Fran, Interview 1)

Fran's 'smiley' and 'bubbly' personality has also contributed to her making positive relationships with adults. The school has experienced a high staff turnover in the last 5 years, and Fran reports working with 3 different head teachers and almost 50 different staff members.

I've worked with a different teacher every year now over the last three or four years so that's been quite difficult because prior to that I did work with...He was a male reception teacher and we got on really well, you know, and I suppose it's hard...when you keep changing teachers to build up that, erm, rapport with them. But yeah, I think I do have a good relationship with the teachers but I am proper friends with the teaching assistants. (Fran, Interview 1)

It is the use of Fran's expression 'proper friends' that I find most interesting in this extract. She makes a clear distinction between a 'good relationship' with teachers and being 'proper friends' with other TAs. I asked Fran if she perceived a power hierarchy in school:

...yes because I'm on a line with the teaching assistants, that's who, yeah, you know so they're sort of friends whereas the teachers are the bosses sort of thing, aren't they? I suppose when you're a TA in that situation you do what the teacher requires... (Fran, Interview 1)

Her power-relationships with the teachers seem to position Fran with little or no agency in professional practice. However, her relationships with parents are built from a much more equal basis. As Fran lives in the school's locality and has children of her own, she reports mutual relationships with some parents. Her part-time role means that she can only make contact with parents at the start of the school day; however, she reports that she values opportunities to engage with parents:

I've always had quite a good relationship with the parents and quite often, I think

when you're in and schoolteachers are always busy and the teaching assistants are the one the parents come to. More than perhaps the teachers, you know, for day-to-day issues. (Fran, Interview 1)

I take it that building and maintaining parental relationships is important to Fran particularly as she seems to be available when teachers are 'always busy'. I asked Fran if she saw herself as an EYTS trainee:

I don't, really. I think within a school and I think the situation I'm in, erm, its very difficult because I'm seen as a teaching assistant...so there's no change really to my job role or to anything...I think my actual personal role, on a day to day basis hasn't really changed because I've not been given any extra responsibility... (Fran, Interview 1)

In summary of Fran's initial identity formation, I consider that she is comfortable in her identity as a TA at this early point in her journey to EYTS. I gain a sense that she applies the life skills she has accrued over different careers to her professional practice and relationships. I see her 'smiley' and 'bubbly' disposition for myself during the research activities and note there are recurring instances of laughter in her interview data. Fran uses Lego to represent how she feels about her forthcoming placement in a PVI nursery as shown in Figure 4.45.

Anticipation of Placement



Figure 4.45 Fran's anticipation of placement

Commenting on her model Fran explains:

Right, there's two of me because I feel like I'm split down the middle...and this is me from my work now, through this door and I'll be sort of feeling that I've still got to keep ties with work when I'm there, but then and this'll be me when I'm on my placement where I think it will be quite fast moving. I'm in a hi-vis jacket because I think I'm going to stick out like a sore thumb because its totally unknown to me to go into a nursery with babies and really young ones. I think that's going to be a learning curve for me and really strange, but exciting as well. I am looking forward to it but I'm a bit apprehensive because of the time I'm going to be away from work, and I've got a little propeller on the back because I think my head's going to be spinning.

I am interested in Fran's division of herself into two parts to represent her presence in each of the sectors. This seems to polarise school and placement as irreconcilable experiences and Fran confirms later that it will feel '*really strange*' not to be in school. For both parts of herself there is a journey metaphor evident in her vehicles and doorways. Additionally, Fran uses a number of other metaphors in her model and commentary, for example, '*stick out like a sore thumb*', '*learning curve*' and '*head spinning*'. I wonder at the

implicit, hidden or implied meaning she conveys through these. The metaphor of '*sticking out like a sore thumb*' could mean she could look out of place as an unfamiliar adult in the placement nursery and thereby attract attention. Alternatively it might mean that she will be different from the nursery staff as she does not yet have same knowledge and understanding of the 0-3s as they do. Indeed, this might link to her next metaphor of '*learning curve*' as Fran seems to anticipate the unfamiliar placement experience as an opportunity to learn a great deal, given that she has no prior professional experience with very young children. As a mother, Fran selected a child minder's services for her own daughter and thereby has not personally experienced private day-care.

The last metaphor that I have noted in Fran's commentary is in regard to her '*head spinning*'. This metaphor often conveys a sense of dizziness or of having several thoughts in mind at once. For Fran it could signify the learning curve she mentions; alternatively, it could mean the prospect of being on placement full-time whilst managing her family commitments. She goes on to explain her worry about this aspect of the placement:

...plus when I'm in placement I have to do full-time so it's going to be a bit, you know, like juggling with (daughter) you know because I don't normally do full-time so I will be stressed with having to leave her full-time and then it's obviously as I'm full time...I'm not going to be able to fit in with work at all... (Fran, Interview 1)

As she mentions '*full-time*' 4 times in this short extract, I take it the prospect is threatening and troublesome to her. She uses another metaphor here of '*juggling*' which conveys a message of having many tasks to manage at once. Taking the metaphors of '*head spinning*' and '*juggling*' together, I hear that Fran expects placement will be hectic both physically and intellectually, and demanding of all her skills. Additionally, she indicates how emotionally difficult it will be for her to be absent from school as she realises she will not have time to visit throughout the duration of the placement.

Fran expresses her concern over collecting evidence in the placement nursery for her EYTS portfolio:

I don't know what I need to know and I find that's panicking me because I know I've got to get a lot of evidence for my portfolio from this setting. So I'm thinking I

don't exactly know what I'm going to be asking for because I've never been in anything like that. (Fran, Interview 1)

I asked Fran what she expected to find similar in placement:

I think the similarities will be, obviously, working with the children, I think children are children and you know, so there'll be the similar situation with that being hands-on with the children.... (Fran, Interview 1)

To say 'children are children' indicates a sense of pragmatism to me. Fran seems to position children as the central focus of placement and seems secure in her knowledge that she can be practical and 'hands on' with them in her practice.

The PVI Nursery Placement

Fran's placement commenced in January 2015. She initially made sense of her experience with a focus on emotion, as shown in Figure 4.46.



Figure 4.46 Fran's initial experience of placement

Commenting on her model Fran explains:

I'm really happy actually, I'm really enjoying it...its a good experience and so I think for me...it's now made me realise that I could go to other places and work in other settings and they're not totally unknown...so I am quite happy that I feel quite settled...I think I've realised that [my] school is not everything, I can go elsewhere and I might actually enjoy it, you know, being somewhere different...so that's happy me.

I hear Fran's message of contentment clearly as she uses the word 'happy' 3 times. I take it that her prior feelings of apprehension and worry have been converted into opposing, positive emotions of enjoyment and being 'settled'. The other message I hear is that her world of work has opened up as she realises she is capable of moving to a new environment. As Fran has worked in the same school since she began there as a volunteer, I take this as a significant shift in her thinking.

Fran's expectation of finding that 'children are children' in the nursery seems to be realised, as she represents a commonality between the placement nursery and school in Figure 4.47.

Commonalities between Workplace and PVI Placement

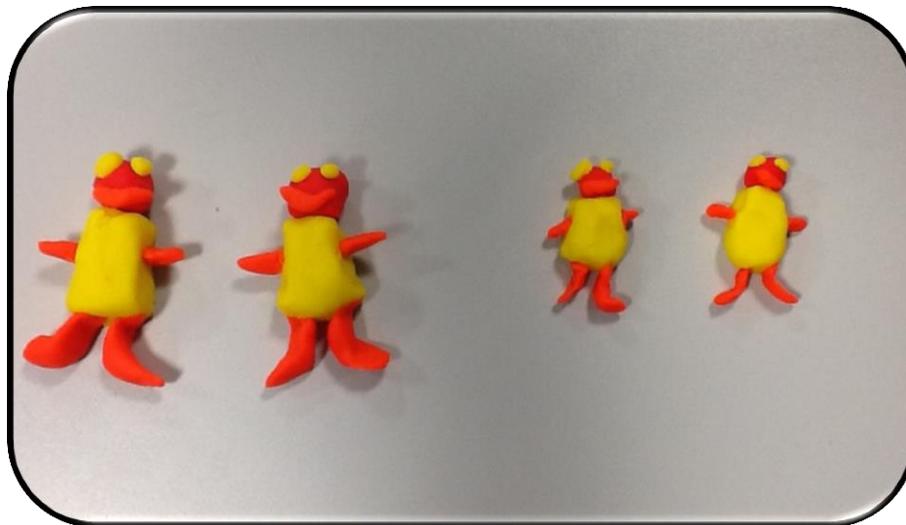


Figure 4.47 Commonalities between school and placement

Commenting on her model Fran explains:

It's got smiley faces and it represents that in my placement and my own setting I feel just as comfortable, I feel the adults in their new setting are really smiley friendly people, and their children are. So before I went I was really nervous thinking "oh God, I'm not gonna be able to do this, it's going to be so different, I not going to know anyone" and I just feel like I've just slotted in. I've gone from one place to another and really all my fears that it was going to be so different and that people were going to be so different, aren't, they're just like those from home really.

I hear Fran's contentment clearly again in this commentary as she returns to the notion of being 'settled'. She uses the metaphor 'slotted in' to convey how well she fits in her new environment yet goes on to express a tension:

I'm being on my best behaviour...so I think you're always conscious, aren't you, that you're a guest, sort of thing...I feel I have to show that, you know, that I'm capable and want to get stuck in and I want to help but I don't want to be a hindrance either to them, er, so I think that gives you a bit of added pressure... (Fran, Interview 2)

Fran's term 'best behaviour' seems to require her concerted effort to project a professional image. She expresses a tension in her identity as a 'guest' whilst wanting to be active and to 'get stuck in' in the identity of a capable practitioner. Fran had expressed her drive to be active and 'hands on' in her previous commentary on Figure 4.45. Whilst Fran experiences this tension between being a 'guest' and being 'stuck in' as 'pressure' on herself, she also perceives 'pressure' on practitioners as another commonality between nursery and school:

...I think the pressures and things are the same... although they're different pressures...like within school it's a lot on target driven and things like that whereas in the setting it's a lot...the wellbeing of the children and...like little things like getting them ready to go outside was really hectic...whereas I thought it would be a lot more relaxed in a nursery but there's different hectic things, aren't there?...we find it hectic in school because we've got to get all these kids through learning this maths challenge...so there's just different, the same sort of things but just different really. (Fran, Interview 2)

I find Fran's comparison of 'different hectic things' interesting. She compares two very different activities in very young children getting ready for outdoor play and a maths

challenge for school aged children. These could be viewed as a 'care' routine for the younger children and an 'education' activity for the school children. I take it that Fran is appropriating equal professional weight on the value of both activities as she describes them as *'the same...just different'*. Other 'care' routines in the nursery also proved to be *'hectic'* for Fran:

I do quite like the snack times and things there because...they have them sat round so it's a nice little social thing for the children...whereas with our snack er, within school it's a table up against a wall and you sit down, have your piece of fruit then carry on...And the meal times I found really hectic! (laughs) Getting them all sat down and feeding them and because of the choices, I think...it does take up a lot of staff time in preparation for their dinner... (Fran, Interview 2)

Fran continues with the medium of playdough to represent the differences she has noticed in the nursery environment, as shown in Figure 4.48.

Differences between Workplace and PVI Placement



Figure 4.48 Differences between the PVI nursery and school

Commenting on her model Fran explains:

One of the things I found different is...the provision's very different from us...it's quite an old nursery, and I feel that the resources and things aren't what I'm used to at school and...there's a lack of, I'd say like literature, like language in the room...and tidy up times and things...it's more the adults going around tidying up, so I found that quite strange... It's about times for me I think, being there all day. I've had to juggle my home life a lot as well to do it so I found that quite stressful.

There are three main messages that I hear in Fran's commentary. The first is a focus on the physical environment and resources and I will return to this issue in Chapter 5. The second message is linked to differences in practice, relating to the learning environment and the routine of tidying up. Fran later expands on her view of tidying up:

I struggled with the children how they used the resources...Within a school everything's quite orderly "your pens are in that pot and your green pot is on the green table and your red pot on the red table"...(laughs). And "you don't move maths equipment from the maths area, that stay's there"...whereas in nursery they just pick things up and take them to the other side of the room...you'd have tea pots in the water tray because they'd take them from the role play to the water (laughs) and that's a no-no for us in schools. And I was constantly tidying because the kids would have something and then just walk away and it'd be all over the floor and the mess, I just couldn't cope with the mess! (laughs) (Fran, Interview 3)

Fran seems to accept this struggle in a light-hearted way given her laughter throughout. The third message from Fran's commentary focuses on a difference to her personal life in terms of coping with the demands on placement at home. I take this to be highly significant for Fran as she had already expressed her worries over coping with full-time work before placement began. Whilst I had not asked about personal differences, Fran described her struggle as a low point during her placement:

I think my low point was just juggling myself and I just thought "I can't cope with it" even though I was struggling, right, with my own kids, the change, you know, erm and I think my low point was that I thought "I can't go on, I can't do it" because it was just too much upheaval in my own life to fit it in.... I think if the setting had not made me feel so welcome and been so lovely I really do think I would have said "I can't do it, I just can't do with the upheaval" (Fran, Interview 3)

In addition to the supportive relationships she received from colleagues in the placement, Fran's childminder proved to be a crucial source of emotional and practical help:

...she said "just do it, I've got your kids covered, they know where I live they can come to me". Yeah, and I said if it weren't for the childminder I don't think I'd have managed it but she's totally like, took over responsibility for my kids when I'm not there! (laughs) Which has been a big help...she's been wonderful with, you know, what hours I need to do and everything, I think she's ended up adopting my daughter, that's what it feels like for the last two weeks (laughs)... (Fran, Interview 2)

The extract illustrates to me the magnitude of the personal commitment Fran has made to attend placement. It was both the relational and practical support from the childminder that Fran reports that enabled her to recover from this low point. I wonder if her joking comment about her child-minder 'adopting my daughter' veils an unspoken feeling. I consider the possibility of Fran feeling guilty for being away from her daughter for full days and also for not being at home for her sons after school. I speculate that Fran might experience some warring emotions, perhaps some envy at the close relationship her daughter and childminder have developed yet also wanting the relationship to be strong enough for Fran to be free to continue attending placement.

Fran experienced an unexpected high point in the PVI nursery:

...one of the little girls in the baby room stood independently on her own in the middle of the room the other day and I was like, it was like having your own child do it, you know, I was like "oh look! She's stood up, she's stood up!" and I thought I wouldn't get anything out of being in the baby....You know, like I thought when you're at school and they start writing and things you get that, don't you? And I thought "what do you get with babies?" you know, but I was really excited for her and I was really surprised that that came out really. (Fran, interview 2)

In witnessing this milestone in the baby's development, Fran compares her excitement as a practitioner to that of a mother. I wonder if Fran unknowingly brings her experience of being a mother to her professional role in recognising and celebrating the baby's progress. I sense her personal and professional identities are more woven than she realises as she says 'it was like having your own child do it'. I explored Fran's own perspective on her

identity formation after only a few days in her placement through the use of socio-mapping with Lego figures, as shown in Figures 4.49 - 4.51.

Developing Professional Identity

Fran uses markers to represent the start and finish points of the EYTS course. She uses a Lego person to represent herself and another to represent a trained EYT.



Figure 4.49 Fran's map of her own progress to EYTS

Commenting on her map Fran judges her progress to EYTS:

I'd say I'm over half, out to there, I'm over half [way there]. (Fran, Interview 2)



Figure 4.50 Fran's map of placement colleagues' view of her progress

Commenting on her map depicting less progress than in Figure 4.49, she explains:

I just think that perhaps knowledge based in their field perhaps...I'm a student so I'm asking lots of questions and, yeah, I think perhaps a bit lower, I see myself lower than the other staff members... (Fran, Interview 2)



Figure 4.51 Fran's map of school colleagues' view of her progress

Commenting on her map Fran explains:

...it's really hard because I think up there. When I talk to them they sort of say I could be there, you know, I could do it. I suppose it's a bit of a lack of confidence, isn't it, that you can, but they're always saying I could but I don't know whether, yeah, I don't know, it would be interesting to ask them to do this... (Fran, Interview 2)

The maps illustrate three varying positions of Fran's progress towards achieving EYTS. What is most striking to me in these representations is her student identity in placement. Here she acknowledges an inferior knowledge of the 0-3s than her placement colleagues and seems to infer that asking questions is an integral part of her student identity. I am interested in the ways she describes her movement between the start and finish markers, given that the mapping is on a horizontal plane. In Figure 4.49 Fran speaks of her trajectory as *'over half way there'* indicating forward movement towards the goal. In her commentary on Figures 4.50 and 4.51 the words *'lower'* and *'up'* suggest a vertical hierarchy of power and status, where students are positioned as low. There seems a contradiction between forward and upward trajectories.

When Fran completed her placement some weeks later, we returned to the socio-mapping exercise to consider her professional identity at this point in the EYTS course. Figure 4.52 shows Fran's representation:



Figure 4.52 Fran's map of her post-placement identity

Commenting on her map Fran explains:

I think I've definitely moved, I now look more professional now, 'cos I had flowery top on and I'd have a suit now. I would, and my hair is blonde now...you see that was me before with my brown hair, I changed my hair colour since...I want to be all professional now. I think I've changed, I think I'm a bit more professional. Well I feel I am, I feel I've a bit more, not authority because perhaps that's not the right word, but a bit more confident and a bit more assured of what I can do.

Whilst Fran uses the same markers of a start and finish points as in her earlier maps, I am most struck by the difference in her projected professional image. The brown haired, casually dressed Lego person seems to symbolise her less professional former self, whilst the blonde, suited Lego person is her desired image. This is powerful imagery of professionalism and I find it interesting that Fran chooses a suit when few early years practitioners actually wear this type of clothing in settings. I take it that Fran's actual change of hair colour and notably changed appearance is somehow influencing her radical change of appearance in this map. Yet power dressing is often considered a sign of professionalism and Fran does judge herself to be '*a bit more professional*' with more confidence and self-assurance.

Fran retains the blonde Lego person to represent her position in relation to the important aspects of the nursery placement and her school, as shown in Figure 4.53:

Important Aspects of Placement and Workplace



Figure 4.53 Important aspects of nursery and school

Commenting on her model Fran explains:

This is placement and this is my own setting, erm, for me I think the important thing was that people were the same, smiley happy people and you know I felt comfortable with both sets. This is me, on my skateboard because I'm still moving with a glass of wine this time (laughs), that's more down to stress than celebration! This is a little light bulb because I think of the knowledge I've gained, a bit of a light bulb's come on thinking "yeah, I really like this...I've enjoyed it" and I feel a bit more confident in what I can do thinking "I could do it, I could go into somewhere else and work somewhere else rather than just my own setting". It's broadened my horizons in that way. That's a little book for my knowledge of what I've learnt and this is my end goal, I'm not quite there yet, I've not quite got the medal but I'm on my way.

I see this as Fran placed centrally between the PVI and school sector, valuing both equally. People are clearly the most important feature of school and placement for Fran and I notice she has three people on each side, which adds to the sense of equality between the two sectors. Fran re-affirms her 'broadened horizons' in being able to work in other

settings and this seems to also relate to her physical positioning between the sectors. Fran returns to the metaphor of being on a skateboard as in Figure 4.45 to depict her dynamic movement in a sense of being very busy with lots to do. She also introduces new metaphors to represent the knowledge acquired during placement. By using two metaphors of a light bulb and a book I wonder if this is a way of distinguishing between having new thoughts and writing them down to keep. Alternatively the book might represent her EYTS portfolio. Fran's 'end goal' of a 'medal' is positioned within sight yet just out of reach, which I take to represent the end of the course and the award of EYTS.

Fran later explained a further aspect of the placement regarding a supportive relationship with a colleague that she names as her 'work-mum':

...there's always someone...in a work place what's a bit motherly and looks after you and I found my work mum at my new work place! (Fran, Interview 2)

In addition to her relationships with colleagues, Fran enjoyed closer relationships with children and parents in the setting than in school:

...you have a lot more...one to one interaction with them...a lot more hands-on, there's lots more cuddles and whereas in school its very professional...and the children come and sit down on a chair next to you whereas here...the children will just come and plonk themselves on your knee and give you a hug and give you a kiss...so it's a lot more tactile, I think really the relationships are a lot more motherly in the relationships than it is in school. (Fran, Interview 2)

Fran's description of 'motherly' is an interesting way to explain the depth of the relationships and overall I hear an emphasis on physical touch in 'cuddles' 'hugs' and 'kisses'. Fran is able to bring her experience as a mother to her thoughts and reflections on the appropriateness of close physical relationships between practitioners and children:

...for me as a parent, I...love it that my daughter goes...and gives my childminder a kiss and things, you know, that doesn't bother me as a parent. So I think why would it bother other parents that...you're giving the child a hug or anything? (Fran, Interview 2)

Fran reports a greater level of involvement with nursery parents than school parents:

The parents see me just as one of the workers there...they're asking about their

children so I'm enjoying that side of it because from being in school you're very much known that you're the teaching assistant...they'll pass on messages to me...if they've got any concerns they tend to go to the teacher...whereas...I think you feel a lot more involved when you're in a nursery. (Fran, Interview 2)

I hear a shift in Fran's professional identity in this extract as she reports having the status of a 'worker'. As nursery parents approach her directly for information on their child, this suggests to me that Fran is positioned as a knowledgeable and respected practitioner. Fran's identity as a student is not evident here, yet her experience of being a student leads her to reflect on how other students on placement may feel:

I think I've realised that I should make more of an effort...because I do tend to walk in the staff room and there'll be someone sat there and I think "oh, it must be a student" and carry on (laughs) and not even say "hello" to them, and I've thought "oh God, how must that student feel?" But I've realised actually that it's quite nice for them to turn round and just say "y'alright?" And I've realised that's a fault of mine...so I will make more of an effort to do that when I go back, yeah. (Fran Interview 2)

Fran completed the seven-week placement and returned to school in March 2015.

Experience of Placement

Shortly after her return to her home school Fran models a representation of how she experienced placement, as shown in Figure 4.54.



Figure 4.54 Fran's reflection on her completed placement experience

Commenting on her model Fran explains:

...when I went on placement...I knew I'd got so much to get out of it really, that I had to make a change and collect everything for the portfolio and get to know people. This represents me climbing the ladder of being there...and constantly learning. This is a little chair, never had time to sit down (laughs) for me it was full-time placement, which I only work part-time at the moment, you know like so that was hard, I struggled with my own family, you know like juggling that and everything, so that was hard...these are links, and they sort of come together...and it was good, my flowers represent that I was really happy and I enjoyed it and really did like being there.

Fran makes a strong connection to meeting the course requirements of practical and academic work whilst on placement. She returns to the notion of an upward climb in her ladder metaphor to represent her increasing accumulation of knowledge. From her model I surmise that Fran makes sense of her lived experience on placement in a number of ways. The first way I notice is through assessing the impact of full time work on herself and her family. The scale and importance of this impact is evident here, in Figure 4.54 and across interview extracts from her anticipation of placement and initial impressions of placement. She expresses how 'hard' it was, what 'struggles' she endured and makes sense of placement by articulating the impact on her personal life.

The second way Fran seems to make sense of her experience is through a focus on 'doing' or being active. Her recurring metaphor of '*juggling*' the many demands placed on her, combined with the notion of non-stop activity that comes from not having '*time to sit down*' provides me with a sense that purposeful actions are important to Fran. I link this notion of activity to her intrinsic '*bubbly*' nature, as the term 'bubbly' indicates non-stop movement.

I also suggest one further way that Fran makes sense of her experience is through a focus on emotions. She acknowledges the spectrum of positive and negative emotions she has felt although I gain an overriding sense of her being '*happy*'. Fran's ensuing comment on her model contained more affirmation of her positive emotion but an acknowledgement that she would not consider a future career with the 0-3s:

I really enjoyed working there and I really liked it...but I think day in, day out working with that age group I think I'd find a bit boring and tiresome...I'd like to do a bit of teaching, I like to see more progression...(Fran Interview 3)

On her return to school and her role of TA, Fran noticed a change to her professional practice that she attributes to her placement experience:

I think...in school there's that much teaching that we have to do I think I've realised just by stepping back and just watching the children do their own learning has been interesting...and I've sort of seen more now...for example when I went back to my own setting outside they'd make a long track of these like bricks of what they'd put together and made a long track. Well normally I'd just think "what're they doing here? Look at these all over the floor". But I didn't...I stepped back and thought "God, that's really clever what they've done"...and I think that's something that I've learnt...whereas...in school its very much a "this is out, this is what you're supposed to do with it" but its not like that, is it? And it shouldn't be like that, I've realised... (Fran Interview 3)

Fran's reflective appraisal of child-led pedagogy led me to ask for her views on application of the EYFS and the principle of the 'Unique Child' (DfE 2014). She explains school practice as:

...you have a topic and you follow the topic and the learning around the topic and you'll differentiate the learning through whichever children but very rarely follow their own interests...It (unique child) doesn't (fit) does it really in school? It's really

difficult...but I think from a school point of view...its 'done to'...what we do in F2 is determining the outcome for Y2...it's the underpinning things what they will need for Y1, its always looking at what they need for the end result so it won't always necessarily be down to their own interests because they'll need to know such-and-such to get through their SAT's and that's what it determines. (Fran Interview 3)

Fran alludes to her perception of top-down pressure for children to meet academic goals as a 'done to' process. She notes the continuous school practice of preparing children for their next academic year as a forerunner to the Statutory Assessment Tests (SAT) children take at the end of Year 2. I find these comments interesting and return to discuss them further in Chapter 5.

Return to the School Workplace

Fran returned to a slightly different role in school to the one she had before the placement. She explains:

I am gonna be doing an intervention group so I'm a bit of my own...rather than coming in and trying to fit in with the class teacher and fit in with what the class is doing I'm...just taking groups out so I'm a bit more of my own sort of manager, doing my own time which I think'll be easier being part-time. I've been given a bit more responsibility... (Fran Interview 3)

Fran adds that the experience of working full-time on placement has changed her desire to work full-time in school, as she had expressed earlier in Figure 4.44.

...we've decided it wouldn't be right for the family it was too much of a struggle 'cause I wasn't at home for the boys when they got home from school they had to let themselves in...there were days when I was picking (daughter) up and bathing her and putting her to bed, I never saw her and I just thought "in what world is it right that I spend all day looking after other people's two year olds and not my own?" you know and that's just not right, is it? (Fran Interview 3)

I hear the impact of placement on Fran's family as the cause of a change of mind towards working full-time. In the reversal of her intention expressed in her commentary of Figure 4.44, Fran's personal role as a mother seems taking precedence over her professional role as TA and trainee EYT. Fran seems to suggest the notion of working with other people's

children full time as absurd, almost alien, for those with young children of their own, as she asks, *'In what world is it right?'*

Fran uses paper and pencil for the first time to represent how she feels about returning to her home school, as shown in Figure 4.55.

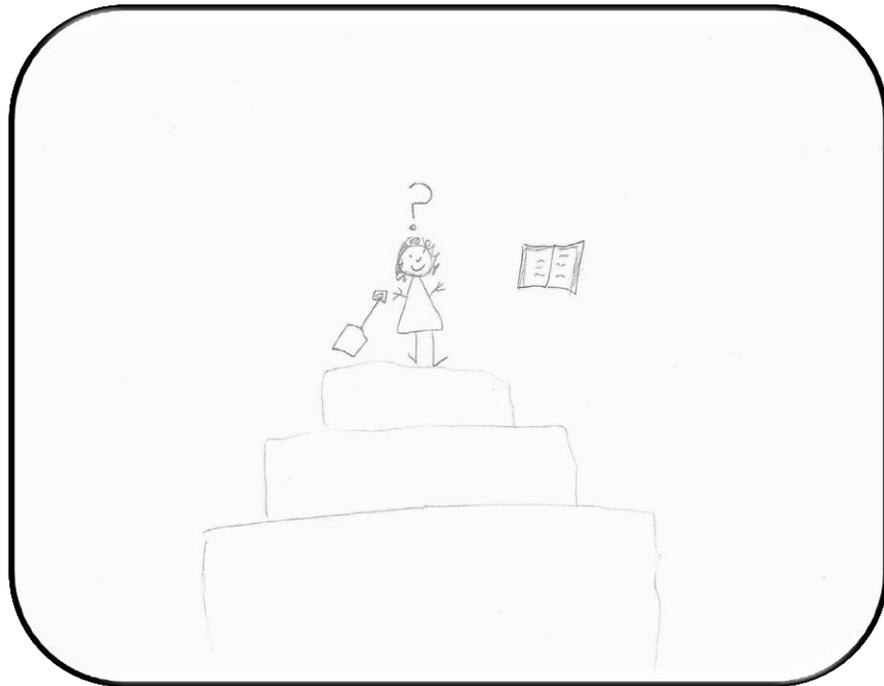


Figure 4.55 Fran's return to school workplace

Commenting on her drawing Fran explains:

...I've gone back with a bit more confidence and I feel, like, a bit further up the hierarchy of the school because I feel that I've learnt stuff what I can put into practice so I've like got more knowledge, more ideas, and my spade represents I'm going to start digging and start doing something with the ideas and the knowledge that I've learnt and I feel I've gone back with a bit more confidence and thinking "I can do this".

Post-Placement Identity

Fran depicts her rise in the school hierarchy through the metaphor of a podium in this drawing and this upward movement links to her previous comments and map in Figures 4.50-4.52 and 4.54. I see she has gained a new criticality in relation to school practices that she previously took for granted. Whilst Fran places herself at the top of the podium

she does not consider this point as the end of her journey. Through the metaphor of a spade Fran seems to signal the beginning of a new episode in her school role through 'doing something' with her new knowledge. Indeed, digging represents a downward movement in contrast to her ascending metaphors. The question mark seems to capture the element of the unknown future for Fran at this point in time, and the podium is perhaps the platform to achieving the award of EYTS.

Summary of Fran's Case

Fran made sense of her placement experience as a busy and hectic journey. A key aspect of the experience was the positive relationships she developed with staff and an increased sense of professional identity as she interacted with parents who valued her knowledge of their children. Moving from part-time work to full-time placement was particularly difficult for Fran, and she became close to leaving the placement due to the difficulty of managing family commitments. She drew on support from her childminder to help her to cope with the extra demands and went on to complete placement with a sense of a successful upward trajectory. Fran reported gaining confidence and knowledge from the placement experience and returned to school workplace with enthusiasm to use her new skills. She revised her aim to work full-time as she decided to balance family commitments with part-time work.

This section concludes the data on Cara and Fran as trainees from the school sector experiencing a PVI sector placement. In appendix 8, I draw together some patterns arising across the idiographic studies of trainees from PVI workplaces and school workplaces. Through a re-configuration and re-labelling of themes, I take prominent convergences and divergences of data to inform the next chapter's discussion of findings.

CHAPTER 5: TWO WORLDS OF SCHOOLING AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

In the last chapter I provided idiographic analyses for Anna, Beth and Debs as trainees from the PVI sector, followed by Cara and Fran from the school sector. A table of themes, drawn from these analyses (see appendix 8) shows the development of the super-ordinate and emergent themes that inform this chapter. Here I stay close to the trainees' lived experience of placement and introduce existing literature to complement, illuminate and problematise the themes identified in the convergences and divergences of data. I will refer to relevant literature on the underlying philosophies of ECEC services, *school readiness*, *datafication*, *ethics of care* and *professional love* as pertinent to this study.

In discussing my findings, I begin by arguing the encounter between the trainees' professional identities at the onset of the study and subsequent placement experience can be understood by identifying two distinct worlds, one historically based in education and the other historically based in care for young children. As discussed in Chapter 2, New Labour claimed to integrate care and education into *educare*. However, *educare* does not currently exist in any meaningful way and I posit that two worlds operate within a shared, statutory EYFS framework. This chapter includes themes of commonalities between the two worlds in terms of *staff who want the best for children* and *the EYFS framework*. The themes of differences discussed are *the unique child principle*, *the teaching of literacy and maths*, *care* and *structure*.

I move on to discuss how the trainees made sense of their lived experience through the metaphor of a journey. As the trainees leave their workplace, a familiar world, to enter into placement, an unfamiliar world, I examine elements of their placement experience to explore the influences on the trainees' developing professional identities. The elements are, *emotional and relational aspects*, *assuming a student identity*, *nomenclature*, *gaining new knowledge* and *identity mapping*. I summarise by introducing new literature in Mezirow's (1974) transformational learning theory, to frame how the placement

experience influenced the trainees' professional identities. The chapter concludes with a visualisation of my findings and current thinking.

Placement Journey in a New World

The idiographic analyses in Chapter 4 show that the trainees experience the PVI and school sectors of ECEC services as two culturally different environments, with practices that overlap, yet with different pedagogical approaches. I suggest these culturally different sectors could be conceptualised as two worlds, each shaped by the EYFS (DfE 2014) as a statutory framework, yet in ways that seem unrecognisable to visitors from the alternate world. Much is already known about contested perspectives on and understandings of ECEC services, with Moss (2013) and others arguing for a social pedagogical stance which recognises the broad learning and development needs of children, in opposition to policy aims focused on improving children's outcomes to enable success in later life; enabling parents the choice of returning to work; and facilitating early intervention strategies (Ofsted 2015). The underlying philosophies of ECEC services are important to this study as they inform arguments in contemporary debates about the workforce (Osgood 2012, Moss 2016), school readiness (Whitebread and Bingham 2012), datafication (Roberts-Holmes 2015) and ethics of care (Noddings 1984, 2002; Page 2008) as discussed in Chapter 2.

Trainees' Perceptions of Pedagogical Approaches

The trainees' descriptions and representations of their professional roles, values and principles, as developed in their workplaces, gave an insight into their contrasting worlds. Anna, Beth and Debs describe their PVI world as aligning with Degotardi's (2015) view of relationship-based pedagogy, where a focus on mutually responsive relationships and interactions forms the basis of children's learning. Cara and Fran, from the school sector describe their world as aligning with Moss' (2013, p5) view of early childhood education as a 'readying' approach for the next stage of children's education. Such a focus on education is often associated with a 'hands-off' approach to relationships, where staff members take a stance of professional detachment (Degotardi 2015). The findings of a relationship-

based pedagogy in the PVI settings, and a readiness-based pedagogy in the school settings adds to what we know about contested perspectives within ECEC services (Moss 2016). However, the minutiae of practice and procedures is seen in greater depth, through the eyes of the trainees, enabling a fine grained exploration of the two worlds, adding breadth to shine a light on pertinent issues.

As trainees from PVI workplaces, Anna, Beth and Debs compared their settings' relationship-based approach to children's holistic care and education to their perception of school approaches. Anna stated, *"Its not just about a focus on education, it's looking at the bigger picture"*. Beth explained, *"What we do in nursery...[is] to give them all the opportunities and do everything...from the EYFS but its not to reach an end of target"*. Debs similarly voiced, *"We have a lot of education now. I think there is a big shift in private for education, there is a big push but we're not as target driven [as schools]"*. Debs indicates a pressure here for the PVI-based world to take on aspects of the school-based world. Overall, however, there seems a consensus between these PVI trainees that their relationship-based approach to children's education and care is holistic, in comparison to school approaches that they view as primarily education-based and target driven. This PVI discourse of holistic education and care aligns with the relationship-based pedagogy promoted by Whitebread and Bingham (2012), Moss (2016) and Degotardi (2015).

Cara and Fran felt their roles as TAs in schools were orientated towards making relationships with parents as this is one aspect of practice they felt the teachers did not have time for and where they were not seen as so approachable. Fran explained; *"teachers are always busy and the teaching assistants the one the parents come to more"*. Cara was also keen to *"build up rapport with parents"*. These trainees seemed to accept that teachers with QTS took the main responsibility for children's learning and development and there seemed to be an underlying assumption that schools, led by teachers, emphasise education and learning for children aged 3 and above, and not the holistic approach that has long characterised the PVI sector. These different philosophical approaches are a main cause of the split in ECEC services (Roberts-Holmes 2012).

In summary, the trainees from the PVI sector workplaces espoused an ideology of concern for and commitment to the holistic child, considering their social, emotional and physical well being alongside their educational development. As the trainees left the security of their familiar workplaces and experienced the alternate sector of children's services, the finding of the trainees perceiving the PVI and school sectors as two different worlds is heightened. The two worlds do, however, share some commonalities that I discuss first.

Commonalities Between the Two Worlds

I discuss here two of the commonalities the trainees reported between their workplaces and placement settings, those appearing the most important to them. The first is having '*staff who want the best for children*' and the second is the '*EYFS Statutory Framework*' (DfE 2014).

Staff Who Want the Best for Children

Two trainees from PVI settings perceived a commonality between their workplaces and placement settings in the dedication of placement colleagues to doing their best for children. As a trainee from a PVI sector workplace, Debs modelled the joint passion she and the school staff shared in Figure 4.28, adding, "*The staff at that school they're really passionate about the kids*". Anna concurs with this view in how she spoke of the school staff in her placement, "*They do want the best for these children*". However, 'the best' was perceived by the trainees as academic success for children in schools, compared to their perception of 'the best' meaning the broader, more holistic learning and development of children in the PVI sector. The two worlds appear to hold different aspirations for children. The commonality of staff across the two sectors wanting 'the best' for children, although only briefly discussed at this point, is particularly relevant to my study in light of links to other discussions concerning '*care*', which I discussed on page 47.

EYFS Statutory Framework

Alongside wanting '*the best*' for children, the second commonality the trainees perceive between their workplace and placement settings concerns the EYFS (DfE 2014). As the statutory framework setting standards for the learning, development and care of children

from birth to 5 years old, the EYFS (DfE 2014) provides mandatory learning and development requirements and safeguarding and welfare requirements for all early years practitioners in England. Therefore, it was anticipated that the trainees would identify the EYFS as a common feature of their workplaces and placement settings; yet some trainees gave few examples of commonalities in comparison to the many differences they perceived. Only Anna, as a trainee from a PVI sector workplace, reported a commonality in meeting legal requirements and being subject to policy regulations, saying *“you’ve still got your policies, your procedures and you’re governed by Ofsted”*. Beth noticed her placement school’s planning was linked to the EYFS and Debs seemed aware of the EYFS framework in her school placement, commenting briefly on the visibility in school *“I think I can (see it), so...it’s similar in both”*. Cara gave a conflicting viewpoint as a trainee from a school workplace, saying, *“I didn’t see it as one framework”*. Indeed, all trainees spoke primarily about the EYFS in terms of differences they perceived in the way it was enacted in placement compared to workplace practice.

As the EYFS aimed at ending the distinction between care and education, commonalities might be expected to show that early years settings across both sectors would offer similar levels of quality and consistency, ‘so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind’ (DfE 2014, p5). This policy aspiration for consistency is not found in the trainees’ data as commonalities reported by trainees are far fewer than differences perceived. In the next section I discuss some of the convergences of data that highlight differences between the trainees’ workplaces and placement settings, arguing that two distinct worlds of ECEC services are perceived by the trainees. I begin with differences in the enactment of the EYFS, before considering other themes broadly relating to *education* and to *care*.

Differences between the Two Worlds

Having identified some conflicting data relating to the EYFS framework in the previous section, I now explore the convergences of data that identified enactment of the EYFS as a significant difference between workplace and placement practice. I begin with data that

relates specifically to the *'Unique Child'* principle of the EYFS (DfE 2014), and move on to discrete discussions of *curriculum focus, care, physical routines and structure*.

The EYFS Unique Child Principle

There were similarities across the idiographic case studies in that 4 trainees perceived that the EYFS Unique Child principle (DfE 2014) was enacted in the PVI sector but not in the school sector. As a trainee from a PVI sector workplace, Debs represented the presence and absence of the Unique Child principle by making a model of practice in her workplace and in the school placement (Figure 4.29). Her PVI setting's practice symbolised the child at the centre of curling lines to indicate flexible practice, with the child's interests used to lead individualised learning. In contrast she used straight lines to represent a more inflexible practice at school that was unresponsive to children's unique learning needs. As fellow trainees from the PVI sector, Anna and Beth concurred with Debs' view. Anna also used straight lines to represent a sense of the inflexible practice she perceived and both she and Beth spoke of children directed to learning activities by their teachers. The adult-led approach to learning was unfamiliar to these trainees and, to them, seemed to disregard the EYFS guiding principle of the *'Unique Child'* (DfE 2014). Beth drew comparative images to indicate a freedom of choice for individuals in her own workplace, in contrast to a purely *'academic'* child to represent school practice. Debs compared the use of the EYFS between her home setting and the school placement, saying *"I don't think it's as holistic in schools, definitely not"*.

As a trainee from a school sector workplace, Fran concurred with Anna, Beth and Debs' view of the Unique Child principle as absent in school practice. Fran remarked, *"It (unique child) doesn't (fit) does it really in school?"* explaining practice as *"You follow the topic and...you'll differentiate the learning through whichever children but very rarely follow their own interests"*. She defended the absence of the principle in her workplace by justifying the school's alternate focus on literacy and maths as *"what we do in F2 determines the outcome for Y2"*. She stated her belief that the head teacher had no alternative but to focus on children's attainment in order to achieve good SAT results.

The findings relating to the trainees' report of tension related to the Unique Child principle of the EYFS echo findings of Roberts-Holmes' (2012) study with 12 nursery and primary school head teachers. He found that some headteachers felt that the EYFS Unique Child principle was in tension with the EYFS demands for a nationally imposed set of standards. Roberts-Holmes (2012) particularly notes the problematic juxtaposition of reception classes between the EYFS and the National Curriculum, where pedagogical practice resembles Key Stage One rather than the Foundation Stage (Roberts-Holmes 2012). This aligns with Moss' (2013) view on the subversion of the EYFS as a unique child-centred and play-based educational stage in favour of the school readiness agenda. Furthermore, Fran's justification of school pedagogy as preparation for SATs in Year 2 aligns with Moss' (2013) assertion of the 'readiness' agenda in all levels of education where each stage of education is viewed as preparation for the next.

Education - The teaching of Literacy and Maths in schools

In contrast to the conflicting data on the EYFS, there is a convergence across all cases in trainees who commented on the teaching of literacy and maths in schools. The teaching of literacy and maths in the schools in this study is considered here as an issue of curriculum, to illuminate a practice in a world of schooling.

As trainees from PVI sector workplaces, Anna, Beth and Debs perceived the formal teaching focus on literacy and maths in schools to be in stark contrast to the more informal and child-led pedagogy they usually followed in their workplaces. Anna described the, "*unbelievably high expectations of children*" as the class teacher focussed on children's progress that was to be measured at the end of the academic year. Beth felt uncomfortable when; "*a child started crying because they didn't want to do the writing that their focussed activity was*". The trainees were expected to support the teaching strategies in school, having to implement pedagogical principles that felt uncomfortable and at variance with their own values.

As trainees from school sector workplaces, both Cara and Fran commented on the teaching of maths and literacy in their workplaces as being different from pedagogical approaches they experienced in the PVI sector. Cara noted how the teaching in her school

was based on planned objectives intended; *“to reach the end of the early learning goals”*. She contrasted her school’s approach to that of the PVI setting where *“they plan on the interests of the child”*. Fran concurred with this view, describing how school pedagogical decisions were made, *“It’s always looking at what they (children) need for the end result so it won’t always necessarily be down to their own interests”*. Anning, Cullen and Fler (2008) note the tension between relationship-based discourse and the compulsory school discourse (Moss 2016), which promotes school readiness and particularly achievements in the ‘basics’ of numeracy and literacy, in preparation for the world of work.

In the previous section I noted Fran’s defence of her school’s focus on literacy and maths and her comments are relevant here too. Fran re-iterated her view, remarking how teachers *“have to get all these children ready for the next step”*. There was a consensus between all three trainees from the PVI sector that the schools in this study had no other pedagogical choice but to implement an intense focus on literacy and maths. Anna perceived the academic expectations of children she witnessed came from *“top-down pressure”* from the government that influenced pedagogical practice in school. She reported a conversation with a schoolteacher who told her, *“I’m not graded on whether they can paint a pretty picture at the end of the year, I’m graded on whether they’ve got their literacy results and their maths results”*. Beth explained teachers’ daily focus on literacy and maths as, *“being almost forced into doing this”*. Debs also perceived the school’s drive for results, declaring, *“It’s all outcome, outcome, outcome”*. Anna commented on the school’s drive for results as *“It’s all about data which is quite sad”*.

The findings relating to the trainees’ view of the importance afforded to the teaching of literacy and maths in schools, combined with the notion of data being of high priority to schools, aligns with Roberts-Holmes’ (2015) findings. He argues that current early years pedagogy is subject to damaging datafication. Datafication is commonly used as a technical term to describe how aspects of daily lives are turned into computerised information and allocated new forms of value (O’Neil and Schutt 2013). Roberts-Holmes (2015) applies this term to the field of early years to argue that a form of intensified governance has led to the on-going and public hierarchical ranking and taxonomy of schools, teachers and children in ways that constrain practitioners from pursuing child-led

values and pedagogical practices. Alexander (2009, p16) suggests that few people doubt that literacy and maths are fundamental to primary education but she warns against the risks of formalised learning for young children, as reflected in perceptions of school practice in this study, as 'dangerously counterproductive'. There are implications for policy here that I will return to in Chapter 6.

The trainees' perceptions of top-down pressure from Ofsted as influencing the curriculum in this way are refuted by Ofsted (2015) in their claim that they do not have a preferred style or approach to teaching or play. Ofsted's (2015) suggests that approaches to teaching and play sit on a continuum, arguing this allows teachers and practitioners to judge the extent of their involvement. The trainees' perceptions in this study were that teachers and schools lacked this kind of agency to make fine-tuned decisions in the interests of individual children, illuminating a tension between policy and practice.

I turn now to the issues of *care* to discuss a binary of practice from the data that further illustrates the notion of two worlds.

Care

A body of literature positions an ethics-of-care as central to professional practice and identity in the early years (Noddings, 1984, Taggart 2011, Elfer 2012). I discuss ethics-of-care here in terms of Noddings' (1984) seminal work and Page's (2008) contemporary concept of 'professional love'. Noddings (1984) argues for the concept of *natural care* as associated with 'I want' to care. I align this view with a social, relationship-based pedagogical approach and Noddings (2002) concept of motivational displacement, plus Page's (2008) assertion of professional love as an intellectual approach, as discussed in Chapter 2. Noddings (1984) argues for the concept of *ethical care* as associated with 'I must' care and I align this view with the readiness-based pedagogy that functionally meets the EYFS statutory welfare requirements (DfE 2014).

When still in their workplaces, the relatively experienced trainees, Anna, Cara, Debs and Fran, articulated many similarities in terms of their professional values, values which seem to reflect the discourse of professional love (Page 2008). Their love for children, parents

and families was represented in their models of love hearts and articulated as a professional value that seemed particularly significant for them. Anna expressed a clear stance in her setting's approach to relationship building, "*We put a lot of focus on the attachment and building relationships, not only with children but with parents and families*". In describing her setting's approach to relationships with children, Debs said, "*we love our kids*". As a parent, Debs was acutely aware of how important practitioner relationships with children are, explaining that her own son has autism and values "*cuddles*" and warm personal interactions. Debs brought a parent's perspective to her understanding of care. Similarly, Cara explained her professional practice and identity as, "*I'm very caring with the children, I'm quite a caring nurturing kind of person*". Overall positive, caring actions formed part of the everyday practice of these four practitioners and seem integral to what Anna and Debs describe as their "*comfort zones*" of practice. Despite the similar approach to children's 'care' evident in 4 idiographic studies, as the trainees left their '*comfort zones*' to experience placement in an alternate sector, they all perceived some difference between their workplace and placement practice in terms of caring actions and physical care routines. The caring actions perceived in the PVI sector align with Noddings' (1984) theory of natural care, based on feelings of '*I want*' to care. As trainees from PVI sector workplaces, Anna Beth and Debs felt constrained from exhibiting caring actions they considered usual practice in their workplaces, such as touching, holding or cuddling children, during school placements. They felt this limited the formation of the close, loving relationships that they espoused as a professional principle in the education and care of young children. Additionally, all three witnessed instances of school practice that seemed uncaring towards children, causing them varying levels of discomfort. Beth gave examples of 'uncaring' actions in teachers shouting at children. Debs gave an example of a child isolated for 'time-out'. Anna was concerned for children labelled as 'low-ability' having to sit for extended periods of group work with little opportunity for free play. She reflected, "*I think there's very little care given in school*", adding, "*There's just no time for it*". For these three trainees, the 'uncaring' practice they perceived seemed wholly contradictory to their own professional values and difficult to observe as passive bystanders.

As trainees from school sector workplaces, Cara and Fran's new experience of demonstrating caring actions was the opposite of the experience of the PVI trainees in that they became freer to touch, hold and cuddle children in nursery placements. The increased freedom was an aspect of practice Cara and Fran seemed to embrace. Fran noticed how children would seek unsolicited physical contact and sit on her knee and, *"give you a hug...so it's a lot more tactile"*. Fran reflected on the different approaches and considered her perspective as a parent, *"(I) love it that my daughter goes up, runs and gives my childminder a kiss"*, concluding, *"so I think why would it bother other parents that, you know, you're giving the child a hug?"* Cara also commented on the increased opportunities to demonstrate affection, *"I'm quite comfortable cuddling them and holding close and caring for them"*. She compared this approach to her own school workplace where she was constrained from physical contact by a teacher who *"wants a more hands-off approach"*.

By the end of placement Fran commented, *"There's lots more cuddles (in nursery) and whereas in school its very professional"*, implying her perspective developed over time and that she came to view the demonstration of affection for children in the PVI setting as less than 'professional' conduct. This perspective illuminates a difference between the two worlds in concepts of professional behaviour, indicating that the PVI world seems more comfortable in displaying physical affection for children as 'professional love' (Page 2008, Elfer and Page 2015).

There were particular routines and times within the nursery and school day when the presence or absence of caring actions seemed more noticeable to the trainees. I focus next on 'physical care routines' to explore two such times, 'meals/snack times' and 'nappy changing'.

Physical Care Routines

As trainees from the PVI sector workplaces, Anna and Debs cited school lunchtimes as a 'caring for' routine that teachers were absolved from as unqualified supervisors assumed responsibility for the children at these times. Anna stated, *"We're no where near the children, dinner ladies come in at 12 o'clock and bring them back at 10 past 1"*. Debs

compared the school's practice to her own workplace practice, saying, "*They have dinner ladies that take the kids whereas we eat with the kids and I prefer our way... I think it's a social part of the day*". Anna also acknowledged the absence of social interaction between adults and children as her own involvement in snack times was limited, "*You cannot touch anything to tidy up. The children have got to be responsible for it themselves*". Like Debs, she reported a contrast to her usual practice, in that she viewed meal and snack times in her PVI workplace as "*socially interactive*" times and opportunities for "*a learning experience*" between adults and children.

Concurring with Anna and Debs' views, as a trainee from a school sector workplace, Fran also perceived this difference in practice. Fran reported that meal and snack times in the PVI nursery were pleasant, social occasions with rich opportunities for relationship building and language development through informal conversations. Fran described practice in the PVI placement nursery, "*I do quite like the snack times...it's a nice little social thing for the children*". She compared this against her school workplace routines, "*Within school we have free flow snack, so the children are left to go and get their own*", which seems to mirror a similar approach to Anna's placement school, in there being no space for personalised adult-child interactions or relationships.

Also, as a trainee from a school sector workplace, Cara had difficulty engaging in the physical 'caring for' routines in the PVI nursery, initially through anxiety and later through a sense of boredom. At the end of placement Fran concurred that PVI practice would eventually become a "*boring*" prospect for her too, compared to the challenge of teaching older children.

In summary, the trainees from the PVI workplaces found their values in relation to caring adult-child relationships, respect for children and privileging of children's emotional wellbeing challenged by school practices. This was particularly evident in the different approaches to physical care routines where they saw schools as devaluing physical care routines and allocating its responsibility to lower level colleagues. This suggests a binary of practice, as viewed by participants, in that the schools in this study were perceived to manage physical routines as primarily 'functional', which aligns with Noddings (1984) view

of ethical care based on 'I must'. This contrasts with the PVI settings, where trainees perceived a 'social' approach based on feelings of 'I want' to care. The trainees' perceptions of care in the PVI settings in this study align with the discourse associated with a social, relationship-based pedagogical approach that seeks to develop children holistically (OECD 2006, Moss 2016). Perceptions of a more functional approach to practice in the school settings suggest an alternative bias towards a readiness-based pedagogy where preparation for primary school dominates practice (Moss 2016). These diverse pedagogical approaches seem to be a pivotal difference between the two worlds.

As trainees from school workplaces, Cara and Fran at first felt at ease with the freedom to hold, touch and cuddle children, yet Fran came to view this as 'less professional' practice. A second binary seems evident here, in that PVI settings encourage professional love in their practice but schools discourage physical contact that might be deemed as unprofessional. The findings confirm Page and Elfer's (2013) study which found early years practitioners held powerful, but often unspoken, feelings about what is allowable in a professional role. There are implications for further research here that I take up in chapter 6.

The finding that the two trainees from school workplaces were disengaged from working with children under 3, as they found the work '*boring*' compared to working with older children, adds to our understanding of the low numbers of graduates working with this age-group. Mathers, Singer and Karemaker's (2012, p34) study found that graduates were 'the least likely to be deployed to work with children under three'. The finding of work with under-3s viewed as '*boring*' may provide one reason why graduates are not deployed with such young children. There are implications for policy in terms of graduate practitioners fulfilling the 2 year FEL (DfE 2012a), which I take up in Chapter 6.

In the next section, I consider a further difference the trainees perceived between their workplaces and placement settings, a difference relating to structure. The trainees' concept of structure varied between individuals and I limit my discussion to the facets of *timetabling*, *environment* and the subsequent *impact on children's play*, they described.

Structure - Timetabling

As trainees from PVI workplaces, Anna, Beth and Debs found their school placements to be rigidly structured environments that operated to strict timetables in contrast to practice in their home settings. Anna commented that in her school placement *“everything is structured to a T”*. Trainees’ models in different media depict structure, as in Anna and Deb’s images of straight lines (Figures 4.12 and 4.29) to convey a sense of the inflexible practice they perceived in schools. Anna and Beth made images of clocks (Figures 4.12 and 4.19) to convey the significance for them of the timetable in organising the daily running of the school as a constraining aspect of practice Beth recounted her placement school’s structured approach, saying, *“Its about, ‘You’re doing this job now, and then we’ll move onto that job, and then we’ll move onto that job’”*, implying the segmenting of practice into discrete, time framed episodes, at the teacher’s discretion.

Structure - Environment

As trainees from school workplaces, both Cara and Fran concurred with the view of schools as having structured environments. Fran described her school workplace practice as, *“Your green pot is on the green table and your red pot on the red table”*. She added her school’s approach to the environment was *“to keep it tidy and orderly”*. Both Cara and Fran found their PVI placement settings to be unstructured environments, with Fran explaining, *“They’re lacking a lot on the structure”* and adding, *“I just couldn’t cope with the mess”*. Cara agreed, perceiving the PVI nursery environment as *“chaotic”*. Her model (Figure 4.37) conveyed opposing images of a structured school environment and a messy nursery environment, describing the latter as *“a nightmare”*. Fran also noted a difference in the aged PVI environment with fewer resources of inferior quality than those she reported in her home school.

As trainees from PVI workplaces, Anna, Beth and Debs perceived the structured school environments as negatively influencing children’s play and consequently children’s learning through freely chosen play activities.

Structure – Influence on Children’s Play

Debs commented on the school’s structured environment, reporting, *“Children are only allowed to play in certain areas in certain numbers”*, with toys and equipment confined to their allotted areas. Debs viewed this as contrary to her setting’s approach where children are free to *“take whatever they want and put it into their [play]”*. Beth concurred with Debs, explaining her PVI workplace practice as, *“At nursery they’re allowed to choose their own play”*, compared to the school placement practice: *“I’m not saying they don’t interact or they don’t play with them but its definitely on a different level”*. Anna also perceived a structured approach to play in school through the devaluing of free choice activities which were interrupted for small group work, *“As soon as everybody’s kinda engaged in the free choice then we call out groups of children to deliver adult led activities, focused on literacy”*.

Fran explained her school’s structured approach to play through the physical containing of play and resources to a specific area, for example, keeping the building blocks within the parameters of a tuff spot tray, *“You keep them [bricks] in the tuff-spot and you play in that tuff-spot”*. Cara concurred with Fran, describing a structured approach to play in her school workplace through the creation of specific areas *“It’s zoned and...you play in that area and they’re focussing and concentrating in...that area”*. Debs viewed the school’s drive for adult-led learning activities as a missed opportunity for child-led learning.

There was a consensus of opinion across all trainees’ idiographic studies that the school and PVI settings in this study presented opposing approaches to the structuring of the environment and of resources. In another binary of enacted practice within the EYFS, the trainees’ data suggests that these schools prefer structured, orderly and tidy environments, whilst PVI settings in this study appear relatively unstructured and messy.

The findings of significant differences in the enactment of the EYFS between the two worlds could be interpreted in two ways. One way would be to consider the EYFS as a flexible framework, as Wall, Litjens and Taguma (2015) suggest in their review of international pedagogical practices in early years settings. Findings from the review iterate the importance of a child-centred pedagogy and play-based learning, yet views the

early implementation of a national school curriculum with children aged 4-5 as a positive strategy to aid children in becoming familiar with school and formal learning (Wall, Litjens and Taguma 2015). An alternative view would consider the revisions of the original play-based EYFS (DfES 2008) made by successive governments (DfE 2012a, 2014) as resulting in a hybrid framework comprising different and contradictory policy aims. The tensions between school readiness and play-based learning are open to individual and cultural interpretations, enabling two different worlds to exist within one statutory framework. There are implications for policy that I will return to in Chapter 6.

Having considered the perceived differences and commonalities between the trainees' workplaces and placement settings, I have argued that the trainees in this study experience the school and PVI sectors as two worlds. In the next section I discuss how the trainees' placement experience was represented as a journey and explore how some significant issues and events influenced their developing professional identities.

Journey in an Unfamiliar World

Four trainees described their lived experience of placement as a 'journey'. The metaphor of a journey is commonly associated with a sense of movement and change, providing a meaningful way of narrativising an experience (Thompson 2016). Their journeys were evident in models and descriptions of vehicles, boats, bridges and even a storybook (Figures 4.9, 4.10, 4.26 and 4.31), along with metaphors signalling a trajectory of ascent. In this section, I discuss the trainees' journey in the alternate world in terms of *emotional and relational aspects*, before exploring some key moments and situations that influenced the trainees' professional identity. These key moments and situations are explored in relation to the themes of *assuming a student identity*, of *gaining of new knowledge* and the *trainees' perceptions of their developing professional identity*.

Emotional and Relational Aspects

I begin with a focus on the emotional and relational aspects the trainees reported as part of their placement journey from the familiar workplace world to the unfamiliar placement world. The range of emotions embodied in the trainees' models and interview data was

evident in Anna's metaphor of a "roller coaster". All trainees experienced emotional highs and lows, sometimes recycling through the range of emotions several times over the seven-week period in placement. For Cara, this was a particularly salient aspect of her journey as her pizza slice of emotions (Figure 4.36) showed a spectrum of feelings. Whilst emotional states are often embodied in physiological changes, only Cara and Beth conveyed these as facial expressions in their models (Figures 4.18 and 4.34).

For Cara, the disequilibrium was quite extreme as the first few weeks in placement were distressing at times. She depended on frequent and regular contact with family members and peers to provide support for the first three weeks. She described a critical point in the placement saying "(I) felt like I'm gonna walk out and I feel like crying". The emotional support offered by family and the potential reward offered by her family of visiting Legoland enabled Cara to continue in placement and was crucial in making the difference between continuing or leaving the course. The stress of dealing with this new world and the intensified need for emotional stability illustrates the extent of Cara's culture shock.

In the idiographic studies, it was apparent that the four relatively experienced trainees reported close, supportive relationships with their workplace colleagues. The temporary loss of such familiar workplace relationships, when on placement, seemed to be destabilising for Fran, Anna, Debs and particularly Cara. The unfamiliar placement offered opportunities to develop new, if temporary, relationships with early years teachers and practitioners. Fran reported making strong peer relationships whilst on placement in the PVI sector, forming a strong attachment with one person who she described as her 'work-mum'. This seems an unusual term for a relationship in the early years context, appearing to go beyond the usual mentor/mentee relationship that trainees often form with their Setting Based Tutor. Interestingly, Fran's 'work-mum' was simply an experienced colleague in the nursery who offered comfort, help, and support during her placement journey. Beth is the only trainee who seemed to move between the two sets of relationships, across workplace and placement settings, with comparative ease. This may be due to Beth's more recent experience of placements undertaken as part of her previous studies. It might be that Beth is more adaptable to moving between the two

worlds as she finds it enjoyable. Alternatively, Beth has relatively little experience in either the PVI or school sector world, unlike the others, so has no stronger sense of identification with one world or the other.

Nonetheless, in relation to their placement colleagues, all the trainees were positioned as a 'student'. Assuming a student identity was part of their placement journey, and I discuss this, and other aspects that I interpreted as influencing their professional identity, in the next section.

Journey Influence on Professional Identity

I now consider four themes the trainees reported as important aspects of their journeys. Firstly, I discuss the aspect of *assuming a student identity* as this was particularly difficult for the relatively experienced trainees. Secondly, I explore the issue of *nomenclature* before focussing on the third issue of *gaining of new knowledge*. In the fourth issue, I discuss the trainees' perceptions of their developing professional identity from the socio-mapping exercise. I introduce new literature in terms of Mezirow's (1978) transformational learning theory to interpret how the trainees made sense of their placement experience.

Assuming a 'Student' Identity

I begin with a discussion of the transition from the workplace settings where the trainees had established identities as employed early years practitioners, to the unfamiliar world of placement where they assumed a 'student' identity. In examining this, I consider how power and authority issues influenced their changing professional identities.

As experienced practitioners, Anna, Cara, Debs and Fran's entry into the placement positioned them in a new and unfamiliar position of 'student' in relation to their placement colleagues. As experienced trainees from the PVI sector, with positions of responsibility and leadership, Anna and Debs experienced an immediate lack of agency and powerlessness that was particularly unsettling for them. Anna described the transition from manager to student, commenting, *"It was difficult actually having to take*

a step down". When Debs worked closely with a child with additional needs, she felt powerless to make decisions around how to manage the child's challenging behaviour. She reported feeling the need to comply with the school's practice, saying *"I'm a student...I were really uncomfortable as to what I were allowed to do"*. Debs reported a particular time initially when she struggled to cope in placement without any relational support from colleagues and felt reduced to the level of a *"dogsbody"*.

As experienced trainees from the school sector, Cara and Fran struggled in different ways to Anna and Debs. Cara had expected to assume a managerial identity within the early years setting and to be *"overseeing the teaching"* so felt she was *"just like thrown in"* to the student practitioner role. I established earlier how Cara struggled to cope on placement and this links to her role as a student practitioner. Acting in the role of student practitioner led to negative feelings, *"I feel used and then I feel a bit resentful about it and then I feel a bit trapped."* This was at a time that Cara described as *"a real low point"*.

Also as a trainee from a school workplace, Fran explained her placement identity as, *"I'm a student so I'm asking lots of questions...I see myself lower than the other staff members"*. However, as Fran came to be viewed as a member of staff, her thoughts reflected a more equal relationship that was particularly evident in her interactions with parents. Fran perceived a different level of respectful relationships in the PVI setting than she reported in her school workplace. She commented on the interactions PVI placement parents, saying, *"I did feel comfortable with them 'cause, you know, they thought 'oh she knows what she's talking about'"*. Fran contrasted this experience with her school workplace *"whereas in school parents will tend to only come and talk to you if they've got an issue"*. She concluded that relationships with parents in the PVI placement were more personal, adding, *"so I think you did build up closer bonds with your parents"*.

All the relatively experienced trainees found assuming a student identity a difficult and distressing process at times; yet, as a relatively novice practitioner, Beth found the transition into placement and to assuming a student identity comparatively easy. She explained, *"I like doing placements...and I like being part of a team"*. Perhaps Beth was also more used to assuming a student identity through her recent studies. She identified a

personal strength in her *“adaptability”*, which could be another factor in her smooth transition from employed practitioner to student.

The trainees reported that their relationships with other adults often positioned them as the ‘student’. Debs described her situation, *“They think I’m just a student, I think it made me feel like a student”*. The term ‘student’ has connotations of inferiority, which Debs describes as a *“stigma”*. Trainees perceived that their placement colleagues thought of them as lacking knowledge, having few or less qualifications than placement staff, few skills and little or no autonomy as students. The relatively experienced trainees found the ‘student’ identity quite difficult to accept and, sometimes, taking on this identity was an actively negative experience. The experience of an unfamiliar identity was compounded by being called by an unfamiliar name, which I discuss in the next section.

Nomenclature

The second issue that contributes to the influence of placement on trainees’ professional identity is that of nomenclature. A name is a powerful descriptor of who a person is, and is important in representing how they perceive themselves. The data suggests that there are two distinct naming conventions apparent in the school and PVI sectors, with school typically addressing staff by their title and surnames (for example Mrs. Jones) and PVI settings preferring the use of first names.

The relatively experienced trainees, Anna, Debs, Cara and Fran struggled with the unfamiliarity of being called by a different name to the one used in their workplaces. For school workplace trainees, Cara and Fran, it felt strange to be called by their first names in the PVI placement, although Fran was surprised that she came to enjoy the informality, saying; *“I just thought it was lovely”*. Two PVI workplace trainees, Anna and Debs actively did not like being called by their surnames. Debs reported, *“That’s one thing I hate,”* explaining, *“It might just be a name but to me it does feel like a barrier”*. For Anna and Debs, the use of their first names in the PVI sector felt synonymous with the close and informal relationships they had established in their workplaces. The informality of the relationship and nomenclature was linked to being able to comfortably express their

'professional love' (Page 2011) for children, which links to the earlier discussion on the ethics of care.

As a relatively novice trainee, Beth coped more easily with being addressed by her surname, perhaps as she had more recently experienced different forms of address on undergraduate placements. However, Beth acknowledged the difference between the informality of first names as used in her PVI workplace and the formality of school "*I suppose they're not allowed to know your first name, it is more formal*".

However, for Anna, use of her surname in the school placement raised questions of how society views early years practitioners, although she struggled to articulate her view clearly, "*I think, it's difficult really, probably so because you're seen as an adult aren't you and, not that Anna's not seen as an adult or somebody to respect, its just how society sees you isn't it really? I don't really know*". Anna seemed to perceive a difference in that greater respect was afforded to school staff.

Summarising of the issue of nomenclature, the trainees' experience suggests a further binary of practice, with schools using a formal means of address and the PVI sector using an informal means. For the experienced trainees, the different forms of address, at best, felt strange and, at worst, were hated. The tradition of using first names or surnames may be potentially rooted in the education and care divide, as arguably teachers have historically been held in high regard by society as graduate practitioners and the formal use of surnames is an indicator of respect for their relative position of power. As practitioners in the PVI sector have traditionally been qualified at a lower level and more unusually as graduates than their school-based counterparts, a culture of informality has developed, with first names commonly used in the PVI sector.

The finding of culturally different naming conventions between school and PVI settings in this study adds to McGillivray's (2008) study of professional identity construction in the early years. She identifies confusing terminology when discussing job titles within the early years workforce as leading to uncertainty about identity, roles and responsibilities. The findings of my study extend McGillivray's (2008) findings by considering the difference of formal and informal means of addressing individual teachers/practitioners in the two

sectors, and the potential effects this might have on an individual's sense of self and the nature of relationships.

In addition to the aspect of nomenclature for individuals is the aspect relating to role titles, as discussed in Chapter 2. The Nutbrown review (2012) aimed to eliminate confusion over job titles by recommending graduates in the field share the same title of 'teacher' on the basis that the concept of a 'teacher' is understood by all. When referring to her colleagues in the placement school, Debs reported, *"I don't think they know what an Early Years Teacher is"*. To date there is no research into the effects of changing the name of Early Years Professional to Early Years Teacher, raising implications for further research that I will return to in Chapter 6.

Gaining New Knowledge

The third issue that contributes to an understanding of how the placement experience influences trainees' professional identity is the gaining of new knowledge and understanding they report. As an EYTS course requirement, practical placements are positioned as vital learning experiences and as sites to bridge theories and working practices. Indeed, there were similarities across the case studies to suggest the placement settings in both sectors were rich sites for experiential learning as the acquisition of new knowledge was indicated through trainees' use of metaphors and models of light bulbs, wise owls and books in the models they made after placement had been completed. In this brief section, I aim to discuss how the gaining of new knowledge influenced the trainees' perceptions of their professional identity.

Reflecting back on the completed placement experience, Fran explained, *"I've like got more knowledge, more ideas"*. Debs stated; *"I feel more knowledgeable, I've learnt loads"* and Cara said, *"My confidence levels by the end (of placement) were really raised"*. Some trainees reflected on how their newly acquired knowledge and experience had influenced their thinking, for example Fran reported a new insight as she critically reviewed school practices that she had previously taken for granted. Anna reported that her new knowledge meant she could support her own son's progress in school more effectively.

The new knowledge led to trainees feeling differently about themselves and reporting increased levels of confidence.

Trajectory of Professional Identity

In the last of the issues contributing to the influence of placement on trainees' professional identity, I draw on the trainees' own perceptions. Trainees verbally described, or physically represented with Lego®, their perceptions of what an EYT is and how close they were to become a 'finished' EYT.

All trainees reported progress in their trajectory towards achieving EYTS and becoming a 'finished' EYT. As trainees from PVI workplaces, Anna and Beth struggled with the concept of a 'finished' EYT as they saw the role as distinctive for each sector. The division of the EYT role into two separate parts was represented in Beth's dichotomous modelling of two individuals as the 'finished' EYT (Figure 4.8). She explained the different roles were due to the different pedagogical approaches in schools and PVI settings, adding, *"It would be nice to think that an EYTS would be able to teach in the same format in a nursery as in the lower part of the school"*. Anna also viewed the EYT role as dichotomous in terms of the roles requiring different approaches to education and care across the two sectors, saying, *"It's the same job but it's a completely different job"*.

Some trainees reported reasons for their progress towards achieving EYTS. Fran attributed her progress to feeling *"a bit more confident and a bit more assured"* and Debs concurred, saying, *"(I) feel a lot more confident and able to...put my opinions across"*. Beth suggested her progress might be due to the development of *"more succinct views on like that I do believe in the importance of play"*. Whilst confidence is not usually linked to concepts of professional identity, for these trainees their increased levels of confidence in articulating key aspects of their practice did seem connected to their sense of professional identity and their perceptions of positive progress towards achieving EYTS.

On return to the workplace after placement, all trainees perceived themselves to have made positive progress towards achieving EYTS and getting closer to their idea of a 'finished' EYT. However, they viewed the finished EYT in a dichotomous way, dividing the

EYT role between delivering a relationship-based pedagogy in the PVI sector and delivering a readiness-based pedagogy in the school sector. The two worlds each seem to require different attributes from an EYT. The trainees' concept of the EYTS role as dichotomous might trouble policy-makers' current concept of a single graduate practitioner successfully teaching across the two different sectors of early years services. The finding of the EYT role as dichotomous relates to my earlier discussion of the two worlds of services for young children which appear, from trainee's accounts, to be delivering two different forms of early years education and care. I return to this idea in Chapter 6 and consider whether the EYTS programme can realistically integrate two distinct roles into a single professional status.

Framing my Interpretations on the Influences of Professional Identity

In summarising the discussion on the influence of placement on the trainees' professional identity through issues of *assuming a student identity, nomenclature, gaining new knowledge* and the trainees' own perceptions of their trajectories, I draw on Mezirow's (1978) transformational learning theory. His study, of 93 women returning to college who participated in an academic re-entry program after a long absence, attempts to explain how one's expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence meaning derived from experiences. Mezirow (1978, p100) describes transformational learning theory as 'a change in the way we see ourselves and our relationships'. Posited on the idea of people changing the way they make sense of their experiences and interactions, this theory can be applied to the trainees in this study to view the placement experience as a learning experience that led to changes in the trainees' thinking. Mezirow devised a process of ten ordered phases to show the transformation of perspective as listed by Cranton (2006, p20):

- Experiencing a disorientating dilemma
- Undergoing self-examination
- Conducting a critical assessment of internalized assumptions and feeling a sense of alienation from traditional social expectations

- Relating discontent to the similar experiences of others - recognising that the problem is shared
- Exploring options for new ways of acting
- Building competence and self-confidence in new roles
- Planning a course of action
- Acquiring the knowledge and skills for implementing a new course of action
- Trying out new roles and assessing them
- Reintegrating into society with the other perspective.

Viewing the data from this study through a selection of Mezirow's phases of transformation, the placement experience can be seen as a disorientating dilemma for the trainees, as earlier in this chapter I discussed the notion of culture shock to denote the experience of disequilibrium. The idiographic studies show how the trainees' self-examination of themselves as 'students' led to some critical assessment of internalised assumptions.

I contend that the trainees' professional identity changed during placement to different degrees and I suggest these could be termed on three levels:

- *confirmed*, to show some degree of change;
- *transformed*, to show a greater degree of change,
- *defined*, to show a lesser degree of change.

I explain how I would apply these levels of change to the trainees in this study. For Anna, Debs and Fran, the opportunity to view, deliver and reflect on alternative pedagogy and practice in their role as 'students' led to them confirming their existing professional values and principles, whilst being open to broadening their practice in light of their new knowledge. At the end of placement, Anna reflected on ways to ensure that children in her workplace made progress, saying, "*Ultimately, wherever you are...the aim is to be making progress*" adding, "*I feel there's much more of a personal touch to the learning and to the care we provide*". Similarly, Debs reflected, "*Looking back I think I was quite closed minded...whereas now I'm a bit more open*". Also Fran stated her intention to improve her school workplace practice, saying, "*I feel that I've learnt stuff what I can put into practice...*"

I'm going to start...doing something with the ideas and the knowledge". I suggest these three trainees' professional identity has been *confirmed* through the placement experience.

For Cara, the critical assessment of internalised assumptions about her own resilience was more extreme, given the initial destabilisation to the way she represented herself as transformed into a person of power, (Figure 4.42), describing herself as being able to "*conquer anything*". I suggest Cara's professional identity was 'transformed' through the placement experience.

For Beth, the learning experience of placement was less extreme than for the relatively experienced trainees; yet her critical assessment of alternate pedagogy and practice in a school led to the defining of her professional values and to her becoming more certain of her practice and beliefs in following a social pedagogical approach (see figure 4.23).

Reflecting on the two pedagogical approaches she stated "*If it is still possible at the age range to still be play-based then I think that's what the children should be doing* ", adding "*I know I enjoy working in nursery now*". I suggest Beth's identity was *defined* as her values and principles crystallised through critical reflections on the placement experience.

The acquisition of new knowledge the trainees report fits with Mezirow's (1995) phased theory, as does the building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, discussed earlier in this section. The final phase of learning in Mezirow's (1995) theory concerns reintegration into society with a new perspective. This phase is evident in trainees' data collected on return to their home placement, in that 3 trainees planned changes to their workplace practice. For example, Fran stated she would '*Start doing something with the ideas and the knowledge that I've learnt*'.

One Early Years Foundation Stage but Two Worlds

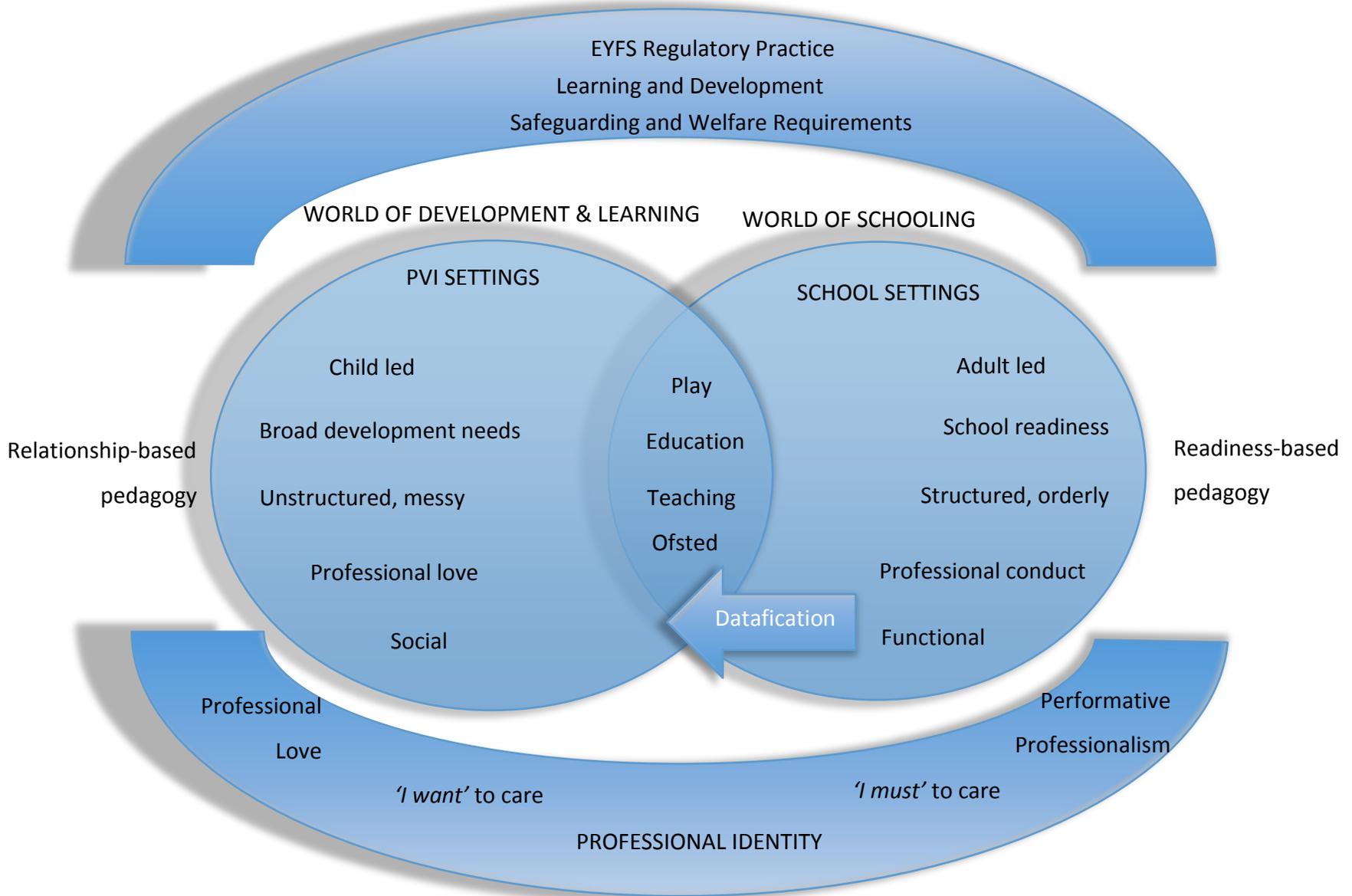
In this chapter I have explored the convergences and divergences of data from the trainees' case studies from Chapter 4 to argue that these 5 EYTS trainees perceive ECEC services as two worlds. Their experience of 8 settings in northern county is a small sample and does not necessarily reflect practice across the whole PVI and school sectors. In Table

3.6, I present a visual representation of my findings and current thinking. The representation shows two overlapping worlds operating within the EYFS (DfE 2014) framework. The world of *learning and development* largely follows a relationship-based pedagogy, aimed at supporting children's broad development needs in the PVI sector. Professional love is prioritised in close, intimate relationships between adults and children. Historically rooted in care, the environment in this world is perceived as unstructured and messy, as children are encouraged to lead their own learning and transport resources in their play. Physical care routines are social events that often provide opportunities for learning. The worlds overlap in sharing the Ofsted inspection framework, offering play and education to children through preferred teaching strategies. The world of schooling largely follows a readiness-based pedagogy, aimed at preparing children for compulsory school education. Historically based in education, the environment in this world is perceived as structured and orderly, as adults direct children to largely adult-led activities, in the belief of securing the best possible cognitive outcomes. Datafication from the world of schooling is arrowed towards the world of learning and development to indicate the increasing presence of top-down pressure for measurable outcomes. The visualisation shows a continuum of professional identity positioned underneath the worlds, moving from performative professionalism to professional love and aligned to the notions of '*I want*' to care or '*I must*' care. Although both worlds operate within the EYFS framework (DfE 2014), the enactment of the statutory guidance is so diverse that trainees experience a culture shock when leaving the familiar world of the workplace sector and entering the unfamiliar world of the placement sector.

In this chapter I have explored the trainees' turbulent journeys in an unfamiliar world and identified events and issues that they represented as significant. I interpreted how such experiences might influence the trainee's professional identity and argue that all trainees underwent a transformational learning experience (Mezirow 1995) in placement to emerge as transformed, confirmed or defined.

After the visual representation of findings on page 217, I conclude the thesis in the next chapter by drawing the findings together to address my research questions, and show how these findings relate to literature. I outline my claims to knowledge and identify possible areas for future research. Having reflected on the study and my on-going learning, I provide some concluding thoughts and outline some limitations of the research and consider the issue of quality. Finally, I state the implications of the study.

Table 3.6. Visualisation of findings



CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In the last chapter, I explored the convergences and divergences of data from the trainees' idiographic case studies to posit that the two sectors of ECEC services constitute two overlapping worlds, where the different enactments of the EYFS statutory guidance is so diverse that trainees experience a culture shock when entering the unfamiliar world of the placement sector. In this chapter I revisit the warrant for the research before relating the findings to the research questions, predicated on the important notion of the world of learning and development and the world of schooling. I discuss the relevance of the findings to literature. Next, I reflect on my learning from conducting this study and identify strengths and limitations of the research, along with a brief assessment of quality based on Yardley's (2000) principles. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of the study.

This study sought to explore how EYTS trainees make sense of their lived experience of placement in an alternate sector of early years services. Trainees are required to teach children between the ages of 0-5 years and expected to support the learning and care needs of very distinct and varied ages and stages of development. To enable trainees to gain experience of the 0-5 years age range, they undertake placements in the unfamiliar sector of early years services, but still working within the EYFS (DfE 2014) that aims to combine the historically split education and care systems. The research questions posed were:

- 1) How do graduate EYT trainees experience an unfamiliar placement during their training year?*
- 2) How do trainees experience commonalities and/or differences between the familiar workplace and the unfamiliar placement?*
- 3) How does EYT trainees' experience of the unfamiliar placement influence their professional identities?*

My research study was an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis combining creative methods with semi-structured interviews, conducted with 5 EYTS trainees studying on the Graduate Employed Pathway. My analytical focus was on how the trainees made sense of

their lived experience of placement in an alternate sector of early years services. Analysis was an iterative and inductive cyclical process whereby emergent themes were identified and ultimately clustered into a final structure of themes (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

How Trainees Experienced Placement

The trainees in this study experienced their unfamiliar placement as a challenging and emotional journey that led to a sense of culture shock. One trainee used this actual term, whilst others conveyed their sense of bewilderment and dissonance as they encountered new aspects of practice and pedagogy that clashed with their previous workplace experiences. The trainees had different starting points to their individual journeys, with differences in age, dispositions, professional experience and domestic commitments, meaning that some trainees experienced the challenge of placement to a greater degree than others. The relatively experienced trainees found the challenges extreme, almost taking two participants to the point of leaving the course, in comparison to the relatively novice trainee who had a less disorientating experience. Their journeys encompassed a *'roller coaster'* of emotions because all experienced cultural dislocation as everything they thought was important about being an early years practitioner in their workplace setting was suddenly challenged in the unfamiliar placement. I return to the findings of the destabilising experience for some trainees on page 223.

How Trainees Experience Commonalities and Differences between the Workplace and Unfamiliar Placement

The trainees experienced their workplace and unfamiliar settings as two different, but overlapping, worlds of pedagogy and practice. They reported experiencing a greater number of differences than commonalities between workplaces and placement settings. One commonality identified by two trainees was that staff members were passionate about working in the early years and wanted 'the best' for children. Differences perceived in the enactment of the EYFS (DfE 2014) were manifest in binaries of practice and pedagogy.

In the world of schooling, pedagogy was perceived as a readiness-based approach through a predominant focus on the teaching of literacy and maths. The trainees experienced children's academic success as prioritised and there was a perceived absence of caring actions. Support for the CoEL (DfE 2014) seemed less evident in the schools than the PVI settings in this study, in that children were perceived as limited in their agency, for example to transport and explore resources. Schools seemed to emphasise maintaining an orderly environment, suggesting that children had relatively few opportunities to develop their own ideas and creative, critical thinking skills. Additionally the reported focus on literacy and maths seemed to facilitate the 'school readiness' agenda and 'datafication' to a greater degree than was apparent in the PVI settings. The intense focus on school readiness and cognitive outcomes seems to outweigh the concept of learning as being about the whole child.

In the world of learning and development, the trainees perceived a relationship-based pedagogical approach in consideration of children's broad learning and development needs. Trainees experienced caring actions as prioritised and valued as a foundation for children's all round success in life. These marked differences in practices contributed to the trainees' experience of placement as a culture shock. Moving between the two worlds was bewildering for the trainees as practice in the unfamiliar placement felt culturally different.

Contributions of the Thesis

My findings in relation to the perception of two overlapping worlds of ECEC services contributes to the literature on the education and care divide (Moss 1999, 2006, OECD 2001, 2015) by suggesting the historical split in early years services in England continues today under differing interpretations of the most recent version of the EYFS (DfE 2014), a singular curriculum framework designed to unify education and care services.

My findings in relation to the prioritising of teaching literacy and maths in schools in this study confirm Roberts-Holmes' (2015) assertion of damaging datafication practices evident in the early years of school, as the school readiness agenda exerts a top-down pressure on the curriculum and assessment practices.

How the Trainees' Unfamiliar Placement Experience Influenced their Professional Identity

I found the experience of the unfamiliar placement to have influenced the trainees' professional identity in varying degrees. The challenges and issues they reported as most important to them included assuming a 'student' identity and the destabilising consequences of having less power, agency and autonomy when confronted with unfamiliar professional beliefs and practices on placement. Further aspects of the journey that seemed to influence the trainees' professional identity were *nomenclature*, and *gaining new knowledge*, in particular, an improved understanding of early years curriculum and pedagogy led increases in trainees' levels of confidence at the end of the placement.

The trainees perceived themselves as moving closer to achieving the status and becoming an EYT. However the concept of an ideal or 'finished' EYT was difficult to define and clouded the sense of professional identity for EYTs as a single practitioner able to teach in the worlds of the PVI and schools. A dichotomy of professional identity rests on the different teaching cultures of each world. This dichotomy links to the previous finding of different beliefs and practices between the PVI settings and schools in this study and troubles the concept of a single graduate practitioner successfully teaching across the two different worlds of early years services as current policy demands.

Lastly, in the development of their professional identity, the two trainees from school workplaces stated their view of work with under-3s as 'boring', indicating they were feeling disengaged from working with this age group.

Contributions of the Thesis

My work confirms Mezirow's (1995) Transformational Learning Theory. His theory provides a lens from which to view the EYT trainees in this study and I consider that three levels of change were experienced by the trainees. I suggest the trainees' professional identities were defined, confirmed or transformed by the acquisition of new knowledge, building of competence and self-confidence achieved through the placement experience.

The finding of trainees becoming disengaged from working with under-3s adds to what we know about the low numbers of graduate practitioners working with the under-3s from studies by Mathers, Singer and Karemaker (2012) and Gooch and Powell (2013), illuminating through qualitative detail how some graduates perceive work with 3-5s as preferable and more challenging.

The finding of the relatively experienced trainees as destabilised by assuming a 'student identity' during placement in an alternate sector adds to what we know of EYPs' professional identity (Hadfield et al 2012), moving beyond a focus on the influence of their leadership role, to understand the influence of the student experience, without power, autonomy and sometimes without the knowledge and skills deemed relevant in the alternate sector.

Potential Areas for Further Research

One tentative finding of the study was that the concept of an EYT is not fully understood by school teaching staff and parents within the field of early years services. This might suggest that the policy pledge of raising the status of the ECEC (DfE 2013b) is failing. Further research could explore the influence of the title Early Years '*Teacher*' following the name change from Early Years Professional in 2013. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Nutbrown review (2012) was instrumental in recommending the word 'teacher' in the title, based on the assertion that the concept of a *teacher* is understood by all. Such research in gathering the perceptions of parents, teachers and practitioners in both PVI and school sectors might be useful in clarifying the positioning of the EYTS role within the ECEC workforce in relation to other roles e.g. teachers with QTS.

The findings of professional love as encouraged in the PVI settings and perceived as absent in schools in this study adds to Page's (2008, 2011) findings of professional love with children under-3. My participants seemed ready to engage in, and be open about, relationships. In schools, there largely seems to be no discourse for showing emotion, and holding emotion back is described as 'professional conduct'. Further research might be conducted to explore how an ethic of care and professional love could be translated in a

school sector discourse, with practitioners working with 3-5s. This type of research could explore the differentiated teaching and caring roles in schools since the introduction of Page's (2008) concept of professional love, to identify ways to promote a unified approach congruent with the principles of the EYFS (DfE 2014).

This study draws from participants with two distinct perspectives in that four trainees were relatively experienced and one was a novice practitioner. As mentioned earlier, it was not possible to purposively sample for levels of experience in this study. Further research might be conducted on other EYTS pathways to explore how novice trainees, with limited prior involvement with ECEC services, experience the PVI and school sectors through placements. This might be useful in generating a better understanding of the placement experience from a novice perspective and add further insights into supporting future novice trainees to prepare for the unfamiliar placement.

Finally, further research might be conducted on graduate employed EYTs post-award to explore if and why they continue to work in their workplace sector or whether they gain employment in the alternate sector of early years services.

Methodological Contribution

Whilst there are both theoretical and methodological limitations to this research, my further claim to knowledge is to have used IPA in a professional learning context in education. Additionally, I have researched EYT trainee experiences and successfully used creative and visual approaches in a novel way to elicit rich and interesting data from participants.

The most significant learning from this study for me has been to appreciate the powerful effect that research can have upon the participants, most notably with Anna. This became apparent in the final meeting I held with the trainees in June 2015. Anna became tearful when reading the draft summary I had prepared and explained she was not a naturally reflective person but that she had said things in the interviews that she normally would not disclose. In doing so she felt she had 'found herself' and had become a more confident person. Taking part in the study had been the most influential part of the course for Anna.

Alsup (2006) found that when new teachers describe an experience, feeling or idea to an informed and interested other, the language simultaneously influences their understanding of this experience, feeling, or idea. Therefore talking with others can be commensurate with increased self-understanding. This resonates with Anna's case and I consider myself to be an 'informed and interested other' (Alsup 2006) having used my learning of active listening and empathic response strategies from the Thrive approach, to build respectful relationships with the trainees.

The flexibility of IPA allowed me to use creative methods with playdough, Lego® and drawing media to complement the more established method of semi-structured interviews. I was struck by the powerful metaphors the participants created and the way in which the creative methods elicited trainees' expressions of what they were thinking and feeling. These expressions were often deeply meaningful to the trainees and generated surprising insights, sometimes not consciously thought of prior to the modelling. Anna reported that making the creative models had really helped to unlock thoughts and feelings that she had not considered before. Fran agreed that she too had been surprised at the depth of her own thoughts and reflections and would not have thought it possible without the model-making beforehand. Most trainees expressed surprise when they reflected back on their models and noticed insightful changes in how they represented their roles at the start and end of the study, which evidenced their changing perceptions over time.

I developed my research skills throughout the project, particularly my interview techniques. Whilst listening back to the audio recordings I noted that at times I did not pursue potential leads or explore for further information. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) note the importance of probing participants about the interesting things they say, and so I resolved to explore trainees' answers more fully in later interviews, and to be more forward in asking for more information or further clarification. One positive thing I noted about my interview technique was the signposting I used, for example, "my next question is...." I also asked questions in a respectful way, for example by saying "can I ask you about..."? This would hopefully have conveyed a sensitive, respectful approach. By

reflecting on my techniques, I improved my interview practice by listening more carefully to the trainees' replies and asking questions such as "could you give me an example of...?"

I was aware of a tension between my roles of researcher and tutor on occasion. For example, when a trainee expressed concerns about meeting the course requirements, as a researcher, I simply listened. When I listened to the audio recording later, I became aware of a flaw in my professional practice as a tutor, by not responding directly to her concerns and offering any support or guidance. Mertens (2010) recognises the issue of reciprocity in research as when researchers feel the need to give something back to participants, which to some degree resonated with this particular situation. In the interactive process of research she acknowledges that researchers should be concerned with what participants get or take from the process. I reconciled the tension between my roles by apologising to the trainee for not responding to those particular comments and I was pleased to learn that she was no longer struggling with that aspect of the course. I resolved to respond to any future tension by offering to speak to the trainee outside of the data collection point, where I could assume my tutor role more effectively and isolate an individual's concerns from the research.

As a teacher educator I expected the data to reflect some tension between EYTs and teachers with QTS in terms of the disparity issues discussed in Chapter 1. Whilst there was some evidence of the trainees' awareness of the existing disparity issues, these seemed to be of low-level concern. Some trainees view their work as a vocation with issues of pay and status seemingly secondary to their primary concern of working with children and families.

I would be likely to use IPA for future research as it offers flexibility for innovative methodological design. In this study I successfully combined IPA with visual and creative methods, in a longitudinal study. Unsurprisingly they worked well together, given that one of the first proponents of creativity was Merleau-Ponty, a phenomenologist. I analysed the data using Word as a programme to successfully organise, manipulate and colour code data, having been unsuccessful in using Nvivo software. Working with documents created in Word allowed me to connect more fully with the data and to establish a more fluid

process of analysis. I found the development of the trainees' idiographic summaries in this study to be particularly revealing and insightful and would be keen to develop this as a way of giving voice to the experiential accounts of participants. Consonant with a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective, the trainees in this study were the experts on the placement experience and the flexible methodology allowed them to bring in issues of personal difficulty that featured in the case studies. This is a feature I would be likely to apply in future research.

Limitations of the Research

I have stayed close to the principles of IPA as set out by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) and my primary goal was to understand how the trainees made sense of their lived experience of the unfamiliar placement. As IPA is an idiographic approach, a limitation of this approach could be the small size of the sample that was consequent on the depth of the study in terms of the range of qualitative methods and the longitudinal nature of the study. The small sample size, from a single cohort on one of four pathways to the award of EYTS, meant that a number of trainee attributes could not be sampled. For example, gender as a broad category, or school placements with 2 year olds as a specific category. It was only possible to ensure participants were drawn from PVI and school sectors. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p49) recommend a homogenous sample can 'represent' a perspective rather than a population. In this study, rather than representing the population of EYTS trainees, the sample represented the perspective of a small number of work-based trainees from PVI and school sectors, with all but one experienced within their own sector.

In terms of generalisability, the findings of this study are bounded to the group level of these 5 participants in 8 settings in a northern county, drawn from one cohort of EYTS trainees. This small sample size does not necessarily reflect practice across whole sectors. In using IPA to focus on the 'particular' of the unfamiliar placement experience it has been possible to move on to the 'shared' through analytical development. Claims to knowledge limited to the group and extensions are considered through theoretical generalisability,

Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p4) suggest this allows a reader to 'assess the evidence in relation to their existing professional and experiential knowledge'.

A further limitation relates to the creative media used in this study. My selection of Lego® and playdough as conventional media for the modelling sessions influenced the ways the trainees made their models, according to the physical properties of the media and quantities available. Although the choice of media was extended to include pencils and paper, there is an emerging body of literature that advocates the use of natural materials, for example clay, on the premise that participants are connected to the natural environment and gain beneficial effects through the smell and feel of natural materials (Chang 2014). The extent to which an additional sensory experience could influence a participant's creative modelling is unknown. However, a natural modelling material might have generated different data.

Research Quality

Whilst IPA is a rigorous approach to conducting phenomenological research, I am mindful of methodologism, a term that Salmon (2002) uses to remind researchers that methods do not have stand-alone integrity, so do not produce meaningful outcomes by themselves. To examine the integrity of this study I use the four broad principles Yardley (2000) describes as indicators of quality research: sensitivity to content; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance. In terms of the first principle, I showed sensitivity to content through thoughtful interpersonal interactions with trainees to be the 'informed interested other' (Alsup 2006) that the participants could talk to openly. I learnt more about the craft of interviews and made improvements to my technique through reflections on each phase of data collection. In terms of Yardley's (2000) second principle, commitment and rigour is most evident in the idiographic case studies, detailing my interpretations of the data and the iterative analysis process and development of themes. In terms of the third principle, transparency and coherence are demonstrated in the detailed description of the research process in Chapter 3 and appended evidence providing an audit trail of the research process. Lastly, Yardley's (2000) fourth principle concerns the impact and importance of the study, which is

evidenced in the warrant for the research; identifying a suitable research space through the literature review; and concluding with useful findings that represent the perceptions of five EYTS trainees.

The Implications of this Study

Whilst this study is not focussed on policy, I nonetheless draw out some implications in regard to the EYFS (DfE 2014) and the free early learning entitlement for 2 year olds (DfE 2013b).

The findings relating to different enactments of the EYFS (DfE 2014) between the two worlds of schooling and learning and development question the interpretation of teaching and learning in the EYFS. Ofsted (2015) has attempted to address such tension by promoting teaching and play as a single endeavour. Its findings from a study of successful teaching strategies included the finding that the interplay between adults and children can be viewed as a continuum, with on-going decisions about structure, formality and dependence made by practitioners to promote the best possible learning (Ofsted 2015). The range of pedagogical choices identified by Ofsted (2015) implies that the EYFS framework is ambiguous and, possibly going beyond the data and the experience of these five trainees, one might consider the EYFS as a single framework delivered in two distinct cultures. The historic division between education and care seems to continue, rather than education and care being integrated, as is the intended aim of the EYFS (DfE 2014).

The findings relating to graduate practitioners as becoming disengaged from working with Under-3s might trouble policy makers. As FEL for 2 year olds is rolled out and provision in schools is becoming more established, the EYTs are positioned as the only graduates with specific professional training, knowledge and skills for working with this age group. If some EYTs are disengaged from working with this age group, the implications are that some 2 years olds may not have access to an expert graduate teacher.

The finding of the placement journey as turbulent and emotional has implications for ITT EYTS training providers. Firstly, providers should consider planning a programme of

support to prepare trainees for the 'culture shock' of placement experience. Secondly, providers should prepare to deploy, or signpost trainees to, support services in understanding the personal and professional commitments undertaken, particularly by employed trainees with families, in achieving the award. To address these areas within my own practice, I will ensure subsequent cohorts of trainees are well informed about future placements and raise awareness for potential culture shock. Signposting to support services occurs through the placement handbook and reminders can be sensitively suggested in individual tutorials. On completion of the placement, I use the creative methods from this study with current trainees to make sense of, and reflect on, their placement experiences. Additionally, a colleague and I deliver an introductory Thrive course to trainees to develop their awareness of relationship-based learning strategies, with plans to widen this training to other ITT courses. Throughout the study I applied my skills and knowledge in relationship-based pedagogy to the participants, modelling an ethics of care that I believe should be extended by all adults working with young children.

Conclusion

In this longitudinal study, I used IPA with creative and visual methods to explore how 5 EYTS trainees made sense of their lived experience of placement in an alternate sector of early years services. I found that these trainees, employed in PVI and school sectors, experienced their unfamiliar placement as a challenging and emotional journey that led to a sense of culture shock. I posit that the trainees experienced their workplaces and placements as two different, but overlapping, worlds of pedagogy and practice. The findings suggest a dichotomy of professional identity for EYTS trainees that rests on the different teaching cultures of the world of schooling and the world of learning and development. This dichotomy troubles the concept of a single graduate practitioner successfully teaching across the different worlds as current policy demands. I suggest that the historical split between early years services in England continues today under differing interpretations of the EYFS, a singular curricular framework designed to unify education and care services. I posit from my findings that this split currently manifests as worlds that

promote either relationship-based or readiness-based pedagogy with binaries of largely polarised practices.

To my knowledge, a study of this nature has not been carried out before. The findings have relevance to policy and practice in the field of early years and the study is of interest to those conducting phenomenological research. Key limitations of the study include the small sample size of participants and settings and its focus on one pathway of four training routes that lead to EYTS. Future research could, therefore, usefully address the experiences of other cohorts of trainees with a wider range of attributes and levels of experience. Alongside this, unresolved issues remain around whether the introduction of the title Teacher has been effective in raising the status of EYTs and about how well the concept of the Early Years Teacher is understood by teachers with QTS, practitioners and parents in both sectors.

To conclude, although the lived experience of placement was turbulent and disorientating to varying degrees for these trainees, I argue that they all underwent a transformational learning experience to emerge with increased levels of confidence and an improved understanding of early years curriculum and pedagogy by the end of the study. In this way, the experience of the unfamiliar placement had an ultimately positive influence on professional identity of EYTS trainees.

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Appendix 1: Pilot Study Information Sheet

Research Participant Information Sheet – Pilot Project

Invitation

I would like to invite you to participate in this pilot research project, which is part of my Doctorate in Education studies. I am interested in finding out about the experiences of Early Years Teacher Trainees when they experience an ‘unfamiliar’ placement. You should only participate if you want to: you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in your studies in any way by choosing to take part or not to take part. Before you make a decision on whether to take part or not, it is important for you to more about my research and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Research Aims

This is a very small scale pilot project, which will focus on what is it like for a trainee when they experience an ‘unfamiliar’ placement. For example, if you work in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector, you may experience a placement in a Children’s Centre, meaning that you encounter a different organizational culture and possibly different expectations of what you do there. My research is aimed at finding out how you feel in that ‘unfamiliar’ setting, and for this pilot study, I will be using ‘creative’ methods.

What are ‘creative’ methods?

Creative methods involve using Lego, collage, playdough, art material, for example, for participants to make something. It is claimed that such methods allow people to reflect and thereby provide an insight as to how people understand their own experiences. Everyone is able to do this, you don’t need to consider yourself as ‘creative’ as this method is thought to provide a positive experience for all through the act of making, and connecting with others through creating something in everyday life.

Who Have I Asked to Participate?

I have invited a small number of students to take part from the Graduate Entry Pathways (GEP) at a large northern University. This is a small scale pilot study and the numbers invited to participate are determined by this small scale, with a maximum of 2. In selecting trainees from the GEP Pathway, I have sought to explore the experience of participants who have experience of working in either the PVI or maintained sector who then experience a placement in a sector they are unfamiliar with.

Where Will the Study Take Place and How Long Will the Study Last?

The study will take place in university at a time that is convenient to you and myself. Two sessions are planned for the days that you are normally attending at SHU, Thursday 5th December and Thursday 12th December. Each session will take place during the lunch

break, lasting approximately 25 – 40 minutes, allowing you time to eat your lunch.

I will take photos of any models, and/or drawings and any verbal comments you make may be written or audio recorded and then transcribed.

Are There Any Risks or Benefits Involved in Participating?

No. You will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in your studies in any way by choosing to take part or not to take part. All sessions will take place on university premises. You may find the experience positive and personally rewarding. If you do find the experience triggers negative memories or thoughts, then counselling is available through SHU student support services. To make an appointment, you can call in person at [Student Wellbeing reception](#), call on 0114 225 2136 or email at student.wellbeing@shu.ac.uk.

How Will I Maintain Your Privacy and Confidentiality?

Everything you tell me will remain completely confidential within the limits of the law. The information you give me during the sessions will be completely anonymised, with the use of pseudonyms where appropriate in my written assignment. Any audiotapes I make of your comments will be securely stored and will be made available only to my supervisor.

Who is Responsible for the Research?

I am conducting the research for the purpose of my doctoral study. My supervisor is Dr. R.L. Garrick, and the Doctor In Education programme leader is Dr. Paul Garland. My project is subject to the SHU research guidelines.

What If I Have Questions about the Pilot?

Please contact me my email l.truelove@shu.ac.uk or telephone on 0114 2256257. Alternatively, you may contact my supervisor Ros Garrick by email at R.L.Garrick@shu.ac.uk or by phone on 0114 225 4919.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If you wish to withdraw after you have participated in the pilot, then your contributions may be withdrawn before Thursday 19th December 2013. I will debrief you by sending you an email with a summary of my findings by the end of February 2014 when my written assignment is to be handed in.

If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a separate consent form.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Appendix 2: Pilot Study Consent Form

Early Years Teachers trainees' experiences of the 'unfamiliar' placement

Research Participant Consent Form

<i>Please tick the appropriate boxes</i>	Yes	No
I have read and understood the pilot study information sheet dated ___/Nov 2013		
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the pilot project and my participation in it		
I agree to take part in the project. I understand that participation will include attending two lunch time sessions to pilot the use of creative methods.		
I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the pilot study at any time without needing to provide an explanation.		
I understand that participation or non-participation will have no effect on my EYTS studies or placements.		
The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.).		
I understand that any information given by me may be used in the written assignment as submitted for assessment by Lynne Truelove.		
I know the name of the researcher's supervisor and programme leader who I can contact if I feel worried about participation / non-participation in the project.		

Name of participant [printed]

Signature

Date

LYNNE TRUELOVE

Researcher

Signature

Date

Contact details for further information: Researcher: Lynne Truelove l.truelove@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 6257. Supervisors: Dr. Ros Garrick - r.l.garrick@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 4919. Dr. Mark Boylan – m.boylan@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 6012. Programme Leaders: Dr. Mark Boylan – m.boylan@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 6012. Dr. Carol Taylor – c.a.taylor@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 2660

Appendix 3: Conducting the Pilot Study

Session 1

For the first of two sessions I planned a simple process, allowing the participants to become used to playing with the Lego, before asking them to make their model into a symbolic representation or metaphor of their home setting. The rationale for this was to provide participants with a 'safe' introduction to the approach, by using familiar subjects that they could readily identify with. I then asked the trainees to make a second model to represent their experience of the 'unfamiliar' placement. By the end of the first session the trainees had created two models each, which I photographed and then audio-recorded their verbal descriptions. The session was completed comfortably within the trainees' lunch break and conveniently in their usual room for teaching and my initial impression was quite positive as there was a relaxed social atmosphere and the trainees had commented on their enjoyment of the process.



Figure A.56 Participant 1's model of home

P1 Comment: *"Well it's quite big...it's only got a partial roof...partly because were having quite a lot of building work going on at the moment, so it's chaos everywhere"*



Figure A.57 Participant 1's model of placement

P1 Comment: It's a tree but it hasn't got all the leaves are so its like it started to grow, But it hasn't finished yet, but it's getting there...

I reflected on the session a short while later and considered the use of Lego as a creative method had been largely successful in terms of generating rich data relating to the participants' experience, within a positive social environment. More specifically I reflected on my conduct and behaviour as a researcher, concluding that I listened to the participants without interjecting any of my own experiences and knowledge of the placements into the conversations, thereby 'bracketing' my own thoughts to 'see' the trainees' pure experience (Savin-Badin and Major 2013). However, I judged that I could have asked more questions and probed for more detail of trainees' models as Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) discuss the importance of the researcher engaging deeply with the participants and using probing to avoid the possibility of data being too thin for analysis. Lastly I considered the group proxemics and session privacy, judging that the trainees had enough personal space for comfort, but I could improve the seating arrangements in order to create a more social space for the next session, where participants for could face each other and engage in social interactions more easily. As there were no interruptions throughout the session, I assumed that the '*do not disturb*' sign had been effective, and chose to use it again for the following session. My reflection of the first session was useful in learning what worked well with the creative methods and

identifying some ethical and practical issues, which I used to inform my practice for the second session one week later.

Session 2

I began the second session by ethically reminding the participants of their right to withdraw, the purpose of the pilot study and the audio recording that I would make (Savin-Baden and Major 2013). The first warm-up activity was to make a model to represent how they felt when at home, or a place where they felt at ease. The facial expressions and interactions I observed between the group members indicated a positive social atmosphere and a collegial rapport quickly emerged through the conversations and banter that flowed. Gauntlett (2011, p126) asserts that 'happiness stems from meaningful connections with others and meaningful things to do'. The participants did seem happy and motivated to use the playdough and also reflected a festive mood as the Christmas holiday period was imminent. I closely observed each person to monitor when they had completed their model. I asked the participant to tell me about their model after I photographed it whilst the other group members listened whilst continuing their own model making.

The second part of the process was to make a model to represent how the participant felt when they started their unfamiliar placement. As each participant completed their first model, they were then able to move on to making the second model, meaning that they could work at their own pace.



Figure A.58 Participant 3's model to represent how it feels in a familiar place

P3 Comment:

"I've done a settee, with music at the side...so it's a comforting place, I just love chilling out to music and that".



Figure A.59 Participant 3's model to represent how it feels in an 'unfamiliar' placement

P3 Comment

"When I first went to placement it was unfamiliar like to anything I've ever done before...it was like, I'm confused, you see he (model) is scratching his head... I was confused, like, what happens and stuff? So that's why I have got 'what now?' written on the side and he is still there scratching his head".

At the end of the second and final session, two of the four participants shared their reflections on the creative methods used in both sessions. I transcribed the discussion to inform my evaluation of the pilot project, In collating all the raw data I preserved the anonymity of the participants by using codes rather than names. Furthermore, I edited the photographs to ensure they only included images of the models and not the participants.

Appendix 4: Main Study Consent Form

Early Years Teachers trainees' experiences of the 'unfamiliar' placement

Research Participant Consent Form

<i>Please tick the appropriate boxes</i>	Yes	No
I have read and understood the study information sheet dated 9th October 2014		
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation in it.		
I agree to take part in the project. I understand that participation will include attending three creative sessions and three interviews staged throughout the academic year, in October/November 2014, January and March 2015.		
I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the pilot study at any time without needing to provide an explanation.		
I understand that participation or non-participation will have no effect on my EYTS studies or placements.		
The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.).		
I understand that any information given by me, and photographs of models made by myself, may be used in the written thesis as submitted for assessment by Lynne Truelove, and in any subsequent publications, in whole or part, derived thereafter.		
I know the name of the researcher's supervisors and programme leaders who I can contact if I feel worried about participation / non-participation in the project.		

Name of participant [printed]

Signature

Date

LYNNE TRUELOVE

Researcher

Signature

Date

Contact details for further information: Researcher: Lynne Truelove l.truelove@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 6257. Supervisors: Dr. Ros Garrick - r.l.garrick@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 4919. Dr. Mark Boylan – m.boylan@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 6012. Programme Leaders: Dr. Mark Boylan – m.boylan@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 6012. Dr. Carol Taylor – c.a.taylor@shu.ac.uk / 0114 225 2660

Appendix 5: Main Study Information Sheet

Research Participant Information Sheet – Doctorate Study

Invitation

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project, which is part of my Doctorate in Education studies. I am interested in finding out about the experiences of Early Years Teacher Trainees when they experience an ‘unfamiliar’ placement. You should only participate if you want to: you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in your studies in any way by choosing to take part or not to take part. Before you make a decision on whether to take part or not, it is important for you to more about my research and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Research Aims

This is a small-scale project, which will focus on what is it like for a trainee when they experience an ‘unfamiliar’ placement. For example, if you work in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector, you may experience a placement in a school, meaning that you encounter a different organizational culture and possibly different expectations of what you do there. My research is aimed at finding out how you feel in that ‘unfamiliar’ setting, and for this study, I will be carrying out interviews with individuals and ‘creative’ methods in groups of 4.

What are ‘creative’ methods?

Creative methods involve using Lego, collage, play-dough, art material, for example, for participants to make something. It is claimed that such methods allow people to reflect and thereby provide an insight as to how people understand their own experiences. Everyone is able to do this, you don’t need to consider yourself as ‘creative’ as this method is thought to provide a positive experience for all through the act of making, and connecting with others through creating something in everyday life.

Who Have I Asked to Participate?

I have invited trainees to take part from the PGCE Early Childhood Education and Care (0-5) with EYTS course at a large northern University. This is a small scale study and the numbers invited to participate are determined by this scale, with a maximum of 8. In selecting trainees from the Employment Pathway, I have sought to explore the experience of participants who have experience of working in either the PVI or maintained sector who then experience a placement in a sector they are unfamiliar with.

Where Will the Study Take Place and How Long Will the Study Last?

The study will take place in university at a time that is convenient to you and myself. Creative sessions and individual interviews will be planned for the days that you are normally attending at SHU, at three points during the course, i.e. October/November 2014, January and March 2015. Where possible, creative sessions and interviews will take place during the lunch break, lasting approximately 25 – 35 minutes, allowing you time to eat your lunch. Interviews will be arranged at a mutually convenient time and may last between 20 – 25 mins. I will take photos of any models,

and/or drawings and any verbal comments you make may be written or audio recorded in the creative sessions and then transcribed. Interviews will also be audio recorded and transcribed.

Are There Any Risks or Benefits Involved in Participating?

No. You will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in your studies in any way by choosing to take part or not to take part. All sessions will take place on university premises. You may find the experience positive and personally rewarding.

How Will I Maintain Your Privacy and Confidentiality?

Everything you tell me will remain completely confidential within the limits of the law. The information you give me and the photographs I take of models made during the sessions will be completely anonymised, with the use of pseudonyms where appropriate in my written assignment. Any audiotapes I make of your comments will be securely stored and will be made available only to my supervisors.

Who is Responsible for the Research?

I am conducting the research for the purpose of my doctoral study. My supervisors are Dr. R.L. Garrick and Dr. M. Boylan. The Doctor In Education programme leaders are Dr. Mark Boylan and Dr. Carol Taylor. My project is subject to the SHU research guidelines.

What If I Have Questions about the study?

Please contact me my email l.truelove@shu.ac.uk or telephone on 0114 225 6257. Alternatively, you may contact my supervisors: Ros Garrick by email at r.l.garrick@shu.ac.uk or by phone on 0114 225 4919 or Mark Boylan at m.boylan@shu.ac.uk or by phone on 0114 225 6012.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If you wish to withdraw after you have participated in the study, then your contributions may be withdrawn before data analysis respectively begins in December 2014, February and April 2015. I will debrief you by sending you an email with a summary of my findings by Autumn 2015 when I anticipate to have completed this aspect of the research.

If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a separate consent form. I would like to have 4 people from the maintained sector and 4 people from the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector participate. If more than eight people are interested in taking part, I will firstly look to gain a balance between the maintained and PVI sectors, and will draw names from a hat to ensure a fair selection process.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Appendix 6: Prompt Sheets

Phase 1

Research questions:

How do graduate EYT trainees experience an unfamiliar placement during their training year?

How do trainees experience commonalities and/or differences between the familiar home setting and the unfamiliar placement?

How does EYT trainees' experience of the unfamiliar placement influence their professional identity?

Draft Interview questions for Thursday 4th December

Opening

"How did you come to be working in early years?" and/.or possibly more specifically taking the university course.

Photo's and comments are printed and ready to review

To explore if there are different relationships in settings;

How do you feel about your relationships with children?

How do you feel about your relationships with other staff?

How do you feel about your relationships with parents?

To explore identity issues;

How do you see yourself as a trainee EYT in your home setting?

How do you think others see you?

To explore commonalities/differences between maintained/non-maintained sectors;

Do you feel that there will be anything in particular that will be similar across the settings that will help you cope with the new experience in placement?

What things do you think might be very different in the placement?

What things do you expect to be more comfortable?

Finally;

Ask trainees for a copy of their own pen-portraits and permission to access their EYTS course application form (this shows a tick list of experience with age groups which could be relevant)

Phase 2

Research questions:

How do graduate EYT trainees experience an unfamiliar placement during their training year?

How do trainees experience commonalities and/or differences between the familiar home setting and the unfamiliar placement?

How does EYT trainees' experience of the unfamiliar placement influence their professional identity?

Activities for Creative Sessions Thursday 29th January 2015

'Warm up' activity – choice of medium – Think about your placement setting, and think about your home setting, is there something which is similar in both settings, or some aspects of both settings that is the same or similar – can you make a model to represent that aspect? (seeking commonalities)

Warm up activity – choice of medium – Think about an aspect of placement that is very different to your home setting, can you make a model to represent that? (seeking differences)

Main activity – choice of medium- how do you experience being in the unfamiliar placement?

Interview questions for Friday 30th January

Opening – Tell me about your placement, how's it going?

Optional prompts -What's been a highpoint, low point, what have you enjoyed, what's been a challenge, has anything surprised you?

Photo's will be printed and ready to review

Questions about placement relate to their own model:

Can you tell me more about the aspects of placement that you are finding similar to your home setting?

Can you tell me more about the aspects of placement that you are finding different to your home setting?

Can you tell me more about how you feel about your placement?

To explore identity issues;

Use a set of figures, could you choose one figure to represent an EYT. Could you pick a figure to represent how you described yourself in the last interview? Place them on the table and ask where are you in relation to these figures? (using another figure for who you now?). See where trainees 'map' their relative positions/ towards a professional identity.

Additional prompts - How do you think others see you? Where would other people put you, children, parents, staff?

To explore the different relationships in placement;

If it helps you to explain then you can use the figures-

How do you feel about your relationships with children in this setting? How does that compare with relationship in your own setting? What the children's routines like?

Alternative format..

What are relationships between staff in the setting like? How is that different to your setting? How do you feel about that? What is your relationship with staff like in placement and how do you feel about that? What are the staff routines like? Are they different, how do you feel about that?

How do you feel about your relationships with parents? How does that compare with relationship in your own setting?

To explore commonalities/differences between maintained/non-maintained sectors;
Relate questions to 1st round of data collection

I'd like to talk about how the EYFS operates in the different settings, (may have mentioned in Int 1)...what is your experience of this? Or interweave into earlier questions re routine etc.

Phase 3

Research questions:

How do graduate EYT trainees experience an unfamiliar placement during their training year?

How do trainees experience commonalities and/or differences between the familiar home setting and the unfamiliar placement?

How does EYT trainees' experience of the unfamiliar placement influence their professional identity?

Activities for Creative Sessions Thursday 19th March 2015 – final impressions

First activity – choice of medium – Think about your home setting now that you are back there, can you make me a model of how you feel about your home role? (seeking comparison with round 1, how do they feel about their home role)

Second activity – choice of medium- can you model the most important aspects of your home and placement settings and yourself. Where would you place yourself in the home setting and where in the placement setting? (seeking comparisons in role)

Third activity – choice of medium – on reflection, how did you experience placement? (seeking comparison with round 2)

Interview questions for Friday 20th March 2015

Opening – Tell me about your placement, how was it?

Optional prompts -What's been a highpoint, low point, what have you enjoyed, what's been a challenge, has anything surprised you?

Photo's will be printed and ready to review

Questions about placement relate to their own model:

Using photo from round 1 - Can you remember back to when you made that? How is it different now?

Using photo from round 1 (anticipation) Did placement turn out to be what you expected? In what ways was it different/same?

Can you tell me more about how you feel about your placement, now you have completed it?

To explore identity issues;

Use a set of figures, could you choose one figure to represent an EYT. Could you pick a figure to represent how you described yourself in the last interview? Place them on the table and ask where are you in relation to these figures? (using another figure for who you now?). See where trainees 'map' their relative positions/ towards a professional identity.

Additional prompts - How do you think others see you? Where would other people put you, children, parents, staff?

Do you feel the placement experience has influenced your professional identity?

Has it influenced you personally?

To explore the different relationships in placement;

If it helps you to explain then you can use the figures-

On reflection, how do you feel about your relationships with children in the placement setting? How does that compare with relationships in your own setting? What were the children's routines like?

Alternative format..

What were relationships between staff in the setting like? How is that different to your setting? How do you feel about that? What was your relationship with staff like in placement and how do you feel about that? What are the staff routines like? Are they different, how do you feel about that?

On reflection, how do you feel about your relationships with parents in the placement setting? How does that compare with relationships in your own setting?

In the last interview you talked about.....how do you feel about now the placement is over?

To explore commonalities/differences between maintained/non-maintained sectors;
Relate questions to 2nd round of data collection

I'd like to talk about how the EYFS operates in the different settings, (may have mentioned in Interview 2)...what is your experience of this? Or interweave into earlier questions re routine etc.

Possible questions based 'on reflection of the placement'

How could SHU support future trainees on placement?

Appendix 7: Reflections on Data Collection – Main Study

Reflections on Phase 1

The creative sessions were very collegial. I felt there was a supportive rapport between participants, evidence of the social connectedness that Gauntlett (2011) espouses. Some trainees gave verbal feedback about the creative methods being enjoyable and therapeutic.

Each session lasted close to thirty minutes, providing enough time for the trainees to make their two warm-up models and a final model. Having an opportunity to use each medium allowed the trainee time to handle and play with it, and then make an informed choice of their preferred option for the third model.

Whilst transcribing one of the creative sessions, I realised that a trainee had expressed some concerns about her ability to meet the Teaching Standards (NCTL 2013b), in the course of describing her playdough model, which I had not directly acknowledged. I felt troubled that I had missed her expression of concern and resolved to follow up this point in the individual interview. By that time the issue had been resolved by the trainee's setting based tutor, who had spent some time with her to discuss a wider range of practical opportunities to extend her practice. On reflection, I view this as a tension between my two roles of researcher and tutor. As a tutor, I saw a flaw in my professional practice by not responding directly to her concerns and not exploring the issue further nor offering any support or guidance. Mertens (2010) recognises the issue of reciprocity in research as when researchers feel the need to give something back to participants, which to some degree matched this particular situation. In the interactive process of research she acknowledges that researchers should be concerned with what participants get or take from the process. I reconciled the tension between my roles by apologising to the trainee for not responding to those particular comments and I was pleased to learn that she was no longer struggling with this aspect of the course.

I reflected on my interview technique whilst immersing myself in the data and noted that at times I explored participants' answers, whilst at other times I did not pursue potential leads or probe for further information. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) note the importance of probing participants about the interesting things they say, and so I resolved to explore trainees' answers more fully, and to be more forward in asking for more information or further clarification. I noted that I tended to listen to their answer then move on to the next question, rather than ensuring the question has been fully explored. One positive thing I noted about my interview technique was the signposting I used, for example, "my next question is..." I also asked questions in a respectful way, for example by saying "can I ask you about..."? This would hopefully have conveyed a sensitive, respectful approach. I noted that my questions were unfinished at times, as trainees anticipated my words and began to give their response. Conversely, I allowed participants to finish speaking before I responded. By reflecting on my techniques, I learned that I could improve my practice in both the creative sessions and individual interviews by listening more carefully to the trainees' replies and asking questions such as 'can you tell me more about...'? or "could you give me an example of..."?

Reflections on Phase 2

In the creative sessions I noted that some trainees were increasingly sketching on their playdough models to provide detail, for example, drawing features on a face. This led me to increase the choices of media to include paper and pencils, to accommodate any propensity to draw rather than to model.

I noted that the length of the individual interviews increased from an average of 20 minutes in phase 1 to 30 minutes in phase 2. I reflected this was most likely due to the trainees having more to say in phase 2 but also felt they were more comfortable with me, indicating the power relationship between us was well balanced. I reflected on how my initial positionality and power as a member of the University staff and researcher in phase 1 was shifting more towards a positionality of researcher and early years colleague in phase 2. My relationship with the trainees was developing over the time we spent in the

creative sessions and interviews and I detected an increasing sense of mutual respect. From informal feedback fellow EYPS tutors, I learnt that the trainees valued the individual interviews as a therapeutic experience. I concluded this was an unexpected aspect of beneficence for the participants.

My final reflection was on the group proxemics, that is the spatial separation and effects of the positioning of individuals in the creative sessions. Whilst the small group numbers of two or three trainees had worked well in terms of space and positioning around a table, I contemplated the option of bringing all 5 trainees together for the final phase. I considered the possible benefits of positive group dynamics against the practical factors of time and physical space, and opted for a full group for one creative session for the final phase.

Reflections on Phase 3

I reflected that the creative session for all the trainees together had been successful in terms of generating detailed, interesting data and in providing an opportunity for social connections between them as a distinct group in what Gauntlett (2011) describes as a making and doing culture.

Four trainees chose the paper and pencils to draw a picture for one of their three artefacts, as these were tricky to photograph clearly I scanned the drawings to create well-defined digital images.

As with previous phases, it had not been straightforward to arrange all the interviews to follow the creative session in a timely way (within two weeks). I noted that the interview conducted in the trainee's home was the longest duration of all the interviews, probably as the home environment provided a more comfortable environment for the trainee to talk in. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) note that participants learn the interview process and dynamics and thereby become accustomed to giving specific detail of the subject. This could be the case in my study as all the trainees as each gave increasingly detailed accounts of their placement experience across the three phases. I also judged the

extended length of the interviews to be an indicator of the good rapport that I have built with each trainee.

Appendix 8: Data Analysis

Post Idiographic Cases - Table of superordinate themes for PVI

Master table of themes for the PVI trainees	
Super-ordinate theme: Professional Identity	
History/Initial formation	
Experience:	
Anna: 13 years (experienced)	Interview 1
Beth: 8 months (novice)	Interview 1
Debs: 7 years (experienced)	Interview 1
Roles and responsibilities:	
Anna: support, lead, deliver, model	Creative session 1
Beth: I haven't got any like particular responsibilities...I get to just to sit down and play	Interview 1
Debs: leading the team, I enjoy that	Figure 5.32 commentary
Multiple selves	
Anna: mother of two, deputy manager, school governor, EYTS trainee	Interview 1
Beth: single, practitioner, EYTS trainee, dance/trampoline coach	Interview 1
Debs: mother of four, deputy manager, Thrive practitioner, EYTS trainee	Interview 1
Work/study/life balance	
Anna: I've always worked full time as well	Interview 1
Anna: a massive part of my life...become a priority over me	Interview 1
Anna: the workload...is just extortionate	Interview 1
Beth: it worries you whether you can actually get all the things that are needed for this	Interview 1
Debs: I'm right laid back and I'll just say 'whatever'	Interview 1
Ethics of care	
Anna: passion/ focus attachment and building relationships	Creative Session 1
Anna: 'empathy', 'sympathy' and 'trust'	Interview 1
Beth: it's that fun, isn't it? It's just like being with them	Interview 1
Debs: I love my job, I love my role	Figure 5.32 commentary
Debs: I tend to get a lot of them...diving on me for a cuddle	Interview 1
Debs: You don't do it for the money	Interview 2
View of self as a trainee	
Anna: I don't see myself as a trainee...I see...the practitioner I've always been	Interview 1
Beth: I don't know, I think this is, again, another tricky one for me	Interview 1
Debs: it's been quite difficult integrating that into work	Interview 1
'Student' identity	
Anna: I'm waiting to be kinda led on what to do	Interview 2
Debs: its really hard for me because obviously I'm a student	Interview 2
Debs: I explained to her that I was a deputy manager...it was as though her view of me switched	Interview 2
Image of a finished EYT / Dichotomous roles	
Anna: it's the same job but it's a completely different job	Interview 2
Beth: one for the PVI sector, one for the school sector	Figure 5.28 commentary
Debs: ideally somebody who can lead and has a passion for their values	Line 649
Identity at the end of placement	
Increased knowledge/confidence	

Beth: know the importance of play and how much children learn through play	Interview 3
Debs: I feel a lot more confident/learnt loads	Interview 3
Debs: I'd never work in a school, ever...schools are not for me	Line 576
Metaphors	
Anna: story & journey	Drawing Figure 5.8
Beth: upward progress	Figure 5.29
Super-ordinate theme: Anticipation of placement	
Emotion	
Anna: (small but) happy	Figure 5.16 commentary
Beth – calm happy excited	Figure 5.24 commentary
Debs – guarded	Figure 5.19 commentary
Metaphor	
Anna: new opportunity...slow journey...doorway	Creative session 1
Beth: open my eyes to more knowledge	Figure 5.24 commentary
Debs: out of comfort zone/challenge (journey)	Figure 5.19 commentary
Anticipation of new knowledge:	
Anna: Widening my knowledge and experience	Creative session 1
Beth –open eyes to new knowledge	Figure 5.24 commentary
Debs: lots to take away with me	Figure 5.19 commentary
Super-ordinate theme: Experience of placement	
Metaphor	
Anna: rocking boat (journey)	Figure 5.17 commentary
Anna: (juggle) I've had to juggle my boys,	Interview 3
Beth: Question mark, where do I go forward from here?	Figure 5.29 commentary
Beth: rising platform	Figure 5.29 commentary
Debs: this represents my journey in placement	Figure 5.37 commentary
Emotions:	
Anna: unhappy/hardest 7 weeks ever/tough	Interview 3
Beth: I'm happy to be there, I'm enjoying it...really good	Figure 5.25 commentary
Debs: rough ground/dodgy/struggled	Figure 5.35 commentary
Problematic situation/low point	
Anna: lots of missed opportunities for the lower ability children	Line 220
Beth: a child started crying... I was really like 'oh my gosh'	Interview 2
Debs: I felt like I was just there as a dogs-body	Interview 3
Super-ordinate theme: Differences between PVI and school practice	
Structure/Timing	
Anna: everything is structured to a 'T' from when literacy starts and that runs through the whole morning...maths starts in the afternoon	Model figure 5.19
Beth: it's a lot more structured and 'we do this then' (clock)	Figure 5.26
Debs: straight (structure) and curvy (child led)	Figure 5.33
Datafication / school readiness	
Anna: get as many children to achieve and exceed the expected targets	Interview 2
Beth: it's from the government its all pushing down on them.	Interview 2
Beth: at the school there was a big push on making sure the children were ready for year one	Interview 3
Debs: they tend to be more focussed on outcomes, it's all outcome, outcome, outcome	Interview 2
Debs: Ofsted are no longer looking for er, praising children and supporting them emotionally...., I just don't get it to be honest	Interview 3
Children without agency:	
Anna: children of low ability have to sit for long periods	Interview 1
Beth: them children were pulled out 'you come to me and do this'	Interview 2

Debs: children are only allowed to play in certain areas	Interview 2
Lack of unique child;/no child-led pedagogy/Teacher: child relationships:	
Beth: drawing showing 'academic' image of school pedagogy	Figure 5.30
Beth: louder, sterner like voice rather than just talking to them	Interview 2
Physical affection/Discipline	
Beth: like a little boy just came up to me the other day and like grabbed me and hugged me and I did think 'oh can you do this?'	Interview 2
Debs: she was told off for what she'd done wrong, made to say 'sorry'	Interview 2
Name	
Anna: not that Anna's not seen as an adult or somebody to respect, it's just how society sees you,	Interview 2
Debs: I hate...I don't like it...it's as though it's a barrier	Interview 2
School hierarchy	
Beth: school roles and responsibilities are perhaps more defined	Interview 2
Super-ordinate theme: Commonalities between PVI and school sector	
Policy/procedure/practice	
Anna: policies, your procedures and you're governed by Ofsted.	Interview 2
Beth: have that time to choose what they want to explore	Interview 2
Beth: you've still got to follow your EYFS... have all your policies in place, safeguarding	Interview 2
Debs: practice of observing children and tracking their progress	Interview 2
Ethics of care	
Anna: their passion...they do want the best for these children.	Interview 2
Debs: everyone who's involved in working with the kids are really passionate	Figure 5.21 commentary
Super-ordinate theme: Return to the home setting	
Emotion	
Anna: apprehensive about stepping down to the under 2's	Interview 3
Beth: so it's nice to be back, be comfortable	Figure 5.31 commentary
Change of role	
Anna: So my role's changed...everybody's role's changed	Interview 3
Beth: working in a room more	Interview 3
Debs: gone a bit AWOL while I've been away	Figure 5.37 commentary

Post Idiographic Cases - Table of superordinate themes for PVI

Master table of themes for the school sector trainees	
Super-ordinate theme: Professional Identity	
History/Initial formation	
Experience:	
Cara: ? years (experienced)	Interview 1
Fran: 6 years (experienced)	Interview 1
Roles and responsibilities:	
Cara: TA part-time	Interview 1
Fran: TA part-time	Interview 1
Multiple selves	
Cara: mother of two, TA, carer (parents) EYTS trainee	Interview 1
Fran: mother of three, TA, EYTS trainee	Interview 1
Ethics of care	
Cara: be smiling for the children in the setting and just create like a happy environment	Figure 5.38 & commentary
Fran: I'm loving work	Figure 5.48 & commentary
School hierarchy/relationships	
Cara: and for us TA's to stay inside	Interview 2
Fran: but I am proper friends with the teaching assistants.	Interview 1
Fran: the teachers are the bosses	Interview 1
Fran: teachers are always busy and the TAs are the one the parents come to	Interview 1
View of self as a trainee	
Cara: it's difficult... I'm just kind of treading a little bit carefully	Interview 1
Fran: I'm seen as a teaching assistant	Interview 1
'Student' identity	
Cara: I feel used and then I feel a bit resentful	Interview 2
Cara: they view...at both settings actually, just as like a TA or a practitioner.	Interview 2
Fran: I'm being on my best behaviour... you're a guest...want to get stuck in	Interview 2
Fran: you feel a lot more involved when you're in a nursery	Interview 3 Approach to other students
Fran: I should make more of an effort	Interview 2
Identity at the end of placement	
Increased knowledge/confidence	
Cara: I've just learnt and developed and grown	Figure 5.46 commentary
Fran: I've gone back with a bit more confidence	Figure 5.59 commentary
Metaphors	
Fran: light bulb, book, knowledge I've gained	Figure 5.57 & commentary
Fran: platform, rising, spade	Figure 5.59 & commentary
Super-ordinate theme: Anticipation of placement	
Emotion	
Cara: worry, apprehension	Figure 5.39 commentary
Fran: I was really nervous	Figure 5.54 commentary
Metaphor	
Fran: split in 2/sore thumb/learning curve/head spinning	Figure 5.24 commentary
Anticipation of new knowledge:	
Fran: learning curve	Figure 5.49 commentary
Expectation	
Cara: I expected to go in more as a managerial side and	

overseeing the teaching	Interview 2
Fran: full time work – stressful	Interview 1
Fran: difficulty collecting portfolio evidence	Interview 1
Super-ordinate theme: Experience of placement	
Metaphor	
Fran: latter climbing, rising platform, digging	Figure 5.59 & commentary
Emotions:	
Cara: <i>'a real bad time'</i>	Interview 3
Fran: I'm really happy actually, I'm really enjoying it... its a good experience	Figure 5.50 commentary
Problematic situation/low point	
Cara: culture shock	Figure 5.41 commentary
Cara: nappy changing/photograph day	Interview 2/3
Fran: 'I can't go on, I can't do it' family struggle, juggle	Interview 3
Dichotomy of care/education	
Cara: you're just caring for them...I think I've found it boring	Interview 2
Relational support	
Cara: ULT, husband, mother-in-law, Anna	Interview 2
Fran: child minder, work-mum	Interview 2
Super-ordinate theme: Differences between PVI and school practice	
Datafication / school readiness	
Fran: what we do in F2 is determining the outcome for Y2...	Interview 3
Lack of unique child;/no child-led pedagogy/Teacher: child relationships:	
Fran: It (unique child) doesn't (fit)	Interview 2
Physical affection/Discipline	
Cara: they've wanted a cuddle and I've made them feel better	Interview 3
Fran: hug and give you a kiss...so it's a lot more tactile	Interview 2
Name	
Cara: it's a bit strange...it just kind of is fine	Line 485
Fran: When I went I actually really liked it	Line 806
Meal times	
Cara: heightened sense of alert really when they're eating	Interview 2
Fran: I do quite like the snack times ...they have them sat round so it's a nice little social thing for the children	Interview 2
Resources/learning environment	
Fran: old nursery/lack of literature/tidy up time	Figure 5.52 commentary
Cara: everything is just everywhere	Line 194
Fran: I just couldn't cope with the mess	Interview 3
Super-ordinate theme: Commonalities between PVI and school sector	
Policy/procedure/practice	
Fran: the pressures and things are the same	Interview 2
Ethics of care	
Cara: really welcoming and, like, nurturing	Figure 5.42 commentary
Fran: really smiley friendly people, and their children are	Figure 5.51 commentary
Super-ordinate theme: Return to the home setting	
Emotion	
Cara: I feel happy...comfortable...back to the familiarity	Figure 5.47 commentary
Change of role	
Cara: you're going in year one	Figure 5.47 commentary
Fran: I am gonna be doing an intervention group	Interview 3
Other:	
Cara: I felt really confident then I came back into school and then they dropped right back down again	Interview 3

School hierarchy

Fran: I feel, like, a bit further up the hierarchy

Figure 5.59 & commentary

Future work:

Fran: I'd find (0-3) a bit boring and tiresome

Interview 3 Fran: staying part time Interview 3

Post Idiographic Cases - Combined PVI and school superordinate themes

Master table of themes for both sectors of trainees	
Super-ordinate theme: Professional Identity	
History/Initial formation	
Experience:	
Anna: 13 years (experienced)	Interview 1
Beth: 8 months (novice)	Interview 1
Debs: 7 years (experienced)	Interview 1
Cara: ? years (experienced)	Interview 1
Fran: 6 years (experienced)	Interview 1
Roles and responsibilities:	
Anna: support, lead, deliver, model	Creative session 1
Beth: I haven't got any like particular responsibilities...I get to just to sit down and play	Interview 1
Debs: leading the team, I enjoy that	Figure 5.32 commentary
Cara: TA part-time	Interview 1
Fran: TA part-time	Interview 1
Multiple selves	
Anna: mother of two, deputy manager, school governor, EYTS trainee	Interview 1
Beth: single, practitioner, EYTS trainee, dance/trampoline coach	Interview 1
Debs: mother of four, deputy manager, Thrive practitioner, EYTS trainee	Interview 1
Cara: mother of two, TA, carer (parents) EYTS trainee	Interview 1
Fran: mother of three, TA, EYTS trainee	Interview 1
Work/study/life balance	
Anna: I've always worked full time as well	Interview 1
Anna: a massive part of my life...become a priority over me	Interview 1
Anna: the workload...is just extortionate	Interview 1
Beth: it worries you whether you can actually get all the things that are needed for this	Interview 1
Debs: I'm right laid back and I'll just say 'whatever'	Interview 1
Ethics of care	
Anna: passion/ focus attachment and building relationships	Creative Session 1
Anna: 'empathy', 'sympathy' and 'trust'	Interview 1
Beth: it's that fun, isn't it? It's just like being with them	Interview 1
Debs: I love my job, I love my role	Figure 5.32 commentary
Debs: I tend to get a lot of them...diving on me for a cuddle	Interview 1
Debs: You don't do it for the money	Interview 2
Cara: be smiling for the children in the setting and just create like a happy environment	Figure 5.38 & commentary
Fran: I'm loving work	Figure 5.48 & commentary
School hierarchy/relationships	
Beth: school roles and responsibilities are perhaps more defined	Interview 2
Cara: and for us TA's to stay inside	Interview 2
Fran: but I am proper friends with the teaching assistants.	Interview 1
Fran: the teachers are the bosses	Interview 1
Fran: teachers are always busy and the TAs are the one the parents come to	Interview 1
View of self as a trainee	
Anna: I don't see myself as a trainee...I see...the practitioner I've always been	Interview 1
Beth: I don't know, I think this is, again, another tricky one for me	Interview 1

Debs: it's been quite difficult integrating that into work	Interview 1
Cara: it's difficult... I'm just kind of treading a little bit carefully	Interview 1
Fran: I'm seen as a teaching assistant	Interview 1
'Student' identity	
Anna: I'm waiting to be kinda led on what to do	Interview 2
Debs: its really hard for me because obviously I'm a student	Interview 2
Debs: I explained to her that I was a deputy manager...it was as though her view of me switched	Interview 2
Cara: I feel used and then I feel a bit resentful	Interview 2
Cara: they view...at both settings actually, just as like a TA or a practitioner.	Interview 2
Fran: I'm being on my best behaviour... you're a guest...want to get stuck in	Interview 2
Fran: you feel a lot more involved when you're in a nursery	Interview 3
Approach to other students	
Fran: I should make more of an effort	Interview 2
Image of a finished EYT / Dichotomous roles	
Anna: it's the same job but it's a completely different job	Interview 2
Beth: one for the PVI sector, one for the school sector	Figure 5.28 commentary
Debs: ideally somebody who can lead and has a passion for their values	Line 649
Identity at the end of placement	
Increased knowledge/confidence	
Beth: know the importance of play and how much children learn through play	Interview 3
Debs: I feel a lot more confident/learnt loads	Interview 3
Debs: I'd never work in a school, ever...schools are not for me learnt and developed and grown	Line 576 Figure 5.46 commentary
Fran: I've gone back with a bit more confidence	Figure 5.59 commentary
Metaphors	
Anna: story & journey	Drawing Figure 5.8
Beth: upward progress	Figure 5.29
Debs: owl	
Fran: light bulb, book, knowledge I've gained	Figure 5.57 & commentary
Fran: platform, rising, spade	Figure 5.59 & commentary
Super-ordinate theme: Anticipation of placement	
Emotion	
Anna: (small but) happy	Figure 5.16 commentary
Beth – calm happy excited	Figure 5.24 commentary
Debs – guarded	Figure 5.19 commentary
Cara: worry, apprehension	Figure 5.39 commentary
Fran: I was really nervous	Figure 5.54 commentary
Metaphor	
Anna: new opportunity...slow journey...doorway	Creative session 1
Beth: open my eyes to more knowledge	Figure 5.24 commentary
Debs: out of comfort zone/challenge (journey)	Figure 5.19 commentary
Fran: split in 2/sore thumb/learning curve/head spinning	Figure 5.24 commentary
Anticipation of new knowledge:	
Anna: Widening my knowledge and experience	Creative session 1
Beth –open eyes to new knowledge	Figure 5.24 commentary
Debs: lots to take away with me	Figure 5.19 commentary
Fran: learning curve	Figure 5.49 commentary
Super-ordinate theme: Experience of placement	
Metaphor	

Anna: rocking boat (journey)	Figure 5.17 commentary
Anna: (juggle) I've had to juggle my boys,	Interview 3
Beth: Question mark, where do I go forward from here?	Figure 5.29 commentary
Beth: rising platform	Figure 5.29 commentary
Debs: this represents my journey in placement	Figure 5.37 commentary
climbing, rising platform, digging	Fran: latter Figure 5.59 & commentary
Emotions:	
Anna: unhappy/hardest 7 weeks ever/tough	Interview 3
Beth: I'm happy to be there, I'm enjoying it...really good	Figure 5.25 commentary
Debs: rough ground/dodgy/struggled	Figure 5.35 commentary
Cara: 'a real bad time'	Interview 3
Fran: I'm really happy actually, I'm really enjoying it... its a good experience	Figure 5.50 commentary
Problematic situation/low point	
Anna: lots of missed opportunities for the lower ability children	Line 220
Beth: a child started crying... I was really like 'oh my gosh'	Interview 2
Debs: I felt like I was just there as a dogs-body	Interview 3
Cara: culture shock	Figure 5.41 commentary
Cara: nappy changing/photograph day	Interview 2/3
Fran: 'I can't go on, I can't do it' family struggle, juggle	Interview 3
Dichotomy of care/education	
Cara: you're just caring for them...I think I've found it boring	Interview 2
Relational support	
Cara: ULT, husband, mother-in-law, Anna	Interview 2
Fran: child minder, work-mum	Interview 2
Super-ordinate theme: Differences between PVI and school practice	
Structure/Timing	
Anna: everything is structured to a 'T' from when literacy starts and that runs through the whole morning...maths starts in the afternoon	Model figure 5.19
Beth: it's a lot more structured and 'we do this then' (clock)	Figure 5.26
Debs: straight (structure) and curvy (child led)	Figure 5.33
Datafication / school readiness	
Anna: get as many children to achieve and exceed the expected targets	Interview 2
Beth: it's from the government its all pushing down on them.	Interview 2
Beth: at the school there was a big push on making sure the children were ready for year one	Interview 3
Debs: they tend to be more focused on outcomes, it's all outcome, outcome, outcome	Interview 2
Debs: Ofsted are no longer looking for er, praising children and supporting them emotionally...., I just don't get it to be honest in F2 is determining the outcome for Y2...	Interview 3 Fran: what we do
Children without agency:	
Anna: children of low ability have to sit for long periods	Interview 1
Beth: them children were pulled out 'you come to me and do this'	Interview 2
Debs: children are only allowed to play in certain areas	Interview 2
Lack of unique child;/no child-led pedagogy/Teacher: child relationships:	
Beth: drawing showing 'academic' image of school pedagogy	Figure 5.30
Beth: louder, sterner like voice rather than just talking to them	Interview 2
Fran: It (unique child) doesn't (fit)	Interview 2
Ethics of care/Discipline	
Beth: like a little boy just came up to me the other day and like grabbed me and hugged me and I did think 'oh can you do this?'	Interview 2
Debs: she was told off for what she'd done wrong, made to say 'sorry'	Interview 2
Cara: they've wanted a cuddle and I've made them feel better	Interview 3

Fran: hug and give you a kiss...so it's a lot more tactile	Interview 2
Name	
Anna: not that Anna's not seen as an adult or somebody to respect, it's just how society sees you,	Interview 2
Debs: I hate...I don't like it...it's as though it's a barrier	Interview 2
Cara: it's a bit strange...it just kind of is fine	Line 485
Fran: When I went I actually really liked it	Line 806
Meal times	
Cara: heightened sense of alert really when they're eating	Interview 2
Fran: I do quite like the snack times ...they have them sat round so it's a nice little social thing for the children	Interview 2
Resources/learning environment	
Fran: old nursery/lack of literature/tidy up time	Figure 5.52 commentary
Cara: everything is just everywhere	Line 194
Fran: I just couldn't cope with the mess	Interview 3
Super-ordinate theme: Commonalities between PVI and school sector	
Policy/procedure/practice	
Anna: policies, your procedures and you're governed by Ofsted.	Interview 2
Beth: have that time to choose what they want to explore	Interview 2
Beth: you've still got to follow your EYFS... have all your policies in place, safeguarding	Interview 2
Debs: practice of observing children and tracking their progress	Interview 2
Fran: the pressures and things are the same	Interview 2
Ethics of care	
Anna: their passion...they do want the best for these children.	Interview 2
Debs: everyone who's involved in working with the kids are really passionate	Figure 5.21 commentary
Cara: really welcoming and, like, nurturing	Figure 5.42 commentary
Fran: really smiley friendly people, and their children are	Figure 5.51 commentary
Super-ordinate theme: Return to the home setting	
Emotion	
Anna: apprehensive about stepping down to the under 2's	Interview 3
Beth: so it's nice to be back, be comfortable	Figure 5.31 commentary
Cara: I feel happy...comfortable...back to the familiarity	Figure 5.47 commentary
Change of role	
Anna: So my role's changed...everybody's role's changed	Interview 3
Beth: working in a room more	Interview 3
Debs: gone a bit AWOL while I've been away	Figure 5.37 commentary
Cara: you're going in year one	Figure 5.47 commentary
Fran: I am gonna be doing an intervention group	Interview 3
School hierarchy	
Fran: I feel, like, a bit further up the hierarchy	Figure 5.59 & commentary
Future work:	
Fran: I'd find (0-3) a bit boring and tiresome	Interview 3 Fran: staying part time
Interview 3	

Appendix 9: Information on the Thrive Approach

The Thrive approach is a dynamic developmental way of working with all children, aiming to develop their social and emotional wellbeing with a view to enabling them to engage with life and learning (Thrive FTC 2016). Children are supported to become self-assured, capable and adaptable, and, for some children, the approach can help to address troubling behaviours that may be a barrier to their learning.

The guiding principles of Thrive are:

- Each child is unique, each child learns in different ways and at varying rates and all talents and potential can be fulfilled.
- Children's wellbeing and development are crucially dependant on relationship with close supportive adults in enabling environments.
- Children flourish when they are confident, self-assured, capable and resilient. (Thrive FTC 2016).

Thrive draws upon attachment theory, neuroscience, child development theory and theories of the use of creativity and play in developing emotional resilience. Thrive promotes a simplified model of brain development, based on the concept of a triune brain, to develop adults' understanding of how the brain grows and changes, from the last trimester of pregnancy through to adolescence.

The Thrive approach uses a computerised programme that allows practitioners to screen whole class/groups and individuals to assess their emotional development, and is capable of producing action plans for practitioners or parents, drawing from a database of activities and strategies.

Thrive promotes a stance called PLACE, requiring adults to be Playful, Loving, Accepting, Curious and to have Empathy when being with children (Hughes 2006). Additionally, the approach uses the concept of Vital Regulatory Functions to suggest adults attune to children, to then validate their feelings, to contain them (emotionally and/or physically) and then to calm and soothe their dis-regulated state.

Appendix 10: Information on using Nvivo software.

Figure A.60 shows how I trialled Nvivo's transcription tool which links the audio to the transcription:

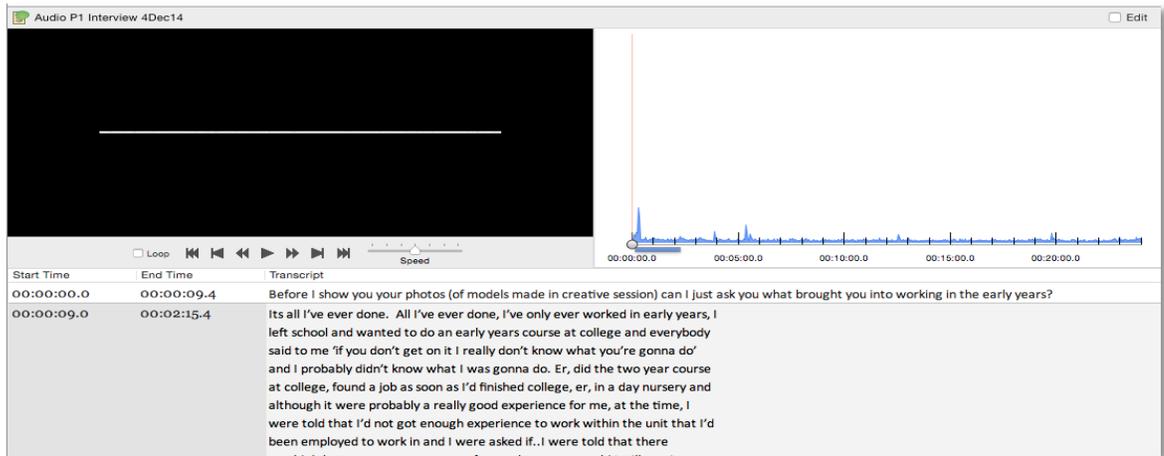


Figure A.60 Example of transcription format using Nvivo

I imported the interview transcriptions into Nvivo and began to create nodes according to descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) that I identified in Anna's data

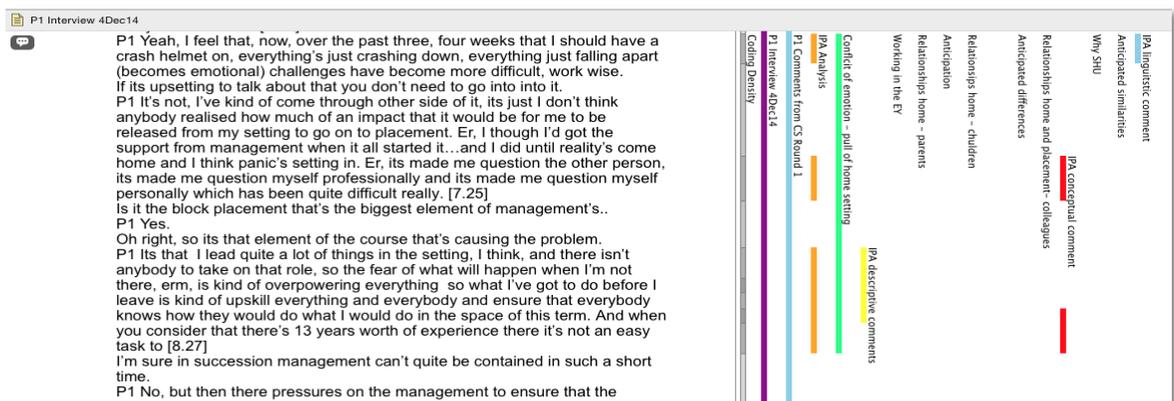


Figure A.61 Extract to show Nvivo format with highlighted nodes