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**'Professional doctorate students' stories of experiential learning: a
discourse analysis'**

Patricia A. Foster

Doctorate Project in Professional Studies: a Project Report
Sheffield Hallam University
For the degree of Doctorate in Professional Studies (Health and Social Care)

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My heartfelt gratitude to Frances, Janet, Ranald, Gemma and, of course, Colin and George, without whom there would have been neither a beginning nor an end.

This report provides an account of a project, the aim of which was to conceptualise, design and complete a work based inquiry of professional doctorate students' stories of experiential learning. The expected outcomes included: the development and construction of a discourse of experiential learning, based on the experiences of those who 'story' them; the development and evaluation of an epistemology of work based inquiry, both providing new insights into hitherto comparatively neglected areas of interest to researchers. The project, based on an initial exploration of the literature, including key conceptual and theoretical perspectives, used a generalised qualitative approach. Reflexivity was integral to all elements of the inquiry. In-depth, unstructured interviews were conducted on seven individuals, studying on a Doctorate in Professional Studies. Data from these interviews, together with evidence gathered from a further continuing and extensive review of the literature, was analysed using methods of data analysis, informed in part by the writings and ideas of Michel Foucault. Three major discourses, constructed from the participants' messages, emerged from the analysis. They were not only on experiential learning, but also on professional doctorate people and professional doctorate awards. Key learning from the project related to the *extra*-ordinary people who were the professional doctorate students, as well the magical and emotional experience of experiential learning. Additional lessons to come from the project related to discourse analysis and work based inquiry. Suggestions regarding the provision of professional doctorate awards, staff development, the support of professional doctorate students and experiential learning were made to significant stakeholders. These included faculties and higher education institutions providing professional doctorate programmes, as well as educationalists involved in the delivery of experiential learning, all of whom should find this report of interest.

Contents

Introduction and Background to the Project	7
Part I	19
Chapter One: A Review of the Literature:	20
Introduction.....	20
Philosophy and methodology	20
Learning, knowledge and experiential learning	22
Concepts, theories and models of experiential learning	23
Experiences, stories and experiential learning	28
Professional doctorates	30
Conclusion.....	35
Chapter Two: Philosophy and Methodology:	37
Introduction.....	37
A philosophical and methodological landscape for a work based inquiry	37
A work based inquiry	40
Participants and participating in the inquiry	42
Methods of data collection.....	44
Methods of data analysis.....	47
Discourse	48
Discourse analysis	50
Reflexivity	51
Assuring rigour, trustworthiness, governance and ethical approval of the project.....	52
Conclusion.....	55
Part II: The Discourses	57
Introduction.....	58
• Writing and presenting the findings: an explanation	58
Chapter Three: Professional Doctorate People:	60
Introduction.....	60
Message 1	60
• 'We are forged from the crucible of adversity'	60
• Constructions and contexts found in the literature	66
Message 2.....	70

• Constructions and contexts found in the literature.....	73
Message 3.....	75
• ‘We are lucky people’	75
• Constructions and contexts found in the literature.....	77
Message 4.....	79
• ‘We are accidental tourists on an accidental award’	79
• Constructions and contexts found in the literature.....	83
Conclusion.....	86
Chapter Four: Professional Doctorate Awards:	88
Introduction.....	88
Message 1.....	88
• ‘We are ‘ <i>un</i> -academic professionals’ on a professional doctorate award’	88
• Constructions and contexts found in the literature.....	92
Message 2.....	94
• ‘We are experiencing the coronation effect’	94
• Constructions and contexts found in the literature.....	99
Message 3.....	101
• ‘We are transformed by our experiences on the professional doctorate award’	101
• Constructions and contexts found in the literature.....	106
Conclusion.....	107
Chapter Five: Experiential Learning:.....	109
Introduction.....	109
Message 1.....	110
• ‘We are building a nest’	110
• Constructions and contexts found in the literature.....	112
Message 2.....	116
• ‘Experiential learning is emotional labour’	116
• Constructions and contexts found in the literature.....	119
Message 3.....	120
• ‘Experiential learning is an everyday happening’	120

Message 4.....	125
• 'Experiential learning is like black magic'	125
• Constructions and contexts found in the literature	131
Conclusion.....	134
Part III.....	136
Chapter Six: A Discussion:	137
Introduction.....	137
Learning from the discourses	138
• Learning thus far.....	138
Past, present and new learning:	138
• 'Extra-ordinary people'	139
• 'The magic of it all'	140
• 'The emotion of it all'	141
Learning and 'les folies' of the project	142
• 'It's my experiences; it's my story; it really is about me'	143
• 'The Naming of Parts'	144
• 'The politically charged world of insider research'	145
Suggestions and recommendations from a work based inquiry	146
• Professional doctorate awards and professional doctorate people... ..	146
• Experiential learning	149
• Projects and methodologies	151
Conclusion.....	151
Conclusion to the Project Report	153
A review and assessment of the project's aim and outcomes	154
A reflection on my journey – a dialogue with self.....	155
• Miner and traveller.....	155
• Motivation, procrastination and perfectionism.....	155
• On finding a voice and finding self.....	157
Concluding thoughts and action plan	158
References.....	159
Appendices.....	182
Appendix 1:	183

*'Time present and time past
Are both present in time future
And time future contained in time past.'*

(From 'Burnt Norton' by T.S. Eliot)

It has been said that that the 'formation of scholars' is influenced by the intellectual ability *and* the personality, character, heart and mind of the individuals concerned (Walker et al 2008 pg. 8). This doctoral project and thesis are likewise products not only of my knowledge, understanding and reasoning, but also the person and history of the particular scholar which is me. During the very early stages of my own studies, I came to realise that, in common with other professional doctorate students, 'biography' has been significant (Wellington and Sikes 2006). Biography in this instance refers to my life story, the experiences and 'turning-point moments' within it (Denzin 1989 pg. 7). By meeting, confronting, passing through, and making sense of the experiences in my life (after Denzin 1989 pg. 33), I have identified the features which make up my philosophical landscape. Furthermore, I have come to recognise that there are synergies between the latter and my professional, academic and research story. Who and what I am has shaped my choice of inquiry topic, research paradigm and methods, as may now be seen.

A biography of self

1951- 1970

I was born in 1951 in an East Lancashire mill town, whose coat of arms contained the words *Arte et Labore*, an approach to life instilled into me by my parents from an early age. Nature, nurture and observed behaviour ensured that I acquired a strong protestant work ethic alongside a deep love of language and literature. I was enrolled at the municipal library from the age of four and quickly progressed from its catalogue to the book collection of my school teacher father, including his own poetry and prose. He encouraged me to explore and defend my ideas and opinions, bringing about the genesis of 'conscientization' or 'critical self-consciousness' in me (Mezirow 1981). However, observation of the breakdown of my parents' tempestuous marriage, taught me that whilst words could soothe and inspire, they could also punish, hurt and alienate. I began to realise the significance to me of what I would come to know as 'discourse' and 'the something other that was said' (Foucault 1972,

accompanied him in his duties as ward chair. His politics were those of traditional working class conservatism acted out in a socialist stronghold. Academically, my progress through those early years appears smooth and fruitful: success at the eleven plus examination led on to 'O' and 'A' levels and entry to university in 1970. My chosen programme of study was 'conventionally-unconventional', an undergraduate degree combining studies in social sciences with vocational qualifications in nursing and health visiting. Whilst this course was seen as innovative and different, it still conformed to society's views as to what was perceived as an acceptable career for a daughter of the '60s' (Armstrong 2004).

1970- 1979

I now found myself dividing my time between a university on the south coast and a teaching hospital in London as I undertook this complex and lengthy course, designed to meet the growing belief that nurses needed to extend their knowledge base and role boundaries beyond the narrow confines of the biomedical sciences and doctor's handmaiden (Grindle and Dallat 2000). The academic components of the programme broadened my political mindset, as I was introduced to texts which detailed the inequality that existed between north and south, rich and poor in Britain's increasingly 'muffled society' (Titmuss 1961 in Taylor and Ayres 1969 pg. 1). I began to recognise the significance of context, as I was presented with rudimentary tools to describe and analyse social apparatus, gaining some understanding of the roles played in their construct by knowledge, power and subjectivity (Foucault 1972).

As for nursing, I was a 'Nightingale', a student of the Nightingale Training School at St. Thomas' Hospital in London, which used the apprenticeship model and a Tylerian approach to education (Grindle and Dallat 2000). That is, I was a salaried and fully-rostered member of the hospital workforce, taught a curriculum underpinned by a strong philosophy and conceptual framework, with behaviourally defined, measurable objectives for each part of the programme. Eminent surgeons and physicians delivered much of the systems-focussed content in a didactic manner within the School of Nursing. However, our

understood and practised 'total patient centred' care long before holism was accepted coinage in nursing circles. I fell head over heels in love with nursing and my role as professional care giver. So much so that on qualifying as a registered nurse at the mid-point of the course, I experienced the first significant turning point moment of my professional and academic career. I cast aside a return to university to complete my degree and health visiting studies, choosing instead to continue working at my training hospital as staff nurse and later ward sister. This was not an unusual decision to make in the 1970's, where female graduates, let alone female graduate nurses, were still viewed with suspicion. After all 'successful work was not part of the traditional female role' (after Blauner 1964 in Oakley 1992 pg. 73).

Another turning-point moment was to quickly follow when, inspired by my tutors, I accepted the opportunity to become a teacher of nurses. I had acted as educator to numerous medical and nursing students during my years as a ward sister. I rejected the pathway which led to qualification as a nurse tutor, preferring instead to seek registration as a clinical nurse teacher. My rationale was clear: I had benefited from the teaching skills of those who placed themselves at the bedside and I was eager to do the same. My career in this new role started in London, continued when I moved to Leeds in 1976 and culminated in my registration as a Clinical Nurse Teacher in 1978. This year was significant in other ways for on July 22nd 1978 I married my husband, Colin.

1980 – 1989

A new decade and another new role: by 1980 I was pregnant with our first son Thomas. I was more than happy to relinquish my career aspirations for what I thought would be the foreseeable future and well beyond. My experiences of family life as a child and the spiritual values which I held, shaped my belief that my place was now within 'the private domain' of the home, as carer and nurturer of my child and family (Stacey 1981). This was my preference and the dominant pattern of behaviour for women in my social circle and in society at large during this time (Graham 1983). Imagine my confusion when within months of our son's birth I felt bored, angry and jealous of my friends with older children who,

basis. However, they were teachers in primary and secondary schools, not teachers of nurses. Whilst their employers were alert to the mutual benefits of such contractual arrangements, it was to be nearly twenty years before the Health Service would adopt a 'family-friendly' employment policy (DoH 2000). I found myself asking 'is motherhood maddening?' (Doyal 1995) as I struggled with the many monotonous and repetitive tasks associated with caring for a young child, even one as sunny natured as our first-born. My feelings were compounded by the birth of our second son Peter in 1983, a beautiful but fretful baby who cried continuously and failed to sleep for the first three and a half years of his life. I had been led to believe that as a young mother I should have 'felt fully alive' but my experiences 'spelled instead a kind of death' (Oakley 1992 pg. 72).

Salvation came in 1986 when, with great tenacity, I took the first tentative steps towards a return to paid employment and caring in 'the public domain' (Stacey 1981). Rather than go back as a nurse teacher at the local school of nursing, something which would have required me to return to work on a full time basis, I chose instead to undertake one evening shift per week at a hospice in Leeds. This was compatible (just) with my commitments at home and also allowed me to pursue a long held interest in palliative care, born out of my experiences as a nurse and teacher in London. The opportunity to work outside the home and to learn more about a way of care to which I felt a personal and professional commitment was enticing. The two short years I was employed at the hospice gave me a great deal: first, invaluable knowledge of palliative care from the very experienced and dedicated team I was privileged to work with; secondly, from the patients and families themselves a deeper understanding of death and dying as I observed with humility their exchanges and interactions during the last days of an individual's life; thirdly, sufficient confidence in my ability as a nurse and a manager of 'hearth, home and work' (after Doyal 1995) to take up the next employment opportunity that came my way.

By the end of January 1987 I had been appointed as a Lecturer/Clinical Supervisor of undergraduate students studying on the BSc Nursing at the

programme and the teaching team whom I had first met when I moved to the city a decade earlier. Furthermore, there was a contractual obligation that all nursing lecturers, regardless of status, should spend 50% of their time working with their students in various clinical settings. Our only dispensation was that when the students were on placement in accident and emergency and psychiatric departments, they received supervision from specialist lecturers employed by the Polytechnic. I relished this approach to education which invested as much in the acquisition of knowledge for nursing as it did in the attainment of practice skills. There was great value placed on what I was later to recognise as a work based or experiential approach to learning and for me the attraction was strong (Kolb 1984, FLDC 1998). As for my new employers, they were sufficiently impressed by my experiences as a practitioner and teacher to create a precedent and engage the services of a non-graduate. Their one proviso was that I enrol on a part-time degree in Nursing Studies.

I welcomed my return to study. It complemented and extended the learning I was gaining as a lecturer. Significantly, it accelerated my politicization as I studied social policy for the first time. I discovered a newly-published text 'The Politics of Welfare' (Deakin 1987). As I read about the crumbling of consensus and the rise of conflict politics, I observed the consequences in Leeds of the first eight years of Thatcherism watching the 'welfare balloon' collapse (Deakin 1987). To some extent, the city of Leeds appeared immune: its reputation as the financial capital of the North grew rather than diminished during these boom years for entrepreneurs. Less secure were the more vulnerable members of its population, reliant upon public services, rapidly being reformed, dismantled and disbanded as responsibility for care was moved from society to the individual. When the opportunity came for a six-month secondment to work as a research assistant for the Dean of the Department of Health and Community Studies on an enquiry into the anticipated impact on education of the newly-published Community Care white paper, I welcomed it with open arms (DoH 1989). This project allowed me to expand my research skills, under the watchful eye of a very experienced supervisor.

encouragement in all my endeavours. Unlike our parents' generation he took an active part in domestic labour, including the care of our home and children (Oakley 1974).

1990-1997

The early years of the 1990's presented me with what Mezirow (1981) described as 'disorientating dilemmas' which led to further turning point moments and subsequent transformation of my personal, professional and scholarly perspectives. In 1989 we made the decision as a family to move from our long-established home and social network in Leeds to Sheffield. The catalyst for this change was my husband's employment at one of the universities in the South Yorkshire city. Increasing demands and responsibilities had resulted in a working day which proved incompatible with family life. Despite extensive thought and preparations being put into our 'removals', all members of the family found the transition difficult and they were a major contributory factor to the serious physical and mental illnesses experienced by my husband over the next few years. Somewhat isolated in a new environment, I added unpaid carer to my repertoire of roles as firstly my husband and then my mother, now suffering from dementia, became my unofficial patients in the private domain of our home in Sheffield (Stacey 1981). With this came new conflicts and demands, similar to those experienced by women (and men) acting as wage earners and carers to different generations (Graham in Roberts ed. 1990, Doyal 1997).

The dilemmas and changes I was experiencing in my personal life were also mirrored in my employment during these years and reflected a pattern not dissimilar to many women of my generation (Dex 1989, 1991). Unable to obtain a post similar to the one I had held as lecturer and researcher in higher education in Leeds, I gained employment in a large Further Education college in South Yorkshire. There I expanded my skills in teaching, learning and assessing, working with students across all levels of provision, including Higher Education. My presence at the College had attracted the franchise of a post-qualifying, part-time degree programme from one of the local universities to that

education for health care professionals and my burgeoning skills in curriculum design to develop and deliver an Access to the Health Care Professions programme with a complementary service of Education and Guidance Service in the College's Adult Learning Centre. This was to meet the needs of the large numbers of men and women affected by the devastating collapse of the steel and coal mining industries in the region during the 1990's.

In scholarly terms, my life was also changing. In 1993 I resumed my study of a part-time degree, originally interrupted by the onset of my husband's illness some years earlier. However, expansion of my employment and cognitive horizons and some careful personal reflection led me to reject studies in nursing in favour of those with a strong social policy and social theory bias. Whilst completing my dissertation I encountered the work of Michael Foucault for the very first time. His writings on knowledge and power held a resonance with my own thinking about society, government and health care in Britain at that time (Foucault 1973, Foucault 1978). After obtaining my degree with first class honours in 1995, I went on to undertake a number of postgraduate modules in research methods and social theory with the intention of registering for a PhD. Unfortunately, increased responsibilities in the workplace and the stresses of 'The 36-hour day' (Mace 1986) did not allow me to take up this opportunity at that time. Nevertheless, my additional studies had taken me further into Foucault's works, deepening my understanding of the connections between knowledge, power, policy and practice. I also learnt about discourse as a concept, explanation and research tool (Foucault 1972, Foucault 1977, Papaleontiou-Louca 2003). With the encouragement of a close colleague, acting as sister, role model and friend, I honed my skills as an academic writer, presenting at a number of national and international conferences. The content of my papers focussed on experiential, flexible and work based learning. As a teacher, I had observed the benefits of these approaches to education (Foster 1997, Hargreaves et al 1997). Furthermore, politicians and professional bodies were campaigning for their use in the education of health care professionals (Blunkett 1998, Council of Deans and Heads 1998, Foster and Hargreaves 2000). My understanding of the conceptual and theoretical underpinning of

most nurse educators, I was more familiar with models and frameworks used as aids to flexible and work based learning used in the clinical setting (Johns 1992, Johns 1993, Palmer et al 1994) than with the works of Schon (1983) and Kolb (1984).

1997 – 2004

By 1997, the majority of the teaching portfolio I delivered and managed in the College was at undergraduate level. This was not an easy role to fulfil in an education sector experiencing increasing competition from schools, together with reductions in funding and staffing levels. I was also undertaking additional work for Sheffield Hallam University in various supervisory, teaching and research capacities. This culminated in my application and subsequent appointment to the position of Senior Lecturer in Nursing at the University in October 1997.

The next five years saw an advancement of my professional career as I undertook programme management of the post-qualifying framework of flexible provision for health care professionals. This was developed to meet the demands of individuals and their professional bodies, and to support employers requiring responsive and innovative education to facilitate the achievement of political and clinical imperatives (DoH 1999, DoH 2000). I oversaw the development of a plethora of programmes, around topics such as infection management, sexual health and emergency care and to support the acquisition of new roles in endoscopy, pre-operative care and paramedic practice to name but a few. I used my experience, expertise and position as Flexible Learning Co-ordinator within the School of Health and Social Care to embed the philosophy and practice of work based learning into our programmes.

My growing expertise in flexible learning, curricula development and strategic working at a local and regional level with the university's partners led to collaboration with different stakeholders on national projects around First Contact Care and Long Term Conditions (DoH 2002, DoH 2004). The resultant programmes further extended my experience of creating learning products

(James and Clarke 1996, FLDC 1998, Foster and Hargreaves 2000). They brought an added dimension to the University's work based learning portfolio, as these programmes were designed for delivery entirely in and by participating health care communities.

2004 onwards

In 2004, now as Principal Lecturer and Partnership Co-ordinator for the newly-created Faculty of Health and Wellbeing at the University, I took up a place on the recently-validated Doctorate in Professional Studies (Health and Social Care). There was some irony in my enrolment on this award as my expertise in flexible and work based learning had been used to inform the philosophy and design of the programme and some of its' modules.

I began the doctoral journey with a very clear idea as to what form my project would take. I wrote in the paper which accompanied my application, that I intended to 'explore the concepts of flexible and work based learning and their use and application in policy and curriculum development; evaluate their impact on health care practice', using a programme I had developed as a case study. That is, undertake a project reflecting my interests as an educator in flexible learning and the juxtaposition between national policy, curriculum design and outcomes on practice. Whilst conducting a critical review of my personal, professional and scholarly progress as part of the assessment of the first module of the professional doctorate, I experienced a transformation not only of my perceptions of 'self', but also of what I wanted my thesis to be about. In meeting, confronting and making sense of my biography (to re-iterate Denzin's phrase), I realised afresh the parts played by literature and poetry, discourse and stories in constructing my identity as a 'goldsmith of words' (Mercier 2008). I began to see myself as a theorist-reflector, rather than an activist or pragmatist (Honey and Mumford 1982). I felt an emotional cost, as I struggled as a professional doctorate student to bring scholarship to my life story, my experiences (after Reason 2001). I recognised that language, discourse, learning from and through experiences were of significance to the person which is me. I therefore put aside my carefully-drawn research question and project,

accord with my biography of self and one which would, as required by my examining university, 'advance knowledge and understanding in a specified area of practice' (SHU 2003).

The project was entitled 'Professional doctorate students' stories of experiential learning: a discourse analysis'. Its foundations lay in my abiding interest in flexible and experiential learning, but the focus of the inquiry was different from what I had originally intended. It centred on the stories and experiences of individuals, aiming to work 'at the forefront of professional practice' (SHU 2003 pg. 6). Whilst my personal journey and encounter with this type of learning had certainly acted as a catalyst for my change of direction, other factors affected my decision. An initial search of the literature showed that scant attention had been paid, thus far, to the experience of experiential learning itself. Examination of the literature also revealed that over the past decade an increasing number of professional doctorate programmes had placed value on students reflecting upon their experiences. However, little appeared to have been done to capture the stories of candidates' encounters with experiential learning.

My aim was to conceptualise, design and complete a work based inquiry into professional doctorate students' stories of experiential learning. At this stage of my doctoral journey, I anticipated that the expected outcomes of the study would be the development of a discourse on experiential learning, providing new insights, based on the experiences of professional doctorate students. That is, the experiences of those who 'story' it. Additional outcomes would be the development and evaluation of an epistemology for work based inquiry at the forefront of academic understanding of the concept and by the completion of the project I hoped to meet the learning outcomes for the Doctoral Project module at my awarding university.

The project report

This report has been written as a reflexive narrative and unfolding account. It charts not only the 'temporal sequence' of events, but also explores the 'inter-relationship of human motivation, chance happenings, and changing

story of the project (Polkinghorne 1995). Use has been made of the first person throughout this written account. This is not only in accord with the qualitative nature of my study, but more significantly it resonates with my personal and academic persona and voice (Lee 2009). Part I of the report traces the genesis of the project through a review of the literature and evidence. In addition, it describes, justifies, and evaluates the philosophical and methodological stance taken throughout this inquiry. Part II presents the findings of the study and goes on to explore the major discourses which emerged from detailed analysis of the data, whilst Part III discusses the learning which came from the discourses and the project as a whole. Suggestions are also made regarding the implications of the inquiry for key stakeholders. Given that reflexivity or 'an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meaning' (Nightingale and Cromby 1999 pg. 28) was integral to all elements of this project, the report concludes with a review of the project's aim and outcomes, as well as a personal reflection and action plan.

*'We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And to know the place for the first time.'*

(From 'Little Gidding' by T.S. Eliot)

Introduction

Hart (1998 pg. 26) suggested that reviewing the literature is 'a process fundamental to any worthwhile research'. He went on to say that all research students should gain a sound understanding not only of the 'history' or background of their chosen topic but also issues of current interest and debate set around the subject area. Arber (1993 pg. 35) stressed the significance of 'searching out' and 'conceptualising the issues', particularly during the planning stage of a project. Both commend the necessity of distinguishing between what has been done and what needs to be done; of exploring and establishing context, particularly intellectual context; of using synthesis to gain and demonstrate a potential new perspective; and, of acquiring and utilising the subject vocabulary. By so doing, the researcher will establish validity, originality and provide a justification for their proposed inquiry. This chapter begins with a discussion of the philosophy and methodology which informed the search and review of the literature for this project. It goes on to critically explore the 'knowledge pool' relevant to the key themes which emerged after conducting a search of the literature. These themes were: learning, knowledge and experiential learning; concepts, theories and models of experiential learning; experiences, stories and experiential learning; professional doctorates and experiential learning. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings from the review, an evaluation of the experience and the processes involved, and thus a justification for the inquiry.

Philosophy and methodology

A 'quality' review of the literature should have breadth and depth, as well as rigour and consistency, and draw upon the ontological and epistemological basis of concepts and theories, in addition to examining more generalised issues and debates around the topics under scrutiny (Hart 1998). A thorough search of the literature was conducted, and informed by the principles located within the research literature in general and in Hart (1998) in particular. The intention of the search and the review was to provide a robust basis for my doctoral project. However, I did not wish to undertake a systematic review or

Evidence-Based Practice (Muir-Gray 1997). Rather, I wanted to release my 'research imagination' by gathering and immersing myself in evidence from complex bodies of knowledge, located within relevant discipline and subject areas. Hart's phrase 'the research imagination' draws upon C. Wright Mills' text 'The Sociological Imagination' (Wright Mills 1978). Wright Mills urges the research apprentice to not only adopt a critical and questioning attitude to the literature on a topic, but also to return to the founding theorists in order to determine how and why subject knowledge has developed and changed. This, he claimed, is what sets apart 'the social scientist from the mere technician' (Wright Mills 1978 pg. 232). This approach was in accord with my own philosophical landscape as a theorist-reflector

I undertook a search process which included scrutiny of databases, providing access to abstracts, journal articles, dissertation abstracts, conference papers and proceedings. I consulted the Library Information Technology Services at my university as well as subject experts in order to gather together appropriate literature and evidence, from disciplines including philosophy, social theory, research and education. Their expertise was also of value in the latter stages of the process when I sought to refine my search. Meanwhile, electronic search engines were used to scrutinise major data bases such as Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), Education Resource Abstracts (ERA), CINAHAL, Emerald Fulltext, Education Resource Information Centre (ERIC), Proquest Educational Journals, Medline and Health Source. Key words (for example, experiential learning, experiences of experiential learning, stories and experiential learning, professional doctorates and experiential learning) were used in searching out the contents of these databases. My choice of search terms reflected the change in focus of my proposed inquiry from flexible to experiential learning and my intended study group. The terms were based on findings from an initial review of the literature completed as part of a taught module during the second year of my doctoral studies. I made use of recommended and known texts to act as pre-cursors to the overall search process and to inform a hand search of text and journals at my university. An

extensive stocks of research and education texts, was also conducted.

In selecting literature to scrutinise in greater detail, I adhered to the main conventions found in the research literature (Gilbert 1993). I did not confine myself to current literature, published within the past five years. If I wished to gain critical understanding of the topics I intended to explore and release my research imagination, as indicated earlier, I knew I would have to examine seminal texts on the subjects. I brought to mind the recommendations of Arber (1993) and Hart (1998) in reviewing the selected literature. My aims were first to identify key sources from which to discern major theories and ideas. Secondly, I wanted to gain an understanding of the latter's' ontological and epistemological roots, in addition to their contextual development. Thirdly, I intended to build a critical history of the major issues, debates and questions posed thus far around the topics under review, to inform the shape and nature of my own investigation and research question. Finally, I wished to identify, define and develop a working vocabulary of key concepts and terms to form the basis of my study. The review which follows incorporates these aims, beginning with consideration of what the literature said of the relationship between learning, knowledge and experiential learning.

Learning, knowledge and experiential learning

It has been suggested that any exploration of 'human learning', including experiential learning, would be incomplete without an examination of knowledge, its nature and organisation, and the processes whereby individual learners and their experiences contribute to knowledge creation (After Kolb 1984 pg. 99). According to Piaget (1970), three perspectives on the relationship between learning, knowledge and experiences have dominated and defined epistemological debate around the structure and nature of knowledge in Western philosophy. They are the approaches of the rationalists, empiricists and interactionists. Both Piaget and Kolb rejected the views of rationalists, such as Descartes, who advocated the pre-eminent role played by logic and reason in the creation of knowledge and truth. Similarly, they dismissed empiricists including Locke and Hobbs, who postulated that only by careful observation,

Rather, Piaget and Kolb had greater accord with a third way, the perspective of interactionists, who viewed knowledge and truth as a 'product of the interaction between the mind's forms and the material facts of sense experience' (Kolb 1984 pg.100). Kolb, however, was critical of Piagetian interactionism. He claimed that it was essentially rationalist in spirit, placing as it did a greater emphasis upon the role of knowing by comprehension rather than by apprehension. For Kolb, the relationship between the two was both dynamic and equal. Significantly for the purposes of my investigation into experiential learning, he argued that 'grasping and transforming experiences' were essential components of the learning process and thus of knowledge creation (Kolb 1984 pg. 41).

Concepts, theories and models of experiential learning

Experiential learning represents a significant paradigm or frame for understanding and delivering adult learning and education. Indeed, Beard and Wilson (2002 pg. 16) go so far as to propose that experiential learning underpins, in essence, 'the process of all learning'. Yet in the literature are found a proliferation of concepts, theories and models around the topic with some level of 'conceptual ambiguity and semantic chaos' characterising the discussions of the various definitions of learning, especially experiential learning (Malinen 2000 pg.15). However, some writers emerge as pivotal to any chronology of adult and experiential learning and appear to have brought greater clarity to the ontological, epistemological and methodological debates surrounding the topics. For the purposes of this review of the literature, consideration was given predominantly to the works of Kolb, Schon and Mezirow. Justification for their inclusion is as follows: they are all, as Malinen (2000 pg. 20 with emphasis removed) concurs, 'major figures' in these fields of learning; their writings have been utilised extensively (but not exclusively) in research, design and delivery of health and social care education; my project centred around the experiential learning experiences of professional doctoral students whose worlds of work and study were health and social care. Thus my choice of Kolb, Schon and Mezirow appeared to be particularly apt: Finally and significantly, throughout the works of these three writers runs a common theme

emancipated by experiential learning (Mezirow 1981, Schon 1983, Kolb 1984, Mezirow 1991, Kolb et al 2000). For these reasons, I chose to critically examine the theories of these writers.

Kolb is viewed by some as having developed arguably the most influential perspective on experiential learning (Malinen 2000, Beard and Wilson 2002). He used the term experiential learning to emphasise the significance of experience within the learning process and to distinguish his approach from other cognitive theories of learning (Kolb 1984). He went on to assert that it was 'unique' to this field of study (Kolb et al 2000 pg. 2). According to his theory, learning was 'the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience' (Kolb 1984 pg. 41). The origins of his thinking on experiential learning were located in the writings of Dewey (1934 and 1938). He also drew upon the work of Lewin (1951) and Piaget (1970). Kolb viewed apprehension, comprehension and sensation as playing equal parts in learning and knowledge acquisition. He also considered the past to be as important as the here and now in shaping learning through experience. Unlike Schon, Kolb made explicit reference to the part played by personal and social knowledge in experiential learning. Kolb did not confine himself to theory generation; he developed an experiential learning model, with a four-stage learning cycle, the starting point of which is concrete observation, followed by observation and reflection, which lead on to the formation of abstract concepts and generalisations, subsequently used and tested in new situations (Kolb and Fry 1975). This learning cycle was widely adopted by educationalists, especially in health and social care (Kolb 1984, Kolb et al 2000). A further contribution to this field of work was the construction of a theoretical framework and model around conversational learning which built upon Kolb's earlier work (Baker et al 2002). Kolb believed that his theory, model and cycle of learning could strengthen the critical links between 'education, work and personal development' in such a way as to facilitate individuals to achieve 'their full potential as citizens, family members and human beings' (Kolb 1984 pg. 4).

writings have drawn adverse comment. In particular, that in the construction of his theory Kolb was 'selective' in his interpretation of Lewin and Piaget's theories and Dewey's concepts of experience and reflective thought, thus producing a model which was essentially flawed (Miettinen 2000). Kolb's theoretical position and cycle of learning were perceived as positivist in nature and, located as they were within the cognitive psychology tradition, inappropriate for professional management education (Holman et al 1997, Gold and Holman 2001). Miettinen (2000) also criticised Kolb's failure to sufficiently recognise (if at all) the interaction by an individual with the environment and others and their influence on the learning cycle. Regardless of this censure, Kolb's theory and cycle of experiential learning remain extremely influential in adult education.

Reflection is presumed to play a major role in experiential learning, as illustrated by Kolb's cycle of learning, in which 'reflective observation' is identified as essential to the learning process (Moon 1999). Knowing and reflecting-in-action are central tenets of Schon's theories of learning, alongside his concern to identify and develop what he terms 'professional artistry' in individuals. The latter refers to 'the kinds of competence practitioners sometimes display in unique, uncertain and conflicted situations of practice' (Schon 1987 pg. 22). Like Kolb, he drew upon the work of Dewey (1974) and of Polanyi (1967). He gave primacy to the notion of the practicum and the role of tacit knowledge when advancing his 'new design for teaching and learning in the professions' and idea of 'theory in use' (Arygris and Schon 1974, Schon 1987). Unashamedly constructionist in his view of reality, he proposed that individuals utilise theories generated from values, beliefs, education, strategies and experiences in the arena of professional practice. By reflecting-in-action and subsequently describing the actions involved, there is the possibility of converting theories-in-use to knowledge-in-action (Schon 1987 pg. 26). To Schon, knowing and doing were inseparable, and reflection key to the acquisition of professional artistry (Schon 1983, 1987). Schon was not alone in signifying the role played by reflection in 'unlocking' knowledge and facilitating deep learning. The concept of reflection and its integration into different theories

learning (Mezirow 1991, Boud et al 1993, Moon 1999, Beard and Wilson 2002).

Schon's work has also not been without its critics. The clarity of his conceptual thinking has been questioned by writers such as Eraut (1995) and Clegg (1999). Inconsistencies between his theories and their implementation by Schon himself have been heavily censured by Greenwood (1993), who also lamented what she considered to be a failure to recognise in his work reflection-before, as well as, reflection-in and on-action. In addition, the rather simplistic nature of Schon's theory and the linear form of his model have both been seen as questionable (Brockbank and McGill 1998). Reflection-in and on-action is said to involve individuals in a variety of complex processes and negotiations, yet Schon's work fails to make reference to this phenomena (Clegg et al 2002). Schon's lack of acknowledgment of the influence of peers and 'the community of others' has also been criticised (Hughes 2009). Furthermore, he has been taken to task for not making explicit the role of the emotions, or 'the affective', in shaping actions and reflections and ultimately blocking deep learning (Mortiboys 2005). Regardless of these criticisms, Schon's writings retain their position of influence in current work on experiential learning, particularly in adult learning and professional practice (Hughes 2009). Moreover, for a study centred around professional, second or even third generation doctorates which are said to facilitate the co-existence of research and practice in a cyclical relationship (Lester 2004 pg. 758), then Schon's constructionist views continue to be worthy of consideration.

In his text on 'Transformational Dimensions on Adult Learning' Mezirow (1991) sought to redress what he considered to be an 'oversight' in adult learning theory. Namely, a 'failure to recognise' the importance of psycho-cultural assumptions on an individual's acquired frame of reference and on the facilitation of meaning construction and meaning perspective during the learning process (Mezirow 1991 pg. 4). The potential for transformation or emancipation of experiences, perspective and the person, was critical to Mezirow's theoretical stance, and substantiated by his lengthy studies of adult learners (Mezirow 1975, 1981, 1991). He defined perspective transformation as 'the emancipatory

cultural assumptions have come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships, reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience' Mezirow 1981 pg. 6). He likened this transformation to what Freire (1970) termed 'conscientization'. He draws heavily upon the theory of Habermas, in particular the distinctions Habermas makes between the technical, practical and emancipatory domains of learning. For Mezirow, whilst each represents a 'different mode of personal learning and different learning needs', each is 'seminal' in generating an understanding of adult learning and education (Mezirow 1981 pg. 4).

Mezirow's development of a theory of learning, at a time when most research into adult education in America was deemed to be 'a-theoretical', has been both praised and denigrated. He was criticised for an over-reliance upon interactionism and by omitting a coherent theory of social change, was also accused of failing to adequately consider context. Furthermore, Mezirow was considered to have 'selectively' interpreted Habermasian theory and uncritically integrated aspects of Habermas's work into his own thinking, presenting at best 'a fragment of a theory' (Collard and Law 1989).

Despite this criticism, there is little doubt that Mezirow, Schon and Kolb continue to exert an influence on adult and experiential learning, evidenced by their presence in the research and practice literature and by the number of citations they command. It has been suggested that the contribution of Kolb (to which I would add that of Schon and Mezirow) cannot be underestimated. At the very least, they have collectively ensured that the locus of learning control be located with the learner and their experiences rather than left in the hands of the teacher (after Kelly 1997).

This section has not sought to provide an in-depth critique of their writings but rather to explore their ideas and theoretical roots, establish their significance for the project and demonstrate a process of interaction with and interpretation of their texts, which I continued throughout the inquiry.

The review of the literature on experiential learning was aimed not only at establishing what were the key theories associated with the topic, but also at identifying the major issues debated in the literature so far. My search confirmed some of the findings from an earlier review I conducted on experiential and flexible learning in 2000 (Foster and Hargreaves 2000). Namely, that the literature continues to abound with explorations of the conceptual and theoretical basis of experiential learning (Moon 1999). Discussions, particularly in the field of health and social care educational research, which centred on the development and employment of different models of experiential learning and usually incorporate reflection, were also prolific (Johns 1992, Johns 1993, Palmer et al 1993, Boud et al 1993, Coll et al 2003). There were numerous accounts of how experiential learning facilitates theoretical and practice learning, as well as the acquisition of knowledge for practice (Miers 2002, Stephen-Haynes 2004, Kelly et al 2005). In addition, there were reports which related the role played by experiential learning in changing practice (Dick et al 2004). However, little attention appeared to have been paid to the experience of experiential learning, although some writers had, as discussed previously, noted the impact of emotions experienced during the experiential learning process (Brockbank and McGill 1998, Moriboy 2005). Others had explored and advised on 'managing the emotional climate' associated with this type of learning (Beard and Wilson 2002 pg. 118). My review of the evidence validated my decision to explore the *experiences* of experiential learning, but what I now needed to do was to clarify what the literature said about 'experiences'.

Malinen (2000 pg. 55) suggested that experience was a 'vague and slippery term', given a variety of meanings by the main writers on experiential learning and used by them in myriad ways. Malinen attempted to bring some order to the debate around how experience should be conceptualised by constructing a three-way classification of perceptual, first and second order experiences. She went on to subdivide each classification and to produce an account of the alternative properties of each set of experiences. Her efforts provide some structure to the discussions on terminology, but are indicative of the challenges

perceiving experience 'as if it was singular and unlimited by time or place'. He argued that much experience is 'multifaceted' and 'multilayered', almost 'defying analysis as the act of analysis inevitably alters the experience and the learning that flows from it' (Boud et al 1993 pg. 7). In contrast, the term for Kolb held only two meanings, 'one subjective and personal ... the other objective and environmental'. He did go on to acknowledge that the two interpretations 'interpenetrate and interrelate in very complex ways' (Kolb 1984 pg. 35). Schon referred to experience as 'making and doing' (Schon 1983, 1987) but was not explicit as to the nature and form that experience might take. Mezirow used the term as object, subject, verb and metaphor, describing experiences as being the vehicles by which individuals' personal meaning systems are strengthened and transformed (Mezirow 1991 pg. 5). Thus, different interpretations of what constitutes experience are found in the key texts on experiential learning. There is, however, consensus on the importance of experiences to the learning process. Boud et al (1993 pg. 8) suggested that experiences lay not only at the heart of experiential learning, but also at the centre of all adult learning processes. I chose to adopt, a working definition of experiences which reflected a synthesis of the writings of Kolb, Schon and Mezirow, rather than any one particular conceptualisation. For my study the term experiences would entail what was said, done, felt, observed or encountered by the students during the experiential learning process.

There was an expectation that for the purposes of this project, students would tell the stories of their experiences of experiential learning. Polkinghorne (1995 pgs. 6 and 7) distinguishes between narratives and stories. He suggested that narrative is a general expression, signifying 'any prosaic discourse', whilst stories are a more particular and 'special type of discourse production', the exploration of which holds 'significant promise' for qualitative researchers. The telling of stories can preserve the complex interrelationship which may exist between actions, actors, emotions and serendipitous events. Moreover, to 'story' implies invitation, involvement, emotion and disclosure (Brockbank and McGill 1998). The literature showed stories and 'storying' to be noteworthy on several counts. First, there is a synergy between aspects of the theoretical

writers such as McDrury and Alterio (2003) acknowledging the contributions to their work made by theorists such as Schon (1983), Kolb (1984), Boud et al (1993), Entwistle (1996) and Moon (1999). Secondly, whether oral or written, stories can give visibility to our experiences and accommodate diverse perspectives and realities of the same. Thirdly, the experience of storytelling may prove to be as significant to learning as the stories themselves, especially when reflective dialogue is an integral part of the process (Mezirow 1991, Boud et al 1993, McDrury and Alterio 2003). I decided that experiences, therefore, in the form of stories were powerful and did 'need to be told' (Beard and Wilson 2002 pg. 80).

Professional doctorates

Finally, my search of the literature included the body of evidence on professional doctorates, defined in the United Kingdom as programmes of 'advanced study and research which, whilst satisfying the university criteria for the award of a doctorate, (are) designed to meet the specific needs of a professional group external to the university' (UKCGE 2002 pg. 62). The evidence included a number of reports commissioned in the United Kingdom by the UK Council for Graduate Education (1997, 2002, 2005,) and more recently the Higher Education Academy (Park 2007) as part of its sponsorship of a national debate on doctorates, including professional doctorates. Here I found descriptions, discussions and debates relating to their history, conceptual and operational differences, the student body and the challenges they pose to their providers.

The literature argued that professional doctorates are not a new facet of higher education provision. Amongst a number of writers who cited that their origins lay in medieval times were Bourner et al (2001) and Huisman and Naidoo (2006). They noted that from as early as the twelfth century, professional doctorates in theology, law and medicine were offered at universities across Europe, and that it was only in the nineteenth century that the modern Doctor of Philosophy or PhD was introduced, initially in Germany. Provision of PhDs grew, as did their status, and with their emphasis upon research, PhDs gave legitimacy to their

(Hoddell et al 2002). However, from the late 1980s onwards their dominance began to be questioned, with concern being expressed at their perceived narrowness, academic focus and learning methods, all of which were failing to serve well those whose careers and professions lay outside the laboratory and classroom (Lunt 2001). New professional doctorate programmes were subsequently developed in specific professional fields, including education, engineering and business administration, in addition to those offered in more generic areas such as musical arts, work based learning and professional studies (Bourner et al 2001, Scott et al 2004). The inexorable rise of the professional doctorate was not solely due to dissatisfaction with the more traditional award. These second, even third generation doctorates were found in both pre- and post-1992 higher education institutions seeking to establish and expand their research 'mission' (Taylor 2008). The UK Council for Graduate Education survey on professional doctorates in the UK established that twenty eight of the thirty four pre-1992 universities offered at least one such award. Furthermore, sixteen of the twenty prestigious Russell Group higher education institutions had professional doctorates in their portfolios of provision (UKCGE 2005). The universities wished to raise their institutional profiles; enlarge and diversify the markets for their products; strengthen links with external stakeholders; and reach out to the hitherto relatively untapped worlds of industry, commerce, the newly-emerging professions and the public sector (Jamieson and Naidoo 2007, Taylor 2008). There certainly appeared to be an appetite for a more flexible, real-world doctorate for the 'unstable state' (Lester 2004), with demand coming from individuals, organisations and governments alike, seeking to meet the challenges of our 'change society' (Taylor 2008).

Diverse was the term most frequently found in the literature on professional doctorates, be it in relation to their location, audience, focus, content, entry requirements, mode of attendance, assessment methods or outcomes. Many commentators when tracing the history of the award also made comparisons between the 'diversity of doctorates' (Usher 2002) found in higher education institutions in countries as far apart as the UK, Europe, USA and Australia. Across these differing awards, writers distinguished between what they termed

the literature, the first generation of professional doctorates, whilst having a taught component, is dominated by Mode 1 knowledge production, or the pursuit of what is referred to as 'truths accumulated over time ... universal, objective, disciplined, planned, tested and reliable findings' (Gibbons et al 1994 pg. 8). With their emphasis upon the academic, the thesis and the academe, these doctorates are considered to bear the greatest similarity to the PhD (Maxwell and Shanahan 1997). The second generation is said to refer to those professional doctorates which focus on Mode 2 knowledge production. That is, contextualised knowledge production which is 'trans-disciplinary ... carried out in non-hierarchical, heterogeneously organised forms which are essentially transient ... not being institutionalised primarily within university structures' (Gibbons et al 1994 pg. vii). A further characteristic of these types of professional doctorates, with their taught elements, seminar schemes and projects or theses, is that they more uniformly span the academe, the professions and the practicum or workplace. The literature also made reference to a third type of professional doctorate, considered to be more generic and firmly located in the practicum, with this emphasis reflected in the titles of the award, such as Doctorate of Professional Studies or Professional Practice. Mode 2 knowledge production drives this final generation of professional doctorates (Lester 2004).

Gibbons et al's typology of knowledge modes has been used in the literature discussed thus far to successfully facilitate understanding of the different generations of professional doctorates. In the context of learning, knowledge production and professional doctorates, however, other commentators considered Gibbons et al's model, with its emphasis on an 'either or' approach to knowledge production, to be restrictive. They preferred a 'hybrid' or fourfold model which incorporated 'disciplinarity, technical rationality, dispositionality and criticality' (Scott et al 2004 pg. 55). They believed that such an approach better reflected the complexity of knowledge production acted out in a variety of academic and practical settings by professional doctorate students. For the purposes of my study, I found both Scott et al's model and Gibbon's et al's

through my project.

In 2004, Leonard et al claimed that surprisingly little was known about what motivated students to undertake a professional doctorate. In contrast, this review of the literature did uncover evidence which shed light on factors which contribute to the uptake of the award. The 'new knowledge workers' (Tennant 2004), drawn from diverse occupations, were shown to embark on professional doctorates for a number of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. In the case of clinical psychologists, professional progression was cited as significant, whilst the acquisition of a profession-specific doctorate was considered to bring prestige to engineers. For others, a professional doctorate offered the opportunity to consolidate their work experiences and to articulate and organise, possibly for the first time, previously unstructured theories and ideas. Completing the award was also perceived as appropriate to 'round off' a career, or one of its components (Scott et al 2004, Taylor 2008). Professional advancement and 'renewal' were not the only causes found in the literature. Personal fulfilment or 'self-actualisation', particularly for the more mature students, as well as the desire to be seen as a scholarly professional, were also mentioned (Scott et al 2004, Wellington and Sikes 2006).

Scrutinising the evidence revealed that whilst the 'coursework plus thesis' model of assessment, based around a research project still influenced the structure and content of professional doctorates (Scott et al 2004), a plethora of diverse models and methods of learning, teaching and assessment were also described in the literature. These ranged from professional doctorates dominated by taught components which included lectures and seminar schemes, to those comprised predominantly of research activities, with some elements of practice found in doctoral programmes which incorporated a professional qualification in the final award. Assessments varied from coursework, research thesis, short and long project reports, examinations and/or portfolio production (Taylor 2008). The literature also confirmed my professional and personal experience. Namely, that increasingly, methods of learning and assessment more appropriate to the needs of adult learners were

formed an integral part of many professional doctorates (Doncaster and Thorne 2000, Bourner et al 2001, Johnson 2001, Galvin and Carr 2003). Additionally, discussions on professional doctorates included a proposal for a conceptual and operational model, with appropriate learning, teaching and assessment tools, to facilitate not only knowledge production, but also capability and wisdom (Lester 2004). I found this approach to the development of knowledgeable practice at doctoral level resonated with the evidence I had reviewed on experiential learning and was therefore particularly apt for my own study.

A number of other issues emerged during my review of the evidence on professional doctorates relating to subjects such as, professional status of applicants, admission criteria and completion rates (UKCGE 2002, Scott et al 2004, Taylor 2008). However, the literature examined raised some contentious issues relating to the quality of professional doctorate programmes, particularly in comparison with traditional PhD award. Although Park (2007 pg. 35) suggested that this assertion had been 'rarely voiced explicitly', Taylor (2008) presented verbatim reports from Cambridge University in the UK to support this viewpoint. Such criticism was based in part around the assumption that 'more coursework and less research' must automatically reduce the quality of the professional doctorate. Concerns were expressed around the difficulties of conducting appropriate and rigorous assessment of practice and performance at doctoral level in professional fields such as the creative and performing arts (UKCGE 1997). Flexible, work based and individually-negotiated assessments and projects posed challenges to teaching staff, their universities and quality systems which some individuals and institutions were finding difficult to meet (Boud and Tennant 2006). The diversity of professional doctorates was viewed as confusing and likely to contribute to the perception that they were inferior awards (Taylor 2008).

I found, therefore, that commentaries and research on professional doctorates to date had focused on their origins, characteristics and distribution across subject areas and had drawn comparisons between professional doctorates, PhDs and other higher level awards. The literature had, moreover, raised issues

doctorate students? There were accounts around their motivation and the challenges they faced as researchers in the workplace, undertaking 'a doctorate in a tight compartment' (Scott et al 2004, Wellington and Sikes 2006, Walsh 2007). Case studies relating to the development of specific professional doctorates and students' journeys, stressed the role played by innovative models of academic supervision and robust peer support in aiding candidates' progression (Galvin and Carr 2003, Leonard et al 2004). However, scrutiny of the literature so far, suggested that, as with research into experiential literature, nothing had been done to capture the stories of professional doctorate students, especially in relation to their experiences of experiential learning. If, as Schon (1987) implied, experiential learning facilitates the development of professional artistry, then an inquiry into how individuals, required at award to demonstrate the potential to 'drive transformational processes' in their 'professional context and circles' (SHU 2003 pg. 12), story their experiences of experiential learning was expedient and apt.

Conclusion

In undertaking this review of the literature, I set out to identify from the existing body of evidence, key sources to justify and inform my proposed investigation into how professional doctorate students story their experiences into experiential learning. I initially explored and established that there was a fundamental association made in the literature between learning, knowledge creation and experiential learning. Scrutiny of the concept, theories and models of experiential learning confirmed the enduring importance of drawing upon writers such as Kolb, Schon and Mezirow for the purposes of my study. Similarly, a critical exploration of the evidence on experiences, stories and experiential learning determined the validity of examining the experience of experiential learning. Furthermore, synthesis of this section of the literature gave me a working definition of experiences which I used in the later stages of my study. It also verified that in this context 'storying' was a potentially powerful tool and should be done. Finally, I reviewed the increasing body of evidence on professional doctorates. This provided me with a critical history of the award, as well as insight into topics which have emerged thus far, relating to their

confirmed to me that whilst experiential learning was important in professional doctorate programmes, little had been done to explore this aspect of students' studies. Given the paucity of evidence in the literature, it was apparent that a study of professional doctorate students' experiences of experiential learning was justified.

However, the overall aim of the literature review had been to 'release the research imagination'. Had that objective been achieved? According to Wright Mills (1978) and Hart (1998) this is partly dependent upon gaining a critical understanding of the theoretical underpinning and intellectual context of the subject areas. I found this aspect of the review both challenging yet deeply satisfying, confirming my preferred learning status of theorist-reflector. I also felt an intuitive accord with the ideas, concepts and importantly the language I encountered. This stirred and stretched my research imagination and prepared me for the development of my project's methodology which is described in Chapter Two of this report.

Introduction

It has been stated that doctoral candidates should 'demonstrate the ability to identify areas of uncertainty and ambiguity at the forefront of professional practice that are accessible to in-depth research activity' (SHU 2003 pg. 46). Furthermore, that qualifications at doctoral level should only be awarded to those able to 'conceptualise, design and implement a project' which generates 'new knowledge, applications or understanding' (QAA 2008). Having undertaken a review of the literature to establish the validity of my doctoral project, later verified by the formal approval processes of my awarding university, I went on to prepare and execute my project plan. This chapter charts its progress. It begins with a justification of the philosophical and methodological landscape chosen for this inquiry. The chapter then goes on to discuss the participants and their participation in the project, as well as the methods of data collection and analysis which were used. Particular consideration is given to the role played by reflexivity. The approaches employed to assure rigour, trustworthiness and appropriate governance of the research, in addition to those utilised to gain ethical approval, are also examined. The chapter concludes with a summary of, and reflection upon the outcomes of the implementation of these parts of my project plan.

A philosophical and methodological landscape for a work based inquiry

All research activity requires the exercise of careful judgement on the part of the researcher (Hammersley 1995). This includes selecting an appropriate philosophical and methodological approach, in addition to identifying complementary methods of data collection and analysis. I therefore sought out a research paradigm which, in ontological and epistemological terms, was in accord with the aims and outcomes of my research project. That is, a synergistic paradigm which would allow me to conceptualise, design and complete an inquiry into professional doctorate students' stories of experiential learning. At this stage of the project's development I anticipated that the main outcome of my study would be a discourse of experiential learning, based

into this important form of adult learning.

Various paradigms or orthodoxies, that is, authoritative and accepted ways of knowing, have directed scientific research or inquiry over the centuries. According to Kuhn (1970) a paradigm is a constellation or cluster of values, beliefs and cognitions or ways of thinking concerned not only with the nature of truth and knowledge but also with the 'rules of order and techniques of procedures shared by a given scientific community', all of which 'enculture' members of the same community (Hughes and Sharrock 1990 pgs. 81-82). A paradigm influences the choice, selection and design of research questions, methodologies and methods. It will also shape the interpretation and distribution of data (Bryman 1988). I was faced with a choice between two dominant paradigms or orthodoxies: the positivist orthodoxy or 'modernist programme', which owes its allegiance to rationalism and empiricism or the qualitative orthodoxy, which encompasses a number of traditions, including postmodernism (Hughes 1980, Bryman 1988, Polkinghorne in Kvale ed. 1992). Philosophically and methodologically, I decided to adopt, for my study, a generalised qualitative approach, which drew upon the key characteristics of the qualitative orthodoxy and postmodern thought. There follows a justification for my choice of approach.

The qualitative orthodoxy has been defined as 'an approach to the study of the social world which seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of their groups from the point of those being studied' (Bryman 1988 pg. 46). It is a tradition owing its genesis to anthropological studies conducted during the early decades of the twentieth century. It came into greater prominence during the 1960's, following the collapse of 'the positivist consensus' (Hammersley 1995). Until that time, researching scientific and social life had been dominated by the positivist orthodoxy, where rational, reasonable science alone was perceived as providing objective truth and knowledge. For centuries, positivism had been the accepted and authorised way of knowing. Now, however, it saw its ontological and epistemological foundations, methodological approach and methods under increased attack from those within and those without the positivist orthodoxy.

the 'paradigm wars' (Gaze 1989). Amongst those engaged in this debate was a growing body of social scientists and qualitative researchers. They rejected the positivist orthodoxy, preferring instead alternative conceptualisations of truth, knowledge and reality, perceived by them as more appropriate to what they termed the post-modern era (Guba 1990, Kvale 1996). They had lost faith in positivism and the possibility that its 'modernist program' of applying scientific laws in an ordered universe, could deliver benefits to human kind (Polkinghorne in Kvale ed. 1992). They sought instead, post-modern theory that had 'cultural modernism' as its principal concern (Kumar 1995 pg. 103).

The qualitative orthodoxy encompasses not one but a number of significant and competing traditions. They include ethnography, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, verstehen, naturalism, grounded theory, feminism and post-structuralism to name but a few (Cresswell 1998). These traditions are derived from the same ontological and epistemological basis, forged out of the belief that reality and knowledge are not the result of external observation. Rather, they are formed from 'dialogues' with human beings, which capture 'their own conceptions of their own lived world' (Kvale 1996 pg. 11). Events, actions, norms and values are therefore viewed from the perspective of the individual. Context is mapped out and detailed descriptions of social settings provided, in order to do justice to the environment in which observations and interviews occur. Meanings and interpretation of behaviour are set within a holistic context, with cognitive maps developed and drawn in order to recognise the longitudinal, processional, inter-locking and inter-connected nature of social life. Amidst the milieu of the qualitative orthodoxy is found the term postmodern. Postmodern themes emerged in the literature from the 1950's onwards, with key writers such as Lyotard, Foucault, Baudrillard, Derrida and Rorty contributing to thinking on various themes, including architecture, literature, knowledge, power, language, and the social sciences. 'Postmodern' as an expression is viewed as ambiguous according to Kvale (1992), who preferred to distinguish between postmodernity or a postmodern age, postmodernism or a cultural expression of the postmodern age, and, postmodern thought or discourse (Kvale 1992 pg. 2). I found these distinctions helpful, and adopted his concept of postmodern

'outrageously eclectic' (Kumar 1995 pg. 103), accepting, even sanctifying the diverse (Polkinghorne 1992) Themes celebrating meaning, life-world, conversations, dialogue, narrative and, significantly, experiences run throughout (Kvale 1996).

The qualitative orthodoxy attracts sharp criticism. Of concern is the perceived neglect, even absence of any theory or theoretical debate within its traditions. Giorgi (1994 pg. 190) saw the need for much greater theoretical clarity and consistency in qualitative research, as well as reflexivity. Criticism of the qualitative orthodoxy is not confined to epistemological issues: problems associated with the bias of the researcher and questions surrounding the validity and generalizability of findings obtained using qualitative research methods have attracted considerable attention (Flick 1998), as have problems of interpretation of data. Furthermore, the claim made by qualitative researchers to be able to enter and capture the 'world view' of their subjects has been questioned (Bryman 1988, Giorgi 1994). However, according to Traynor (1999 pg. 21) the qualitative orthodoxy in general, and postmodern thought in particular, have 'won the day', with many of their insights now forming part of the parlance and common currency of social theory and literary criticism. The Age of Reason has been replaced by the Age of Postmodernity and the Architecture of Cultural Landscapes (after Kvale 1992). For me, there was a synergy between the 'swampy, messy lowlands' of the qualitative orthodoxy, postmodern thought and the concept, practice and experience of experiential learning, as discussed in Chapter One. They share a common language and architecture and it is this close correlation which confirmed for me that a qualitative approach, using postmodern thought and theory was most appropriate for my project.

A work based inquiry

As I set out to design and undertake my project, I was mindful of two further maxims. First, that as a candidate undertaking research as part of a professional doctorate, I was required to conduct a work based inquiry with a philosophical approach and field of study, related to my professional discipline

incorporating postmodern thought into my project's philosophy and methodology, as a researcher, I was advised to rethink, indeed even 'recast', the process of inquiry itself (Traynor 1999 pg. 21).

What then of inquiry? How had it been configured to date? Was there a need for me to recast the process of *my* work based inquiry? During the early stages of my doctoral studies, a search of the literature had yielded few if any answers to the first two questions. Subsequently, I drew together my ideas on inquiry from my reading on postmodern thought, the psychology of practice and action research to provide me with an appropriate epistemology and a way forward. I postulated that a work based inquiry was 'concerned with pursuing a way of knowing and developing and enhancing a body of knowledge for work, which requires the use of reflection and review by its participants.' Furthermore, I suggested that a work based inquiry should value and integrate experiences of the everyday into knowledge and theory generation and development for use within the community of work (Foster 2005).

Using Kvale's terminology I argued that those researching or inquiring into the world of work, needed to engage with an alternative landscape and architecture. I decided that the researcher or inquirer needs to develop and use an epistemology which is characterised by the belief that there is no firm ground upon which truth or knowledge statements can be situated. Furthermore the researcher must remember: that a body of knowledge is not a single, integrated affair, but rather it consists of fragmented, disparate elements and events; that human knowledge is constructed; that knowledge statements may be tested and judged by their pragmatic usefulness rather than against an approved set of methodological rules (after Polkinghorne 1992 pg. 147). Finally, in a work based inquiry the researcher will be required to draw upon bodies of knowledge and diverse ways of knowing which are 'relational, reflective and representational' (Reason and Bradbury 2005). In summary, a work based inquiry in a postmodern world, should seek to reveal and explore the contextualisation of beliefs, as well as the diversity of truths held and utilised by individuals within their world of work. A work based inquiry should be located within the

knowledge generated within that locality which is shared across the community of work and workers.

I went on to deliberate that research methods for a work based inquiry should be appropriate for the work setting and topic under review, allowing for 'a family of approaches', be participatory and facilitate the 'conscientization' of the research subjects (Freire 1970, Reason 2001). I looked to the postmodernists themselves to gain a better understanding as to what this might mean for work based inquiries in general and my project in particular. Lyotard (1979) writing in what has been described as the 'locus classicus' of postmodern debate spoke of the primacy given by postmodernists to narrative knowledge. Whilst he acknowledged that both modernists and postmodernists play Wittgenstein's 'language games' (Lyotard 1979), he claimed that narrative knowledge 'does not give priority to the question of its own legitimation'. Rather 'it certifies itself in the pragmatics of its own transmission without having recourse to argumentation and proof' (Lyotard 1979 pg. 27). Thus, for postmodern thinkers narratives, discourse and stories have intrinsic value. I concluded that for work based inquiries in general as well as my research into experiential learning in particular, that significance and worth should be given to narrative, discourse, stories and experiences.

Participants and participating in the inquiry

Having explored and justified a philosophical and methodological approach for my work based inquiry into how professional doctorate students story their experiences of experiential learning, I went on to consider in greater detail who I should approach to participate in my project. After consultation with my Director of Studies, I decided to draw participants for my inquiry from the second and third cohort of students undertaking a Doctorate in Professional Studies (Health and Social Care) at a large post-1992 university. Individuals studying for this third generation professional doctorate award held positions of seniority and responsibility within the organisations and professions which they represented. All were employed in the field of health and social care and included those working within medicine, nursing, social services, biomedical sciences and

of professional doctoral learning, the students undertook a module of study which required them to complete a critical reflection and review of their previous learning and professional experience. The learning outcomes and assessment criteria explicitly stated that in order to pass the module, students were to: analyse key experiences; identify and explore personal choices, contextual factors and organisational imperatives, all of which may have impacted upon their personal, scholarly and professional learning and development. That is, the expectation was that the students would experience experiential learning. I sought to recruit a purposive sample of convenience, totalling four to six students in number which was appropriate for qualitative research of this nature and should generate a sufficiency of rich data (Cresswell 1998). At the same time, a small sample group would, I reasoned, avoid the danger of generating such a 'mountain' of data that detail cannot emerge (Potter and Wetherell 1987).

The decision concerning the participants had been made. I now had to turn my attention to 'accessing the field'. Gaining access to the participants within the 'closed' setting of the university was 'overtly' achieved in a number of ways (Silverman 2000). First, I obtained the approval of the university for my proposed project, by the process of Independent Scientific Review and scrutiny of my proposed project by the Research Governance and Ethics Committee of the Faculty. The latter proved to be a rather lengthy procedure, as I was the first member of staff undertaking the newly-validated Doctorate in Professional Studies to seek their approval. I was greatly helped by both my Director of Studies and the Deputy Dean of the Faculty, who as my line-manager and work-place supporter had the responsibility of facilitating 'navigation' through the University as necessary. Secondly, I gained permission to approach the students from the professional doctorate's programme leader. Thirdly, with the agreement of their programme leader, I gave a short presentation to second and third cohort of students undertaking the Doctorate in Professional Studies, during which I briefly outlined my proposed inquiry, and gave them an information sheet relating to the study (please see Appendix 1 for a copy of the Information Sheet). The latter had been approved by the Faculty's Research

Seven students subsequently communicated with me by telephone and e-mail correspondence, indicating that they wished to participate in my project. Throughout this process I was mindful that, in order to gain physical and social access to the field, I must to 'get in' and 'get on' with the participants and the organisation (Cassell 1988).

The project plan submitted to the university for approval had required me to not only provide information about the participants, but also to detail the 'architecture' of my intended inquiry methods. The following sections discuss in depth the methods of data collection and analysis which I utilised for the purposes of my work based project.

Methods of data collection

Any work based inquiry should be framed by an appropriate ontology and epistemology, which should also shape the choice of methods of data collection used by the researcher. I had ascertained from my earlier examination of the literature that within the qualitative orthodoxy, the preferred methods of data collection reflect postmodern ways of knowing. They include participant observation, the use of interviews, focus groups, the life history method and scrutiny of documentary evidence. Whilst participant observation is the method of data collection most frequently referred to, interviews are also highly favoured and they were selected as my data collection method of choice (Bryman 1988, Denzin and Lincoln 1994).

Four main types of interview are discussed within the literature, including structured, semi-structured, unstructured and group interviews (May 1997). For the purposes of this work based inquiry, I decided that unstructured interviews were most appropriate. The unstructured, qualitative interview has the potential to facilitate openness, rapport, exploration, co-operation and participation between the two participants (May 1997 pg. 119). I deemed this necessary if I was to elicit personal stories of their experiences of learning from the professional doctorate students. Furthermore, I drafted an interview schedule which consisted of four questions or triggers which were descriptive and

interview. The questions emerged from my review of the literature. They centred on stories, experiences, experiential learning and the students' professional doctorate studies and were constructed as follows:

Question/trigger 1:

Tell me about yourself

Question/trigger 2:

Tell me about your course

Question/trigger 3:

Tell me about your experiences of the first module

Question/trigger 4:

Tell me about your experiences of experiential learning

(Please see Appendix 2 for a full copy of the interview schedule). It was my intention that my choice of interview type and question design would promote depth of dialogue and increase my understanding of the students' perspective, by allowing the interviewees to converse about topics using 'their own terms of reference' (May 1997 pg. 112). Whilst this has been construed as encouraging 'rambling' in those interviewed (Bryman 1988), I preferred to consider this could be a positive rather than a negative device which ensures that the participants' own stories and discourse of their lived worlds are articulated and told

I was also attracted by Kvale's writing on interviews, which suggests that the qualitative research interview should literally be 'an InterView'. That is, 'an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest' (Kvale 1996 pg. 2). He uses two contrasting metaphors to illuminate

researcher during the qualitative research interview. He likens it to that of miner or traveller. When assuming the part of miner, the researcher is required to strip away surface layers and dig out buried 'nuggets' of data from the participant, be they objective facts or essential meanings. Conversely, the research interviewer as traveller is depicted by Kvale as wandering through an often unknown landscape, conversing and listening to the stories of others as they go on their way. It is a journey which can be transformational for the both traveller and those they encounter. I was strongly attracted to the metaphor of traveller and adopted it for the purposes of the interviews for my work based inquiry (Kvale 1996). As a concept it resonated with my understanding of postmodern social research, suggesting as it does that by considering conversations, stories, language, context and relationships, the qualitative interview can act as a 'construction site' for knowledge. In addition, the potential for perceptual and meaning transformation and personal emancipation for the traveller and the participant was in accord with my reading of Mezirow's work, outlined earlier in this report.

Prior to interviewing the seven students who had agreed to participate in my project, I piloted the interview schedule, with an ex-colleague. She had acted as personal mentor to me throughout much of my academic career and I valued her wisdom and experience. As an educationalist, with an international reputation for scholarly activity in reflection and work based learning, she had undertaken a professional doctorate in education in 2000 and was the ideal critical friend. I took care to frame my role during the interview as that of traveller, listening to her rather than intervening as she told her story. We both learnt from the experience. My friend related for the first time her feelings of trepidation about elements of her doctoral journey. She gave me valuable feedback, approving of my conduct of the interview and the four trigger questions used (please see Appendix 2 for a copy of the interview schedule). She expressed surprise that for one normally rather garrulous, I had been able to adopt a more passive role throughout the interview. Soon after this pilot interview I arranged to meet with the participants of the project at dates, times and locations convenient for them. With the exception of one interview which, at

situated in a private meeting room at the University. At the commencement of each interview, I re-iterated to the participant the purposes of the project using the Information Sheet, previously discussed, and proceeded to obtain their informed consent using the principles and documentation considered later in this chapter. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim by an experienced transcriber who I employed. The format and notations used in the transcriptions were simple in form and detail and appropriate for discourse analysis (Wiggins and Riley 2010). I found the interviews themselves a fascinating and relatively easy experience. Reading the transcripts, I noted that at times I journeyed with greater confidence than at others, with some of my interjections appearing occasionally hesitant and muddled.

The use of unstructured interviews was not my only form of data collection. I drew upon the literature on experiential learning and professional doctorates throughout the project, judging it to be 'data in use' (Wolcott 1994 pg. 4). I had already established a dialogue with the evidence at the conception of the inquiry. This was similar to that of the hermeneutic cycle of understanding, involving interaction and interpretation by the researcher with the texts (Hughes and Sharrock 1990). I continued to use this 'data' as my inquiry progressed, particularly as I conducted, analysed and reflected on the interview process and the stories generated therein.

Methods of data analysis

Wolcott (1994) advises that the qualitative research interviewer should give early and careful thought as to how they propose to analyse, or rather describe, analyse *and* interpret the data (Wolcott 1994). He suggests that categorising analysis in these three ways will best facilitate the transformation of 'unruly data' into an 'authoritative account' (Wolcott 1994 pg. 10). I was aware from the literature that the tools available for the description, analysis and interpretation of interview data were both quantitative and qualitative. They included: coding data as described by Strauss (1988), using grounded theory methods; indexing material in the ethnographic tradition (May 1997); using electronic packages

analysis. In the case of selection of data analysis method, the literature cautions against a choice of convenience or ease. Rather, the researcher is urged to seek an approach in accord with their project and its overarching philosophy, as was the case with the collection of data (Wolcott 1994, May 1997). I chose to use discourse analysis and ideas drawn from the writings of Michel Foucault to inform my analysis; a qualitative approach, framed in part by a postmodern thinker, and in harmony with my ideas on work based inquiry.

Discourse

Discourse itself is a term with a myriad of 'significations' (Mills 2004 pg. 1) and as Potter and Wetherell (1987 pg. 6) suggest, I found a 'panoply' of perspectives on discourse in the literature. Potter and Wetherell themselves adopted a broad definition of discourse, based on the work of Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), and described discourse as 'all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written text of all kinds' (Potter and Wetherell 1987 pg. 7). Traynor (1999), drawing on the work of Parker (1992), suggested that discourse is 'realised in texts, it is about objects, it contains subjects, it refers to other discourses, it is a coherent system of meanings, it reflects its own way of speaking, and is historically located'. Burr used similar language, but went further, defining discourse as including 'a systematic, coherent set of images, metaphors and so on that construct an object in a particular way' (Burr 1995 pg. 184). I found these writers' distinctions helpful, highlighting as they did the spoken and written word as the subject and object of discourse. Also, I was struck by Burr's inclusion of 'images and metaphors', which resonated with my professional and personal self. I therefore decided to adopt and adapt these particular conceptualisations for my project, with discourse as both subject and object of the inquiry. The subjects of my study were the written texts I reviewed, as well as the spoken stories of the students, whilst its objects were the metaphors and discourses which emerged out of my analysis. Such 'significations' touch not only on some of the general and theoretical meanings of discourse alluded to by Mills (2004), they also direct the reader to philosophical interpretations of the term, including those found within the work of Foucault.

on knowledge and power as part my undergraduate dissertation (Foucault in Gordon ed. 1980). At this time, I was also introduced to his texts on language and discourse (Foucault 1972, Foucault 1977). Foucault admitted to using the term discourse in a number of ways, 'treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualised group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements' (Foucault 1972 pg. 80). He thought of discourse as 'a body of knowledge' with the capacity to reveal the relationship between that same body of knowledge and the disciplinary practices of institutions and personnel. Foucault believed the relationship to be subject to social, political and historical conditions (Foucault 1972, Foucault 1978). His concern was both with what was spoken, as well as with what was left unsaid and why. According to Mills, it was this focus upon 'constraint', for whatever reason, which makes his ideas on discourse and discourse analysis 'so insightful' (Mills 2004 pg. 72). Foucault used a number of discursive devices to illustrate his thinking, which I found helpful in visualising as well as articulating his theories. They included the notion of 'assemblages' or 'dispositifs'. That is, multi-linear ensembles representing his analyses of particular 'social apparatus'. He traced lines of power, knowledge and subjectivity within these 'agencements', paying attention to their spatial distribution and location in any particular discourse; lines which to him represented both the past and the present or 'new' (Foucault 1972, Deleuze 1992). Examples of his use of these ideas on discourse analysis are found in his works on madness, criminality, sexuality and medical practice (Foucault 1967, Foucault 1973, Foucault 1977, Foucault 1979).

It could be argued that Foucault's approach to discourse and discourse analysis had little place to play in a project which centred on the stories and experiences of individuals, accepting that his focus appeared to be with the 'grand' themes and institutions of society. However, Foucault himself argued that 'one should read everything, study everything' (Foucault 1976 in Macey 1993 pg. 130) and amongst the two hundred items that comprised his bibliography and archive for 'The Birth of the Clinic' (Foucault 1973) were to be found accounts and narratives of the 'ordinary' in addition to texts on philosophy and economics, as

also attributed the maxim that 'everything is political' and has context. I felt therefore that his ideas as a postmodern thinker were in keeping with much of what I had already read on experiential learning, given that his work has the potential to help us see and unpick from stories the fabric of our personal and professional lives. This allows us to apprehend, comprehend and articulate how knowledge and experiences have shaped our actions and selves. Furthermore, if, as suggested by Hargreaves (2004) there is a danger that the stories told by professionals often seek to legitimise, validate, condemn or redeem themselves and their actions, I felt there was virtue in analysing the students' histories in a manner which puts value on the something other that was said and in using Foucault's work as part of my 'little tool kit', as he suggests, rather than utilising it in its entirety (Foucault in Morris and Patton 1979 pg. 115).

Discourse analysis

But what of discourse analysis? How was I actually going to undertake the analysis? Again, I searched the literature, discovering yet more definitions of discourse and discourse analysis in my search for an analytical approach to complement my conceptualisation of discourse. I knew what I did not want to do: that is, I did not wish to adopt 'action' approaches which focus on discursive practices, such as electronic 'sorting' methods, used in sociolinguistic and critical discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell 1995, Willig 1999, Wetherell et al 2001). Rather, I wanted to use an 'interpretative' approach aligned to postmodern thinking, including that of Foucault, which would allow me to centre my analysis on the discursive resources which the students' drew upon. This would, I thought, allow me to see the students' stories as 'constitutive of experience rather than representational or reflective' (Willig 1999 pg. 2). I was also reminded that 'the analysis of discourse is more akin to riding a bicycle than baking a cake. That is, the researcher must keep on trying until they acquire the skill, there being no recipe or manual available for them to follow' (Potter and Wetherell (1987 pg. 168). I was encouraged because this advice concurred with the suggestion made by Kendall and Wickham (1999) that there is 'no such thing as a Foucauldian method' of discourse analysis. They proposed that the researcher should avail themselves of 'the spirit' of his

should immerse themselves in the data and make use of 'craft skills and tacit knowledge' during the analysis (Potter and Wetherell 1987 pg. 175). Finally, I was greatly helped by Wolcott's somewhat prosaic, but very useful list of strategies to use when analysing qualitative data in general. His suggestions ranged from 'highlight your findings' to 'propose a redesign for your study' (Wolcott 1994 pgs. 29-35). He also advises the researcher to 'compare with another case' and this I did, looking at a wide range of examples drawn from different areas, such as management, applied psychology, radiography and urban policy, but all using discourse analysis and Foucault's writings (Traynor 1999, Gillies 1999, Boyes 2004, Jacobs 2006, Wiggins and Riley 2010). These case studies did not provide me with any one definitive method of discourse analysis, but they did encourage me to believe that, thus far, my thinking on analysis appeared to be justified. Armed with my 'little tool kit' (including the advice on discourse analysis outlined above, Foucault's writing on discourse and Wolcott's strategies) and with some trepidation, I set off to analyse my data; to make transparent and to 'turn to language', what was different, shared and consistent (or not) in professional doctorate students' stories of their experiences of experiential learning (Traynor 1999).

Taking each transcript, I did indeed immerse myself in the students' stories, reading them over and over again, as I looked for different messages and 'discourses in contention' within the texts. I consulted the literature as my 'data in use' to assist this process and to fire my research imagination again. During this stage of the analysis, images and metaphors tumbled into my mind. Initially, I had been frightened of the data but as the messages and discursive constructions began to emerge and I shared them with my Director of Studies, I felt a growing sense of excitement. My findings from the analysis are explored in the later chapters of this report.

Reflexivity

Finally, reflexivity played a significant role in my analysis of the data, as it did throughout the project. As an educationalist, my longstanding use of reflection with learners had taught me the worth of purposeful application of this form of

(Moon 1999). I knew that reflection could avail me in the capture and harnessing of tacit knowledge (Schon 1983), I anticipated therefore that it would prove helpful to me as I analysed my data. I also knew that a number of writers recommended reflexivity be utilised as a strategy to facilitate discourse analysis; to remind the researcher that their 'accounts of how people's language use (or discourse) is constructed are themselves constructions' (Potter and Wetherell 1987 pg. 182); and, that no story is privileged. I used the process of reflexivity or the conduct of 'detachment, internal dialogue and intensive scrutiny' of 'what I knew' and 'how I knew it' to assist in the analysis of the students' stories (after Hertz 1997 pgs. vii and viii). In addition, I used reflexivity to assure the rigour and trustworthiness of my method and findings, as will be seen in the final section of this chapter.

Assuring rigour, trustworthiness, governance and ethical approval of the project

Rigour and trustworthiness

The literature told me that all researchers, regardless of their philosophical and methodological stance, need to attend to issues relating to the rigour and trustworthiness of their research. Quantitative researchers find virtue in what they perceive as the potential of the positivist paradigm to 'deliver' on reliable, valid and generalisable research findings. Meanwhile, critics of qualitative research are sceptical as to whether rigour and trustworthiness in terms of reliability, validity and generalisability can be achieved (Cresswell 1998). This criticism continues, despite the counter-arguments made by postmodern thinkers that all research activity is fashioned 'by the social relations of the production of knowledge' (Kemeny 1988 pg. 205). The way forward for my project was first, to assume a 'subtle realism' as to what I could or could not achieve in relation to the reliability and validity of my results (Hammersley 1992). Secondly, I took the advice of Kvale (1996) and avoided adopting conceptualisations of rigour and trustworthiness derived from empiricism. I chose instead an approach which perceived validity and reliability as a process of reflexive accounting or understanding. I established a reflective relationship,

the process of making sense of the data to ensure the rigour and trustworthiness of the research findings and report (Wolcott 1994, Kvale 1996). Thirdly, I used the principle of reflexive accounting with my Director of Studies and supervisory team to 'check out' the trustworthiness of my analysis and conclusions (Wolcott 1994). Fourthly, because I was conducting unstructured interviews, I gave consideration to their setting, to ensure that as interviewer and researcher I acted sensitively at all times, documenting, recording and transcribing the interview process in full (Kvale 1996).

Research governance and ethics

Research in this country has increasingly been subject to ethical codes and guidelines as political and professional bodies have sought to assure good governance of research and the research process (Gilbert 1993). This has been particularly apparent in the arena of health care research. In 2003 and in response to the Department of Health's research governance requirements, the NHS introduced a new system for the registration, authorisation and independent scientific review of all projects requiring NHS ethical approval. Higher education institutions adjusted their own procedures for review, governance and ethical approval of health-related research projects to ensure that they and their researchers adhered to the new arrangements. This was the case for my awarding university. Whilst some of my participants were employees of the NHS, I was not required to seek approval from the Multi Site and Local Research Ethics Committees of the NHS. Instead I had to submit documentation containing details of my proposed project to the Research Governance and Ethics Committee of my Faculty for independent scientific review and scrutiny before I could proceed into the research phase of my professional doctoral programme (as described earlier in this chapter). In addition, I had to defend my proposal via an oral presentation, to an examining panel and audience whose membership went beyond my supervisory team and Faculty. I was successful in both these aspects of governance and was relieved and delighted when the Research Degrees Committee of the university approved my proposal with no conditions.

time and I was no exception. The principles have been described as: the principle of respect, recognition and tolerance for persons and their difference; the principle of promoting the caring of others; the principle of expanding equalities, fairness and justice; the principle of enlarging spheres of autonomy, freedoms and choice; the principle of minimising harm (Plummer 2001 pg. 228). In addition, researchers' working with human subjects must ensure that they acquire the informed consent of their participants, assure confidentiality and take into consideration of what Kvale (1996 pg. 116) terms 'the consequences'. Meeting these ethical principles and requirements would necessitate me acting responsibly, sensitively and with integrity throughout the inquiry.

According to Silverman (2000 pg. 201), informed consent includes giving relevant information on the project to individuals to facilitate their decision to participate or not in research activity. The researcher must also ensure that participants understand the information, participate on a voluntary basis, and give their written consent, or in the case of participants not deemed 'competent', that consent is gained by proxy. The information given to potential participants should detail the purpose of the study, the main features of its design, as well as the possible risks and benefits of participating in the study (Kvale 1996). As intimated earlier, I obtained the students' informed consent using an information sheet and consent form approved by the university, immediately prior to commencement of the interview (please see Appendix 3 for a copy of the consent form). The information sheet and consent form confirmed that participants' confidentiality would be maintained at all times and that I would not disclose either their identity or personal details. Confidentiality was of particular importance in an inquiry which required participants to share their stories and experiences, stories which touched upon emotions and feelings of a very private nature. Data collected during the course of the project was stored in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998) with participants' privacy assured by changing their identifying features and using gender-neutral pseudonyms in the reporting of interviews.

research. Bryman (1988) warns the insider researcher of the potential for them being asked by different groups within the organisation to act as informer or deployed as a resource by one faction against another. In addition, he contends that the researcher may be inappropriately identified with the management or hierarchy of the organisation to the detriment of the integrity of their research. As a long standing member of staff of the university which was hosting the participants of my research, I was very conscious of these warnings as well as the possibility that during the 'ramblings' of the unstructured interviews some untoward practices by organisations or others may be revealed. I followed Bryman's suggestions and explained clearly and in full to the participants and all other stakeholders, the purpose and nature of the inquiry from the very start of the project, as well as my role within it. I knew that if necessary I could call upon the support of my Director of Studies and work-place supporter to help and support me, but no issues arose. There was a further aspect to address as an insider researcher on this particular inquiry. I was researching aspects of being a professional doctorate student which I had already experienced myself. The reliability, validity and potential bias of my findings and conclusions could therefore be questioned (Silverman 2000). However, the qualitative researcher in general and the inside researcher in particular will find it difficult if not impossible to exclude their own story, biography and 'lived world' from their writing and research (Wolcott 1994 pg. 338). I recognised that I would need to continue to explicitly acknowledge these shared experiences, using them to serve as 'a reality check' alongside reflection for the remainder of the project and writing of this report.

Conclusion

This chapter has told the unfolding story of my doctoral project as it relates to the adoption of a generalised qualitative approach for the study, which drew upon some of the key characteristics of the qualitative orthodoxy and postmodern thinking. The latter influenced my preference for a broad conceptualisation of discourse, in accord with the underpinning philosophy of the project. The choice of unstructured interviews to secure the stories of professional doctorate students' experiences of experiential learning, together

have been described and justified in this chapter. As already stated, Kvale's work on 'InterViews' proved particularly important in shaping the manner in which data was collected and the role adopted by me as interviewer of the professional doctorate students.

Additionally, this chapter has recounted the development of my ideas around work based inquiry and the value placed on discourse, stories and experiences within such an inquiry. These ideas were likewise influenced by my reading around postmodern thinking. Their utility has yet to be fully explored and evaluated. This comes in the remaining chapters of this report which discuss the major discourses which emerged from the analysis of the students' stories.

*'Not only how far away, but the way that you say it
Is very important. Perhaps you may never get
The knack of judging a distance, but at least you know
How to report on a landscape: the central sector,
The right of arc and that, which we had last Tuesday,
And at least you know'*

(From 'Judging Distances' by Henry Reed)

Introduction

Writing and presenting the findings: an explanation

In Chapter Two of this report I gave a reflexive account of how the methodology for my work based inquiry had been developed and implemented. The chapter included a critical discussion of and justification for the concepts which underpinned my approach to discourse analysis, as well as a description of the practical steps taken to support the analytical process. I had chosen to make discourse the subject and object of the study. I had taken the spoken stories or discourses of the students as the subject of the analysis and using my 'little tool kit', traced the messages found therein. From this emerged a 'set of images and metaphors' and discourses, which had formed the objects of my analysis (Burr 1995). The choice of metaphors was drawn from the students' own words and relevant literature. By this stage of the project, I had identified three key 'discourses in contention' (Wiggins and Riley 2010). They related to professional doctorate people, professional doctorate awards and experiential learning. The next challenge was how to write up and present these findings in a clear and coherent manner, sympathetic to the structure and style I had adopted in the project report thus far. Furthermore, I had been careful to use an interview schedule, designed to be descriptive and structural, in order to elicit my participants' choices of reality and truths (May 1997). I was mindful, therefore, that it was important for the purposes of validity that readers should be able to 'see for themselves' the 'expressed thoughts' or messages of the participants as well as my reflections and conclusions (Wolcott 1994 pg. 350).

I chose to use an integrative model of presentation, in which the findings, analysis and discussion of each discourse appear in a separate, dedicated chapter, rather than to employ a more traditional method where a linear approach is utilised (Dunleavy 2003, Bell 2007). I went on to formulate a detailed plan for the discourse chapters. My preference was for a chapter framework which made visible the messages and metaphors from which the emergent discourses were derived. Additionally, I wanted to ensure that the

part of my report:

- How is the discourse discussed and constructed by the interviewees in their accounts?
- What alternative constructions of the discourse are found in the literature?
- What has been learnt and what recommendations arise from this construction?

This model was based on the very helpful suggestions and practical examples of undertaking and writing up discourse analysis given by Gillies (1999) and Wiggins and Riley (2010). I also felt it was in keeping with the interpretative approach to discourse analysis I had used to inform my methodology. When looking for alternative constructions of each discourse, I used relevant evidence drawn from my original literature review. In addition, I searched for and critically examined newly-published work on appropriate topics to bring currency and authenticity to my conclusions.

The chapters which now follow were crafted with this model in mind. In constructing and writing the three discourses I was careful not only to heed Wolcott's advice but also to ensure that how the students' 'repeated, renewed and displaced' their 'choice(s) of truth' was apparent in my written account (Foucault 1981 pg. 70). Chapter Three examines the discourse on 'professional doctorate people', whilst 'professional doctorate awards' is the subject of Chapter Four. The final chapter in this part of the report is dedicated to the discourse on 'experiential learning'.

Introduction

One powerful discourse which emerged during examination of the participants' stories related to their choice of truth and understanding of themselves as professional doctorate people. This chapter explores the messages and metaphors which, as a result of the process of data analysis, were identified and used to assemble the discourse on professional doctorate people. The messages and metaphors which this discourse comprised related to the participants' personal, professional and academic journey up to their enrolment on the professional doctorate programme.

The messages which emerged were: first, the students presented themselves as 'forged from the crucible of adversity'; secondly, they saw themselves as 'successful, determined and resilient'; thirdly, the professional doctorate students considered themselves to be 'lucky' people; finally, they were 'accidental tourists' on an 'accidental award' (after Tyler 1985). The chapter goes on to examine other constructions found in the literature relating to the messages, choices of truths and 'multiple realities' of the professional doctorate people interviewed for the purposes of my study (Wiggins and Riley 2010). It ends with a summary of the conclusions reached.

Message 1

'We are forged from the crucible of adversity'

The metaphor which I used to describe this message had its genesis in one of the participant's accounts. Pat used the words '*sort of adversity*' to describe what (s)he perceived as being an experience shared by all members of the student group. To be 'forged from a crucible' can imply 'shaped' or 'refined' through 'severe test(s) or trial(s)' (COD 1990 pgs. 278 and 461). I therefore considered that my chosen metaphor of 'forged from the crucible of adversity' as apt in conveying the participants' first message on being 'professional doctorate people'. The students' stories from which this message and choice of metaphor were derived now follow.

The seven participants in my study were all individuals who held positions of considerable seniority and responsibility in the field of health and social care. *'We are all very experienced professionals'* (Phil). Collectively they represented the professions of education, social work, physiotherapy, pharmacy, diagnostic and therapeutic radiography. Their occupational standing was not the only characteristic they had in common. As has already been discussed, their accounts spoke of people who had some *'sort of story of adversity'* (Pat) to tell and included tales of personal, professional or academic difficulty and disadvantage. When adversity was discussed in the students' stories, it was frequently, but not exclusively, constructed by the participants in my study in a positive way. That is, the students' difficulties and disadvantages were spoken of as forces which had strengthened rather than diminished their resolve and advancement.

The main types of personal adversity recalled in the participants' accounts related to the socio-economic, health and migrant status of themselves and their family members. One student, Pat, made reference to the poverty experienced as a child, presenting it as a key driver for self-improvement and professional development. It was Pat who perceived this choice of truth as one held in common by the whole of the group.

'When I was a kid we were very poor you know. I can remember being in a workhouse (local authority care) for about nine months when I was a kid 'cause I had nowhere else to go and you couldn't get any lower than that you know and I think well that had always been the driver for me to get job security ... a lot of the people on the course ... they sort of completed their professional development for the same reason ... they wanted to ensure that they were never poor you know and um that really brought us all together ... a sort of story of adversity' (Pat).

Another student made reference to their family's socio-economic background.

'We were a basic family you know ... basic salaries really' (Alex).

position, preferring to move quickly on to describe a 'basic' family as having *'good um strong qualities and life really'* (Alex).

Alex had also suffered poor health as a teenager. Having obtained thirteen O-Levels, (s)he described being *'nowhere'* and *'in limbo'* after illness brought a premature end to secondary school education.

'I did well at school um I didn't have to struggle ... and I did it reasonably comfortably I suppose I thought life was a doddle until I ended up doing my A-Levels ... I had decided that it was gastroenteritis. It was nerves and I was very poorly ... I came out of schooling' (Alex).

Additionally, this student had a congenital condition, requiring surgery in later life which resulted in *'a little bit of um weakness and a small amount of disability'* (Alex).

Other participants in my study were the main carers of family members with illness and disability. They included Phil who had a daughter with *'multiple impairments'*. She was described by Phil as the *'inspiration'*, and *'the passion for the work'*, be it academic or professional labour. Another student, Sam, described the *'quite busy life'* (s)he had as a parent of two young teenagers, full-time worker and carer for an *'aging mother'* who lived with the student's family in a very rural location, situated one hour's drive from Sam's place of employment.

Migrant status was also referred to in my participants' stories. As a *'first generation immigrant to this country'* Phil's predominant construction of self was in these terms. (S)he stated *'I always seem to see myself as an immigrant'*. Pat, the child of a refugee, linked migrant status with the prejudice and economic hardship suffered by the family throughout the student's early years. (S)he considered this to be a powerful reason why you should seek improvement of one's life and lot.

against him and everything else that went with it, was a spur to get out of this sort of cycle of poverty' (Pat).

Additionally, the students' stories told of difficulties experienced in their professional and occupational lives, some of which followed earlier, personal adversity or disadvantage. Alex was one such individual who encountered a number of challenges which overall were positively construed by the student. As discussed previously, (s)he left school early following a bout of ill-health. Alex tried to find work, but quickly met with resistance from potential employers.

'I felt this little bit you know of being in the gap ... I ended up going to interview in a real grown up world ... speaking to a man in a suit ... who said that really I don't know where I can place you ... you're too qualified and too old to get a job and an apprenticeship' (Alex).

Alex remembered experiencing emotional and psychological distress as a result of the situation (s)he was in.

'I was a little bit of disappointed, felt very lost, um lost my confidence, all my friends had gone to their universities of choice ... and I felt sort of ... anyway uh they found me a job at the old polytechnic ... in chemistry ... the analytical laboratory ... I found it quite demoralising to be um fetching and carrying for students that really I wanted to be in that place' (Alex).

Alex also encountered difficulties when (s)he went on to work at a local NHS hospital trust as a pharmacy technician. (S)he was sent to the diagnostic radiography department and recalled asking of a radiographer, who was holding up a chest x-ray for examination:

'How do you get from ... we see nothing and (then) there is the image? ... She said well it's too difficult for you to understand in a short time' (Alex).

Adversity in this instance, prompted Alex to take actions which resulted in a change of occupational direction.

'I went away ... and I spent the rest of the afternoon making some drugs Next day I phoned up various Schools of Radiography... and started another journey three or four months later as a radiographer' (Alex).

Later in Alex's career trajectory, (s)he encountered more difficulties.

'I was not successful um I went for a senior post ... in radiography and um I don't know how to phrase this ...there was three of us applying. It was an internal post. I was told to apply because of all the places I had worked in the past we went to interview and the questions asked of me in the interview um was about starting families. I came away and uh was told the other two candidates ... were not asked the same questions and um I talked to both immediately ... and it made me think well um you know they were less experienced, less qualified' (Alex).

Alex chose to conceptualise this as *'an interesting little time'* which acted again as a spur to take positive action. (S)he undertook further professional development and academic study to prove that *'I could study and have children and work'*.

Another student who experienced professional adversity was Pat. On this occasion, it came in the form of redundancy and happened late on in the career of this participant, employed at the time as a teacher.

'When they closed the School of Radiography I was made redundant ... but I couldn't get a job ... I was on the dole for eighteen months' (Pat).

Eventually, (s)he used an old qualification as an HGV driver to gain employment, but thought:

pounds an hour you know ... and so it drives you to think, well, I've got to do something else' (Pat).

Once again adversity was conveyed by this student as a force for good, the 'something else' being a successful application for a place on the professional doctoral programme.

The final category of personal adversity discussed by the participants in my study related to their experiences of school and higher education. Sam took A-levels in English Literature and History at a *'terrible secondary school'* before going on to become a therapeutic radiographer. The difference and conflict between the conceptual and theoretical approaches of the subjects (s)he studied at school, university and later in practice led Sam to understand that:

'Part of me was always ... just being suppressed and hidden away because it wasn't encouraged' (Sam).

For this participant, it was academic adversity of a different type. This was about the struggle between the *'arts and sciences'* and construed by the student as destructive. It spilt over to Sam's professional life where (s)he *'learnt to compartmentalise'* emotions, actions and reactions, to the detriment of working relationships, behaviour and the care Sam gave.

Two of the students, Hilary and Pat, had been members of the armed forces and received sponsorship from their employers to undertake higher education diplomas. Their courses of study led to professional qualifications. For Hilary, this was registration as a physiotherapist; for Pat it was registration as a diagnostic radiographer. Later in their academic careers they made the transition from Level 5 to Level 6 study because *'the goal posts kept shifting'* (Pat). They both portrayed the move as difficult. *'It was a big step for me because I didn't have a base degree'* stated Pat whilst Hilary spoke of the *'prejudice'* (s)he encountered as a diplomate, completing a first degree. Hilary

academic and work life, saying *'I didn't realise to be quite honest'*.

Hilary also discussed contrasting experiences on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Despite encountering prejudice whilst studying on the Level 6 'top-up' course, Hilary praised the organisation of the award. (S)he referred to it as *'structured and supporting'* (Hilary). However, (s)he depicted the masters' programme negatively, describing the course as *'a wee bit disorganised'*. For Hilary, study on the postgraduate award was *'frustrating and a little bit anxiety provoking'*. Gradually academic aspects became *'really difficult ... it was hard going'*. Conversely, as an advanced practitioner and *'by far the most experienced (at) working with patients with musculoskeletal injuries'*, (s)he had found the clinical features of the masters course *'not particularly challenging'* (Hilary).

This, therefore, was the first message which emerged from my analysis of the participants' stories and relating to the students understanding of themselves as professional doctorate people. They saw themselves as forged from the crucible of personal, professional and academic adversity. With my interviewees' choices of truth in mind, I went on to explore how the literature constructed the experience and consequences of adversity. I was led in my investigations to re-examine some familiar texts from social policy, as well as to seek out new papers to provide answers to my quest.

Constructions and contexts found in the literature

The majority of students discussed and constructed most of the difficulties they had faced with neutrality or optimism. Objectively, the interviewees could be considered successful, if judged in terms of their current occupation and the professional and academic qualifications they had amassed over time. Pat certainly thought that (s)he had achieved success in a number of areas of life.

'I think that you know I've achieved a lot ... and I've got everything that I want ... I've got a house, you know, three kids through university, you know, no mortgage and a beautiful (partner). What more could you ask for?' (Pat)

adversity presents an alternative discourse or choice of truth for those long considered to be 'born and bred unequal'. Nearly half a century ago, Taylor and Ayres investigated the effect of the material and social environment on the educational achievement of children across the regions of England. Their 'ecological' survey drew upon government, regional and local data, and included an examination of access to higher education by the nation's young people. Additionally, case studies were undertaken involving, amongst others, 'immigrant' and 'handicapped' children. Their extensive study tells a story of children, living in a 'Lowry landscape', which, 'prison-like in its effects', impacted negatively on all areas of their lives, including their ability to achieve at school, college and university. Whilst Taylor and Ayres acknowledged the importance of parental attitudes and the quality of educational provision in determining the academic progress of a child, they concluded that other factors were also significant. They were the level of physical and mental health of parents and children, together with the standard of 'social services' (to include housing, medical and welfare services) and the standard of local prosperity, expressed in terms of personal and local authority income. They understood that the subtle, but complex interplay between these features could result in the 'imposition of inequality for life' for children living and growing up in economic and environmental poverty (Taylor and Ayres 1969 pg. x).

The construction of the discourses around socio-economic deprivation and educational attainment found in more recent literature contain similarities to those found in Taylor and Ayres' study. A study of four large-scale longitudinal sources of data relating to children growing up in the United Kingdom today, speaks of those from poorer families emerging from school with substantially lower levels of educational attainment than those from more affluent backgrounds. This 'achievement gap' first appears in the pre-school years and widens through childhood and adolescence, proving in some instances to be intergenerational and detrimental to individuals' social and economic mobility (Goodman and Gregg 2010). The study reveals that whilst teenagers from all economic backgrounds aspire to go on to higher education, there are far lower rates of conversion of ambition to actuality for young people living in poverty. In

that a 'wide variety' of factors including health and the environment, influence children's achievements throughout the school years. They construct a strong discourse around the impact of parental aspirations, attitudes and behaviour on the educational attainment of children, presenting evidence of strong variation dependent upon their socio-economic position. Their understanding is that affluent families are more likely to invest in parenting styles, rules and a home environment which facilitate learning. Furthermore, they consider that more prosperous parents have a stronger belief in self-determination and desire for their children to access higher education than their poorer counterparts, all of which impact positively on academic achievement and ultimately on socio-economic position (Goodman and Gregg 2010).

The students interviewed for the purposes of my study did make reference to economic adversity and ill-health encountered during their childhood and teenage years. Several spoke additionally of the influence of their status as migrants or the children of migrants on their life-stories. They portrayed this as central to their construction of self and key to their pursuit of economic security and professional success. Their stories and experience of upward social and economic mobility are echoed in a major study of the life chances of children from minority ethnic communities whose parents were born outside the UK (Platt 2005). Analysis of data drawn from the ONS Longitudinal Study suggests that the improvement in social mobility experienced by the children was due in part to the expansion of professional and managerial occupations in the UK from the 1970's onwards. These changes in the labour market increased employment opportunities for everyone of working age, regardless of their ethnic origins. However, greatest advancement appeared to be amongst the children of parents from minority ethnic communities, who were predominantly located in the working class, due to the 'more room at the top' factor. Platt produces a discourse in which class and ethnicity continue to be seen as significant in determining children's life chances.

These constructions of poverty and migration, together with their impact on learning achievement, occupational status and social mobility, bear some

support. For one student parental encouragement came from being talked and read to by:

'My mother (who) was trying to teach us the Queen's English, you know (to) speak properly' (Pat).

For another student it was being protected by their parents from economic hardship and assisted by them during their time at school.

'Throughout my early life I never felt as though I was without ... I did well at school ... I didn't have to struggle ... and I did it reasonably comfortably' (Alex).

A further interviewee from my study received help from their wider family to gain initial employment.

'I didn't really know what I wanted to do and um started working at the hospital purely through family favours um, I can't remember if it were me mum or me grandma who knew the lady that was in charge of the service department and she phoned up and asked if there were any jobs and um me and my cousin started at the same time' (Chris).

Despite some similarities between the students' constructions of their reality and those found in the literature, differences also occurred. The participants in my study did not consider themselves to have been positioned to experience 'inequality for life' (Taylor and Ayres 1969 pg. x). Rather they depicted themselves as resilient individuals, forged and shaped in the crucible of adversity to be people who were determined to succeed in all areas of their lives. They were diligent to a fault *'I'll always do everything to you know one hundred percent effort'* (Chris). They spoke as driven people.

'We are successful, determined and resilient people'

When I first read the transcripts of the participants' interviews, the term 'driven people' came to mind. However, I later rejected it as a suitable metaphor to describe this group of professional doctorate people. 'Driven' can imply compulsion and may refer to goal attainment, based on an 'inner, psychological urge'. It can also suggest 'force' and 'constraint' in a negative way which, overall, did not appear to me to be synonymous with the students' construction of themselves (COD 1990 pg. 358). I decided upon the phrase 'successful, determined and resilient' as my metaphor of choice. This more descriptive term came from my analysis of the interviews and from reading around alternative literature. I begin my account of this second message with the students' stories.

Several of the participants in my study recounted tales of steady and occasionally mercurial advancement of their professional careers, usually the result of hard, even sacrificial work on their parts. One such student was Chris. Over a period of twelve years, (s)he progressed from having no academic qualifications and working as a service assistant, to holding the position of Head of Education and Training for a large NHS Trust and undertaking the professional doctorate.

'I went from ... being a service assistant on a ward and later as a health care assistant I did my A-levels in 1997...I did alright in my A-levels. I got an A and 2 B's. I did physics, chemistry, biology ... I did sports medicine ... for four years ... graduated in 2002 but all the time I was at (university) ... I was commuting weekly uh 'cause I had a (partner) and son so I used to go to (university) on a Sunday night or a Monday morning and come back on a Friday and then work Saturday, Sunday on medical assessment unit as a healthcare assistant and um and then go back to (university) on a Sunday night and I did that for four years ... we used to get very long summers so that used to give me a chance to work hard and get money built up for the following year ... when I first left university I was ... the manager of the Clinical Simulation Centre ... did that for a year and then ... got my current job, Head of Education' (Chris).

decade as a medical assistant. Immediately prior to leaving the service, (s)he had obtained an Higher Education Diploma in Physiotherapy.

'I just wanted to be a chartered physiotherapist ... I wanted to be in a job where there was where I had some degree of responsibility and autonomy' (Hilary).

Hilary went on to speak of how (s)he had *'thrive(d) on responsibility'*, acquiring an advanced practice role once (s)he transferred over to employment within the NHS.

'I worked for five years as an extended scope practitioner... you know in a musculoskeletal clinic ...which had just been set up, interesting place to go setting up a new service and helping integrate a new clinic and staff ... actually it was my first job in the NHS' (Hilary).

Hilary's current post was similarly innovative.

'I'm the lead clinician of a back pain service ... I manage a team of specialists with twelve physiotherapists ... it's supposed to be an integrated service across the whole city ... I'm responsible for the whole service and how it links with all the um exit groups ... I love the freedom and innovation' (Hilary).

As discussed earlier, Pat was also an ex-member of the armed forces. (S)he had first trained as a paramedic before going on to qualify as a radiographer. In addition Pat had *'managed a large sick quarter facility... and a marine base'*. Within the NHS, (s)he had taught radiography and worked as a practitioner. Pat spoke of being resolved, throughout life, to progress professionally, born in part out of early childhood experiences.

'That's always been the driver for me, you know, to be able to provide for yourself and your family ... the reason that I got so many qualifications ... if you come from a poor background then you do learn the hard way, you learn everything because life's hard anyway' (Pat).

and professional success and a place on a coveted ultrasound programme, spoke of feeling an obligation to do well. (S)he portrayed this as a constant and urgent force in life.

'I still felt that I had to prove a point though. You know, it's almost yes you've proved yourself but you can't slip. That's what I feel all the time' (Alex).

The students' desire to succeed was not confined to their employment. It extended to their studies and to other areas of their lives. Alex spoke of being determined to undertake a doctoral award and thus complete the academic journey.

'I finished my masters a few years ago and ... I thought, right, I'm going to finish ... I'm going to do my ... PhD' (Alex).

On commencing the professional doctorate, Chris said with equal determination:

'I wanted to make sure ... to get it right from day one' (Chris)

For Phil, observation of the impact of the Pass laws on people's lives in Southern Africa led to politicisation and a determination to affect societal change from a young age.

'The woman that worked for us had her children living with us and somebody reported her and they were sent back to live in the township ... and that was a catalyst for ... some of my political involvement at University and I actually got involved and headed up the campus that I was at ... just because it had left such a very, very strong impression' (Phil).

Jo, the Head of Clinical Governance at a large Primary Care NHS Trust, spoke of the demands of that role and how:

'It is very important to me to have a life outside of work' (Jo).

undertaking the professional doctorate and currently attending:

'A night class working through some ...social psychology ... lots of philosophical things ... looking at modernism and post modernism' (Jo).

With a professional and academic background in the biological and pharmacological sciences, (s)he expressed the desire and determination to 'explore' and extend knowledge and understanding in these new (to Jo) areas of thinking. (S)he was not alone in undertaking extra-curricular study. Hilary also told of a burgeoning interest in philosophy. It had coincided with the completion of Hilary's postgraduate award in sports medicine. (S)he commented that it had resulted in a 'massive' and long-lasting 'shift' in thinking.

The students' accounts' traced their stories of success and determination to progress as workers, students and people. As with the previous message, I turned to the literature to see if I found confirmation or denial of my participants' constructions of their realities. My reading took me into the academic disciplines of social policy, psychology and para-psychology, and my findings will now be discussed.

Constructions and contexts found in the literature

Analysis of the participants' stories revealed lines of discourse which suggested that they had faced adversities in their lives, some of which contributed to their determination to 'succeed against the odds' (after Siraj-Blatchford 2009). I was aware that as professional doctorate people they were not alone in citing difficulties and 'critical incidents' as positive rather than negative forces in their lives. A study of students undertaking a Doctorate of Education, gave the example of an individual whose failure of the 11+ examination was pivotal to their later success (Wellington and Sikes 2006). Nevertheless, what else might have contributed to the choice of truth, frequently cited in my students' stories?

When considering Message 1, I had looked at studies of which some had pointed to the benefits of aspirational parents, supportive home and school

young people considered by some to be 'born and bred unequal' (Taylor and Ayres 1969, Goodman and Gregg 2010). Several of the students interviewed for the purposes of my study, such as Pat, Chris and Alex, had spoken of the support they received. Their stories have already been told, but the studies I had read thus far did not seem to me to offer a full exposition of possible alternative 'truths' around success. The literature around resilience did offer me another construction of what may have contributed to my participants' determination and fortitude.

Resilience has been conceptualised as an 'adaptive response to extraordinary challenge(s)' (Sameroff and Rosenblum 2006 pg. 117). In this longitudinal study, challenges were identified as a set of social and environmental risk factors, including poverty, maternal anxiety, minimal maternal education, unskilled occupational and disadvantaged minority status. The inclusion of a particular challenge as a 'risk variable' was based on analysis of data drawn from other research on resilience undertaken by the authors over a period of thirty years. They further justified their choice by reference to the 'large' bodies of literature which supported each challenge (Sameroff and Rosenblum 2006 pg. 118). Their conclusions were that individual characteristics of mental health and higher intelligence facilitate the development of resilience, with intelligence 'broadened' in this instance to mean 'effective adaptation to the environment, learning from experience and overcoming obstacles by taking thought' (Sameroff and Rosenblum 2006 pg. 117).

Their work is illustrative of the co-existence of different constructions of resilience. Sameroff and Rosenblum's study of resilience concentrates on life circumstances and outcomes which are presented with a 'negative valence' and as a threat to the development of resilience (Luthar and Zelazo 2003 pg. 512). Overall, in Sameroff and Rosenblum's work there is an explicit focus on risks, threats and detrimental consequences, evidenced by their methodology and use of terms to describe the different risk variables, such as 'poor parenting, antisocial peers and low-resource communities'. However, they also accentuate the positive in their concluding remarks, writing about what enhances rather

contrasting constructs and paradigms in their accounts. This 'new paradigm war' (after Gage 1989) discussed in the literature on resilience has been fought for several decades, with varying effects. Illumination of the pessimistic connotations of 'extraordinary' socio-economic and environmental disadvantage and their risk for children's subsequent educational development and social mobility, can throw into shadow the more 'ordinary' discourse on resilience. Namely, that whilst children and young people do experience adversity, the majority adapt, 'get jobs, have successful social relationships and raise a new generation of children' (Sameroff and Rosenblum 2006 pg. 123). It is these positive and ordinary constructions of resilience which appear to resonate most closely with my participants' stories and choices of truth, suggesting that disadvantage and difficulties 'don't have to f%*k you up' (Berliner 2008 after Larkin 1974).

Message 3

'We are lucky people'

The third message which contributed to the discourse on professional doctorate people relates to the participants' perception of themselves as 'lucky' people. In this instance, the message and my choice of metaphor were one and the same and came directly from the students' own stories. The term 'lucky' was not utilised by all. However, those who made reference to the idiom did so frequently and for them, luck was a strong feature of their discourse.

A number of students identified themselves and their circumstances as lucky, with good fortune influencing their professional and academic lives. For Alex, providence came via the interventions of a member of a wider friendship circle and resulted in a fortuitous change of employment in early career.

'Fortunately for myself a friend of the family uh gave me a very good reference as a pharmacy technician ... I thought well it's got to be better than analytical chemistry ... that's not my thing so um so I went for the post ... and uh got the job as a student pharmacy technician (Alex).

Another student who portrays their occupational progression in serendipitous terms, down to 'more luck than judgement', was Chris.

'I were due to meet somebody at ... (the) hospital while I was finishing the self-rostering job and they were late and ... I looked on the notice board for ... jobs and saw the Simulation Centre and it really worries me cause if I hadn't, closing date were like tomorrow or something and if that person had been on time I don't think I'd have seen it. You know it's weird how things happen' (Chris).

(S)he related the story of a subsequent promotion to Head of Department using similar terms.

'I got it as an acting basis the first year ... because they failed to recruit and I think they got into a position where they, the person who was doing the job had left ... they had two people who turned them down who they'd appointed and then at the eleventh hour gave back work and said we don't want it after all ... So I approached the Director of HR and said would you give me a shot at it, so um he did on an acting basis and I got it from there. I did ok too, that's where I've been ever since ... I think it's more luck than judgement. I don't know, I think it's more being in the right place at the right time as well' (Chris).

Finally, Hilary consistently constructs a story of professional and scholarly advance as a series of 'fluke(s)' and lucky chances.

'What I really wanted to do was physiotherapy ... I applied and got an interview ... when I look back it was a complete fluke ... quite honest I had no idea how difficult it was to get in ... or how prestigious the course was. I just ... turned up basically and it was extremely lucky ... it was fantastic when I look back because it would have been a huge um risk if I had left the Navy not knowing ... I count myself quite lucky' (Hilary).

programme of study and secondly at securing employment as an extended scope practitioner.

'I kind of landed this opportunity ... accepted on a MSc in Sports Medicine ... so that was my step from having a diploma ... and no NHS experience. I thought well this will be a passport basically to hopefully a job with some kind of reasonable level of responsibility and that's exactly how it turned out ... it's kind of quite amazing I know you make your own way but, but the very week I was, I was finishing my course ...I thought I could look at jobs back ... where I had a flat ... and I looked in the front line news of professional journal and there was an advert for an extended scope practitioner ... and I rang up and they offered me an interview and the rest you know, it ... was amazing' (Hilary).

Constructions and contexts found in the literature

Luck was portrayed as playing an important part in the stories of some of the professional doctorate students interviewed for the purposes of my study. They considered that luck had facilitated their professional and academic progress, bringing them 'unexpected good fortune' (COD 1998 pg. 705). There was a serendipitous, almost haphazard element to the luck and advancement experienced by students such as Hilary: *'I kind of landed this opportunity'*. The participants in my inquiry are not alone in considering that luck constitutes a noteworthy presence in their lives. Literature from the academic discipline of psychology reveals how widespread this belief is. Researching into the perceptions of the significance of luck in individuals' lives, Smith et al (1996) found that 75% of those interviewed for the purposes of their study considered luck as influential in determining the circumstances and outcome of a wide variety of events. A majority referred to luck as causal as well as descriptive of happenings. Smith et al's research formed part of an ongoing series of projects by the authors into the subject of luck and luckiness.

Prior to Smith et al's work, much of psychology research literature on luck centred on the subject of luck and locus of control. Studies undertaken included those asking individuals to identify the location of factors which they believed

located internally, that is, within the individual, their efforts alone influencing outcomes positively or negatively? Alternatively, did participants believe that circumstances were determined by factors which were located externally and over which they were able to exert little or no control? Luck was positioned in these studies as an example of an external force, lying beyond an individual's sphere of influence and control. Smith et al (1996) were critical of this body of work. They considered that luck could be attributed to both internal and external factors. The stories told by the participants in my inquiry reflected something of this truth. Hilary deemed that (s)he was intrinsically a lucky person and together with Chris and Alex (s)he recalled instances of external happenings described by all three students as lucky. For my students, luck was manifest in self and circumstances, over which they had varying degrees of control.

Smith et al (1996) also put forward a number of potential explanations as to why individuals perceive themselves and events as lucky. These included the exercise of cognitive bias by individuals considered to have optimistic personalities, demonstrated in the recall and telling of past events and future predictions. Implicit learning in-situ, feeding into peoples' perceptions might also play its part in the perception of luck. Later work by Day and Maltby (2005) exploring the links between luck, optimism and behaviour takes these ideas further. The findings from their research suggested that a belief in good luck was related to personal optimism and to positive goal-orientated behaviour.

It is difficult to judge what role good luck and personality may have played in the outcome of events recalled in my participants' accounts. Nevertheless, luck was perceived by some students as being of significance in their lives and achievements. The constructions of luck found in the literature were helpful in extending my understanding of the concept and suggesting why for some of the students in my study 'we are lucky people' was an important message.

'We are accidental tourists on an accidental award'

'Unexpected' is the term which links Message 3 with the fourth and final message of this chapter. Luck, as I have already discussed, has been defined as bringing '*unexpected* good fortune', whilst accidental suggests, amongst other things, 'unintentional, *unexpected*' events or 'happening(s) by chance' (COD 1998 pg. 7). It was this notion of the accidental, rather than other meanings of the word such as 'not essential ... subsidiary' which for me was in accord with the stories told by the students in my study. Additionally, accidental was an appropriate adjective to use to describe the professional doctorate award, which was almost stumbled upon by some of the students interviewed for my project. The novel 'The Accidental Tourist' (Tyler 1985) was a further influence on my choice of metaphor. It was the title of the book and the occupation of the main character, rather than his personality which appealed to me. Tyler's hero was employed as a writer of guides for 'accidental tourists'. The term 'tourist' seemed fitting for my purposes, given the routes which many of the students followed and the guides they encountered before they reached their final destination of a place on the professional doctorate award. Tourist also had a resonance with other metaphors used for my inquiry, such as traveller and journeyman, justification for the choice of which I have discussed in Chapter Two of this report.

The students' journey to their professional doctorate studies appeared accidental and serendipitous for all the seven participants in my study. For Phil, enrolment on the programme came via a number of casual encounters with friends and colleagues.

'I have a friend who is on this course ... she has spoken to me very positively and excitedly about the course ... So I started to think ... maybe I should do a doctorate' (Phil).

This initial, unsolicited conversation, led on to further chance discussions with fellow professionals at work by the student in question.

emailed (them) and whilst I was waiting for a response I bumped into somebody I knew ... he knew this guy' (Phil).

Eventually, an exchange of email correspondence resulted in Phil applying for a place on a professional doctorate programme.

'So I phoned my friend ... I said to her, where are you doing your professional doctorate and ... she's on this course, so it all ...came together. That's how I got onto this course. It was just co-incidence ... that's how I am here. I did it all very late, I got interviewed at the last minute and got accepted at the last minute ... but I'm here' (Phil).

Pat's journey to the professional doctorate began with successful research methods training.

'They were asking volunteers to do a course in health research ...so I did that course ... enjoyed that ... knocked out a few papers ... decided I enjoyed doing that as well' (Pat).

(S)he subsequently tried to 'develop ... proposals for PhD study' but was unsuccessful. 'I really couldn't get any support for that'. Pat then went on to seek advice from an academic, who both supervised PhD students and taught on a professional doctorate award.

'So I said ...well where do I go from here? And she said, well you could self-fund it (the PhD), you know and do it yourself ... you'd certainly get through the university with that proposal ... but I felt that, you know, after speaking to other PhD ... students who'd been there and done it and some of them were still on it, they were saying it was such a lonely process, very isolated, and I spoke to (her) about this and she said, why don't you have a look at the Professional Doctorate? ... I had a look at it and I thought well, this is really just what I need ... I'd never even considered that course before or even knew it existed ... if I had perhaps I'd done it earlier ... I sort of came to this and we went through the

which surprised me' (Pat).

Pat's story told of a circuitous route to an accidental award of which the student had no prior knowledge, indeed did not even know existed.

Jo was also unaware of the availability of professional doctorate programmes. (S)he came upon details of this type of provision on the internet whilst searching for information on a different education product altogether.

'I can't remember how I specifically arrived ... where I saw the course ... I was looking (for) ... a potential adaptation course on the internet' (Jo).

Pat was not the only student for whom the professional doctorate was the award of second choice. This was also Chris's story. (S)he had wanted to undertake a PhD after completing a first degree in sports sciences

'I think in an ideal world I would of stayed on at (university) and done a full time doctorate, but with effectively two children, me (partner's) a health visitor ... (s)he were working at (home). There were no question of moving up ... kit and caboodle to (university)' (Chris).

Chris began to explore alternatives, but like Pat (s)he experienced a lack of success.

'I started really asking questions ... looking at different courses ... applied for the Masters in Clinical Education ... and didn't even get an interview' (Chris).

This disappointment was followed by a series of chance encounters between the student and senior academics at a nearby university. An unexpected 'crossing of paths' led to Chris's enrolment on a professional doctorate programme.

'I also came into contact through my boss with (the Deputy Dean) and I think she said you need to talk to (the programme leader) and ... I think mine and

the DProf is on the cards' (Chris).

Fear of isolation and loneliness contributed to Pat's decision to pursue the professional doctorate award. This was also the case for Alex whose studies on a postgraduate programme had proved to be a very '*lonely time*'.

'I thought if I transferred that into PhD length ... of time ... I think I will be going probably mad ...with no one to really ... talk to' (Alex).

(S)he was introduced to professional doctorate courses as a result of a chance conversation with a colleague in higher education. The award was presented as a possible solution to '*try and sort out the problem*' of academic and professional isolation.

'There's not many ultrasound radiographers ... there's hardly any that are doing what I am doing and there's nobody else in the area that I live or work' (Alex).

Sam too made reference to having initially wanted to '*go down the PhD route*', expressing surprise and amazement that (s)he had applied for a place on the professional doctorate programme.

'How I got onto the course ... I suppose I don't mean this in an awful way.... was a little bit sort of, not by default, but I was very interested in doing something my boss was initially suggesting to go down the PhD route and I hadn't given a lot of consideration at that time. It amazes me how when I think about it ... I'd looked at the DProf I then started to look ... at things like the DEd and I thought oh no that's not for me then looked ... through the (DProf) module handbook and I thought this is really ... the thing, so I sort of came to it via a very convoluted path' (Sam).

Finally, for Hilary:

this, you should think about this, and after a couple of years of thinking about it, I thought well, I think I know I need to develop' (Hilary).

'It took a bit of persuasion' but these unsolicited words of encouragement from Hilary's acquaintance, a senior research fellow at a higher education institution, led to this student's successful enrolment on an appropriate professional doctorate course.

Thus, the participants I interviewed spoke of journeys of happenstance, which resulted in them gaining places on what for them was an accidental, almost hidden award. As a result of unexpected encounters along the way with friends, colleagues and academics, acting often in the capacity of unofficial guide, these accidental tourists arrived at their destination. That is, they enrolled on a professional doctorate award. However, did these students' constructions of this fourth and final message match those found in the literature?

Constructions and contexts found in the literature

My search of the literature for alternative constructions of Message 4 was different from the exploration of evidence associated with the other messages. I was already familiar with much of the evidence written on professional doctorates and the student experience. For the original review of the literature for my project, I had explored issues around the conceptualisation, development, structure and delivery of professional doctorate awards. I had also looked at evidence relating to professional doctorate students and the different challenges they encountered. Following on from analysis of the transcripts from my own study, I re-examined this literature as well as newly-published work to see if the constructions located here were in accord with my participants' choices of truth about their journeys to the professional doctorate.

I found that reports and commentaries around the part of the student trajectory associated with inquiry, application and enrolment onto a professional doctorate programme, unlike my students' stories, centred on the motives for application. Scott et al's study (2004) of professional doctorates included examining learner

involved gathering data on twelve professional doctorate programmes offered in the three subject areas of business administration, education and engineering, using individual and group semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. Scott et al (2004) traced their participants' responses to construct a 'loose typology' of motivation based on their understanding of their participants' initial reasons for beginning a professional doctorate award. Type 1 or 'extrinsic-professional initiation' motivation was associated with the learners' perception that a professional doctorate would enhance their career development, particularly in the early stages. Type 2 or 'extrinsic-professional continuation' motivation was also linked to career development, but was connected with those participants already established and experienced professionals who wished to develop further or diversify their career options. In contrast, Type 3 or 'intrinsic-personal/professional affirmation' motivation was concerned with the 'goals, interests and values' which led the learners to pursue a professional doctorate 'for its own sake'. They concluded that there existed a 'diversity' of motivators and expectations for undertaking a professional doctorate, which were linked 'predominantly' but not exclusively by the participants in Scott et al's study to their career development (Scott et al 2004 pgs. 114, 121 and 124).

Motivation was also the subject of Wellington and Sikes study of professional doctorate students (2006). Their study was smaller in scale than that of Scott et al, looking only at the experiences of learners accessing a Doctorate of Education. Using data gathered from e-mail correspondence and Scott et al's 'loose typology', they explored why their participants had, amongst other things, chosen to study on a professional doctorate programme. Whilst their findings reflected those of Scott et al, they concluded that their participants' motives for undertaking a professional doctorate were 'informed by a web of reasons', which were hard to classify as either extrinsic or intrinsic, so tightly were they inter-twined (Wellington and Sikes 2006 pg. 728).

More recently, a study on the motivations, experiences and perceived outcomes of students registered on a part-time Doctorate of Education, delivered by distance learning, looked specifically at their motives for registering on the

postal survey semi-structured interviews and participants' reflective evaluations showed that the most highly rated motives were extrinsic factors such as the acquisition of a doctoral award, the development of new academic skills and understanding (Butcher and Sieminski 2009 pg. 48).

The findings of these three studies construct a very different discourse of the journey to enrolment on a professional doctorate to that presented by the students in my inquiry. Whilst some of my participants did make direct reference to the motivating factors which lay behind their application, they were in the minority. Phil spoke of the professional doctorate being:

'My swan song ... I feel at this stage I would like to make a contribution to an area of knowledge rather than use it to progress anywhere' (Phil)

For Hilary, whilst the decision to apply for a professional doctorate was the result of continued promptings of a friend, as discussed earlier, other factors played a part. In terms which reflected some of Butcher and Sieminski's conclusions, (s)he stated:

'I need to develop and stretch and expose myself to new ideas and challenges' (Hilary)

Otherwise, the message presented by the students who participated in my study was that their route to the professional doctorate was dominated by a series of meetings and events which were accidental, yet opportune.

I had also chosen to describe the professional doctorate as 'an accidental award', hidden from the view of my participants and sometimes their second choice of course. Was a similar choice of truth found in the literature on professional doctorates? My re-examination of this body of evidence revealed little, if anything, about the visibility of the award to its potential client-base. Scott et al (2004) analysed the marketing materials produced for each of the programmes reviewed for the purposes of their study. Their investigation was

efficacy in reaching the desired target audience. I found more, however, on the reasons behind learners' choice of a professional doctorate over that of the more traditional PhD. Fear of isolation, concern over models of academic supervision, the lack of relevancy to practice and the nature and length of final thesis were given as key explanations for choosing the former rather than the latter award by participants cited in a number of studies (Neumann 2005, Wellington and Sikes 2006). Although loneliness had been mentioned by Pat and Alex, as contributing to their choice of doctoral awards, other lines from these and the remaining interviewees' discourses were much stronger. For them, the professional doctorate was indeed 'an accidental award'.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an exploration of the first major discourse on 'Professional Doctorate People' constructed from the students' accounts of their experiences and journeys prior to commencing the professional doctorate award. The messages of which the discourse comprised arose from my participants' unsolicited responses to an interview schedule designed to encourage them to 'converse' and tell their stories using 'their own terms of reference', as I discussed in Chapter Two of this report. I drew directly upon terms found in their accounts as well as literature to frame the metaphors I used to describe each of the messages discussed in this chapter. The students presented themselves as forged by the crucible of adversity into successful, determined and resilient people. Some considered themselves and their circumstances as lucky, but all were revealed as accidental tourists on an accidental award.

I found that some of the literature on topics relating to the messages repeated the realities found in my participants' narratives, as was the case in the work on luck. In other instances such as the evidence on adversity, resilience and professional doctorates they were displaced and renewed by alternative constructions of truth.

that for me these professional doctorate students were, to use one participant's words '*quite inspirational really*' (Sam).

Introduction

The second major discourse to emerge from the participants' stories related to their choices of truth around the professional doctorate award and their experiences as enrolled students on the programme. All the students interviewed, with the exception of Chris, were close to completion of the first year of their professional doctorate studies. Chris, however, was on the third year of the course. The messages and metaphors identified and used to assemble the discourse on professional doctorate awards were: first, that despite their success, determination and resilience, the students saw themselves as 'un-academic professionals'; secondly, overall they portrayed the support and supervision they received during their doctoral studies as having 'a coronation effect'; thirdly, the professional doctorate students considered that the doctoral programme was 'a transformational award'. As previously, this chapter will discuss each message, presenting the students' stories which underpin the message and its associated metaphor. The chapter will examine in turn other constructions, contexts and choices of truth as found in relevant literature. It concludes with a summary of the chapter's findings.

Message 1

'We are *un-academic professionals*' on a professional doctorate award'

My metaphor of choice for the first message of the second discourse on professional doctorate awards was '*un-academic professionals*' and it referred to my participants feelings about themselves as students. It was Gregory (1995) who first coined the phrase '*scholarly professionals*', when commenting on the introduction of the doctorate of education in British universities. '*Scholarly professionals*' referred to learners studying on this relatively new award, in comparison to '*professional scholars*', the term assigned by Gregory to individuals following the more traditional PhD pathway. The expressions '*scholarly professionals*' and the differently nuanced '*researching professionals*' (Bourner et al 2001) are now common parlance in the literature on professional doctorates. I rejected the use of either phrase as a suitable metaphor for this

participants' accounts and decided to prefix the term negatively to denote the lack of readiness felt by the learners I interviewed to meet the various demands of the professional doctorate programme.

Despite reservations about their academic skills and identity, the students' accounts suggested that they retained confidence in their choice of award. Chris repeatedly referred to it as being *'ideal'*, whilst Pat said emphatically *'this is really just what I need'*. Sam similarly echoed *'this is really ... the thing'*. For Jo, the professional doctorate offered:

'A range of things I would be interested in doing ... it met clear need(s) for myself ... (and) ... it came for me at absolutely ... the right time' (Jo).

Hilary also spoke of the programme meeting what (s)he presented as professional and personal deficits:

'I kind of did realise that ... I'm leading a team of superintendent physiotherapists ... increasingly my own team are gaining these qualifications and I thought for credibility apart from anything else I need to be developing ... I suppose (I) realised I was winging it a wee bit' (Hilary).

The potential to fulfil personal needs, as well as to integrate academic and professional experiences (after Scott et al 2004), within one doctoral programme was perceived by Chris as the reason for labelling the professional doctorate the *'ideal'* award. This was in contrast to the PhD, which (s)he portrayed in quite different terms.

'This (the professional doctorate) sounds ideal, (it) sounds right ... what you should be looking at and to me it fitted in really well because I'd only ever thought of ... a PhD... something completely separate to your work ... so specific and so removed from actual everyday life' (Chris).

participants both wanted and needed, they also indicated, as discussed earlier, that they lacked confidence in their academic persona and skills. They used affective terminology to describe their feelings of self and experiences of the professional doctorate thus far, with Phil stating:

'I am finding it very, very overwhelming ... in terms of my learning ... I just can't express how overwhelming this has been ... I sometimes feel whoa, can't go (there)' (Phil).

Both Pat and Chris spoke of self-doubt, which in Pat's case manifested itself in fear of the academic world (s)he had entered into. This was an emotion unfamiliar to this ex-member of the armed forces.

'You always have this element of self doubt, and ... when I started on the course here, I didn't really know what to expect ... you know I think well I've never really felt frightened in the services ... even when we were under fire and stuff ... but when you're suddenly thrust into a different environment you know, an academic environment' (Pat).

For Chris, commencing the professional doctorate programme was similar to 'a bit of sailing into the unknown'. Using the same words as Pat, (s)he attributed this experience to 'self doubt' and went on to say:

'When we first got together that day ... it (was) all just a big melting pot ... of emotions' (Chris).

In Chris's case, this emotional reaction was enhanced by the conviction that 'everyone else is a lot more intelligent than you', a choice of truth which (s)he shared with other students. Some of my participants were also convinced that there were 'big' gaps in their academic knowledge and understanding. Phil maintained that (s)he:

... I sometimes look at other people on the course and think ... are they all just very, very bright? ... I can't believe that they know all these theories, postmodernism, critical theory and all' (Phil).

Another student, Pat, believed (s)he had a specific deficit in knowledge of research methods and skills, exemplified during a previous experience of seeking approval for a proposal to undertake a traditional doctorate.

'I was trying to develop a proposal for PhD study. I really couldn't get any support for that ...because my ... methodology and that was weak and I really didn't have the skills to attract the funding for it' (Pat).

This concern about understanding and engaging in research activity was also highlighted in another student's account. Like Pat, Hilary's fears had originated from an earlier attempt to apply for a PhD. Furthermore, (s)he also spoke of worries about a perceived inability to write academically.

'I thought, whoa, nightmare ... why go back (in)to that kind of fear? ... I was just aware of (my) limitations, you know I'm not able to write ... I wouldn't be that comfortable with setting up a research project properly, you know' (Hilary).

Hilary concluded this particular line of discourse by stating:

'I think you come in with your doubts right at the forefront' (Hilary).

Hilary was a highly successful health care practitioner, professionally confident and competent. Yet in common with other participants in my study, Hilary's story portrayed a lack of conviction that (s)he had ability and academic skills necessary to successfully undertake a professional doctorate, however 'ideal' that programme of study might be. For Hilary, this was 'a wee bit, a shaky, you know, thing to do'.

relatively 'un-academic'. Pat's account illustrated this choice truth, illuminating as it did a contrast between professional assurance and disbelief in having an academic identity.

'I mean radiography, I don't have a problem because I am comfortable with anything to do with that, and even with teaching, but you know with study, then you think 'will I be able to think at that level?' and you know you're not sure... I've never considered myself to be an academic ... I'm a practical person, you know, rather than a thinker' (Pat).

My participants believed themselves to be *un-academic* professionals, worried about their scholastic skills and attributes. I turned once again to the literature on professional doctorates to seek out and explore alternative constructions and explanations.

Constructions and contexts found in the literature

The students interviewed for my inquiry identified themselves as confident professionals, but '*shaky*' academics. Their assurance in their professional capability and standing resonated with some aspects of Gregory (1995) and Bourner et al's (2001) portrayal of scholarly and researching professionals, as introduced earlier in this chapter. In their research, they made the distinction between scholarly and researching professionals, and, professional scholars and researchers. These writers constructed the former as senior and experienced professionals, undertaking a professional doctorate programme, in which research knowledge and training formed part of their taught studies, with the expectation that their inquiry would be work and professionally based. Conversely, professional scholars and researchers were portrayed as students with little or no occupational experience, enrolled on a traditional PhD, whose research training was provided using an apprenticeship model, with the subject of their thesis closely aligned to their previous academic studies. The professional profile of my participants, together with the focus, structure and content of the professional doctorate they were studying (as discussed in

et al's findings.

However, the students in my study did not directly construct or refer to themselves in their stories as either scholarly or researching professionals. Neither did they, as their stories showed, consider themselves '*academic*'. This position differed from the Wellington and Sikes' assertion (2006) that their participants viewed themselves as both scholars and researchers, albeit at the conclusion of the course rather than whilst still undertaking their Doctor of Education studies. My interviewees had yet to identify with this representation of self or speak of it as their choice of truth in the accounts they gave.

Little reference was made, in the literature I revisited, to the feelings and emotions experienced by learners whilst studying on the professional doctorate award. This was in contrast to my participants' accounts where the affective had presented itself as a strong line of discourse. Neumann (2005) undertook a major research inquiry into doctoral education in Australian universities, which included a comparison between the experiences of those who offer, undertake and support professional doctorates and PhDs. Her work focussed on the differences and similarities of experience of the awards as they related to: recruitment and selection; structure and content; and perceptions of status of the two types of programmes. Findings included the suggestion there was 'an underlying hint of a lack of confidence' present in the account of one professional doctorate student interviewed for the purposes of the study (Neumann 2005 pg. 179). No further mention was made of learners' feelings or emotions in relation to self or the award in this report.

Similarly, Leonard et al's inquiry into the doctoral experience of professional doctorate and PhD alumni from a university in the United Kingdom made no reference in its reported findings of the affective impact of the experience on their participants (Leonard et al 2004).

These studies along with those of Gregory and Bourner et al present the choice of truth that the scholarly and researching professional is a persona which is

professionals portrays a picture of the conflicts and complexities of the professional doctorate learning trajectory, which more faithfully repeats the reality and experience spoken of in my participants' stories (Taylor 2007). She postulated that the difficulties and intricacies of being 'on the cusp' of learning cultures as diverse as higher education, employment and a profession, together with the complexities associated with being a full-time worker on a part-time award, often with caring responsibilities as contributing to the feelings of vulnerability expressed by those she interviewed (Taylor 2007 pg. 160). Furthermore, Taylor claimed that her participants portrayed themselves as 'novices' during the early stages of their journey as researching professionals, particularly when it came to writing and research activity. This message replicated the fears expressed by Pat and Hilary, concerning gaps in their research knowledge and capabilities. I found no further reference to research and other subject knowledge deficits as recounted by my students in the work of Taylor and the commentators I reviewed, although Butcher and Sieminski (2009) did, as discussed in Chapter Three of this report, cite the acquisition of new academic skills and understanding as important in motivating students to register for a professional doctorate. Taylor, Butcher and Sieminski all constructed the professional doctorate as a journey, at the end of which alumni finally took on the identity of researching professionals.

As for my participants, still in the main in early stages of their doctoral studies, their message was that they saw themselves as '*un-academic professionals*'. Despite this construction they also spoke of their growth as doctoral learners, supported as they were by their peers and supervisors. This choice of truth is explored in the second message of the discourse on professional doctorate awards, a message which looks at '*the coronation effect*'.

Message 2

'We are experiencing the coronation effect'

Once again my selection of a suitable metaphor to describe the students' message was inspired by the words of one of the participants. Hilary had used

presence, guidance and encouragement (s)he received from fellow learners and staff members of the professional doctorate course team. For me 'the coronation effect' implied affirmation, confirmation and celebration of birthright, as well as position. The words had first struck me as meaningful during my original interview with Hilary. When I went on to read and analyse all my participants' accounts, I found a similar choice of truth repeated in them concerning the support learners had received during their professional doctorate studies. Although some of the students' stories were presented as tales of caution rather than of celebration, overall I considered 'the coronation effect' an apt metaphor to use to describe their collective experiences. I begin this section with my participants' accounts of encounters with their peers.

'I have to say they're a great bunch of people. I think ... they care a lot about each other' (Jo).

This message about the character of the professional doctorate peer group and their behaviour toward each other was constructed by Jo using very positive terms. (S)he was not alone in presenting fellow learners in this light. Hilary spoke of the '*respect and interest*' shown by students and staff towards each other, attributes which (s)he considered to be '*absolutely fundamental*'.

'How people treat you is, for me, absolutely fundamental ... it was one of the things about this course ... the atmosphere was just very much warm and human ... that to me is quite, quite crucial' (Hilary).

Jo repeated Hilary's choice of truth about the worth ascribed by group members to the attributes and experiences of each other when (s)he said:.

'We all brought our own experiences. We worked in small groups ... and our small group played to our strengths ... I think that is part of ... valuing everybody's experiences' (Jo).

'very comfortable'.

Encounters with fellow students were presented not only as affirming but also as experiences which *'marked'* participants. It was Chris who had spoken of the influence on individual group members of what (s)he termed the *'low cards exchange principle'*. (S)he stressed that such *'exchanges'* were experienced mutually by the learners.

'There were this ... low cards exchange principle from forensics that if any two things come into contact with each other they leave a mark on each other. I think that we have brushed past each other that many times now that we've left a mark on each other' (Chris).

Whilst students such as Chris, Jo and Hilary depicted these exchanges and the support they received from other professional doctorate students as helpful and constructive, others were more circumspect. Sam's choice of truth was different. Speaking of some of the taught sessions on the programme, (s)he stated:

'It's been a real eye opener ... (with people coming) from completely opposite ends of the spectrum ... they're very forthright with their views and very inconsiderate' (Sam).

In contrast to this construction, Alex proposed an alternative line of discourse. (S)he presented the dissimilarities of backgrounds and opinions as advantageous to the learning of the students.

'It was so nice to see that we're all so different ... but we are all experiencing the (same) problems or similar issues ...we all have to get through' (Alex).

(S)he went on to state:

...I've felt there's something more with this group than just we've got to get this work done ... we are living each others' lives a little bit' (Alex).

Overall, for Alex and the other participants in my study the experiences of *'living each others' lives a little bit'* as people and professional doctorate learners had a 'coronation effect' which helped them all *'to get through'*. Support from peers, however, was only part of the students' message. Other aspects of their accounts spoke of the role played by the professional doctorate course team and supervisors in the academic development of the individuals interviewed by me.

Hilary had used the phrase the coronation effect in connection with members of the professional doctorate teaching team. (S)he said:

'The people here (at the university) the exercises that were done were just fascinating and ... I got inspired to be quite honest' (Hilary).

Alex also considered that the *'structured support in the beginning ... has been very helpful'*, referring to the academic supervisor allocated to each student at the start of the professional doctorate programme. The academic supervisor, together with the wider course team and a work-based champion, comprised the *'structured support'* which Alex had referred to as beneficial.

Chris's account presented two experiences of academic supervision, each constructed in a different ways. Initially, Chris had *'got a bit ruffled'* having been allocated a supervisor who (s)he had *'not hit it off with'*. (S)he portrayed the encounters with the first supervisor experiences as discouraging episodes, which did little to facilitate the development of Chris's confidence as a scholar. (S)he said:

'I think I got paired with this person mainly because our backgrounds were comparable ... in terms of sporty medicine type physiotherapy background' (Chris).

'I wanted to be able to bounce ideas off somebody and I've never got on that well with people who answer a question with a question and that's exactly ... what this person was' (Chris).

When it came to sharing an early version of doctoral writing, Chris considered the supervisor's response to the work as less than supportive:

'When I finally showed a draft ... (s)he says well never mind it's your first attempt so in other words like accept ... you're going to fail this time and I'm not like that. I don't want to (fail) I'll always do everything to ... one hundred percent effort' (Chris).

Following this encounter, (s)he was assigned to another academic, who as a therapist had a very different professional and subject lineage to that of Chris. (S)he portrayed their supervisory sessions using an alternative choice of truth to the one presented previously:

'It were just like an absolute breath of fresh air, honestly, it were just like a completely different kettle of fish (s)he's been absolutely fantastic ... she'll cultivate my ideas but also keep me on track ...remind me of what I should be doing and give me rope but not enough to hang meself' (Chris).

For Chris, this second approach to supervision was *'exactly what I needed'*.

Finally, a return to Hilary's account. (S)he presented a story in which (s)he described this time the impact of the coronation effect on all the students in the group.

'I think what comes out of it is we see individuals just getting confidence ... confidence to move on, to take on this challenge of doing a professional doctorate' (Hilary).

'opened up' to a positive 'way of thinking' about self and the professional doctorate learning journey, which:

'Encourages (you) to sort of continue ... to do this ... to explore my own thinking ... and develop myself personally and professionally' (Hilary).

These were the students' stories of their experiences of the support received from peers and teaching staff whilst studying on the professional doctorate programme. They had felt sufficiently encouraged, assisted and affirmed to 'develop' their identity not just as health and social care professionals, but also as professional doctoral learners and as people. Was this message about the coronation effect repeated in the literature, or would I find alternative constructions of this choice of truth?

Constructions and contexts found in the literature

Lee commented recently that the experiences, practices and interactions of doctoral students and their supervisors were 'comparatively under-researched', despite their importance to doctoral study and progress (Lee 2009 pg. 85). Her words resonated with me as I reviewed the literature on support received by learners during their doctoral studies.

I began by looking at what the reports and commentaries presented as truths on encounters between professional doctorate students and their peers. It was Scott et al (2004) who coined the phrase 'the cohort effect' to describe the bringing-together of learners on various professional doctorate programmes. The discussion of their findings mostly centred on the mechanics of the cohort-effect. Additionally, the authors reported the 'clear appreciation' expressed by participants of the support they had received from fellow students. They stated that as 'researching professionals' their participants had found it 'vital' (Scott et al 2004 pg. 92). Included in the report of Scott et al were extracts from students' accounts, which made reference to the benefits of sharing resources and experiences between members of their cohort. Scott et al's participants also spoke of 'clashes', 'different orientations and different paradigms of

et al 2004 pgs. 92 and 93). These differences were reported as valued by these participants, as was the case with Alex, whose story I referred to earlier in this chapter.

Lee (2009) also considered 'the cohort effect' important in facilitating professional doctoral learning. She supported using an adapted version of the concept of a 'community of practice' to achieve this aim (after Wenger 1998). Wenger's original work identified three key characteristics of a community of practice as important. They were domain, community and practice. For Lee these were represented in the professional doctorate setting as the common purpose of undertaking professional practice research, by a cohort or group of professional doctorate students, who shared a similar practice or work background (Lee 2009 pg. 39). Lee constructed a picture of a community of practice where practice expertise was enhanced; there was mutual support and 'obligation' for the 'learning of others' and a sharing of experiences and resources. Lee's work reflected in part the choices of truth represented by Scott et al and my participants. Unlike them, Lee made no reference to the students' feelings towards one another as together they experienced being part of this community of professional doctorate learning and practice.

My review of the literature around academic supervision and the support of professional doctorate students concurred with Lee's earlier contention on the paucity of research into the experiences, practices and interactions of doctoral students and their supervisors. Much of the work presented a discourse on the constitution and organisation of the academic supervisory team. Appraisals of professional doctorates, such as those by Bourner et al (2000) which looked for and found 'evidence' of individual and team supervision, were examples of such an approach. Scott et al's study (2004) included an examination of the membership and roles of individuals within supervisory teams. They presented in their findings evidence of 'clear differences' across professional doctorates programmes as to whether or not experts from the wider community of practice and employment formed part of the supervisory team. Lee's work (2009) on professional doctorates incorporated a brief review of some of the literature on

commentaries on PhDs. Based on this, she developed a checklist of 'the characteristics of supervision', some of which were alluded to in my participants' stories. The relevant characteristics of good supervision portrayed by Lee included the exhibition of trust between student and supervisor. It should have the potential to enhance a student's motivation and confidence, as well as promote their independence. In addition, good supervision should celebrate a student's achievement and success (Lee 2009 pg. 89). Finally, drawing upon an earlier study of her own (Lee 2007), Lee promotes a mutual exchange of learning ideas between supervisor(s) and student, based on the principles of equality and partnership, a characteristic of academic supervision also referred to in Scott et al's study (2004).

Despite the dearth of research, I found some repetition in the constructions presented in the literature with the message delivered by my participants on the importance of support from peers and academic supervisors on their progress as professional doctorate students. The impact of 'the coronation effect', their studies and experiences on the award were all portrayed as '*transforming*' by Sam and other interviewees. This message formed the third and final part of the students' discourse on the professional doctorate award.

Message 3

'We are transformed by our experiences on the professional doctorate award'

I was already very familiar with the term 'transformative' as used in the context of learning and discussed already in Chapter One of this project report. Transformative in this sense implies experiences which challenge and change individuals' 'frames of reference', resulting in a transformation or emancipation of perspectives, experiences and the person (Mezirow 1991, Mezirow 1997, Mezirow, Taylor and Associates 2009). On reading my participants' accounts of their experiences as students on the professional doctorate award, I became convinced that transformative was an equally appropriate term to use as a metaphor for this message. The students' stories told how they had changed as

attributed many of these changes to the construction, content and conduct of the award itself. Their discourse on experiential learning and its impact upon them will be discussed in the next chapter. These are their accounts.

Phil, who as discussed in Chapter Three, was undertaking the doctorate as a 'swan song' to a long career in social work, constructed the professional doctorate course as instrumental and *'incredibly important'* in transforming key aspects of both personal and working life. (S)he stated:

'The course has certainly been incredibly important for me, not just on a personal basis, but also in terms of helping me think through what I am doing' (Phil).

The overall structure and content of the award and teaching sessions were perceived by Phil as facilitating critical exploration of ideas; an *'exciting'* attribute of this programme which s(he) considered differentiated the professional doctorate award and this course in particular from other types of doctoral education. (S)he deemed it necessary if one was to for *'move forward'* as a professional and scholar.

'If I came here everyday and somebody had lectured to me. I wouldn't have had to do all this thinking ... you have to explore your own ideas ... why did they develop this course ... in the way they have developed it? ... we are all very experienced professionals. We need to integrate what's coming in with what we're doing. That's what will create the movement forward. It's all very exciting' (Phil)

Phil went on to relate how *'all this thinking'* had resulted in *'checking out'* what (s)he was doing in practice with colleagues at work. (S)he recalled receiving a *'sort of home truth'* from a fellow-worker about Phil's *'very high expectations'* of clients, especially of:

'Other parents' ability to cope, because I cope well. She said ... I'd say, well I think it's about time they stood on their own two feet. I've done that ... I'd never

This challenged Phil's perspective on the frames of reference within which (s)he practised as a social worker. According to Phil, the professional doctorate award had also transformed the manner in which (s)he reacted to thoughts and ideas. (S)he constructed this process as *'insight learning'*, the consequences of which were the emergence of *'something completely new'*.

'One of the first books I read was 'a Harebrained Tortoise Mind' ... I do feel like ideas come up to the surface of my consciousness ... before I would let (them) just flow and flow ... if they disappear, they disappear. Now, I feel like I have to grab them ... I have a little notebook I carry around with me ... so, um I don't lose those tortoise mind thing(s) ... I suppose it's about insight learning ... goes around (and) ...around and something completely new comes out' (Phil)

Pat was another student who made reference to the role played by the professional doctorate programme in facilitating changes in thinking, reading, and study skills. These modifications had impacted on Pat's perceived academic ability and identity.

'This is developing my thinking skills ... if you'd of asked me two years ago, so you are going to read books on ... critical thinking and how to reflect ... I'd of said absolute rubbish ... and then you're reading and you're thinking, hmm, this guy's got a point ... it's always sort of bubbling away in the sub conscious ...you know what you've read (yes) and you're trying to apply ... that to reality as well' (Pat).

This emancipation of Pat's skills of cognition, judgement and critical reflection was in contrast to another and alternative choice of truth held by Pat, who also stated that (s)he, Pat, was *'a practical person, you know, rather than a thinker'*.

Several students presented specific parts of the professional doctorate programme as instrumental in altering their perception and construction of

effecting these changes.

'I think the most beneficial session that we had was (on academic writing)... I think I have a quite a logical scientific mind ... and I think that up until (that session) I was ... trying to categorise and put things in boxes ... how we should proceed and what we should write about ...and I can still remember some of the things... about internal editors ... at that stage I sacked my internal editor' (Chris).

A consequence of the dismissal of Chris's 'internal editor was a change in epistemological position, from rationalist to post modern thinker. (S)he conveyed this as a decision to:

'Go along with the flow a lot more ... try and enjoy the tapestry of it all ... (and) understand the nuances' (Chris).

(S)he presented this alteration of philosophical stance as very significant and the:

'one thing that this doctorate has really, really taught me' (Chris).

For Hilary also, the sessions on academic writing were considered transformative. Like Pat and Chris, (s)he had constructed a personal identity as an '*un-academic professional*', fearful of writing and study. Hilary's story provided a vivid account of one of the writing workshops and the changes which subsequently ensued.

'I thought before I went into it, I can't write, and then you suddenly produce something ... and you think ...maybe there's a potential in there ...and that's been really quite powerful ... talk about affirming' (Hilary).

Most of my participants' stories contained accounts of how they had acquired new knowledge and ideas as a result of their experiences on the professional doctorate award. Hilary had spoken of how the programme had:

people learn ... how organisations maybe want to learn and all those things were really fascinating for me because I was then trying to translate how ... I'm currently doing (as a practitioner) and it was really quite reassuring and empowering to be able to think, well, this is valid' (Hilary).

Jo's choice of truth was that:

'The Doctorate is like a new door opening ... I think ... it is plural; new doors opening' (Jo).

Alex portrayed the award as 'a very new' and 'fantastic experience'. At the beginning of the professional doctorate programme (s)he had thought:

'Well, here I am, coming to the university to progress my knowledge about what I do (as a radiographer)' (Alex).

However, Alex went on to speak of how this original perception of the course was 'all turned upside down' as (s)he:

'Ended up reading information ... that had nothing to do with (practice)... I joked at one point ... I'm not coming anymore because I'm going to do a BA (Hons) in literature' (Alex).

(S)he conveyed this change in reading habits as 'a very big turning point' which altered 'the way that I see everything ... it was very good'.

The student' stories telling of changed perspectives, ideas, skills and practice endorsed Sam's choice of truth that the professional doctorate award was transforming and emancipating them as people. I turned again to the literature to search out similar constructions and versions of truth.

Analysis of my participants' accounts had revealed what was considered by them to be a strong association between the changes they were experiencing in their work and academic personas and the professional doctorate programme. When reviewing the evidence, I found some representation of the students' message in the literature on professional doctorate awards. However, it was noteworthy firstly that the evidence scrutinised once again related predominantly, but not exclusively, to alumni of professional doctorate awards, rather than to learners still on their doctoral journey. Secondly, the majority of research papers and texts I located were set within the context of programmes leading to a professional doctorate award in education, engineering or business administration.

'Learning on professional doctorates', rather than professional doctorate awards themselves was constructed in some studies such as that undertaken by Scott et al (2004) as having a positive influence on students' 'identity, experience and professional performance' (Scott et al 2004 pg. 126). Examples provided by the authors to support their construct included an account of self actualisation by one student who referred to her Doctorate of Education studies as 'so satisfying, so riveting and it was making me, me' (Scott et al 2004 pg. 127). Regarding professional performance, Scott et al (2004 pgs. 134 and 135) cited cases of learners who acquired a 'knowledge base' for practice, as well as those who developed and used critical thinking skills in their professional work environment. One student's story spoke of professionally being a 'very different person from the one I was' (pg. 136). Wellington and Sikes (2006 pg. 730) also referred to 'messages about knowledge and understanding' found in the accounts of their participants, asked to comment on the impact of the Doctorate of Education on their professional lives. Additionally, one of the alumni interviewed stated that she had learnt 'to think more holistically and to see the bigger picture' (Wellington and Sikes 2006 pg. 730). These were in accord with the choices of truth provided by the learners in my study, as were comparable constructs found in the work of Butcher and Sieminski (2009). Their research had explored students' perceived outcomes of their programme of study at different stages of the professional doctoral trajectory.

a study of students undertaking a Doctor of Education award, where the focus of the research was different to the studies I have referred to so far. This project had looked at the relationship of 'practitioner research' undertaken by doctoral students (rather than the doctorate programme as a whole) to the learners' personal and organisational development or transformation (Pilkington 2009). The author provided evidence of the benefits of practitioner research as reported by her participants, relating to their acquisition of 'new insights, knowledge or understanding' which they portrayed as impacting positively on their practice and employing organisations, (Pilkington 2009 pg. 167). When portraying personal transformation and identity, the examples cited by Pilkington were drawn mainly from the students' professional practice. She did, however provide illustrations of 'transformative learning' associated with changes in attitudes to fellow students and increased confidence in participating in external academic activities (Pilkington 2009 pg. 170).

I was unable to locate any further reported references in the literature to the transformation of participants' personal and thinking skills. Overall, the constructions of the impact of the professional doctorate award were repetitions of my participants' message. Namely that they experienced transformation in their personal, academic and professional lives, and they presented the professional doctorate award as crucial to those changes. An exception was found in the work of Lunt (2003). Whilst this major ESRC funded study of professional doctorate students did include accounts of differences in the participants' which were attributed to their experiences on the course, it also contained an alternative choice of truth. The students, particularly those who had studied on engineering doctorate programmes, spoke about experiencing transformation of their career aspirations and advancement. No such construction was found in my participants' account.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the participants' discourse on the professional doctorate award. The messages which comprise this particular discourse, construct a picture not only of this '*accidental*' yet '*ideal*' award, but also of a still

researching and scholarly professionals. The support and encouragement of their supervisors and peers were presented by the interviewees as having a 'coronation effect', all of which were contributing to changing my participants as learners, workers and people.

Some of the students' constructions and portrayals of their experiences were repeated in the literature, as was the case with the impact of the professional doctorate award on the participants' professional practice and academic skills. What was absent in the evidence I reviewed was the presence of the affective, which was such a strong component of my participants' accounts, particularly in the narratives recounted in Messages 1 and 2.

Finally, the structure, content and conduct of the professional doctorate award were considered to be '*transformational*', a term also used by the students when constructing their accounts of experiential learning. The latter is the subject of the third and final discourse which emerged from my analysis of their stories and forms the basis of the next chapter of this report.

Introduction

This chapter discusses experiential learning, the last of the major discourses to come out of my exploration of the participants' stories and the one most eagerly awaited. This discourse related to the professional doctorate students' experiences of experiential learning both prior to the commencement of the award and thereafter. Their choices of truth on experiential learning were based on their encounters with this type of learning throughout their personal, professional and scholarly lives. In particular, their stories and the messages made reference to their experiences on Module 1 of their professional doctorate award which required them to conduct a critical review of their learning, as discussed earlier in this report.

The discourse was assembled from a number of messages concerned with the processes, emotions and outcomes associated with experiential learning. The messages were as follows: the participants considered that experiential learning was akin to 'building a nest'; they regarded it as 'emotional labour'; although they thought of experiential learning as an 'everyday happening', the students also deemed it to be similar to 'black magic' in its effect. This was the final message which made up the students' discourse on experiential learning.

This chapter will discuss each message in turn, beginning as before with an explanation for my choice of metaphor, followed by an exposition of my participants' stories. Other constructions, contexts and choices of truth found in the relevant literature will then be discussed and the chapter will conclude with a summary of my findings. It commences with an exploration of the first of the students' messages, namely that experiential learning resembled building a nest.

'We are building a nest'

The metaphor of choice for this message about came from Phil, who when describing the process of experiential learning, stated:

'I feel like a mother bird, collecting bits to build my nest' (Phil).

This phrase seemed highly appropriate, being synonymous with the lines of discourse in my participants' stories which recalled how they had first collected, identified, then examined, selected, arranged and even rejected remembered experiences, as part of the process of experiential learning. The students I interviewed construed *'thinking and dwelling'* as integral to this process, a term also coined by Phil to describe experiential learning. The image conjured up by these words are of the parent bird carefully constructing, settling and inhabiting their nest. It was, for me, a faithful representation of the students' accounts of experiential learning, as will be seen.

The metaphor of nest building appeared not once but throughout Phil's story to convey a particular choice of truth about the process of experiential learning. When speaking of preparing the first assessment of the professional doctorate award, (s)he said:

'As soon as I knew, which was right on the first day, that I was going to have to write a sort of critical review of my career, looking at my development, I started collecting little bits. I wasn't quite sure how they were going to fit together, but I needed to collect them ... to build the nest' (Phil).

Phil recalled how this had *'caused me to pause and look back'*, which previously (s)he would not have considered doing. Whilst seeking out *'little bits'* from which *'to build the nest'* during a visit to Southern Africa, Phil had *'the most incredible conversation'* with an elderly relative concerning gender and spiritual identity. (S)he went on to further explore in the conversation connections between these aspects of self and *'working life'*. Despite being brought up in a religious household, Phil had previously thought that faith had played no part in shaping

maybe is a link'. Phil asserted that if (s)he had not been 'doing a lot ... in my head ... thinking about who I was', the original exchange with the family member and subsequent linking of 'my religious identity with what I am doing (as a worker and person)' would not have occurred. Phil found re-sorting 'notions in your head' about self 'quite cathartic really'.

'Thinking, reading, mulling at work (and) reflecting' were also presented by another student, Pat, as a choice of truth about the process of experiential learning (s)he had engaged in whilst completing the critical review of learning.

'People at work ... say ... that I have been distracted ... they'll come in ...see me sitting there looking into outer space ... they'll say ... you're quiet ... and I'll say ... I'm thinking about something. I tend to do that a lot more ...I need to (think) and read in order to understand' (Pat).

Moreover, examining *'the experiences of years'* as well as thoughtfully sifting and ordering old and new knowledge, were all constructed by Chris as significant parts of the process of experiential learning. For Chris, this involved *'taking stock'* and *'putting a mark in the sand'*. That is, accepting or rejecting *'little bits'* of memories and ideas from the past and very necessary if, as (s)he suggested *'you don't want things to come back and bite you'*.

'We all need to be reeled in at some point ... concentrate on things we can affect and not pay too much attention to the things that ... we can't really affect ... the review of the past learning ... it's almost like taking stock ... it's almost putting a mark in the sand and saying right this is where we are now, let's move on' (Chris).

Chris compared this series of actions to using and managing patient records.

'It's almost as if you've analysed the data ... you can now save it in a secure place. It's a bit like medical notes you don't need any more ... that person's done, discharged ... send them back to medical records ' (Chris).

important to *'bury some of the bad things'* from the past, but only once those experiences had been *'acknowledge(d) ... work(ed) with ... and (brought) out into the open'*.

'A realisation that things (from the past) formed where you are currently' was presented by Sam as a significant part of the experience of experiential learning. (S)he also considered that *'actually having to ... think for a long, long time... read (about) it and put it down on paper'* were all part of the process of learning, making the *'links'* and *'building a nest'*. Like Chris, the review had made Sam *'go back to my childhood things, that I think you just bury away'* and in common with others (s)he portrayed it as *'cathartic'*.

Echoes of these choices of truth were found in Hilary's account, particularly when recalling life in the armed forces. (S)he described appreciating for the first time *'how influential it was ... the experience of the Navy'*, a realisation which came from having *'the time to explore ... go through (my) own personal management'* (Hilary).

These were my participants' stories about the process of experiential learning. Their accounts told they had collected, sifted and scrutinised evidence of their past and current histories; in some instances, rejecting, re-sorting and/or rebuilding their experiences. They spoke of all the *'thinking'* associated with the learning which emerged and their growing conviction that they were *'products of the past'*. For them, the process of experiential learning was rather like:

'Panning for gold ... it's like going back over that stretch that you've skimmed through quickly, looking for lost nuggets' (Chris).

Were these constructions replicated in the literature on experiential learning?

Constructions and contexts found in the literature

As with other discourses and messages, I started my search by re-examining texts and papers which I already had some familiarity with. Formerly, my main

educational theorists such as Kolb, Schon and Mezirow. Now I paid greater attention to their models of experiential and transformative learning, as well as the processes and components involved. Additionally, I looked at more recent literature published by other writers on these topics to see if the students' choice of truth that experiential learning was like 'building a nest' was represented there.

As I discussed in the literature review of this project report, Kolb's experiential learning theory and model of learning consisted of four stages which were as follows: first, a concrete experience; secondly, observation and reflection on the experience; thirdly, the formation of abstract concepts and generalisations; fourthly and finally, testing out of the concepts in new situations (Kolb 1984, Kolb et al 2000). The stages of Kolb's cycle were sequential, as were the eleven phases of learning identified by Mezirow in his transformation theory and model of adult learning (Mezirow 1991 pgs. 168-169). The various 'structures, elements and processes' included in the model were:

1. A disorientating dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame, sometimes turning to religion for support
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of new roles, relationships and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisionally trying out new roles
9. Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships
10. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
11. A re-integration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective

learning identified by my participants. For example, following a '*cathartic*' experience Phil had critically appraised and re-assessed beliefs (s)he had previously held on identity and self, as outlined in Mezirow's model above. However, I also found a number of differences between the students' construction of the process of experiential learning and the constructs which appeared in the literature. Both Kolb and Mezirow identified a definite starting point or catalyst which indicates the commencement of their models and cycle of learning. For Kolb it was a 'concrete experience' which begins the process, whilst a 'disorientating dilemma' marked the first phase of Mezirow's transformation learning model. The main stimulus, experience or point of departure for my students was the critical review of learning, illustrated in the extracts from their stories included above.

Furthermore, not all the participants' experiences, whether drawn from past or present times, were presented by my interviewees as 'disorientating dilemmas' or problematic. For example, Hilary's '*experience of the Navy*' was remembered with satisfaction, rather than with 'discontent' (Mezirow 1991 pg. 168). In addition, the accounts of students, such as Pat's, did not reflect the ordered, sequential progress through the learning experience put forward as a choice of truth in the work of both Kolb and Mezirow. By contrast, my interviewees' stories spoke of experiential learning as a process in which the constituent parts were connected and intertwined, rather than discrete components of a cycle or model. I found constructs which were more comparable to those presented by my students in the work of authors such as Gold and Holman (2001) and Beard and Wilson (2002). These writers alongside Jarvis (1987), Miettinen (2000) and others were all critical of what they considered to be the 'reductionist' approach represented by Kolb's cycle. Mezirow's model, although admittedly 'general, abstract and idealized' (Mezirow, Taylor and Associates 2009 pg. 21), likewise positioned learning as a rather linear process (De Weerd et al 2006). My participants' experiences and choices of truth appeared at odds with the constructions of the process of experiential learning as described in the works of Kolb and Mezirow. Beard and Wilson's use of a combination lock to illustrate an alternative conceptual framework for experiential learning provided an image

of the 'tumblers' differed from those identified by the authors (Beard and Wilson 2002 pg. 4).

There were numerous references in my interviewees' stories to 'thinking and dwelling' and all that this entailed for them. I turned my attention next to look for evidence of any repetition or displacement of this line of discourse, extending my search to include texts on reflection and metacognition. Phil had stated that the process of '*thinking and dwelling*' involved '*collecting*' experiences and, after a period of exploration or '*doing a lot in my head*', '*linking*' those experiences together. Whilst Kolb's experiential learning cycle does make reference to reflection and interpretation, there is not the same emphasis on cognition as appears in the stories of Phil and the other students. Conversely, the core elements of transformative learning as discussed more recently by Taylor (2009) better reflect the participants' constructions. Taylor's model incorporates a number of components such as the promotion of critical reflection and dialogue with self and others. The former includes, critical reflection on the 'content, process and premise' of the perception of prior and/or current experiences. That is, thoughtful exploration on *what* is perceived, thought, felt and acted upon; *how* performance and function is perceived; *why* we perceive (Taylor 2009 pg. 7). Dialogue with self and others is the medium and arena where reflection is played out; where evidence and experiences are examined, weighed and validated or not (Taylor 2009 pg. 9). This 'dialogic process and model' (after Valsiner and Van der Veer 2002) provides a theoretical representation of transformative experiential learning which replicates some of the choices of truth found in my students' accounts. It still fails to capture the importance which they placed on the 'thinking' or cognitive part of their experiential learning experience.

I found depictions which bore closer resemblance to the participants' discourse in the educational psychology literature on metacognition, in which cognition about cognition or thinking about thinking has been defined as 'thinking about one's own perceiving, understanding (and) remembering' (Papaleontiou-Louca 2003 pg. 10). Additionally, metacognition is considered to involve both self-

responding to one's own thinking, all of which were constructions repeated in my interviewees' stories, not least by Hilary who had spoken of the opportunity which experiential learning afforded to think, dwell and *'go through (my) own personal management'*.

Message 2

'Experiential learning is emotional labour'

As a student of the social sciences, I was familiar with the term emotional labour, originally coined by Hochschild (1983, 1989) to describe how workers managed their own emotions in order to influence the feelings of others. Furthermore, I had come to realise through the writings of Oakley (1974 and 1992) and Graham (1983) that emotional labour was about the emotional cost of caring work, both in and outside the home. Early on in my reading of my participants' stories, I decided to use this phrase as a metaphor for the second message. The students repeatedly constructed the experience of experiential learning as *'hard'* work, which although *'exciting'* for some was more frequently perceived as *'painful'* and brought *'inner turmoil'* to others. For my participants the experience of experiential learning was not just a process; it was also emotional labour.

Alex's dominant choice of truth about experiential learning was that it was *'hard, I can't think of another word to describe it'*, whilst Phil spoke of it requiring *'a lot of work in my head'*. Similarly, although Chris presented the critical review of past experiences as *'really, really beneficial'*, (s)he had found the process of *'looking at ... highlighting some of the things that bother me ... acknowledging them'* and finally *'working'* with the experiences as *'hard'*. Chris compared the work of experiential learning to the task of spinning.

'I (would) think about things going back thirty years, you know on probably a daily basis ... just spin(ning) certain events through' (Chris).

emphatically *'I love it'*. Sam was amongst a minority of participants who portrayed the emotional experience of this type of learning in positive terms.

Phil was *'excited'* by experiential learning, yet also presented it as *'overwhelming'*, employing the same adjective (s)he had used to describe the experience of the professional doctorate award.

'This really has hit me for six ... this experiential learning ... thrown me into inner turmoil' (Phil).

For Alex *'at the beginning'* experiential learning was *'too emotional, too personal'* and although over time s(he) construed that the experience as *'much better'*, Alex still felt as if (s)he was having to *'work'* at and *'pull out'* relevant memories and information. When speaking to a fellow student about these experiences, Alex recalled saying that the *'work is so hard for me'*. Hilary's choice of truth was similar. (S)he referred to experiential learning as *'mind blowing'* and *'very difficult'*, particularly when this involved *'facing up to your gaps'* (Hilary) as discussed earlier.

'Going back', that is, recollecting and critically re-examining one's personal, professional and scholarly past was deemed by Sam as *'very uncomfortable for me you know and I had nothing really traumatic ... to deal with'*. Nevertheless, the review had *'made me go back to my childhood things'* to search for the experiences *'that I think you just bury away'* (Sam).

Sam constructed the process of *'going back'* and seeking out the *'buried things'* as *'pain and torment'*, requiring my participant to *'dig away'* to expose the *'story'*. For Sam, this experience of emotional labour was presented as difficult but worthwhile because the story was *'really you'*.

'You've gone through all the pain and the torment of having to dig away at it, but ... it's your story, isn't it? it really is you' (Sam).

hard experience. This was their choice of truth not only for themselves but also for other members of their cohort. Chris recalled how all the students had fought to understand their past experiences:

'The one big thing I can remember about module one is looking for clarification ... we were all, at one stage or another, fighting for some understanding (of our experiences)' (Chris).

Alex spoke of meeting with fellow students to share their thoughts and feelings about the critical review of learning.

'When I arrived ... we sat together and talked ... I found that I was drawn into their emotion ... and I never experienced that in any piece of work that I ever had to do before' (Alex).

Pat was also somewhat taken aback by the feelings (s)he stated (s)he had observed in members of the professional doctorate student group, as they narrated the stories of their past experiences.

'Some of them certainly found it quite emotional to relay that to the rest of us and I was quite surprised by that' (Pat).

During class discussions of the review, Sam also noted *'it is hard for people, you know'*. Chris considered that the emotional response of students was due, in part, to unfamiliarity with this level and depth of experiential learning.

'I just don't think any of us (had) ever taken a serious ... retrospective look at where we've been, you know, and how this has brought us to the stage of life that we're currently (at) and I think some of it is quite painful' (Chris).

Experiential learning for my participants was portrayed as affecting and for some *'the hardest thing I've ever had to do'* (Alex). This was a significant

the literature or whether I would find other truths presented therein.

Constructions and contexts found in the literature

I explored a number of texts and journals drawn from the fields of adult education and educational psychology. I discovered that they contained a degree of unanimity regarding the significance of the role which feelings and emotions can play in learning in general and experiential learning in particular (Boud and Miller 1997, Beard and Wilson 2002, Golombek and Johnson 2004, Moon 2006, Moore and Kuol 2007). For example, from the results of their inquiry into teachers' experiences of professional development, Golombek and Johnson (2004) concluded that emotions and emotional tensions were frequently the 'starting point' of experiential learning. Additionally, Boud and Miller (1997) constructed the affective as being 'the most powerful' determinant of the outcome of learning experiences for students.

The necessity for tutors to pay attention to the emotional response of higher education students to their learning, both during and after the learning experience, was a conclusion drawn by a number of commentators. Moore and Kuol (2007) highlighted the importance of the emotional dimensions of all types of educational experiences, citing specific examples of case studies relating to experiential learning in the published account of their research into 'excellent teaching'. Together with Dirkx (2006), their choice of truth was that neglect by teachers of their students' emotions may cause them to pass over learning opportunities which had the potential to facilitate powerful 'transformative learning' (Moore and Kuol 2007 pg. 88). Similarly, Brockbank and McGill (1998) stressed that facilitators of experiential learning and reflective practice should actively manage the expression of emotion by learners in order to maximise positive learning opportunities. Furthermore, Beard and Wilson (2002) in their handbook on experiential learning emphasised that students' emotions should be 'harnessed' to enlarge learning, knowledge, understanding and skill acquisition. Their combination lock model, which devotes one 'tumbler' to the affective, reflects their choice of truth on the role which experiential learning can

best effect.

Moon (2006) focussed on the roles played by emotions in the learning process, constructing emotions as the subject of the learning experience, as well as drawing attention to the positive and negative influence emotional processes can play in reflective and experiential learning.

However, whilst the literature reviewed made mention of the emotions of learners and advised tutors how to 'manage' them in order to maximise their students' learning, I was unable to unearth accounts which constructed experiential learning itself in affective terms. Nor was it construed as hard and costly work or labour. Even when writing of the 'emancipatory dimensions' of transformative learning and critical reflection which can 'free' the student from 'frames of learning that limit or distort communication and understanding' Mezirow (1998 pgs. 191-192) made no reference to this as being an emotional experience. My participants' conversations about experiential learning were conversations about feelings *and* work; when they spoke about experiential learning they were talking about emotion *and* labour (after Graham 1983). The professional doctorate students I had interviewed had assembled a series of truths on the process and experience of experiential learning, portraying it as thoughtful, intricate and emotional work. They also considered that experiential learning had something of the 'everyday' about it; an ordinary happening located in their 'everyday' lives. This construction constitutes the third of the students' message on experiential learning and will now be discussed.

Message 3

'Experiential learning is an everyday happening'

Yet again the metaphor selected to describe this message, came directly from my participants' stories. It was a term used by one of the students to refer to the part played by experiential learning in peoples' lives. 'Everyday' implies routine, regular, unremarkable and ordinary. The word is frequently used to characterise tasks or occurrences which are the lot of 'everyman'. The message

my participants' accounts. Whilst not all of the students used this as a choice of truth, those who did considered it to be important to themselves and to 'everybody'.

For Pat, the author of the term 'everyday', experiential learning was a daily event.

'If you're looking at experiential learning, then you learn something (through experiences) ... everyday' (Pat).

(S)he used an example from professional practice to illustrate this line of truth.

'I've learnt today from (the stories of) ... the students that I've just taught. They've taught me things that I didn't know before' (Pat).

Pat went on to state that (s)he considered experiential learning to be, not only an everyday event, but a universal happening, necessary for human development.

'I think you can't go through life without learning experientially ... it's the thing that everybody does, and they may not be aware of it, and it may not be formalised ... but it is there ... how else could we walk and talk?' (Pat).

These themes were also represented in Chris's account. (S)he drew upon stories of parenting to support the message that experiential learning is a requisite for life; something '*we all do*'. Chris began, however, by repeating Pat's choice of truth that for many people experiential learning went un-recognised.

'I think we do it more than we think ... (it's) subconscious almost' (Chris).

(S)he said experiential learning was what:

suppose as humans ... is using what we've learnt in the past through experience to shape the future and I suppose it's what we try and do with our children listen to what I've done, listen what I'm trying to tell you, so you can benefit from that ... but really I think we've all got to go out and find our own experiences and make sense of them ... a personal sense and what it means to us' (Chris).

Additionally, Chris said that reflecting on and learning from experiences was now a 'constant', in the daily exercise regime (s)he undertook.

'Experiential learning helps me to look ... at things that did go well and not focus too much on things that didn't (and) learn from them ... I constantly ... go over things ... it helps me make sense of it; makes me feel better ... I do quite a bit of running and I'll go for a run and before I go for a run I'll think about ... what I want to think about while I'm out running ... and work it through' (Chris).

Sharing experiences and learning from them was also constructed by Jo as a facet of regular working life. Jo told of how (s)he used experiential learning and story-telling as a means of problem-solving with the team (s)he had responsibility for at work.

'I found ways and means ways that suit me of telling a story. It's encouraging other people to ... (relate) the way they've gone through something ... to share a problem they're having ... describing them to the group ... we certainly do work in that way. Individual(s) ... feel easier with each other because they have their own weaknesses and it works for them and me' (Jo).

Sam also constructed experiential learning as an everyday feature of life as an educator, 'we tell our students to do (it) all the time'. Furthermore, Sam considered that such were the benefits of experiential learning that it was something 'everybody should do'.

was an everyday happening, which occurred in multiple locations and part of 'being human'. According to these students, experiential learning was something which everyone did or should participate in. I turned to the literature for evidence of a similar discourse around experiential learning.

Constructions and contexts found in the literature

On this occasion my attention was drawn to texts and journals on adult education, in addition to those from the occupational and professional body of literature. I looked in particular for constructions reflecting the students' perceptions that experiential learning was something which '*we all do*', on an informal, often daily basis and a necessary ingredient of living.

Usher (1993) was one of the few writers I located who used the term 'everyday' in the context and construction of a discourse on experiential learning. In what Boud termed a deliberate 'challenge' to theorists and educationalists (Boud et al 1993 pg.128), Usher chose to distinguish between 'learning from experience' which he portrayed as occurring 'in everyday contexts as part of day-to-day life' and experiential learning. Using Foucault's ideas on discourse (Foucault 1972), Usher presented experiential learning as 'a key element of a discourse' or body of knowledge on experiential learning which has the 'everyday process' of learning from experience as its 'subject' (Usher 1993 pg. 169). He inferred that through the auspices of experiential learning, and especially when stories of experiences are told, then meaning and understanding about day-to-day living will result. My participants did not make this distinction. For them, learning in and from the everyday experiences and contexts of living was experiential learning

I went on to identify a number of reports on studies conducted inside and outside the education setting concerning the application of concepts and models of experiential learning and reflection to paid and unpaid working life. However, none of the authors constructed these experiences of employment as 'everyday', although they were clearly part of each of their participants' daily lives. A recent inquiry, exploring the perceptions of students enrolled onto on-

located within the university sector (Guthrie and McCracken 2010). The authors encouraged the learners to use experiences drawn from their daily lives where they were employed as interns and community-based workers to evaluate 'meaningful learning' (pg. 1). Guthrie and McCracken's chosen construct was that that 'experiential and reflective pedagogies have the potential to dramatically facilitate and extend significant learning' for students about their everyday worlds of work (pg. 15).

A critical review of the literature on service and community-based learning reached the same conclusion as Guthrie and McCracken on the efficacy of these approaches to learning (Mooney and Edwards 2001). Service and community based-learning were considered by the authors of the review to come under the 'rubric' of experiential learning, given that they all claim to owe some of their pedagogic roots to the thinking of Dewey and Freire. Much of the literature discussed by Mooney and Edwards had examined students' perceptions of using service and community based-learning theories to explore their day to day experiences of work and volunteering. This shared choice of truth around the educational advantages of experiential and related forms of adult learning was in accord with the literature I had originally reviewed to inform the focus and design of my inquiry. Writers cited in Chapter One of this report such as Miers (2002), Stephen-Haynes (2004) and Kelly et al (2005) all reiterated this same perception. Likewise, studies undertaken in the everyday world of the workplace and areas of professional practice, such as nursing (Jarvis 1992), teaching (Pollard and Trigg 1997), coaching and mentoring (Jackson 2004), business and banking (Brookfield 2009), all repeated this construction of the 'curricula benefits' of experiential learning when applied in the practicum (Mooney and Edwards 2001 pg. 1). That is, experiential learning facilitated the development of academic, practice and work-related knowledge and skills. Significant for my project was that these researchers and commentators considered their participants' daily experiences of study, placements, practice and employment to be 'everyday' rather than the learning activity itself. In contrast, my interviewees constructed experiential learning, rather than its objects, as 'everyday'.

students' choice of truth about the universality of experiential learning, portrayed by them as '*something which everyone does*'. I did, however, discover an instance of one learner who was reported as saying of experiential learning and reflection 'this has been so applicable to life' (Guthrie and McCracken 2010 pg. 11). For this learner, as well as for my participants, this type of adult learning was an ordinary, everyday occurrence, but it could also be extraordinary, rather like 'black magic' in its impact and effect. This was the students' fourth and final component of their discourse on experiential learning.

Message 4

'Experiential learning is like black magic'

'Black magic' may appear an unusual choice of metaphor for this message as the term usually denotes an act 'attempted for evil or devilish purposes' (COD 1990 pg. 113). However, it was the phrase employed by one of the students, comparing the teaching method (s)he used as a climbing instructor to experiential learning. Pat's contention was that the educational approaches drawn upon were one and the same. (S)he considered that both were akin to 'black magic' in the effect and affect they had on participating learners. They made the seemingly impossible happen, prompting unexpected changes in the behaviour, skills and perceptions of people. The dictionary definition of 'magic' makes reference to all these attributes. It also mentions the amazing, astonishing and powerful qualities of magic (COD 1990 pg. 712). My participants' stories spoke of experiential learning as '*unbelievable*', '*cathartic*' and '*fantastic*' in its impact on their lives and I decided that 'black magic' was, barring its satanic connotations, a suitable metaphor to use. I rejected the familiar and more prosaic term 'transformative' to represent this line of discourse, preferring to utilise words which came directly from the account of one of my participants and more faithfully reflected the students' telling of their stories. I begin this message with the students' accounts of the impact of experiential learning on their perceptions and actions as professional people.

describe the learning and teaching methods (s)he had used as a climbing instructor and teacher of radiography to remarkable effect. Pat explained how as a novice climber, (s)he had been actively involved with experiential learning for the first time, although (s)he had yet to 'label' it as such. The experience proved to be:

'A turning point for me because within a year I was an instructor and I just took to it like a duck to water' (Pat).

That which Pat had thought was 'previously unattainable' became 'quite easy for me'. (S)he felt that this belief extended beyond climbing into other areas of life. Pat now had:

'The self confidence to be able to do ...things that previously I hadn't thought possible ... because I thought if I can do that (rock climbing), I can do anything' (Pat).

When undertaking a teaching course, Pat obtained a label and theoretical framework for the educational approach s(he) had benefitted from using. Learning from and about experiential learning 'changed everything'. Pat spoke of how (s)he altered 'entirely' the teaching style (s)he used in the class room and at the rock face. The changes were not confined to education. Pat considered that the insight and understanding (s)he had gained by using experiential learning as a teacher had:

'Changed my attitude to life ... it changed everything ... everyone was telling me ... when I went back into a hospital environment after this period of teaching and climbing ... you're a different (person) ... you're totally different to the one that left here ... three years ago' (Pat).

In this instance Pat's choice of truth, that experiential learning was like black magic, changing everything including work practices, related to memories from the past. For another student, Phil, experiential learning was 'having an

(s)he had begun to keep a diary of day-to-day experiences.

'I started looking at what I was writing in my reflective diary and I actually do talk about the recognition I receive (at work) ... I don't think I acknowledged (before) ... how important it is to me to be valued' (Phil)

Phil considered that this insight had arisen directly from the review process. (S)he cited other examples of the 'exciting' differences and benefits which maintaining a diary was having at work. Reflections recorded there were viewed as catalysts, prompting Phil to look at some of the professional literature and to 're-think' aspects of practice.

'And suddenly I read an article about all the difficulties with evidence based practice. I never even thought this through before. I suddenly thought I'm propping up a system I'm not even sure I believe in ... what am I doing? So I've had to start re-thinking what I'm doing (in practice)' (Phil)

For Sam, experiential learning was 'fantastic', altering Sam's whole 'professional outlook'. (S)he presented various stories of drawing upon learning in and through experiences when working first as a radiographer and latterly as a teacher. In one part of the account relating to Sam's early career, (s)he described deliberately suppressing the use of learning from personal experiences in encounters with patients. This was part of the professional behaviour (s)he adopted in the radiography department. Concentrating on 'technical accuracy' was conveyed by Sam as being 'part of surviving' which came with costs to practitioner and patient alike.

'Very early on I learnt to compartmentalise ... when I put (on) my uniform that became my professional outlook. I became this other person ... I think I always knew ... that this environment that I virtually lived in and agreed with, all this technical accuracy, really wasn't a good place for the patient ... (but) you weren't allowed to bring your own experiences ... to my job' (Sam).

(my) *knowledge development*' for the review of learning, (s)he had realised that *'I'd never really fastened that up ... not really made that link'*. Sam's choice of truth was that (s)he was *'much better now'* at exploring and using learning from experiences whilst working in education *'because I've had to'*. Consequently:

'It's changed how I look at experiences ... how I teach. I engage with a lot of professionals from across a number of fields ... I encourage people to develop and there is a lot of openness, because I've had to' (Sam).

Hilary constructed as *'utterly incredible'* the insights which (s)he considered experiential learning in the form of the critical review had brought to the understanding of people, their utilization of knowledge and potential impact on physiotherapy practice. These were presented as new perceptions which *'I just found out'* and:

'It was just amazing to me ... (to learn) there is so much inherent knowledge within people that isn't allowed to come out' (Hilary).

Reflecting on experiences at work (s)he considered that all too frequently:

'The working environment or the approach that's taken (by the therapist) doesn't facilitate people. You just realise actually they (the patients) know loads and they probably instinctively know what the best way to do something is' (Hilary).

Hilary shared this fresh understanding with the team (s)he had responsibility for, Hilary's own practice was reviewed and refreshed by these experiences. (S)he rediscovered through this process *'that I still do think that the most exciting thing I love is working with patients'* (Hilary).

The black magic effect of their experiences of experiential learning was not confined to my participants' professional lives; it also impacted on them as scholars and people. They attributed most of these *'unbelievable'* changes in

experiential learning.

Phil had, as discussed earlier in this chapter, chosen to record interviews with elderly family members, to explore, amongst other things:

'My origins ...it's something I been intending to do for a number of years ... I don't think I would actually have done that interview if I hadn't been thinking about the critical review' (Phil).

(S)he portrayed the interview as leading to an altered reading of memories of the past. Phil now felt differently about them. Thoughts which previously:

'Had been so enormous for me and something I carried with me for nearly 55 years, my (family) could hardly remember ... didn't quite have the same strength for the rest of the family' (Phil).

Similarly, Jo stated that re-calling, recording and reflecting upon past and current experiences during preparation of the first assignment of the professional doctorate programme had *'helped me as a person'*. As a result of *'that process of exploration'*, (s)he re-constructed previously-held beliefs about self as *'utter rubbish'*. Jo went on to say:

'My approach to things is different ... it (experiential learning) changes your perspective on things and broadens your outlook' (Jo).

Significantly for Jo, (s)he now felt that (s)he had acquired *'helpful labels for myself that I didn't have before'*.

The stories of Pat and Chris provided more details about the changes which occurred both during and after the critical review of learning. They conveyed these alterations to self as *'positives'* and *'benefits'* which were unsought and unexpected.

learning and furthermore these differences had been noted by Pat's partner. (S)he stated that the review had:

'Brought up things that made me think more about the way that I was with other people ... my (partner) would tell you that I am one of the most uncommunicative people around ... one weekend I said ... I been reflecting about this and I'm very sorry about this ... (my partner) said by god where did that come from? (Pat).

Apart from the impact on Pat's proficiency as a climber, (s)he also constructed experiential learning as having a magic effect on a further favoured leisure activity. As an expert skier, Pat considered that experiential learning had

'Affected my skiing as well ... I'm thinking, I really can't ski this year. Why can't I ski this year? I'm thinking ... I must be doing something wrong. So then ... I go away at the end of the first day and I think tomorrow I'm going to use my critical thinking skills to analyse where I'm going wrong and then correct it the next day, and after that I was fine!' (Pat).

For Chris, conducting the critical review of learning had:

'Really opened my eyes to how we all are products of our experience ... we are all so affected on a daily basis by the things that happen' (Chris).

(S)he constructed *'look(ing) at how the experiences of years previously had shaped me'* as *'unbelievable'*, and considered that *'the real art'* for people was *'using what we've learnt in the past, through experience, to shape the future'* (Chris).

Echoing the words of other students, Alex presented the review as *'fantastic'* and:

viewed the world ... and never viewed what I do like that before' (Alex).

Alex's choice of truth was that experiential learning was more than transformative; it was personally *'amazing'*. (S)he considered that *'writing a project about myself'* had *'certainly broadened my thought processes ... reading ... and actually interested me in other things'*. Sam presented a similar construction; s(he described preparing and writing the review as *'an awakening experience'*, *'very cathartic'* and *'very refreshing'*. (S)he said:

'I think I'd forgotten the joy of writing and the joy of language ... I just thought, I really like this and why haven't I done this for twenty years?' (Sam).

Experiential learning was portrayed by Sam as the black magic responsible for this release of what she viewed as *'part of me'*. (S)he described how:

'Part of me was always in here, just being suppressed and hidden away because (as a radiographer) it wasn't encouraged ... writing that first assignment has taken a disproportionate amount of time. I should tell you, I'm still writing it now ... but it has taken a long, long time because, well, I'm just going to do it, I'm going to write ... it's so important to me ...it is very cathartic' (Sam).

The students' stories repeatedly told of the *'unbelievably fantastic'* experience which for them was experiential learning. Certainly, they were transformed and emancipated through and by their experiences (Mezirow 1991), but their lines of discourse for this message spoke of happenings which were powerful, magical encounters. What did the literature have to say?

Constructions and contexts found in the literature

Although I had chosen not to use the term *'transformative'* to convey my participants' final message on experiential learning, I did examine the commentaries and evidence on transformative as well as experiential and other associated types of learning, when searching for repeated, renewed and

psychology and psychotherapy academic communities to inform my deliberations.

The students' stories had, as I conveyed previously, told of instances where their experiences of experiential learning had '*changed everything*' for them. I had little difficulty locating representations in the literature which bore some resemblance to my interviewees' construction that experiential learning, as well as the professional doctorate award itself, acted as an agent of change. Reference has already been made to this choice of truth in my discussion of the theoretical frameworks of Kolb, Schon, Mezirow and Boud during Chapter One of this project report. This choice of truth was also repeated in papers which I examined for the original literature review and used to inform earlier sections of this chapter. They comprised work from the worlds of nursing (Jarvis 1992, Johns 1993, Palmer et al 1993), education (Pollard and Trigg 1997, Guthrie and McCracken 2010) and coaching and mentoring (Beard and Wilson 2002, Jackson 2004), to name but a few. This literature recorded alterations in their interviewees' knowledge, practice and skills, and attributed them to the impact of experiential learning.

Mezirow and Taylor's recent text on transformative learning in practice contained a number of case studies reporting change and transformation amongst participants found in community, work and educational settings (Mezirow, Taylor and Associates 2009). Examples of perspective and behavioural changes noted by their contributors included improved receptiveness amongst interviewees to culturally responsive education (Tisdell and Tolliver 2009), engagement in critical reflection by workers in 'Corporate America' (Brookfield 2009) and employment for previously out of work people as a result of participating in 'Farmer Field Schools' in rural Africa (Duveskog and Friis-Hansen 2009). The authors of these very diverse case studies all construct experiential and transformative learning as potential forces for transformation and change.

on developing the international and cultural leadership (ICL) skills of business and management students, repeated the same choice of truth. She reported that her participants supported 'experiential ways of learning', considering that this approach to adult learning had the power to develop new ways of thinking amongst learners about ICL. Likewise, Driver (2010) writing in the psychoanalytical literature conveyed a similar message about experiential learning's positive facilitation of identity emancipation and transformation. Her paper was based on analysis of secondary data generated from a number of earlier studies into psychotherapy students' learning experiences. All the literature discussed thus far, repeats something of my students' construction of experiential learning as an agent of change. However there appeared to be a missing dimension in the stories of transformation reported in the texts and journals I reviewed; an omission which gave legitimacy to my choice of 'black magic' as a suitable metaphor for this message.

In their reflections about using experiential learning with learners, Tisdell and Tolliver (2009 pg. 98) recorded how 'surprising and moving' were their students' accounts of 'meaning-making' on cultural aspects of their lives. When Tisdell and Tolliver wrote of the 'unexpected', they were referring to the learners' stories and not to the learning experience itself. In the literature I examined, I did not find representation of the '*unexpected*' and '*utterly incredible*' construct which was part of my participants' discourse on experiential learning. A report of an enquiry into postgraduate management students' views of self-directed and experiential learning methods noted that those interviewed and classified as 'enthusiasts of self-directed learning' constructed 'themes of enjoyment and excitement' about this type of learning. In contrast, 'reluctance and reservation' were said to be features of the responses of the 'non-enthusiasts' (Stansfield 1996 pg. 437). The author made no specific comments on experiential learning, nor did she distinguish between experiential and self-directed learning in her discussions. The reported message of the 'enthusiasts' only replicated in part my interviewees' construct and lacked any repetition of their use of magical language and imagery. My participants had presented experiential learning as an experience which had made the '*previously impossible ... possible*' (Pat).

effects of experiential learning permeated well beyond the academe and practicum into all areas of their lives, including leisure activities, relationships and their construct of self. The breadth of the '*amazing*' influence of experiential learning on a student group was once again a message which was not reproduced in the literature I examined.

Conclusion

This final chapter in Part II of the project report has explored the professional doctorate students' discourse on experiential learning. The participants' messages, built from the stories of their experiences of this type of adult learning spoke of a process of learning which was similar to building a nest. It proved to be emotionally affective and '*very hard work*'. They constructed experiential learning as being an everyday event for Everyman; akin to black magic or 'the stuff of which dreams are made on' (The Tempest: Act 4 Scene 1 Lines 156 -157).

My search for repeated, renewed and alternative constructions took me into some familiar but also very diverse literature. There I found elements of the students' choices of truth replicated, for example in the case of metacognition (Message 1) and the potential for experiential learning to generate change and transformation (Message 4). However, there was under-representation of other parts of my participants' discourse in the texts and journals I reviewed. The literature on emotional labour and the everyday proved illustrative of this. Here, there was mention of emotions, feelings and the everyday, but these constructions had been applied to other aspects of experiential learning than those presented by the learners I interviewed. Finally, I could find little or no replication of the students' message on the 'black magic' quality of experiential learning.

This proved to be a challenging chapter to write, not least because of the disparate bodies of evidence I scrutinised as part of its construction. It was also very significant as its completion marked the ending of my presentation and discussion of the major discourses emerging from the analysis of the

The third and final part of this project report explores what can be learnt from the discourses and from the study itself. In addition, it identifies the implications for educationalists, researchers, employers and learners which came from the findings of this work based inquiry.

*'Today we have naming of parts. Yesterday,
We had daily cleaning. And tomorrow morning,
We shall have what to do after firing. But today,
We have the naming of parts.'*

(From 'Naming of Parts' by Henry Reed)

Chapter Six: A Discussion:

Introduction

It was stated both in the recent descriptor issued by the QAA for doctorate qualifications and in the professional doctorate programme specification from my own awarding institution that doctorates would be awarded to candidates who demonstrate their contribution to 'the creation of new knowledge, through original research or advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline and merit publication' (SHU 2003 pg. 5, QAA 2008 pg. 23). Additionally, in commenting on the final project report the university laid down that students should acknowledge 'the strengths and weaknesses of the project's findings', as well as identifying any 'obvious and unusual or subtle elements of the research' (SHU 2003 pg. 56) As I prepared the final chapter of my report, I was mindful that its structure, content and lines of 'persuasion' would have to address these requirements as well as answer the question posed at the end of Chapter Five which asked what has been learnt from the discourses and what are the implications for those whose academic, professional and personal worlds are professional doctorate programmes and experiential learning?. Furthermore, I wanted to ensure that throughout, I continued to follow Foucault's maxim and make clear in my discussions what knowledge or choices of truth I was 'repeating, renewing or displacing' (after Foucault 1981 pg. 70)

This chapter will begin by summarising the learning which has emerged thus far from the discourses about professional doctorate people, professional doctoral awards and experiential learning. It will go on to identify and discuss further 'past, present and new learning' which has come from my scrutiny of the articulated 'assemblages' or 'dispositifs' (Foucault 1972, Deleuze 1992). The chapter will then focus on the lessons which arose from the project itself, including its strengths and limitations or 'les folies' of its methods and findings. Finally, suggestions will be made as to what inferences can be construed for key stakeholders, who include the students of professional doctorates themselves.

Learning thus far

My analysis of the professional doctorate students' stories and construction of the three main discourses to come out of their accounts had shown them to be successful, resilient, determined people, who had been forged and shaped by diverse adversities into a '*great bunch*' of individuals. My participants constructed themselves as lucky in their personal and professional lives, and also considered that good fortune had played its part in them becoming 'accidental tourists' on the professional doctorate award. Their particular doctoral programme although perceived by the students as 'ideal' was also presented by them as having something of the 'accidental' about it. They had almost stumbled upon it as a consequence of happenstance. These confident, successful people, most of whom were in the early stages of their doctoral studies, presented themselves as 'shaky', *un-academic* professionals. However, one of the choices of truth put forward by my interviewees suggested that they considered the professional doctorate was transforming them as people, employees and learners. They presented the structure, content and organisation of the award as instrumental in facilitating change, but more significantly the students spoke of the role played by the professional doctorate course team and their peers in supporting their transformation. My participants had all experienced what was termed by one of them as 'the coronation effect'. As for experiential learning, it was very hard, emotional work; a metacognitive act, akin to nest-building. For these students, this type of learning was part of their everyday lives. Lastly but importantly, experiential learning was more than transformative; it was like '*black magic*', changing their lives in inexplicable and unimagined ways. To what extent these choices of truth repeat, renew and displace existing constructions in the literature has already been identified in Part II of this report. The implications of these constructions will be discussed later in this chapter.

Past, present and new learning:

There were, however, additional lessons to be learnt. Gazing once again at the completed discourses and tracing the lines of their construction, I identified a

discursive structures. It was these which I believed constituted some of the most important learning to emerge from my project and would contribute to 'the creation of new knowledge'.

'Extra-ordinary people'

The first truth was something of a paradox. Examining the discourses built from the accounts of my participants, these '*basic, ordinary people*' (after Alex's story) were revealed as '*extra-ordinary*' individuals and '*worthy of merit*'. Extraordinary signifies a quality or an object which is '*remarkable, deserving of attention and comment and in addition may imply 'going beyond the ordinary' or 'employed for a special purpose*' (COD 1990 pg. 415). In several respects, the people I interviewed presented as ordinary rather than extraordinary. They described themselves and their personal histories as '*nothing special*' (Sam). They all held positions of leadership and seniority within their employing organisations, but this is not unusual. Indeed it is an ordinary state of affairs for professional doctorate people. Entry onto their award and similar courses is normally reserved for those who are experienced health and social care practitioners, working at the forefront of their profession and my participants were no exception. Yet here lies a contradiction; for whilst amongst their peers in the cohort they were ordinary, in the context of their professional worlds, these students and all other professional doctorate students were *extra-ordinary*. As people '*employed for a special purpose*', their positions, experience and expertise in the practicum sets them apart.

Furthermore, whilst my participants may have presented their identity of self as unremarkable, their stories of success, resilience and determination in the face of adversity reveal another facet, another paradox. Their histories demonstrated that they were individuals who had '*achieved a lot*' and thus far '*got everything*' they wanted (Pat). Likewise, their stories had portrayed them as people who were motivated, persisted and had a strong will to learn and to succeed: '*I'll always do everything to one hundred percent effort ... I don't want to fail*' (Chris). The participants also showed what *extra-ordinary* people they were by the support and '*inspiration*' (Hilary) they gave to each other once they were

and felt that *'there's something more (about) this group'* than they had experienced with students on other programmes of study, for *'we are living each others' lives a little bit'* (Alex).

The revelation of these characteristics in the discourses showed how *extra-ordinary* these professional doctorate people were. This is not an altogether new construction as the lines of discourse which trace the strength of will and persistence of adult and doctoral learners had been partly described and documented elsewhere in the literature (Wellington and Sikes 2006, Barnett 2007). However, it remains a significant choice of truth as it expands our picture and knowledge of these *extra-ordinary* professional doctorate people and is built from their own stories.

'The magic of it all'

Secondly, as I considered the 'assemblages', I became aware that the message about black magic, originally discussed in Chapter Five, was not confined to the discourse on experiential learning. Rather, the 'noises, sounds and sweet airs' of 'this rough magic' was present in all three (The Tempest: Act 3 Scene 2 Lines 130-131). Earlier in Chapter Five, I had previously suggested that magic made 'the seemingly impossible happen, prompting unexpected changes'. I had also argued that it was more than 'transformative'; it was 'amazing, astonishing and very powerful' and my participants had certainly constructed their experiences of experiential learning as 'fantastic' and just like black magic (COD 1990 pgs. 712). My re-reading of the completed discourses showed a synergy between this message and the students' perception of themselves as 'lucky' people. Accounts of their surprising and often unforeseen 'stroll' into new employment and promotion were used to exemplify their status as 'lucky people'.

A further synergy existed between the students' depiction of experiential learning as 'black magic' and the encounters which contributed to my participants' enrolment as 'accidental' students on the professional doctorate programme. Chris had spoken of a startling and *'unexpected crossing of paths'*;

number of *'complete flukes'*.

Finally, the students frequently used magical terms and 'sweet airs' when speaking of the professional doctoral award, the teaching team and their peers. They constructed all three as not merely 'transformative' but rather as *'absolutely fantastic'* (Chris). There appeared to be a fortuitous, magical coming together, not merely of *'fantastic'* students and staff, but also of an equally *'fantastic'* professional doctorate award and my interviewees' *'amazing'* experiences of experiential learning. This close alignment and the sheer magic of it all had succeeded in *'turning'* the participants of my study *'upside down'* (Alex) as they *'panned for gold'* (Chris). This second choice of truth to come out of my scrutiny of the discourses appears to be new learning, not as yet repeated in the constructions found in the texts, papers and journal articles I had reviewed for the project and accompanying report.

'The emotion of it all'

Arguably, the most important learning to come from the three key discourses concerned emotion. It was a theme which once again ran powerfully throughout the students' stories and formed a construct of note in each dispositif. Emotion was subject, object, verb *and* metaphor (after Mezirow 1991 pg. 5).

The people I interviewed had used affective language to express positively and negatively their feelings concerning life events, their professional doctorate studentship and, of course, the experience of experiential learning. Alex had spoken of the ill-health and subsequent change in employment circumstances (s)he had encountered as *'disappointing ... demoralising'*, resulting in Alex experiencing a *'huge lack of confidence'*. Hilary had felt *'very frustrated ... (and) anxious'* as a postgraduate student, emotions replicated in the students' accounts of their fears and concerns about being professional doctorate learners. *'It's very, very overwhelming'* Phil had remarked and Pat had spoken of *'fear'* far greater than anything which (s)he had known when *'under fire and stuff'*, as a member of the armed forces. As for experiential learning, although some students had found it *'exciting'* (Phil) and *'mind blowing'* (Hilary), others

(Sam) and *'quite, quite painful'* (Alex). The critical review of learning was a focal point in their accounts about experiential learning yet something few of them had ever undertaken *'seriously'* before (Chris). Nevertheless, it was considered to be *'the hardest thing'* some of my participants had *'ever had to do'*, emotionally and cognitively.

All in all, Chris's phrase *'it's a big melting pot of emotions'* seemed a very apt metaphor for this important lesson. I should not have been surprised by the strength of the theme on the affective. First, I had asked the students to tell their stories and, as I had commented earlier in the report, an invitation *'to story'* implies involvement, disclosure *and* emotion. Secondly, Taylor (2009 pg. 4) has commented that *'affective ways of knowing'* prioritise experiences for learners. Thirdly, during my years in higher education I had observed my own students experiencing experiential learning and had known this intuitively as a choice of truth. Yet until now I had not heard it recounted by learners with such power. This learning about the affective had been under-reported in the literature on adult education, doctoral awards and experiential learning. However, *'the emotion of it all'* represented for me, as a member of the academe, important new learning about the experience of experiential learning in general and the experiences of professional doctorate students in particular.

These lessons were concerned with the *extra-ordinary* individuals who are professional doctoral people. They were about the magical and the emotional impact which may be experienced not only by candidates studying on a professional doctorate, but also by students utilising experiential learning. The learning which came from this work based inquiry was not confined to the discourses alone. Additionally, lessons were learnt from the conduct of the project itself and they will be identified and discussed along with the study's limitations or *'les folies'* in the next part of this chapter.

Learning and *'les folies'* of the project

In Chapter Two of this report I had articulated my ideas on work based inquiry. I had postulated that a work based inquiry should be *'concerned with pursuing a*

which requires the use of reflection and review by its participants.’ I had gone on to suggest that ‘a work based inquiry should also value and integrate experiences of the everyday into knowledge and theory generation and development’. I had concluded by stating that ‘a work based inquiry in a postmodern world should seek to reveal and explore the contextualisation of beliefs as well as the diversity of truths held and utilised by individuals within their world of work’ (pg. 41). This thinking was synergistic with my choice of a philosophical and methodological landscape for the project which was qualitative and drew upon the characteristics of postmodern thought. These ideas had also influenced my selection of unstructured interviews and discourse analysis as my preferred methods of data collection and analysis. What, therefore, had been learnt from implementing this work based inquiry?

‘It’s my experiences; it’s my story; it really is about me’

The first area of learning related to the participants, the interviews and their choices of truth. The research had been undertaken relatively early on in the doctoral journey of all but one of the seven participants. However, all had completed their critical review of learning and thus experienced experiential learning as part of their professional doctorate programme of studies. I had been eager to capture my interviewees’ personal stories of their experiences, hence my use of ‘structural’ questions and triggers which asked the students to recount their experiences. I had also wanted to ensure that my participants’ own stories and discourse of their lived worlds, as well as their constructs and choices of truth, were articulated and told. *‘It’s actually more like a conversation’* I had assured one of the students at the start of the interview. To what extent had they enunciated *their* stories during the course of the different conversations?

Reading and analysing the students’ accounts, I had been mindful that ‘remembered and related’ experiences (Boud and Walker 1998 pg. 195) were ‘produced rather than simply registered’ (Rattansi 1992 pg. 33). Similarly, Michelson (2011 pg. 5) warns against treating the autobiographical utterances of adult learners, albeit in written form, as ‘free expressions of newly uncovered

to conform in this instance to the norms and expectations of the world of adult learning. I was already well aware of the 'myth of free self-authorship' (Michelson 2011 pg. 10). However, these potential 'folies' had already been acknowledged and accounted for, as can be seen in the discussion on methods of data collection in Chapter Two of this report. Furthermore, I had sought in the interviews neither to encourage nor suppress stories which were, for example, particularly valedictory and/or emotionally charged. Rather, I had endeavoured to maintain the 'discipline' of the qualitative interview (Kvale 1996), minimising my interjections. The verbatim transcripts from the interviews showed that overall I was successful in my efforts to maintain an 'encouraging' silence. I felt therefore able to concur with one of the student's own statements that these *'really were their experiences and stories'* and that their choices of truth *'were really about them'* (after Sam).

'The Naming of Parts'

The second area of learning related to discourse analysis. During both the planning and execution of this project I had read extensively about this topic. Once I had started to immerse myself in the students' stories, as well as undertake the task of identifying and constructing 'the discourses in contention', confidence in my chosen 'tool kit' grew. In the accounts I found messages not only relating to experiential learning, professional doctorate people and awards, but also 'utterances' which provided a metaphor for discourse analysis itself.

Again, it was Sam's account which offered me fresh illumination on discourse analysis. (S)he had been speaking about compiling the critical review of learning, describing how *'writing it down ... seeing my history ... picking that part ... exploring it more deeply ... I've learnt a lot'*. Re-reading a transcript of this interview I began to see a synergy between the actions and objects identified by Sam and discourse analysis. Recording, tracing, scrutinising and exploring are common features of both, as they are of reflection (Moon 1999). What I felt was missing from Sam's original account was reference to a particular element of my choice of truth on discourse and discourse analysis. Significant for me was to annunciate, proclaim or give voice to the lines of discourse; that is to

Second World War, in which each component of a gun are located, named, their use identified and contextualised, seemed an appropriate figurative term to represent my increased understanding of discourse analysis.

I had indeed *'learnt a lot'* about discourse analysis during the course of completing the project and my learning was not confined to metaphorical language. A valuable lesson had been the realisation that an appropriate framework and written style, sympathetic to the inquiry's underpinning philosophical and methodological stance was required to support the presentation of each major discourse or dispositif. I wrestled for some time, before deciding on the approach which I eventually utilised in Part II of this report. Whilst the design of the framework was based upon the existing constructs of other researchers (Gillies 1999, Wiggins and Riley 2010), its usage certainly constituted important new learning for me.

'The politically charged world of insider research'

The third area of learning related to my role as an insider researcher. As discussed in detail in Chapter Two of this report, I adhered to the advice of writers such as Bryman (1988), Wolcott (1994) and Silverman (2001), lest the findings and conclusions of the project were deemed unreliable, invalid or biased. I had come to appreciate the necessity of 'explicitly acknowledging my shared experiences', not only when conducting the inquiry but also whilst writing the project report. I found Wolcott's suggestion to routinely conduct 'reality check(s)' invaluable, particularly during supervision sessions with my Director of Studies where we discussed and critically considered my ideas on the discourses and choices of truth contained within them. By these actions, keeping a reflexive diary and regular meetings with the ex-colleague who played the part of critical friend I strove to militate against possible accusations of bias.

This represents the major learning to come from the conduct of this work based inquiry. Recommendations will now be made as to what might be inferred by these lessons, together with those identified and discussed earlier.

Willig (1999 pg. 9) cautioned would-be discourse analysts against 'wanting to make a difference' and formulating 'concrete' recommendations for stakeholders, derived from the findings of their projects. She believed that to do so could be 'problematic', especially where 'professional practice' was involved (pg. 18). Rather, she recommended that researchers should provide advice to best 'inform' interventions. Nevertheless, I am aware that it is also incumbent upon work based inquirers to advance proposals which have utility for their world of practice. The following suggestions for higher education institutions, adult educationalists, researchers and professional doctoral students (including those located within my own faculty and university) have been devised with these two caveats in mind.

Professional doctorate awards and professional doctorate people

The findings from this project provided a strong message that whilst professional doctorate awards have the potential to 'transform' students personally, academically and professionally, all too frequently candidates enrolled upon the programme as a result of happenstance rather than design.

This has clear implications for programme and marketing teams in my organisation, as well as those sited in other universities, seeking to attract appropriate candidates to a professional doctorate award 'fit for purpose'. Competition amongst higher education institutions for doctoral students, especially for the 'new knowledge workers', is growing. Yet funding sources are fast disappearing and completion rates of all doctorate programmes are a cause for concern (Park 2007, Taylor 2008).

Therefore, education providers should ensure that their offer to prospective learners and their employing supporters on professional doctorates is visible, accessible and relevant. Incorporated into marketing materials should be clear and current evidence of the positive personal, academic, professional and organisational outcomes which may be achieved through study on a professional doctorate, especially an award maximising utilisation of experiential

personnel should be full and unambiguous.

There was little doubt that the professional doctorate award upon which my participants were enrolled, devised with a 'course work plus thesis' model in mind, was well-received by the students interviewed. In particular, the critical review of learning assessment was perceived by them as pivotal to their emancipation as learners and people.

Thus, the findings from this study suggest that faculties offering 'doctorates in a tight compartment' (Wellington and Sikes 2006) should incorporate such devices in to the structure of their professional doctorate programmes. Educationalists are advised to design curricula which include module(s) and assessments requiring candidates to critically explore, reflect and learn from their past as well as present personal, academic and professional histories. The inclusion of a 'long-thin' module of portfolio building, running in parallel with the professional doctorate programme and tracing the students' continuing journey, is an example of a recent modification undertaken by my faculty to accommodate this learning. Ongoing support for the learners will be provided by members of the academic teaching team and peers. Furthermore, a programme specification containing an over-arching teaching, learning and assessment philosophy and strategy which explicitly supports the requisites is advocated.

In order to develop this mode of professional doctoral programmes, faculties and universities such as my own are urged to invest in the establishment and maintenance of a facilitative, institutional environment and culture. That is, one which has an organisational strategy and structure which will enhance their development. Additionally, it is proposed that they provide financial and organisational support for staff to actively participate at internal and external events which extend their knowledge and skills in topic areas pertinent to professional doctorates. Attendance at forums where examples of proven, good practice are shared would be particularly useful.

staff and supervisors played a significant part in facilitating transformational and emancipatory learning amongst the professional doctoral students. The provision of support from the course team, mindful of the past and present biographies of these 'extra-ordinary' people, as well as the costs to the learners of undertaking this type of study programme is, therefore, integral to their transformation. Like the learners, supervisors need to have 'a will to learn' (after Barnett 2007). They should be prepared to offer of themselves if they are to provide 'education rather than training' for professional doctorate students (after Leonard et al. 2004 pg. 384) and bestow the 'coronation effect' on candidates. The employment of a wide range of tools and opportunities to facilitate communication, support and build up a 'community of practice' amongst learners, academic supervisors, other members of the professional doctorate teaching team and key external contacts is advised.

Universities may need to review and revise their in-house programmes of support for professional doctorate supervisors to help staff develop the awareness and the attributes noted above. Similarly, involvement by course team members in external workshops, conferences and other events, which discuss and disseminate best evidence on various aspects of doctorate student support and academic supervision, is strongly recommended. Finally, they are advised to incorporate exercises and activities into their learning, teaching and supervisory sessions which advance the academic writing and critical thinking skills of their doctoral students, as evidenced in my participants' stories and suggested by Butcher and Sieminski (2009). The utilisation of experts in academic writing and critical thinking in delivering this type of support is also proposed. These latter initiatives will not only enhance the learners' self-esteem, but also aid the professional doctorate students' transition from 'un-academic professionals' and research novices to scholarly professional experts.

Central to any implementation of these suggestions should be deliberation by higher education institutions and their staff as to their commitment to professional doctorate awards. Any such discussions should take into account the potential educational, reputational and fiscal rewards which such

consideration by faculties and universities of the key issues as well as subsequent agreement of their strategic and operational position are necessary, if professional doctorates are to flourish, especially in the current climate (Park 2007, Taylor 2008).

Experiential learning

The project's findings also included robust messages concerning experiential learning. The professional doctorate students had considered it to be *'life-changing'*, almost akin to *'black magic'*, turning their perceptions of self, career and relationships *'upside down'*. My participants had found the experience of experiential learning costly. This was *'emotional labour'* and for some *'the hardest thing'* they had ever had to do. There are a number of recommendations, arising from these choices of truth which are relevant not only for those educationalists who support professional doctorate programmes of study, but also for all teachers who use experiential learning and above all those who do so with adult learners.

First, teaching staff intending to utilise this type of learning are advised to be mindful of the potential upset or affect, which may be experienced by learners during or as a result of the learning activity. This is something which both they and their students may find *'a difficult one to handle'* (Sam). As intimated by Clarke (2010), a shared understanding of emotional intelligence may protect learners against the negative impact of emotions which may inhibit rather than support transformative learning and facilitate educationalists in supporting their students more effectively. Teachers might also consider giving thought to their own behaviour in *'settings where experienced emotions'* may influence learning, be they professional doctorate programmes or other higher education awards (Anderson and Gilmore 2010 pg. 753).

It is also recommended that a family of approaches to experiential learning, which *'actualizes context'* (Swann 2008, Michelson 2011) and promotes reflexivity in a spiral rather than linear fashion is utilised, particularly when undertaking a critical review of learning. Such an approach will also foster the

helpful component of their learning experience.

There is, however, some more cautionary advice for all educationalists. By using experiential learning they may wish to promote amongst their learners the development of a therapeutic confessional where self is shaped and shared (after Swan 2008), yet this experience may not always be liberating. Taking context into consideration will reduce this risk, as I have already indicated. Teachers are advised to value their students' accounts and choices of truth. They should not try to replace them with a 'favourite story', drawn from the literature or their own experiences and imaginings (after Byatt 2010 pg. 26).

Furthermore, I would suggest that educationalists make transparent to their students some of my participants' constructions of experiential learning. Not least that '*exciting*' though experiential learning may be, it is also '*very, very hard work*'. It is recommended that information and briefing papers on experiential learning are developed for use by professional doctorate students and staff. The documents should include relevant learning from the findings of this study and be incorporated in to programme and module handbooks. This will not only facilitate students' understanding of the power and magic of experiential learning, but will also enhance their awareness of the emotional labour which may be involved. For professional doctorate students, sharing the experiences of experiential learning of their peers may prove to be very beneficial, as my participants' stories testified.

Once again, review and refreshment of learning, teaching, and assessment policies and strategies, as well as the provision of staff development on experiential learning in order to 'operationalise' the lessons of my project, is strongly recommended. This advice is for professional doctorate programme teams within my own faculty and university. It also has utility for all institutions and educationalists whose world of provision and professional practice includes this quite '*amazing*' mode of learning.

This project was about discourse: discourse in the form of written texts and the spoken stories of the participants were the subjects of the inquiry; the objects of the study were the assemblages or dispositifs which emerged; discourse analysis was the method by which I chose to analyse the students' utterances. I have traced throughout this report my experiences of using discourse analysis. My counsel to would-be discourse analysts is to select not only tools of data collection and analysis which match their philosophical landscape, but also to identify a method for writing up and presenting their findings synergistic with their overall approach.

There are also recommendations to be made concerning future projects which could be undertaken in the subject areas covered by this work based inquiry. It has been said that reflective learning has become 'an article of faith' in professional development and learning (Perriton 2004 pg. 120) and that there is a lack of 'good empirical evidence' on the reality of learners' use of reflection (Moon 2006 pg. 81). I would suggest that the same might be said of students' experiences of experiential learning, in which critical reflexivity should play such an important part, especially with professional doctoral students. Further research which examines and extends the ideas, choices of truth and new learning which emerged from this project regarding experiential learning would be welcomed, as would inquiry into professional doctorate people and the programmes they study.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed what Wolcott alluded to as the 'bottom line' for researchers which is the 'so what' question (Wolcott 1990 pg. 59). That is, what has been learnt and what might be done about it? The initial discussion has focussed on the learning about the 'extra-ordinary' people who were the professional doctorate students and participants in my study. The chapter has gone on to explore the common themes of magic and emotion which linked the discourses and the associated lessons. Consideration has also been given to learning on the conduct and findings of the project, including the lessons relating to undertaking unstructured qualitative interviews, discourse analysis

recommendations for a range of stakeholders on professional doctorate awards, experiential learning and future research activity in these subject areas.

*'What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from. And every phrase
And every sentence that is right (and every word is at home,
Taking its place to support the others,
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
An easy commerce of the old and the new,
The common word and the new,
The formal word precise, but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together)'*

(From 'Little Gidding' by T.S. Eliot)

When asked the question 'how do you conclude a qualitative study?' Wolcott (1990 pg. 55) responded 'you don't!' His riposte was intended as a warning to researchers against 'a grand flourish' which either merely re-iterates or goes 'beyond the boundaries' of what has already been said. Nevertheless, there remains the need to draw all research project reports to a close and Wolcott advised authors to do so by completing a 'succinct review' of what the study achieved. Thus, the conclusion to this report will begin with a review and assessment of the original aim and anticipated outcomes of the project, conceived during the planning stages of this inquiry. However, the project has also been about my learning as a scholar and an individual. The report will finish, therefore with a critical reflection on my journeying and a personal action plan.

A review and assessment of the project's aim and outcomes

The aim of the project had been to conceptualise, design and complete a work based inquiry of professional doctorate students' stories of experiential learning. In addition, I had expected the outcomes to include: the development and construction of a discourse of experiential learning, providing new insights, based on the experiences of those who 'story' them; the development and evaluation of an epistemology of work based inquiry which would be at the forefront of academic understanding of the concept; in completing the project, to meet the learning outcomes of the Doctoral Project module of my awarding university. Examining these aspirations I consider that both the aim and the outcomes of the project have been met, as storied and evidenced by the contents of this report. Indeed, with regards to the construction of a discourse, not one but three dispositifs resulted from my endeavours. Yet there remains a query: has my conceptualisation of, and nascent epistemology for, work based inquiry an application beyond the boundaries of this professional doctorate project? I have shared my deliberations and conclusions internally and externally amongst educationalists with a professional and academic interest in work and practice based learning. To date their critique has been very

inquiry has relevance to the wider community of higher education.

A reflection on my journey – a dialogue with self:

As discussed in Chapter Six, the project has been all about discourse. It seems fitting that in this concluding reflection, I consider my own discourse and engage in a dialogue with self, concerning the truths which have been brought to light about me during the course of my completion of this study.

Miner and traveller

I drew upon Kvale's writing regarding qualitative research and interviews throughout the inquiry. His portrayal of the interviewer as miner or traveller held special resonance for me and reflecting back, I recognise that during the course of the project I have assumed the different mantle of each role. Undertaking the various tasks associated with the study, for example completing and presenting the analysis of the students' stories was 'very hard labour', to paraphrase the interviewees' own words. It required me, as they had done, to 'dig out and dig deep' into my personal and academic reserves, whilst I sought to collect, analyse and illuminate the stories of my *extra*-ordinary participants.

I have more easily embraced the part of traveller and have been accompanied on my journey by a number of 'good companions' (after Priestley 1929). They have included authors with whom I felt a personal, professional and philosophical affinity such as Foucault, Wolcott, Kvale, and latterly Barnett. In addition, I have had the works of familiar poets, novelists and commentators by my side and they frequently provided me with ideas and inspiration, as well as solace and distraction when required. All played an invaluable part in helping this traveller complete her scholarly journey.

Motivation, procrastination and perfectionism

Staying motivated has proved to be the greatest test of all. Scott et al (2004) wrote extensively regarding the aspirations and motivations of professional doctorate students and I found their conclusions useful in understanding my own motivational trajectory. I stated in the introduction to this report that an

as well as a desire for self actualisation and to 'become' (after Barnett 2007) all contributed to my original application for a place on the professional doctoral programme and the commencement of the project. For me, 'extrinsic-professional initiation' and 'extrinsic-professional continuation' factors played little or no part in either starting the award or completing the project. Rather, it was 'intrinsic-personal/professional affirmation' which proved to be more important. In common with some of Scott et al's interviewees, I found time after time that the support, approval and encouragement of significant others, such as my peers, supervisory team and husband helped to revive my flagging motivation. In addition, 'the pursuit of truth and critical engagement', more usually associated with traditional doctorate study, proved to be of importance to me (Scott et al 2004 pg. 123). Finally, validation of my ideas and thinking at the various assessment points on the doctoral programme and through supervision also boosted my determination, motivation and morale.

My tendency to delve deeply into the academic literature to uncover 'truths' was certainly helpful but it could also divert me from the task in hand and there is little doubt that I procrastinated. This is not new behaviour on my part, but at times on my doctoral journey, it proved quite disabling. Procrastination is a characteristic shared by many professional academics, writers and doctoral students, trying to undertake scholarly activity (Wolcott 1990, Johnson 2001, Cameron et al 2009). Texts abound with advice on how to overcome 'the disease', including suggestions on procedural and technical know-how (Dunleavy 2003, Lee 2009). Hygiene factors relating to my study environment certainly played their part in both assisting and preventing me from engaging in thinking and writing during the project. However, I have also come to realise that for me there is a strong connection between procrastination and the pursuit of perfectionism and this has also impeded my academic progress. The 'goldsmith of words' within me encourages me to seek out the perfect phrase or paragraph, no matter how elusive or painful the chase may prove to be (after Mercier 2008). Unlike Perry (1995) I find that I am unable to 'give myself permission to do a less than perfect job'. In the case of the project report, my tendency to procrastinate resulted in emotional tumult and all too frequently a

I would want to believe. Cameron et al (2009) encourage doctoral students to gain insight into the emotions associated with academic writing and to develop what they term 'writing know-how'. Furthermore, they encourage the students to acquire a strong sense of their identity as academic writers. Realising that I am both a procrastinator and a perfectionist, for whom critical creativity is also significant, has enabled me in recent months to get on and to write.

On finding a voice and finding self

Barnett (2007 pg. 89) writes of the student who 'is there in the room, but yet will not utter; will not give of herself'. He goes on to distinguish between the 'embodied or pedagogical' and the metaphorical, 'even metaphysical voice' (Barnett 2007 pg. 91), claiming that whilst the voices are different, they have shared significance for the learner 'in the room'. Both require the student to be courageous, speak out, intervene, claim attention and speak with what Barnett refers to as 'particularity'. For me 'the room' had two significations and settings: one, the classroom which I shared with my fellow professional doctorate students; the other, the study where I conceived my project and wrote much of this report.

I have learnt that voice, in either form and used in both locations is, as Barnett proposed, a projection of the self, and no more so than when I have used my metaphorical voice in written work. For Barnett the metaphorical voice is predominantly about 'authenticity'. However, I would suggest that before any metaphorical voice may be labelled authentic, it must first be found, formed and used by its author. Hertz's edited text on 'Reflexivity and Voice' proved very useful in helping me to identify, develop and employ my particular voice over the course of the doctoral journey (Hertz ed. 1997). I have come to realise that my authentic voice is 'metaphysical', if metaphysical implies a 'style (which) reflects an attitude to experience ... (making) connections between ... emotion and mental concepts' (Bennett 1964 pgs. 2 and 3). My voice is at its best and most authentic when I have sufficient confidence to also draw into that my written work the literary and the metaphorical. I therefore owe a debt of gratitude to Barnett and Hertz's texts for giving me the courage to be the

1997). That is, to inscribe self into this doctoral report.

Concluding thoughts and action plan

This conclusion set out to conduct a purposeful review and productive reflection, for as Nietzsche (1968 pg. 226) suggested 'learning is not enough'. Throughout the chronicle of my doctoral report, I have striven to follow Mezirow's advice to identify, consider and *critically* explore the various acts, thoughts, perceptions and reflections which have formed my journey (Mezirow 1981).

What next? My overarching goal for the next six months is to oversee the drawing together and ending of a career in education. During this time, I will begin the process of putting into practice the learning from this work based inquiry. I am now a member of the Doctorate of Professional Studies teaching team in my faculty and will be participating in research seminars in order to disseminate the study's findings here at the university. Having found my voice as a scholar, I intend, in retirement, to continue the 'business of academic thinking and writing'. In particular, through conference attendances and journal publications I hope to share the stories and learning from this doctoral journey and project for, as Hilary commented:

'Peoples' individual experiences are really important and ... can be absolutely powerful gold dust'.

Word count: 49,241

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Information Sheet for Participants:

Version 1: Approved December 2006

**Faculty of Health and Wellbeing,
Sheffield Hallam University,**

**11-15, Broomhall Road,
Sheffield S10 2BP.**

Project Title: 'Professional doctorate students' stories of experiential learning: a discourse analysis'.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to participate in a study to explore professional doctorate students' experiences of experiential learning. Please take time to read the following information carefully and decide whether or not you wish to take part. Discuss it with others if you wish.

"Why have I been asked to take part in this study?"

You have recently completed Year One of the Doctorate in Professional Studies (Health and Social Care) at Sheffield Hallam University, including the module 'Review of Learning and Professional Experience'. This module incorporates experiential learning into its teaching, learning and assessment strategy. It is therefore appropriate that you be asked to take part in this study

"How long will the study last?"

The study will last for two years.

"What will it involve?"

It will involve you taking part in a one to one, unstructured interview with the researcher at the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing, Sheffield Hallam University. It is anticipated that the interview will be of one hour's duration.

"What if I do not wish to take part?"

This will in no way affect your right to continue with your own studies on the Professional Doctorate programme.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving an explanation and without any affect on your right to continue with your own studies on the Professional Doctorate programme.

“What will happen to the information from the study?”

The information will be stored in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act. In compiling the project report, your name and personal identification details will be removed to ensure that your confidentiality is maintained at all times.

“Are there any risks associated with taking part?”

None are anticipated.

“Who do I complain to?”

If you have any concerns or questions about this study you should contact me or you may wish to contact my Director of Studies, Dr. Frances Gordon at the University on 0114-225-4360.

“What do I do if I wish to take part?”

If you wish to take part, please contact me at p.a.[foster@shu.ac.uk](mailto:p.a.foster@shu.ac.uk) or telephone me on 0114-225-4379 for further details

Interview Questions and Triggers:

Project title:

'Professional doctorate students' stories of experiential learning: a discourse analysis'

Version 1: Approved December 2006

Question/trigger 1:

Tell me about yourself

Question/trigger 2:

Tell me about your course

Question/trigger 3:

Tell me about your experiences of the first module

Question/trigger 4:

Tell me about your experiences of experiential learning

Consent Form for Participants:

Version 1: Approved December 2006

Doctorate in Professional Studies (Health and Social Care)
Sheffield Hallam University

CONSENT FORM

Project Title:

‘Professional doctorate students’ stories of experiential learning: a
discourse analysis’

Please tick as appropriate

		Yes	No	
1	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions			
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my educational progress being affected.			
3	I understand that the findings from my participation in this study will be used to inform project outcomes.			
4	I understand that all the information I give will be confidential and I will not be referred to by name in reports or publications without my prior explicit permission.			
5	I agree to take part in the above study3 02			

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person taking consent
(if different from researcher)

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature