Bournemouth University

Professional Education and Personal Epistemology:

A Post Qualifying Social Work Case Study

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Abstract

The overall aim of this professional doctorate is to inform improved methods of educational practice for preparing and developing learners to deal with the complex and constructed nature of professional learning and knowledge. The primary concern is to understand notions of knowledge and knowing for professional education and the nature of personal epistemology for post qualifying (PQ) social work students. The main purpose is to facilitate these students' awareness of personal epistemology and enable them to validly articulate their own knowledge in this context.

The thesis adopts an overall pragmatic perspective, undertaking an empirical case study which encompasses a documentary analysis, questionnaires and interviews within a qualitative and interpretive methodology. The findings from the case study provide an understanding of a PQ social work programme's epistemology and the nature of the students' experiences, views and assumptions concerning professional knowledge and knowing. Overall, it can be seen that the hegemonic privileging of academic knowledge over practice-based knowledge creates particular epistemological tensions and misalignments in respect of post-technocratic reflective models. Such privileging impacts negatively on the authority and articulation of PQ students' professional knowledge, and highlights the necessity to more fully acknowledge a professional perspective within a reflective epistemology.

The findings are used to inform a series of practice development initiatives with PQ social work students. The initiatives help develop epistemological awareness and enable a re-alignment to post-technocratic reflective models with the development of a Practical Reasoning Framework. The Framework acknowledges the types of knowledge and ways of knowing associated with professional reasoning and judgment, and helps establish the validity, justification and authority of a professional perspective within a reflective epistemology.

The recognition of the need to more fully acknowledge a professional perspective within a reflective epistemology, and the development of the Framework to address this need can be identified as the thesis' contribution to knowledge. With recent national reports emphasising reasoning and judgment as necessary components of professional development, their authentic and legitimate inclusion within an academic context is now more important than ever.

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Introduction

This introduction briefly discusses the background and context of the thesis, explains the setting in which the research has been undertaken and highlights a number of significant themes.

Social work

Social work operates under a number of constraints and tensions in respect of its autonomy of practice. It is a state-mediated profession; the state's legal and policy framework sets the parameters for intervention and provides its bureaucratic framework (Camilleri 1996; Thompson 1995). Social work is also a contested arena; with a number of social, political and professional interest groups playing a part in shaping the context and nature of social work, there is no easy consensus on the definitions of the nature and purpose of social work (Payne 1990; Thompson 2005).

Social work is undergoing significant change at the present time. The Social Work Task Force (hereafter SWTF), instituted by the government in December 2009, was set up to advise on a programme of reform for social work in England in the wake of the death of Baby Peter in Haringey and the failing performances of some local authorities, such as Haringey, Birmingham and Cornwall (Ofsted 2009). Employers have reported that newly qualified social workers are not prepared for practice (CWDC 2009); and Lord Laming (Laming 2009) in his progress report on the protection of children in England following the Climbié Inquiry (Laming 2003) has questioned the quality and consistency of the social work degree. The remit of the SWTF has been to look at the need for reform across all fields of social work, including children's, adults' and mental health services. Its 15 recommendations for a comprehensive reform of the profession, accepted in full by the government, include a call for a reformed system of initial training, together with greater leadership and a strong national voice for the social work profession, led by a College of Social Work (SWTF 2009).

The Social Work Reform Board (hereafter SWRB), led by the social work sector, has been set up to take forward the key recommendations. It works to unite employers of social workers, educators, regulators, service users, government and the social work

profession itself, to bring about social work reform. Therefore, although statutory constraints clearly exist and there are financing concerns to be dealt with (Lymbery 2011), this reform in many ways provides the scope for partnership, action and autonomy for social work as called for by Thompson (2000).

The board has recently reported its progress in a *One Year On* report (SWRB 2010). This provides greater detail on key areas of reform and specific recommendations for:

- A Professional Capabilities Framework (hereafter PCF);
- Employer standards and supervision training for front line managers;
- Entry standards, practice placements and practice supervision for the Social Work degree;
- A new Continuing Professional Development (hereafter CPD) framework;
- Partnerships between universities and employers.

The board is now using the wider social work sector to take forward and test proposals and feedback views to support implementation.

The post qualifying social work framework

The previous Labour government's modernising agenda for health and social care (DoH 1998) led to the launch in England in September 2003 of a social work degree, which raised the qualifying level of new social workers. The agenda also led to the formation of a number of regulatory bodies that had a remit for social work education. For example, the General Social Care Council (hereafter GSCC) registered social care workers and regulated their conduct and training. It launched a revised framework of approved and regulated post qualifying (hereafter PQ) awards for implementation in social work education in 2007 (GSCC 2005). These awards have focused on strategic workforce planning and development and are aimed at two groups of workers. The first is recently qualified social workers aiming to consolidate and extend their practice. The second is social workers who have been in practice for a number of years and are now required to complete the full PQ awards for registration or continuing professional development purposes to ensure up-to-date/current practice.

The revised framework has 5 pathways:

- Childcare
- Adults
- Mental health
- Practice education
- Leadership and management

Within these pathways the awards are set at 3 different levels, meeting the required set of professional competencies and academic requirements:

- The PQ award in specialist practice focuses on the knowledge and skills needed for consolidating, extending and deepening initial professional competence.
- The PQ award in higher specialist social work focuses on the knowledge and skills needed for making complex judgments and to discharge high levels of responsibility for the co-ordination of social support and the management of risk.
- The PQ award in advanced social work focuses on the advanced knowledge and skills needed for professional leadership and the improvement of services, i.e. at a strategic level.

The initial minimum academic level for specialist awards is set at the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (hereafter FHEQ) level 6 (undergraduate level H) and the Higher Specialist and Advanced Awards at FHEQ level 7 (M / Masters) (QAAHE 2008).

At Bournemouth University many of the PQ award programmes are delivered off campus (i.e. at agency sites across England), and all adopt aspects of flexible and self-directed learning approaches. Assessment requirements focus primarily on reflective assignments combining theory and practice elements. The Consolidation and Preparation for Specialist Practice (hereafter CPSP) programme forms the first module (40 credits) of the specialist level pathway and is also an initial requirement for entry onto higher specialist pathways. It is assessed through a work-based portfolio that demonstrates how students have consolidated their initial competence

acquired at the point of qualification (knowledge, skills and values), and is illustrated, analysed and reflected on in the context of social work National Occupational Standards (hereafter NOS) (TOPSS 2002).

The CPSP portfolio is comprised of the following elements:

- CV;
- Continual professional development review (4000 words);
- Practice analysis (5000 words);
- Third party testimony.

This framework has been under a major review with the SWTF, and is due to close in 2012 (SWRB 2010). The regulation of social workers in England will transfer from the General Social Care Council (GSCC) to the Health Professions Council (hereafter HPC). PQ awards will be offered within a new CPD framework. At the time of writing (August 2011) the SWRB (2011) have proposed the set of principles that should underpin this framework, aligned to the PCF, which aims to help social workers develop specialist knowledge, improve their practice and progress in their careers.

The empirical study part of the thesis has been undertaken within the pre-existing PQ framework, with CPSP students. The practice development part of this thesis has been influenced by the current prioritising of CPD and social workers' professional capabilities by the SWRB, establishing important areas of focus.

My previous research

I have developed a keen interest in understanding and researching a range of professional educational issues. A number of my publications can be seen to highlight specific areas of interest, e.g. critical thinking for social work (Rutter and Brown 2011 *in press*), social work practice education (Keen et al. 2011, *in press*; Williams and Rutter 2010), reflective learning (Rutter 2006a), and associated learning and support issues (Keen et al. 2009; Rutter 2006b). A full listing is provided in Appendix A. This work, as well as my dissertation for a Masters in Academic Practice completed in 2005 ("*It's Not What You Wanna Hear, Is It?*"

Student Perspectives on Learning Support in Professional Education), has explored general areas associated with professional education as well as focusing on professions other than social work, e.g. nursing and teaching, to gain different perspectives. This broader approach has also been adopted in the thesis.

Themes

My research work has identified a number of relevant issues and themes pertinent to a PQ social work education context, which form a starting point for this thesis and are explored in more detail in later chapters.

First, discussions around students' personal epistemology, i.e. their beliefs about knowledge and knowing (Hofer 2002), appear highly significant. The notion of learning is underpinned by the notion of learning about 'something'; as McCormick and Paechter (1999, p. xi) contend, "...it is impossible to have a view of learning without also implying a view of knowledge". Learning will necessarily, therefore, be underpinned by beliefs and views about knowledge. These beliefs and views impact on students' educational performance by affecting the ways in which they tackle everyday and educational tasks (Entwistle 2000; Hofer 2002). Professional education programmes appear to require students to have an advanced level of personal epistemology (i.e. seeing knowledge as something complex, uncertain and evolving) in order to deal appropriately with knowledge, i.e. constructively, analytically and critically (Brownlee et al. 2005). In effect, it is necessary to recognise the impact of students' beliefs, perceptions and conceptions about the nature of knowledge on their learning (Pillay 2002).

Epistemological issues are also relevant to the wider context here. An underlying and ongoing power issue between governments, higher education and professional bodies can create a particular strategic tension in respect of a profession's knowledge base. In essence, this is a contest of power to impose certain meanings of what a particular practice is about, what its ends are and how those ends are best achieved. Emphasising either a curriculum based on disciplinary knowledge or a vocational curriculum based on the needs of the profession establishes a stake in the conflict over how education is to be defined and who is to do the defining (Usher et al. 1997).

As seen from the work of the SWRB and the SWTF, all of these groups are particularly active and interested parties in the future of social work along with important others, e.g. service users, carers, practitioners and employers. Each of them may have different underlying assumptions or beliefs regarding the nature of knowledge, i.e. epistemologies that will inevitably impact on a profession and its knowledge base. Differences and debates may centre on the objective/subjective dualism; e.g. whether subjective knowledge is any less real or valid than objective knowledge, or whether the nature of knowledge loses any objective properties (the idea of absolute truth) when it is seen as the product of individual construction (McCormick and Paechter 1999). Such debates can impact in a number of ways. Camilleri (1996, p.56) explains that it is "this tension, this dialectic that produces, transmits and reproduces the discourse of social work". Trevithick (2005, p.58) argues that the underlying issue of who is controlling the shape and future of social work has "tended to reinforce" a divide between theory and practice.

On the whole, a general move from a technical-rational approach towards a reflective and experiential one (Bines and Watson 1992) appears to have created a number of epistemological demands for the pedagogy of professional programmes within higher education (hereafter HE). This move encompasses non-academic, practice-based types of knowledge and subjective ways of knowing, but the validation of these becomes a problematic issue when operating within different traditions, approaches or models, e.g. evidence-based practice (Mantzoukas 2007).

Finally, there appears to be much complexity, ambiguity and lack of clarity concerning reflective processes and experiential knowledge and ways of knowing (Fook et al. 2006; Trevithick 2008), which compound these epistemological issues. A postmodern view of knowledge is essentially blurring traditional boundaries between knowledge and knowing, as well as highlighting their uncertain nature. For example, the knowledge found and formed in groups, organisations and in action is now acknowledged through social learning processes (e.g. Nonaka 1994). The interplay of knowledge and knowing generates new knowledge and new ways of knowing (e.g. Cook and Seely Brown 1999). In social work, Fook's (2002) postmodern view shows that knowledge is mediated through the perspective of the

knower and she draws attention to the creative and contextual way in which knowledge is generated, i.e. it often has to be created in spontaneous response to changing situations. Trevithick (2008, p.1216) notes the different but complementary forms of knowledge being acknowledged here, abstract, action-based and intuitive, and states that all sources of knowledge need to be conceptualised as "tentative". Cooper (2008, p.225) sees "transformative opportunities" for knowledge creation with colleagues, service users and carers.

These epistemological issues have an effect on the nature and operation of professional education and ultimately the students' experiences, providing a platform of concerns to be explored throughout the thesis. The next chapter provides a more personal perspective on my position as a practitioner-researcher and explores the rationale, focus and structure of the thesis in more detail.

Chapter 1: Narrative 1

This introductory narrative explores my position as a practitioner-researcher, the rationale and focus of the thesis in more detail, and sets out the thesis structure. It also begins to show a holistic synthesis of the literature review, empirical enquiry, and practice development areas of this professional doctorate.

My practice

I have worked as a lecturer at the Centre of Post Qualifying Social Work at Bournemouth University (hereafter BU) since 2002, and at present lead two PQ generic units. First, 'Enabling Work-Based Learning', a 20 credit unit within the PQ specialist award programmes and the Graduate Certificate in Practice Assessment programme; and second, 'Leading and Enabling Others', a 20 credit unit within the higher specialist award programmes. Both these units focus on topic areas concerned with work-based learning, reflection and critical thinking. I also have a role as a support tutor for all PQ programmes, undertaking group workshops, providing support materials, and one-to-one sessions for academic learning development.

It is important to point out that I am not social work trained (my background is in librarianship) and therefore I do not teach social work as a subject. This limitation in my knowledge base and practice places a number of constraints on my position and status in the PQ team. As a lecturer my teaching is informally overseen and directed by a senior lecturer, who is not my line manager. This has been a very positive influence in developing my skills, knowledge and abilities, but it has also placed a few constraints on my development in respect of being able to take full responsibility for some areas of my teaching. My knowledge and skill base has, at times, felt insecure and I have lacked a certain amount of conviction in respect of my expertise. Undertaking this professional doctorate has therefore provided the potential for the empowerment of my practice.

Practice issues

The PQ students we work with at BU are qualified practitioners in health and social work/care fields who are usually in full or part-time employment at the time

of undertaking a programme. Student profiles basically match those of the two groups originally targeted by the PQ awards, i.e. recently qualified social workers and social workers who have been in practice for a number of years; producing a wide range of educational experience from qualifying degrees at masters or degree level to professional certificates. The diversity in age, experience, and confidence within any one cohort of students can be extreme. It is important to note that PQ students are all practitioners returning to study, and for those whose qualifying education was many years ago the difference between higher education and practice can be overwhelming and disempowering (Moon 2005).

The PQ awards, being set at FHEQ levels 6 and 7 (QAAHE 2008), place an expectation on PQ students to engage analytically and critically with a wide and diverse range of knowledge (e.g. theory, research, law, policy, practice and personal experience). However, in my work as a lecturer and as a support tutor I was aware that a significant number of students were experiencing major problems in achieving this expectation, which was particularly evident in their written reflective assignments. These students seemed able to reproduce and/or describe most types of knowledge, but had trouble critiquing formal knowledge, interpreting theory with their practice experience, and moving from descriptive, experiential accounts to reflective and critically analytical ones. Their assignments lacked depth as they 'glossed over' topics and issues, and merely replicated the ideas of others. Most importantly, this was in direct contrast to some lively, critical and informed debates and group work happening in unit workshops where the students' voices were in evidence. These voices suddenly became missing in their written work, and this was something I sought to address (Rutter 2006a).

Overall, though, the support offered in groups and individually was not as useful or as effective as I had hoped. Essentially, although students picked up ideas that enhanced their reflective writing style, they seemed unable to transfer the skill to a new situation or develop deeper understanding to improve their writing further. The skills and techniques were only appearing to offer a superficial and temporary solution and the real issue seemed to lie at a much deeper level.

Focus

I began looking at what the underlying issues might be. Initially, the 'academic literacies approach' (Lea 1998; Lea and Street 1998), which conceptualises literacies as social practices and views writing at much deeper epistemological and ontological levels, offered a way forward. Within this approach student writing is seen to concern broader matters such as identity and authority and what it is that constitutes valid knowledge, rather than skills or literacy. Indeed, the authors state that this "broader perspective" is "critical" in understanding problems in student writing (Lea and Street 1998, p. 171). Epistemology, concerned as it is with the nature, sources and limits of knowledge (Hofer and Pintrich 1997), became a pivotal focus, providing insights into a number of problematic areas. In general, it is seen that personal epistemology can affect learning in general and vice versa (Schraw 2001; Hofer 2004b), and it has a role in respect of enhancing critical thinking (Barnett 1997; Moon 2007). Taylor and White (2000) show how pertinent these issues are as they discuss fundamental questions about the nature of knowledge and ways of knowing in social work practice.

Considering my previous research and the themes noted in the introduction, the idea began to form that the underlying issues might be to do with the students' *and* the programmes' epistemology; but I found there to be a lack of any major research in the field of personal epistemology for PQ social work education. It was still not clear how PQ students viewed their own and others' knowledge, and whether this aligned with PQ social work and/or HE requirements. It sounds slightly absurd, but Tight (2003, p.168) acknowledges that even though it is at the heart of what higher education is about, "knowledge remains a highly contested arena" and is "relatively under researched". O'Brien (2002) argues that epistemological understandings for student issues, assessment and curriculum design should have a more central place within the dialogue of new pedagogies, and consequently what is needed is further understanding of both knowledge and knowing in professional education. This concerns what types of knowledge and what ways of knowing are apparent and how they are conceived, plus

understanding the nature of personal epistemology for students on professional courses.

The requirement to investigate at a much deeper level through a professional doctorate route began to emerge as I acknowledged a need to understand more before I could know how best to proceed with the PQ students. This thesis therefore focuses on the nature of knowledge and knowing within this particular context, and values the uniqueness of a particular learning environment and its individual learners as advocated by Bendixen and Rule (2004).

Personal perspectives

Underpinning the thesis are certain personal and professional viewpoints and values that set its tone and particular direction as well as its nature and purpose.

Education

I understand PQ students to be professionals in their own right, working in extremely complex and uncertain conditions, making high level decisions and judgements. They deserve respect for, and acknowledgement of, their experience, existing knowledge and ways of knowing. I have come to see them as active agents constructing their own meaning for their practice within this educational context. I also acknowledge the individual and social nature of their learning and development (Turner 2000; Postle et al. 2002; Doel et al. 2006, 2008), and indeed my own. As seen above, many of the students are mature and experienced professionals bringing with them a raft of knowledge, skills and values, but who can feel anxious and disempowered in an HE setting (Rutter 2006b). It has been difficult to know how best to refer to them in the thesis, e.g. as professionals, students, or as candidates, which is a term used in BU course literature. For the sake of clarity I have chosen the term student, with the proviso that it does not carry with it any reductive connotations.

A 'continued professional learning' (hereafter CPL) approach, recently advocated in Webster-Wright's (2009, p.705) review of professional development, aligns with many of my thoughts about teaching and learning in professional education.

CPL focuses on professionals being engaged holistically in self-directed, life-long learning and avoids the potential limitations of the concept 'professional development', which can focus on a practitioner as deficient and in need of developing through discreet interventions. The CPL approach thus sees the learner, the context and the learning as inextricably interrelated.

I see my educational role as a facilitator and an enabler of students' thinking and meaning-making with new and existing knowledge, rather than as a 'transmitter' of my own or other's knowledge. My pedagogic approaches are thus mostly active, reflective and experiential (rather than didactic), underpinned by adult learning principles (Knowles 1990), and my workshop methods focus on using past experience, dialogue and individual/group activities. As I try to respect learners as individuals I also advocate a more embedded, developmental approach to learning support that can accommodate diversity, rather than a deficit or remedial model which tends to be generalist, reductionist and potentially disempowering (Cottrell 2001).

In general I try to align this 'espoused theory' with my 'theory in use' (Argyris and Schön 1974), but there are difficulties associated with my status, my role as a support tutor called on by other lecturers when students are seen to be in danger of failing, and the limited amount of contact time with students. These factors, as well as the students' own perceived need for a 'quick fix', can push me into providing solutions for students rather than enabling them to develop their own understanding and work towards individual resolutions. This is something I aim to be critically aware of.

Consequently, my expectation for this doctorate is that it does not become a technical fix but something more holistic and developmental concerned with aims, ends and purposes as advocated by Badley (2003a). This approach acknowledges the student-centred learning theories of Biggs (1999, 2003) and Prosser and Trigwell (1999) which explore the innate individualism and complexity of students' approaches to learning, i.e. the same learning situation can be perceived and approached in very different ways by learners. Similarly, learning

environments are dynamic and multi-layered, involving a number of relational factors such as students' perceptions, prior experiences and approaches (Prosser and Trigwell 1999). There is, therefore, no simple equation between what I do and what the students do. For these reasons, and because I am not an educational psychologist, this work is not focusing on improving students' epistemological beliefs or their stages of epistemological development through a particular intervention. It will though, of course, encompass and utilize major understandings from the personal epistemology field of study.

Research

This educational research is, in essence, a

> "...critical enquiry aimed at informing educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action."
>
> (Bassey 1999, p.39)

As seen above, the judgments and decisions to inform my practice need themselves to be informed not only from a general understanding of the issues from the literature but also from the PQ social work programme itself. There are therefore general and contextual elements to the research. The CPL approach (Webster-Wright 2009) confirms this need, as it also aims to understand more from the perspective of the professionals (or students) themselves through holistic, situated research perspectives, which do not ignore the implications of ontology and context.

> "Rather than deny, seek to control, or standardise the complexity and diversity of professional learning experiences, let us accept, celebrate and develop insights from these experiences to support professionals as they continue to learn."
>
> (Webster-Wright 2009, p.728)

This moves to an approach particularly relevant for a practitioner-researcher where knowledge and practice interact in "a cyclic or spiral relationship" (Lester 2004, p.767). In this respect I will be in a similar position to PQ students, founding this work not only on academic or research processes but also on processes of thoughtful action, i.e. concerning myself with propositional, practical and more personal knowledge (Lester 2004).

A professional doctorate has to meet academic requirements concerning advanced scholarship and extending the boundaries of knowledge. However, it also involves the methodologies of development and systemic change, supporting high level professional capability and wisdom, "engaging with the knowledge-in-use that thinking practitioners develop and use in the course of their work" (Lester 2004, p.764). The danger is that one becomes overtaken by the other (Scott et al. 2004). Such tension between academia and professional practice is a recurring theme in the thesis. For Lester (2004) this means critically considering both fitness of purpose and fitness for purpose of the work, and an ethical-moral questioning of both means and ends.

Allwright (2003; 2005) appreciates these issues and offers an ethical approach to a practitioner's research called Exploratory Practice (hereafter EP). This approach, in effect, incorporates a research perspective into one's pedagogy. It advocates an emphasis on understanding and continuing learning rather than problem-solving, focusing on quality of life as a value base rather than just quality of output, and research to be undertaken with students as informed participants developing their own understanding of learning, rather than being undertaken on them as subjects. Although the approach has been developed in the context of language education, it is now recognised as a general approach for practitioner-based research (ProDAIT 2006).

Taking an EP approach aligns most appropriately with the practitioner-research focus of this professional doctorate; although adopting an action research approach could also have been appropriate here. Bradbury and Reason (2003) note action research's core concerns to address significant practice-based problems, and develop practical as well as conceptual contributions by working with people rather than on them. These concerns are also at the heart of this study. The key reason for adopting the EP approach is because it insists that understanding always needs to precede attempts at problem-solving. In the EP approach, looking for ways to improve practice should not take precedence over the prior need to understand the situation that needs improving (Allwright 2005).

The overall approach EP offers will inform the overall design of the thesis and the process of practice development. EP as a research method in itself, though, is not considered appropriate for the empirical section of the thesis. This is because I am investigating an issue in order to inform my practice, rather than investigating my practice per se as the primary research objective (for which EP was conceived). As a foundation, Allwright's (2005) principles for EP recommend identifying and refining thinking about a problematic area as a primary research activity. They suggest converting the practical problem into a puzzle first, as something prior to and more holistic than problem solving that demands to be understood, offering a starting point as well as particular routes for this thesis, which are explored later.

Such a fundamental emphasis on understanding (as opposed to merely problem solving) aligns well with both my educational and research viewpoints, in particular the desire not to provide remedial, deficit-based solutions. As Prosser and Trigwell state:

> "Academic development is less about the development of teaching skills and more about the development of an enhanced awareness of students' perceptions of learning and teaching situations."
>
> (Prosser and Trigwell 1999, p.173)

Thesis structure

Aims

The research aim is to understand the epistemological issues relevant to professional and social work education, and those associated with the PQ curriculum at BU (i.e. both the contextual and personal elements associated with our programme and students). The educational aim is to enable PQ students to be aware of and understand relevant, underlying issues concerning their own and the programmes' epistemologies. The overall purpose is to develop teaching, learning and assessment processes and materials which will prepare students to engage critically with a range of academic and practice knowledge, and enable them to articulate their own understanding and knowledge in a valid way for this context.

These key areas of focus provide the framework of the thesis and lead to associated research questions (developed in later chapters):

- Investigating the role and place of personal epistemology in respect of professional education and, in particular, PQ social work education: via a literature review.
- Researching the epistemological issues associated with the BU PQ curriculum and its students: via an empirical study.
- Using this understanding to develop my educational practice and enhance the student experience: via practice development.

The chapters are formed as follows: the methodology (chapter 2) and the literature review (chapter 3) lead to the empirical study (chapter 4), which subsequently leads to the practice development (chapter 6). Chapter 7 makes the final conclusions and recommendations. Each of the above chapters adopts a critically reflective approach to the research. In addition, three narrative chapters, which include this one (chapters 1, 5 and 8), aim to synthesise the research and practice elements of the thesis, and also present a reflexive approach by exploring my particular personal and professional position throughout the thesis.

Overall, an integrative, critically reflective and systematic process builds knowledge and understanding from the literature to direct the empirical research, which in turn informs the practice development and establishes the thesis' overall professional purpose. This professional doctorate investigates the issue from broad as well as more focused and contextualised perspectives, establishing an exploratory, descriptive but also explanatory stance. As the thesis progresses, it reflexively explores and develops further personal and professional understanding within accompanying narrative stages.

Conclusion

Stake (1995, p.19) claims that "good research is not about good methods as much as it is about good thinking" and so this initial narrative attempts to begin the process with an explicit analysis of the main thinking behind the thesis.

Essentially, I will be integrating the academic and professional requirements of the professional doctorate by undertaking a literature review and empirical research which lead to advances in knowledge, which are then critically considered in processes of thoughtful action, leading to advances in practice.

Articulating the rationale and aims, the areas of focus and my personal perspectives in this chapter and in the previous introduction achieves a number of points of departure. First, the themes identified as pertinent to a PQ social work education context provide areas for further study within the literature review. Second, the aims and areas of focus lead to the formation of research questions, developed in the next chapter. Third, a number of fundamental requirements and principles have been identified as follows:

- Taking a holistic and reflexive approach;
- Respecting students as individual and active agents;
- Developing a progressive understanding through a wide range of sources;
- Encompassing a general and a contextual focus;
- Allowing research and practice to interact through interpretation and judgment.

These inform a more developed argument for the research approach and methodology, presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 2: Research Approach and Methodology

Working from the principles and requirements prepared for this professional doctorate in the initial narrative, a defined research position can now be identified that will help establish a deeper and more critical underpinning to its empirical design and methodology.

Indeed, every research design is:

> "...embedded in commitments to particular versions of the world (an ontology) and ways of knowing that world (an epistemology) implicitly held by the researcher".
>
> (Usher et al. 1997, p.176)

I shall critically examine these philosophical underpinnings; however, there are necessary limits to this section of the thesis. I am an educationalist rather than a philosopher, and the scope of a professional doctorate is associated more with being a "scholarly professional" than a "professional scholar" (Lee 2009, p.7). The aim is to present a clear alignment between the principles and requirements established in the previous narrative and the rationale of the research design, rather than a detailed philosophical debate.

I see meaning being independently, individually and socially created during learning and therefore I believe that although many 'things' exist independently of our consciousness, the meaning of them does not. However, I also see the need for standards and criteria to ensure that the best and most appropriate meaning is established in a critical fashion. My belief aligns with a social constructionist view as explained by Crotty (1998) as follows. The constructionist view sees meaning being constructed rather than revealed or independently produced from an engagement with reality, which entails an interaction between a subject and an object. This is an active relationship, with the participant acting as agent, but with social (e.g. cultural) as well individual (e.g. cognitive) elements involved.

This position aligns with a pragmatic philosophical position, which acknowledges a certain complexity in the world, as well as our limited relationship with it. For

example, Dewey's (1929) experiential world is made up of different layers - objective completeness and order, subjective uncertainty and ambiguity, as well as combinations of both. A key position here is that pragmatists start with the idea that since nobody can step completely outside of their own action, knowledge is only attainable from an actor's point of view. More than this though, Dewey's (1906) 'experimental theory of knowledge' considers the development of knowledge as an adaptive human response to environmental conditions aimed at an active restructuring of these conditions (i.e. problem forming and resolving). Knowledge, therefore, has a practical use in the guidance and control of that interaction. The world does not impose some unique description on us that we passively perceive and replicate, rather it is we who 'choose' how the world is to be described. As a result, any knowledge is provisional and is contingent upon its ability to provide a rational understanding of the world as the basis for human action. Dewey (1939) calls a successful item of knowledge, or proposition, a 'warranted assertion', rather than 'knowledge' or 'truth' because of the confusion and ambiguity surrounding the meaning of these terms. Pragmatism is therefore completely action-centred (Kivinen and Piiroinen 2006), as any item of human knowledge may be overturned by future experience. However, Shook (2000) explains that this is not a retreat into relativism or scepticism because it is possible to evaluate and rank any idea or proposition on its pragmatic merits. Pragmatic testability concerns the consequences in lived human experience which may be evaluated.

This aligns with the study's need for a reflexive stance and for standards and criteria to ensure criticality. By accepting this position, though, it follows that any research intent is not to identify or discover "the single truth and the absolute or correct knowledge" (Mantzoukas 2007, p.244), and therefore ideals such as these cannot be used as critical standards. Von Glaserfeld (1983 cited in Roth 1999, p.7) asserts that the notion of 'fit' replaces the notion of 'truth' when we can no longer compare knowledge with some ontological reality to establish its truth-value. In addition, if, as in this thesis, the world is regarded as real but knowledge of it is regarded as contingent, then it is important to look at how competing claims to knowledge are made and their context (Taylor and White 2000).

This position actually entails an epistemological humility and an acceptance of complexity and uncertainty. I do not understand there to be an independent meaning to be discovered or revealed as seen in a positivist stance, but also I do not see that meaning can be independently created and imposed as in a relativist stance. The constructionist position explains that meaning is constructed through an interaction between these respective objectivist and subjectivist views and positions (Crotty 1998)*, and I am therefore aiming to construct meaning from an interactive engagement with the research and practice.

> "Such pragmatism means judging the quality of a study's intended purposes, available resources, procedures followed, and results obtained, all within a partiuclar context and for a specific audience."
>
> (Patton 2002, p.71)

Thus, the constructed meaning as well the construction process itself will be critically examined within this study using relevant criteria at a number of key points and an overall reflexive stance is adopted within the narrative chapters. I am aiming to align with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) key ethic of respect for truth, in trying not to deceive others or myself either intentionally or unintentionally.

These world views can now be aligned with the study's methodology and methods, providing the rationale and justification for how they are selected and the ways in which they are used. To clarify the definitions used here, it is stated that the 'methods' refer to the tools and techniques of data collection and analysis; whilst the 'methodology' refers to the approach or paradigm that underpins the research, the frameworks and concepts in which the methods are situated (Tight 2003). Principally, the pragmatic, constructionist view of the world can be seen to align well with a pragmatic approach to research and with a qualitative, interpretive methodology. The pragmatic research perspective recognises that the initial problem (or puzzle) provides the "occasion and enduring focus" of the inquiry by supplying the initial questions, as well as the standards of relevance which define "success in the undertaking" (McCormick and Paetcher 1999, p.4).

Within this perspective different methods are appropriate for different research situations and questions, and the aim is to do what makes best sense rather than be driven by an exclusive paradigm or method (Patton 2002). Being driven by

research objectives and purpose also aligns with a pragmatic perspective on educational research as defined by Badley (2003a), i.e. research that is offering useful descriptions to meet particular educational needs and purposes. He insists it is not an alternative model of research or another theory of everything, rather it is an approach, a perspective and working point of view; and as such fits in with the notions of uncertainty, tentativeness and suggestion rather than with traditional claims of truth, certainty and authority.

Pragmatic research questions are descriptive and evaluative and aim to study things as they are. However, if they are restricted to the more superficial aspects of a phenomenon, or its output alone rather than its processes, they will not be able to provide a more searching and in-depth investigation of what is happening (Trinder 1996). There appears to be an instrumental element to pragmatism which can lead it to become overly simplistic and technocratic; a position which would not align with the principles and requirements as detailed in the initial narrative. As Biesta (2007, p.11) asserts, judgments in education are ultimately "value judgments not simply technical ones", and therefore teachers and educational researchers should not become educational technicians.

As being pragmatic allows one to "eschew methodological orthodoxy in favour of methodological appropriateness" it can allow the "situational responsiveness" (Patton 2002, p.72) required by this research. In this respect, the need for a naturalistic design strategy can already be noted within the intended purpose and aims of the study, aligning best with a qualitative approach. The empirical research takes place in a real-world setting and I, as the researcher, am not attempting to manipulate or control the context or any of the points of interest. There is no predetermined course as in a quantitative study, and the aim is to understand what is going on. Such descriptive research also goes beyond mere collection and tabulation, though, and involves elements of comparison and relationship as the discovery of meaning is the focus of the whole process (Verma and Mallick 1999). This discovery of meaning and generation of understandings and insights will be in contexts that are held to be inherently too "unstable for

reliable predictions and explanations concerning human behaviour to be made" (Cousin 2009, p.9).

It is useful to note that certain tensions are apparent in the research methodology concerning personal epistemology (explored further in the literature review), with the result that a range of quantitative as well as qualitative approaches are considered legitimate (Pintrich 2002). The choice appears dependent on the construct of personal epistemology that is initially adopted, i.e. what is being investigated: product or process. In respect of this applied study the focus is on process, which aligns with a qualitative approach.

Other themes associated with qualitative inquiry support the aims and objectives outlined in the initial narrative, e.g. emergent design flexibility, 'sampling' aimed at insight about the phenomena, use of the personal experience and engagement of the researcher and a dynamic developmental perspective (Patton 2002). Similarly, an interpretive (hermeneutic) approach also appears appropriate for this study. Hermeneutics rests on the ontological argument that "lived experience is itself an interpretive process" (Cohen and Omery 1994, p.148) and this experience is to be "interpreted and understood within the context of social practices" (Usher 1996a, p.18). A broad following of this approach is therefore adopted here to see people not only as a primary data source but as active participants and to seek their perceptions, meanings and understandings (Mason 2002). However, it is also important to recognise that these "meanings are not coterminous with intentions", that knowledge of human actions is "indeterminate", and so the interpretations we provide can never be complete (Usher 1996a, p.20).

There are, therefore, certain limits to be aware of in adopting an overall qualitative approach. Interpretive belief states that the social realities under investigation are "mysterious" and can only be "superficially touched by research which tries to make sense of them" (Holliday 2002, pp.5-6). The risk is that qualitative and interpretive theories place artificial boundaries around subjects' behaviour and are thus criticised for their "narrowly micro-sociological persuasion" (Cohen et al. 2000, p.27). In response, this study looks at broader areas of professional

education in the initial and also the interpretive stages, rather than focusing solely on social work. Nevertheless, it will only be able to build up a series of limited pictures in an attempt to represent something that is much more complex.

Taking this discussion further, the study's requirement for not only a general view but also a contextual focus provides a route into ensuring a more situated, as opposed to generalised, perspective within the methodology. The study requires that knowledge is constructed from particulars that can take account of the complexity necessary for understanding the situation and context. Haggis (2002, p.218) argues that such research into the "situated uniqueness of adult learning experiences" is needed to complement the "more strategic and generalising approaches to the study of student learning that are dominant" in higher education. She suggests it is the unnamed and unexpected factors and interrelationships involved in learning at an individual and contextual level (which generalised research and models cannot take account of) that are likely to be the cause of unpredicted outcomes, and which therefore need to be studied (Haggis 2003, 2004).

Thus, material that is situational and therefore non-generalisable in a traditional sense will have a contribution to make towards a better understanding of the overall complexity of learning, especially within contexts. Lea and Stierer (2000) also call for more context-specific investigations of pedagogical and discursive practices in order to make the shift from a deficit model of student failure. From a practitioners' point of view, Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson (2001) make the point that the 'noise' of real life (i.e. the complexity, variability, exceptions and the unusual) is something to be taken account of, rather than excluded, because it may be a highly significant part of the story for people working with it.

Conclusion

In summary, I am taking a constructionist world view and adopting a pragmatic research approach along with a qualitative, interpretive methodology and a contextual focus. This defined position establishes a deeper and more critical underpinning to the thesis' empirical research methodology and design, developed

further in chapter 4. Before that the literature review will establish a necessary further level of understanding and direction for the study.

Chapter 3: Literature Review
3a. Literature Review Methodology

A literature review provides the necessary context and background about the current knowledge of the topic and lays out a logical case to defend the thesis position taken (Machi and McEvoy 2008). As seen in the previous section the aim of the literature review is to investigate the role and place of personal epistemology in respect of professional education and, in particular, PQ social work education. The first research question for the thesis can be formed accordingly.

RQ1: *What is the role and place of personal epistemology in professional social work education?*
This is a focused and selective, but also integrative narrative review to develop understanding and direction for the study, rather than providing empirical evidence that particular approaches work in certain situations. Narrative reviews are useful where the aggregation of data is difficult because diverse studies or fields are being analysed (Baumeister and Leary 1997; Galle and Whitcombe 2006). In contrast, systematic reviews of primary research studies are frequently seen as being concerned with providing research-based answers to specific questions about what works or what works best in relation to a practical problem (Hammersley 2001). Such an approach is therefore inappropriate here. This review undertakes a rigorous search of the relevant literature, with its comprehensiveness being achieved not in numbers but in exhaustiveness of ideas and coverage of relevant areas. This is also achieved in the review's critical evaluation of the specific topic of research, and ultimately in the ability to answer the question asked of it. The intention is not to identify all the literature on a particular topic but to identify specific groups of material that possess characteristics that are relevant to the issue being studied.

Achieving the review's aim has been affected by the complexity of the phenomena being investigated, the range of settings where it is relevant and the

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volume of pertinent ideas. The subject area of personal epistemology is so broad it is impossible for this study to encapsulate all the literature that might have been relevant. Nevertheless, a wide range of material from other disciplines and professions such as nursing and teaching, plus the arenas of professional practice and education, work-based learning, vocational learning and expertise development has been included in order to gain a necessary wider perspective. PQ social work students are practising professionals and much of their learning occurs in practice as well as in the classroom and so both these arenas become relevant.

Non-systematic reviews such as this one can be criticised for undefined methods of searching, critiquing and synthesising the literature (e.g. no focused research question or searching strategy, no clear method of appraisal or synthesis of literature), resulting in biased or inaccurate conclusions (Aveyard 2007). To address this, certain processes and methods can be made explicit to improve transparency. Presented here is the methodology and research question, and in Appendix B are the searching methods strategy and terms, methods of appraisal, and predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The resulting narrative analysis identifies the unifying concepts and discrepant issues, and adopts an overall interpretive response to the literature studied, manipulating its descriptive and explanatory, rather than its predictive potential. The interpretive approach taken does not entail synthesising data, rather it involves judging the relevance of ideas and the findings or conclusions of particular studies, and thinking about how these relate to one another and how their interrelations can be used to illuminate the field under investigation (Hammersley 2001; Popay et al. 2006). The trustworthiness of the literature review is said to increase by the researcher adopting a self-consciously critical, systematic, and analytical approach towards capturing more subjective and intersubjective dimensions (Finlay 1998 cited in Galle and Whitcombe 2006, p.188).

Further detail regarding such thoughts and interpretation decisions are therefore also noted in Appendix B.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3b. Literature Review

"The concept of knowledge is a slippery notion." (Webster-Wright 2009, p.715)

Introduction

The literature review aims to answer RQ1: *What is the place and role of personal epistemology in professional and social work education?* A range of literature covering professional education in general as well as social work and other specific professions, such as teaching and nursing, is reviewed to provide a broadly informed perspective.

The construct of personal epistemology is critically reviewed first to determine key underpinning concepts and points of interest. The notion of knowledge within professional practice and education is then briefly explored historically, leading to an overview of current reflective practice and post-technocratic models. These models' reflective epistemological positions and requirements are then critically explored in much finer detail, followed by a review of their impact and operationalisation in practice and educational arenas; establishing the areas of interest for the empirical research.

Personal epistemology

Definitions

As a philosophical enterprise, epistemology is concerned with the origin, nature, limits, methods, and justification of knowledge (Hofer 2002). In effect it is,

> "...concerned with what distinguishes different kinds of knowledge claims – specifically with what the criteria are that allow distinctions between 'knowledge' and 'non-knowledge' to be made."
>
> (Usher 1996a, p.11)

There are fundamental debates here concerning the nature of truth and reality and the relation of the human knower to it, but this review is concerned with more practical and situational aspects and those associated with the notion of personal epistemology. The study of personal epistemology focuses on how an individual

develops their ideas about knowledge and knowing and uses them in developing an understanding of the world.

> "This includes beliefs about the definition of knowledge, how knowledge is constructed, how knowledge is evaluated, where knowledge resides, and how knowing occurs."
>
> (Hofer 2002, p.4)

The personal epistemology literature is "plagued" by terminology that is "undefined, poorly specified or variably defined" (Alexander and Sinatra 2007, p.223). Technically the term 'epistemic beliefs' correctly refers to beliefs about knowledge, and the term 'epistemological beliefs' to beliefs about the study of knowledge (King and Kitchener 2002; Murphy et al. 2007). However, the literature uses both terms to refer to beliefs about knowledge, and authors are not united in terminology. The term 'personal epistemology' is considered an acceptable umbrella term (Hofer 2001) and will be used throughout this thesis.

Key approaches and agreements

Research in the field of personal epistemology has made important contributions to education, most fundamentally in identifying epistemology as a category of informal knowledge that may well play a role in students' reasoning, study strategies and participation. Hofer (2004a) states that epistemological beliefs may influence comprehension, cognitive processing, and conceptual change learning. In this respect it can be seen that those students who have developed a well-formulated and integrated pedagogical, professional and epistemological stance are more likely to perform better (Barnett and Hallam 1999). Conversely, some beliefs and assumptions about knowledge can actually impede students' development of certain necessary skills or attributes (Goldstein 1993). These are very broad generalisations though, and personal epistemology is seen as a complex and contested area in educational psychology (Schraw 2001), with a number of approaches in the way it is conceptualised and thus researched. These are explored briefly to show the range of ideas before identifying common factors and direction for this study.

The two main approaches or conceptual understandings conceive of personal epistemology respectively as developmental stages and as a system of beliefs. First, the developmental staged approach suggests a general, systematic progression in the development of one's ideas about knowledge and knowing. Research for this approach is built on interview methodology, initially grounded in a phenomenological approach. The intellectual development of Harvard undergraduates over a four-year period is originally investigated by Perry (1970) using open-ended interviews and longitudinal samples. It concludes that first year students mainly believe that knowledge is about omniscient authority handing down facts, but by their later years at college they tend to believe that tentative complex knowledge is derived from reason and enquiry. Perry, using earlier work by Jean Piaget, creates nine developmental or staged positions for this journey, starting with dualism, moving through multiplism and relativism, to end with intellectual commitment within relativism.

Other models have been developed for this developmental approach using research undertaken with different groups of people. Belenky et al. (1986) explore the personal and educational experiences of women (students and non-students) and propose a classification scheme which describes five distinct 'women's ways of knowing' (silence; received; subjective; procedural: connected and separate; constructed). In contrast, Baxter-Magolda's (1992) Epistemological Reflection Model identifies a sequence of four ways of knowing (absolute, transitional, independent, contextual), and offers a constructivist theory based on a 16-year longitudinal interview study. King and Kitchener's (1994) seven stage Reflective Judgement Model uses a developmental approach to understand the epistemic assumptions that are related to an individual's judgment about ill-structured problems. This model is based upon findings from cross-sectional and longitudinal interviews and delineates the development of the process of knowing and reasoning through three levels: pre-reflective; quasi-reflective and reflective judgment. Kuhn (1991) and Kuhn and Weinstock (2002) develop a similar cognitive focus, focusing on how epistemological assumptions influence thinking and reasoning using real-life cognitive activities and interviews, but with views

categorized as changing from absolutist to multiplist and then finally to evaluativist beliefs.

The second main understanding of personal epistemology is as a system of beliefs, which suggests a series of dimensions within a person's epistemology. This approach most often uses survey methods for assessing individual conceptions of knowledge and knowing. Schommer (1990) pioneers a written instrument to elicit multiple dimensions (the Epistemological Beliefs Questionnaire or EBQ), covering five distinct dimensions: structure, stability, source of knowledge, and control and speed of knowledge acquisition. The four identified factors are conceptualised as Certain Knowledge, Simple Knowledge, Quick Learning and Fixed Ability. Although there is considerable debate as to whether all these dimensions constitute genuine epistemological beliefs (Hofer and Pintrich 1997; Moore 2002), the EBQ has been widely used in quantitative studies (Schraw and Olafson 2008), and is modified by Schraw et al. (2002) as the Epistemic Belief Inventory (EBI), and by Hofer (2000) as the Discipline-Focused Epistemological Beliefs Questionnaire (DEBQ).

In addition a third, more recent view of personal epistemology builds on the beliefs approach but takes an alternative stance by seeing personal epistemology as part of the learning process itself, i.e. as a metacognitive process (Hofer and Pintrich 1997). These authors regard personal epistemological as 'epistemic metacognition', organised into 'theories' or interrelated propositions (Hofer 2004b). The theories become activated and engaged during knowledge acquisition and construction, e.g. when evaluating different knowledge claims. Research for this approach has taken a more process-oriented angle, focusing on understanding cognitive use or activation through observations, think-aloud protocols and tasks (Hofer and Pintrich 1997; Hofer 2004b).

Two vital agreements have been established to cover all three of these approaches to personal epistemology (Hofer and Pintrich 1997; Hofer 2001, 2004b, 2004c; Bendixen and Rule 2004). First, the construct of personal epistemology involves beliefs about the nature of knowledge and knowing covering four (interrelated)

dimensions, highlighting particular issues associated with uncertainty, complexity, authority and justification respectively.

For 'knowledge' there are two dimensions:

- Certainty: i.e. the degree to which one sees knowledge as fixed *or* fluid and changeable; providing a continuum ranging from knowledge as absolute and unchanging to knowledge as tentative and evolving;
- Simplicity: i.e. the degree to which knowledge is viewed as individual facts *or* complex, interrelated concepts; providing a continuum ranging from knowledge consisting of isolated facts to knowledge as highly interrelated concepts.

For 'knowing' there are also two dimensions:

- Source: i.e. the extent to which credible knowledge is other or self-generated; providing a continuum ranging from knowledge originating outside the self and residing in external authority through to knowledge being constructed by the person and in interaction with others;
- Justification: i.e. the rules and criteria that individuals use to evaluate knowledge claims; providing a continuum ranging from using observation or on the basis of what feels right, through to the use of rules of inquiry and the evaluation and integration of different sources to justify what is known.

Second, there is a general agreement that epistemological beliefs develop and change over time. The various developmental stages and positions described within these sets of models can be seen to reflect a comparable trajectory. Although there is no consensus on how and when these changes take place, many researchers agree that personal epistemologies develop in a constructivist manner, and that the developmental sequence follows a route from a simplistic (unsophisticated/immature) stance towards an advanced (sophisticated/mature) one, i.e. from absolutism to relativism and then to evaluativism (Vosniadou 2007).

In general, an advanced personal epistemology can be defined as seeing knowledge as tentative and evolving, interrelated and complex, and where knowing involves constructing understanding for oneself using evaluative and integrative strategies. It is associated with higher education learning outcomes where there is an expectation for students to engage analytically and critically with a diverse range of knowledge (Moon 2007). In social work, O'Sullivan (2011) has specifically linked King and Kitchener's (1994) advanced level of reflective judgment (with its ability to see knowledge as complex and contingent and formulate sound executable judgments in the face of uncertainty) to notions of professional and practice wisdom.

Challenges and criticisms

Even though there is some general agreement in the field of personal epistemology, a number of challenges and criticisms are now also apparent, which need to be taken into account for this thesis.

Challenges are put forward in respect of the established research methodologies and methods (i.e. surveys and interviews) being reliable and valid enough for the tasks of identifying and/or measuring personal epistemology. Hofer (2002, p.10) asks, "can we fully capture individual epistemology when we impose meaning through questions?" and "can it be effectively measured through self-report instruments?" She concludes that survey instruments are less useful in capturing the dimensions related to knowing, which are more evident in the results of interview studies (Hofer 2004b). Bråten et al.'s (2008) review of the subject shows that although the use of interviews and observations have indicated that all four dimensions (certainty and simplicity of knowledge, source and justification of knowing) are represented in students' epistemic thinking, they have not been unequivocally verified through the use of questionnaires.

The reasons for such unreliability appear to be associated with the inherent complexity of the entity itself, which is perhaps the most challenging issue. According to Buehl and Alexander (2001) knowledge is multi-layered and multi-dimensional, and the greater part of any belief system is not directly accessible;

which makes it difficult to assess its true depth and character. Hofer (2005, 2008) concurs, noting that the concept is complex and multifaceted and that no single paradigm is likely to enable researchers to capture this; and thus some forms of measurement (e.g. Likert-scale items) cannot capture the complexity of the developmental reorganisation of beliefs. Although qualitative description may be more appropriate than quantitative characterisation for certain conceptions of personal epistemology, Kuhn and Weinstock (2002) outline the significant weakness of models that depend on multiple, diverse characteristics to define each developmental stage. A lack of cohesion with respect to these characteristics means that it is not always clear what defines the fundamental nature of each stage and what drives the movement from one to the other. In addition, Hammer and Elby (2002, 2003) note that students do not typically reflect directly or explicitly on the nature of knowledge or knowing, and their epistemologies might not be accessible to conscious reflection and articulate reporting. They suggest that the prevailing unitary ontology (personal epistemology conceptualised as developmental traits, beliefs, or theories seen above) pushes researchers to place students into categories, and this distorts analysis by focusing on the abstract rather than the context-dependent meaning of the responses in interviews and surveys.

Schommer-Aikins (2002) rejects ideas that eliminate the possibility of measuring epistemological beliefs at least to a limited degree, but concerns regarding the validity and reliability of quantitative research design and evaluation for personal epistemology continue to be raised (Wood and Kardash 2002; Pintrich 2002; Schraw and Olafson 2008). Wong et al. (2008) ask whether researchers are aware of the difference between actual and professed beliefs and if this is included as a variable in their studies; and whether they take into account the differences in the way students may understand certain terms or items in a questionnaire. In response to these concerns, a diversity of research methods is now advised for the study of personal epistemology, even within the same study (Pintrich 2002; Bendixen and Rule 2004; Hofer 2008). Essentially, however, a gap between the enacted form of epistemologies within the lived experiences of people and the

theoretical form apparent in the contemporary epistemological research is still evident (Niessen et al. 2008).

There are also a number of important critical debates revolving around the constructivist orientation underlying much of the research in this field; the use and meaning of such terms such as 'advanced' or 'sophisticated' beliefs; and the implicit assumption of a hierarchical beliefs system. In particular, it is recognised that advanced epistemological beliefs do not necessarily constitute a "developmental ideal" in all cultures, and more relativistic ways of knowing may not be appropriate (Goldberger 1996 cited in Brownlee 2004, pp5-6). The demands of a postmodern or constructivist curriculum also pose a number of relativist concerns (Schommer-Aikins 2002; Hofer 2001). For example, Kuhn and Weinstock (2002) note the need to ensure that tolerance of multiple viewpoints does not foster an inability to weigh competing claims and evidence and, as a result, hinder intellectual commitment.

> "…it is a deceptively simple step down a slippery slope from the belief that everyone has a right to his or her opinion to the belief that all opinions are equally right."
>
> (Kuhn and Weinstock 2002, p.139)

Moreover, although the advanced stages and levels of beliefs can be defined as evaluativist in nature (Kuhn 1991; Baxter Magolda 1994; Perry 1970), Wong et al. (2008) question whether the measures of both knowledge and knowing have been able to identify clear and objective standards to allow such evaluation of these competing claims.

Overall, the problem appears to be that the prevailing concepts of epistemological research, detailed above, do not sufficiently capture the different senses of knowledge and knowing. Consequently, what constitutes an advanced personal epistemology is being questioned. Hammer and Elby (2002) suggest that in accepting statements like 'knowledge is tentative rather than certain' researchers are neglecting the contextual and situation aspect of personal epistemology. As an example here, Bråten et al.'s (2008) quantitative study with Norwegian student teachers has revealed that students who ostensibly show a less advanced personal

epistemology (by relying on expert authors and viewing knowledge as transmitted from experts) perform better than those who view knowledge as personal construction, i.e. the more advanced view. The authors explain that by acting on the conviction that knowledge is primarily constructed by the self, some participants may have concentrated too much on subjective interpretation at the expense of figuring out precisely what the authors and texts said. Taking a slightly different angle on these issues, Bromme et al. (2008) challenge the idea of a simple relationship between the quality of epistemological beliefs and knowledge, showing that holding constructivist views may, in fact, turn out to be counterproductive for students (e.g. because they do not believe in certain, e.g. scientific, principles on which their discipline is based), and that more knowledge can actually result in less advanced epistemological beliefs. There are, of course, particular pedagogic issues here concerning the epistemological base of any curriculum and its constructive alignment (Biggs 1999) which will be noted later when considering the student experience.

Furthermore, Wong et al. (2008) note particular difficulties in the accepted notions of an advanced epistemological stance with regard to reliance on authority. They argue that even if an individual is responsible for the construction of personal knowledge he or she cannot be responsible for all of that knowledge. There is a sociological perspective to knowledge and an individual cannot possibly justify all knowledge claims and so has to rely on certain authorities. Trusting in authorities is a fundamental aspect of an epistemological stance, but there are both naïve and sophisticated ways of justifying this reliance. The point these authors make is that relying on others does not necessarily mean one has less advanced epistemological beliefs or views. Bromme et al. (2010) agree, arguing that relying on others can be a well-adapted behaviour so long as there are capacities for second-hand evaluation of these knowledge claims.

In effect, the contention here is that labelling certain beliefs or developmental traits as advanced or sophisticated strongly signals the desirability and effectiveness of them; but what positively affects learning and comprehension and, thus, rightly deserves to be labelled as such, should be empirically explored

in different task contexts and at different levels of expertise (Hammer and Elby 2002; Hofer 2006; Wong et al. 2008). Furthermore, Bromme et al. (2008) claim that levels of sophistication should therefore be understood, instead, as flexibility of epistemological judgments toward both different disciplines and in different contexts.

The most recent conceptual understandings concerning personal epistemology emanating from this debate, therefore, offer a serious challenge to the prevailing views of personal epistemology (seen above as coherent, unitary and established traits, beliefs or theories that can be uncovered and then measured or assessed). For instance, a proposition from Hammer and Elby (2002, 2003) suggests that individuals may operate from a set of 'fine-grained epistemological resources', which vary according to the situation. These context-sensitive resources (e.g. the ability to accept information or doubt it) are smaller and less stable than the structures described above in the first three approaches to personal epistemology. As resources they are available to everyone and are activated and manipulated by the situation and the context; i.e. an individual will access these personal resources based on the immediate demands of the classroom environment. This approach involves a shift towards understanding personal epistemology as a manifold ontology rather than a unitary one; i.e. not as singular traits, beliefs or theories, but as a range of available options or agents. For Hammer and Elby (2002), epistemological sophistication is understood to mean the ability to take into account the differences between contexts, and the demands of a context into account. There has been little empirical testing of this resources approach, although a small study by Louca et al. (2004) analyses a teaching intervention using different frameworks and shows that the resources approach displays more predictive and explanatory power than developmental or beliefs-based approaches. The resources approach is therefore seen as a useful heuristic tool for interpreting epistemic understanding (Hofer 2008).

Other recent and alternative conceptualisations of personal epistemology also appear to highlight these flexible and contextual aspects. Niessen et al.'s (2008) 'enactivist' view of personal epistemology conceptualises epistemological beliefs

as fluid and dynamic constructs that characterise the relationships between people (e.g. student, teacher), subject content, and the teaching/learning situation. Likewise, Palmer and Marra's (2008) 'ecological' model of personal epistemology provides a heuristic device for envisioning the multiple, interacting and overlapping contexts that may influence the development of an individual's epistemological beliefs. The idea of context is not new, though. Hofer and Pintrich's (1997) early review shows evidence that epistemologies can be sensitive to context or domain as well as consistent across contexts. An individual may describe a relatively stable general epistemology, but subsumed under that is a series of domain-specific epistemologies that may or may not be consistent (Buehl and Alexander 2001; Hofer 2006).

On the whole, though, the latest perspectives begin to suggest that the existing conceptualisation of personal epistemology is now inadequate, especially in respect of professional higher education, to which attention is now turned. O'Brien (2002), an education consultant at the University of Queensland, argues this point forcibly for the more complex pedagogies being adopted within higher education which encompass shifting conceptions of knowledge, its nature and validity. She highlights the work of Barnett (1997) here.

> "Where expertise once lay within complex frameworks of theories and understandings in a particular domain, a 'supercomplex' world presents us with increasingly complex applications of understandings and ever expanding possibilities for interpretation."
>
> (O'Brien 2002, p.4)

Again, this notion is not entirely new. Hofer (2004b) points out this underlying assumption in all approaches; epistemological thinking occurs in the process of resolving problems for which there may be no clear-cut answer. O'Brien (2002) argues further, though, that an understanding of self as a purposeful professional practitioner has brought an added dimension to the learning experience within professional education. It is this self-knowledge and holistic understanding of how knowledge, skills and self integrate and become applied that requires a sound (or advanced) epistemological perspective in order to promote effective learning; but which, she says, would appear to be more complex than the dimensions of personal epistemological beliefs proposed at present.

Studies associated with professional education

In respect of professional education, there is a "paucity of epistemological literature" (Brownlee et al. 2008, p.460), even though a key premise is that the development and construction of knowledge for practice is best supported by a contextual way of knowing (Baxter Magolda 2002) or by reflective reasoning and judgment (Lucas 2008), i.e. at an advanced level of personal epistemology.

A few studies in this area focus on the particular expectations and preconceptions students on professional programmes bring with them into HE. For example, Cantwell and Scevak (2004) identify a potential problem for students entering HE from the workplace to be the strength of their belief in the fundamental structural simplicity of knowledge. This view is supported by Kember (2001), who notes that these students find it difficult to adjust to HE if the teaching is not expository, and they experience problems with assignments that go beyond the reproduction of material (i.e. with no direct question or answer). Mature and part-time students bring with them and are exposed to a greater diversity of ideas, and this may present challenges to their existing personal epistemologies (Palmer and Marra 2008). However, Kaartinen-Koutaniemi and Lindblom-Ylänne (2008) point out that there can be considerable variation in the personal epistemology of professionally oriented students.

One of the key issues pertinent to professional education students is the difference between constructing knowledge at work and constructing knowledge in HE, and it can form a considerable epistemological challenge. There is another significant point here regarding the ontological aspect to professional knowledge which may cause problems for these students. Knowledge in a professional context is usually actively constructed in and from contexts through continuing, developmental discourse among colleagues interpreting work-related situations. It becomes professional and personal understanding, with ontological as well as epistemological aspects, thereby creating a very holistic but also a more complex phenomenon. Constructing knowledge in professional conversations takes place to a large extent at an implicit, embedded level, i.e. "as a matter of knowing, more

than knowledge", which can be in direct opposition to academic requirements (Tillema and Orland-Barak 2006, p.604).

To date, the most relevant studies concerning personal epistemology for professional education have been conducted with pre-service graduate teachers and diploma-level child care students in Australia (Brownlee 2004, 2003, 2001; Brownlee et al. 2005, 2008). Using Biggs' (1999) '3P model of learning' Brownlee considers epistemological beliefs as one of the factors (or presages) that influence approaches to learning and outcomes of learning (Brownlee et al. 2005; Brownlee and Berthelsen 2008). These studies use semi-structured and scenario-based interviews, and a descriptive-interpretive approach to content analysis based on the developmental categories as developed by Kuhn and Weinstock (2002), absolutism, multiplism, and evaluativism. Overall findings illustrate that students hold a range of epistemological beliefs across these categories and that there is a need to explicitly address them in educational programmes.

This research has begun to tackle some of the suggestions seen above in the recent critical debate concerning knowledge construction and the notion of knowing. For Brownlee and Berthelsen (2008) (and others such as Barnett 1997, 2000, 2007) teaching in HE needs to promote stronger connections between the knower (and their existing beliefs) and the known, through internalisation of new knowledge that is evaluated and understood in a critical way. Brownlee (2004), in particular, is seen to note the interrelationship between self and theory for professional education students. She highlights the usefulness of Baxter Magolda's work (1992, 1994) concerning connected teaching and relational pedagogies, which support students in using both their own experiences and impersonal or formal ways of knowing, allowing them to include personal beliefs/experiences as well as evidence/theory to support and validate their beliefs. Indeed, Brownlee et al.'s (2005) and Brownlee and Berthelsen's (2008) research extends this idea of relational pedagogy (where self and theory are interconnected) to promote the notion of relational epistemology, where both expert and personal ways of knowing are interconnected. Additional research by Stacey et al. (2005) shows that explicit reflection on epistemological beliefs, and a structured approach to

developing the skills needed for critique of evidence, assists students to develop a more relational epistemology. The findings point to the need for students to be able to explore and articulate their personal beliefs that may have developed prior to their entry into HE and their need for support to be critical thinkers.

Personal epistemology: summary

It can be seen that epistemological conceptions and assumptions are increasingly being recognised as influential in a learning context (Pillay 2002). In particular, as Schommer-Aikins (2002, p.108) points out, the study of personal epistemology is an attempt to understand the learner's perspective and may serve to identify some crucial sources of the problem when a student's thinking "goes awry" and to guide us in modifying the instruction to be more amenable to students' ways of thinking. However, all the existing research notwithstanding, "epistemological belief research remains at the edge of an unexplored frontier" (Schommer–Aikins 2004, p.28). Although it can be seen that personal epistemology can affect learning and vice versa (Schraw 2001), it is apparent that the nature of personal epistemology is not fully understood and the methods for understanding it are also in contention.

The most recent personal epistemology research for professional education highlights specific contextual aspects and demands, in particular the inter-relationship between self and theory, and acknowledges the place of personal epistemology as a key factor in the learning environment. The question of how we conceptualise knowledge within multi/trans-disciplinary professions and fields, however, continues to challenge both epistemological and pedagogical understandings. Students' personal views or assumptions about how knowing occurs, what counts as knowledge, where it resides, and how knowledge is constructed and evaluated in a particular context, thus become key issues and worthy of study. O'Brien (2002) argues that epistemological understandings for student issues, assessment and curriculum design should have a more central place. Social work education is one of the new pedagogies being adopted within higher education that encompass shifting conceptions of knowledge, its nature and validity. It is, therefore, necessary to establish its epistemological perspective and

in order to do this it is important to look first at the wider practice-based view of knowledge, within which it is embedded. The next section thus concerns itself with professional knowledge and knowing, both in practice and educational arenas.

Professional knowledge and knowing

Introduction

As a general starting point, the link between the professions and knowledge is well-established. A key feature of professions is that they are "knowledge-based occupational groups" and the aim of professional education is to "make a distinctive contribution to students' knowledge base and their socialisation into the occupation" (Smeby 2007, pp 207-8). The understanding of professional knowledge, however, can be seen to have shifted over the past few decades, setting up certain oppositional views, and changing the answers to the questions concerning what counts as knowledge, and who can know and how. This shift is now explored further.

Professional practice

In the early 20th century professional development makes use of a university discipline-based curriculum underpinned by a systematic knowledge base. The academic knowledge and theory of a given occupation has been traditionally used as one of the bases on which occupations "lay claim to being professional" (Watson et al. 2002, p.9). Professional practice at this time is seen as a technical-rational activity (a technocratic model) with its academic, scientific knowledge-base informing instrumental problem solving for practice (Goldstein 1986*).* Such technocratic application of knowledge is an objective, instrumental and systematic process, where theory is used as a framework to inform and guide practice in a one-way, top-down fashion. This model is based firmly on a view that practice involves working with solvable problems (Lester 1995), and fits into the notion of a modernist society characterised by order, stability, and a belief in science and progress (Jarvis et al. 2003). As Kondrat explains,

> "...the instrumental, or technical, domain of activity refers to the ways in
> which human beings seek to make the world they inhabit responsive to

> their needs and desires. In order to create the conditions in which needs are met and desires are fulfilled, the criterion of effective control becomes the regulating principle....Decision rules for action are based on some calculus of probability in reaching the stated goal."
>
> (Kondrat 1992, p.241)

Social work follows this strictly modernist, technocratic pattern until the late 1970s, privileging academic knowledge (Stevenson 1971), adhering to the principle of an objective, definable and logically consistent body of knowledge, systematically and scientifically created in academia, valuing scientific and positivist notions of knowledge (Philp 1979). As a result it also assigns a derivative status to practical knowledge as a secondary way of knowing, i.e. theory directs practice (Kondrat 1992).

The ability to use academic knowledge to inform professional activities may be traditionally recognised as one of the attributes of the professional person (Greenwood 1957). Nevertheless, the technocratic, hierarchical model of knowledge is seen to create certain problems related to relevancy and meaning for professional practitioners. Whan (1986) argues that the Cartesian legacy of this approach denotes a separation between mind and body, and consequently a separation between theory and practice. The hierarchical aspect is also troublesome because the knowledge and skills of application and practice become viewed as being of a lower order than the knowledge seen to lie in the theories and techniques of the disciplines. Theory and practice thus become separated (Raelin 2007).

This technocratic conception of knowledge validates academics and researchers as those who can actively add to the knowledge base by following systematic, empiricist, or scientific methods. Practitioners, on the other hand, are seen to passively apply the scientific body of knowledge created by others to address the problems and issues of practice. Not only this, the technocratic model requires the ability to make verifiable predictions which require an abstract and generalised view rather than a situational one; "a structuring of situations into causes and effects" and "procedural standards that differentiate" between "observed facts" and the subject's "experience of those facts" (Kondrat 1992, p.241). Usher et al.

(1997) strongly assert that although a need for certainty and rationality and the privileging of theoretical knowledge encourages rigour, it can also leave practitioners and students feeling this process and the end product are not relevant to their world of everyday practice. As O'Sullivan (2005, p.232) notes, knowledge that originates from "preoccupations with prediction and control does not form a prominent part of wisdom".

Consequently, a general dissatisfaction with a technocratic model develops, and major societal changes during the latter part of the 20th century combine to produce a particular "practice turn" in social theory and in epistemology, challenging the value of empirical, objective knowledge produced independently of the human experience (Raelin 2007, p.497). There begins instead a "foregrounding of complexity, uncertainty, heterogeneity and difference" (Usher 1996a, p.28). People at this time are guided less by tradition and past experience as they are forced to reflect and make decisions amid rapid change, risk and uncertainty (Dyke 2006). In response, Beck (1992) calls for a type of democratisation whereby expert knowledge and lay knowledge are both valued and reflexively engaged with as a means of deciding future action, i.e. a transaction between different types of knowledge. Gibbons et al. (1994) argue that a new mode of knowledge production (featuring reflexivity, transdisciplinarity and heterogeneity) is replacing or reforming established institutions, disciplines, practices and policies. Edwards and Usher (1997, p.162) summarise key technological, economic and cultural changes that result in a postmodern decentred condition of knowledge, where the original ideals of knowledge for knowledge's sake and for the pursuit of truth (the power and purpose of modernist education) prove unsustainable, resulting in "a loss by universities of their privileged status as primary producers of knowledge".

A change in the way professional knowledge is viewed appears to start with Ryle's (1949) interest in the link between intelligence and action and a key distinction between 'knowing-that' and 'knowing-how'. A focus on what people are unable to say and the more active awareness a practitioner relies on while involved in activity becomes developed further by Polanyi (1967) as 'tacit

knowledge'. Tacit knowledge, being embodied in skills that are located inside practices and ways of doing things, is important but difficult to articulate. Argyris and Schön (1974) begin to unravel this issue and identify an essential distinction between what we do and what we say we do, differentiating our 'theories of action' respectively into 'theories in use' and 'espoused theories'. This distinction helps explain why it is difficult to express some theories used in practice.

> "Clearly, specifying the knowledge contained in our theories in use would mean codifying the entire body of informal beliefs relating to deliberate human behaviour."
>
> (Argyris and Schön 1974, p.8)

Nevertheless, a key point made by these authors is that by articulating this type of knowledge there is the potential to theorise and validate it.

> "Learning to think like a professional now requires learning to build one's own theory of practice.
>
> (Argyris and Schön 1974, p.186)

Schön (1983, p.vii) further extends the ideas of tacit knowledge and knowing-how to describe 'knowing-in-practice', acknowledging the artistic, intuitive, emotional and embedded features ignored by the modernist, technical-rational perspective. This kind of knowing is "inherent in intelligent action" (Schön 1983, p.50) and it challenges the modernist divide between theory and practice as artificial. Schön's (1983; 1987) 'epistemology of practice' openly reconceptualises knowledge in practice and also identifies reflection (in and on action) as a process of generating and articulating this individual knowledge; although he recognises that the resulting descriptions are always social constructions.

Schön's work may be variously criticised for his underplaying of the impact of the socio-cultural context, the impreciseness of his terms, and his insistence on the essentially intuitive and inarticulate nature of practice wisdom (Usher et al. 1997; Sheppard 1998; Ixer 1999; Moon 1999), but there is a groundbreaking and determining epistemological shift here. Schön's critique of the technocratic model as an unsuitable framework to examine the complexity of knowing in practice is "prescient" (Webster-Wright 2009, p.716), allowing professional knowledge to be thought of as more than a commodity or object, and knowing as involving more than an individual's mind.

Social work practice - reflective practice model

Social work as a profession also takes this journey in its view of knowledge. Schön's concepts and ideas, together with those of John Dewey, Gilbert Ryle, and Michael Polanyi, are seen throughout the work of many authors debating, advocating and using these principles for social work. For example, Kondrat (1992) is one of the first to advance the epistemological status of practical knowledge as a distinct and identifiable mode of knowing in its own right for social work, advocating its equal place alongside formal and technical knowledge. Although doubt is also cast on the effectiveness of reflection as a process and its sufficiency as an explanatory concept and as a process of change (Van Manen 1995; Day 1993 cited in Cooper 2001, p.728), it is a welcomed concept for social work practice. It is used positively in the development of a reflective practice model for social work (Yelloly and Henkel 1994; Coulshed and Orme 1998; Harrison 1987; Thompson 1995; Payne 2002).

Reflective practice presents ways for understanding the interconnectedness of theoretical knowledge, self-reflection and action in the world. It is seen to offer solutions for many of social work's knowledge base problems linked to its history. For Jones and Joss (1995) the knowledge of a reflective practitioner becomes a process and not a product, being developed through analysis by observing, reflecting, experimenting and conceptualising. For Coulshed and Orme (1998) and Stepney (2000) it prevents an over-emphasis on competency and task performance, which had produced an anti-intellectual argument during the late 1970s (Trevithick 2005). For Gould and Harris (1996) and Fisher and Somerton (2000) it avoids the belief that theory and research (via evidence-based practice) will provide all the solutions to the problems professionals encounter. (Some of these knowledge base issues are explored further below.)

Thus, reflective practice is seen to handle an eclectic knowledge base (with its potential relativism) rigorously, to encompass a consideration of self, and evade the limitations of more scientific and technocratic methods (Payne 2002). It also appears to combine a subjective stance (reflectivity) with objective elements (criticality) and lead to accountability and responsibility of practice (Payne 2005).

Most recently, a concept of 'critical practice', which fully incorporates but also transcends reflectiveness by focusing clearly on change, is now advocated as the preferred approach to professional social work (Glaister 2008; Adams 2009). Although fully appreciating the added dimension here, for the purposes of this thesis the overall term 'reflective practice' is maintained for consistency.

Professional education

This shift, in recognising a practice element and the use of reflection for professional knowledge, has a major impact on the content and methods of professional education. The ideas can be seen encapsulated in reflective and experiential teaching and learning theories. For example, Kolb's work (Kolb and Fry 1975; Kolb 1984) with an experiential learning model (based on earlier work by Dewey and Piaget) shows the part that practice and reflection play in an experience-led learning process. The experiential element points to deficits of previous approaches and provides the ideas and opportunity for new practice-based pedagogies.

> "If professional knowledge is revealed in doing, and if knowing–how takes its place alongside knowing-that, the requirement for actual experience and the importance of learning through practicum opportunities are magnified."
>
> (Kinsella 2007, p.407)

This reflective and experiential educational movement is described by Bines and Watson (1992) as a shift from the traditional 'technocratic' to a 'post-technocratic' (i.e. a post-positivist/modernist) professional education model, encompassing the experiential and reflective theories noted above. The post-technocratic model is seen to be concerned with professional knowledge in its wider sense and with action; it gives credence to practice and practitioners as well as to related disciplines and academics. The post-technocratic model's aims are "practice, problem-solving and evaluation", ensuring that professional competence in its widest sense remains "the central and integrating focus" of any course (Bines and Watson 1992, p.21). The model is particularly concerned with three main aspects of professional development, "namely the professional knowledge base, competence in professional action and the development of

reflection" (Bines and Watson 1992, p.57). There is essentially a move from a primary focus on transferring knowledge towards an understanding that knowledge is co-constructed with students; and this significant shift from teaching to learning leads to innovative pedagogic practice (Webster-Wright 2009).

Reflective, pragmatic and experiential educational models start to develop (e.g. problem-based learning), which place the individual learner at the heart of the learning process. An emphasis on experience of, and reflection in and on practice within a 'practicum', i.e. the bridge between the academic institution and the world of practice, becomes essential. In the wider context, these new models and approaches to learning are also seen to be able to meet the needs of a postmodern society more effectively, dealing with a world of "risk, illusion and ambiguity" and the emergence of lifelong learning (Jarvis et al. 2003, p.19).

Associated learning processes tend to be interpretive and inductive and can form a more integrative relationship between practice knowledge and theory than the technocratic model, i.e. one that encompasses 'being' and a personal ethical stance (Margetson 2000; Tynjälä et al. 2003). Smeby (2007) argues for this emotional and ideological role of knowledge to be emphasised in professional curricula, in order that students get connected to professional knowledge. As a result, these are not just new epistemological requirements but ontological ones as well, a point reiterated extensively by Barnett (1994, 1997, 2004, 2007, 2009) as he argues for students making connections between their knowledge, actions and self-understanding at the highest levels of criticality. Dall'Alba's work (Dall'Alba and Barnacle 2007; Dall'Alba 2009) and others' (Cunliffe 2002; Curzon-Hudson 2003; Cherry 2005) likewise reconfigure professional education as a process of becoming, involving not just what we know and can do, but also who we are.

Social work education – post-technocratic model
In social work education as well, a post-technocratic shift is seen from the 1990s that leads away from exploring ideas gained from formal theory towards personal theorising and exploring constructs gathered directly from students' experience (Papell and Skolnik 1992; Papell 1996; Harris 1996). Gould and Taylor (1996)

define an epistemology of practice for social work education in detail, showing how it promotes and endorses the shift from technocratic to post-technocratic methods and allows creative links to be made between knowledge and situations. These educational methods facilitate the reflective practice model for social work and one of the key, pivotal areas where this is focused is on the link between theory and practice. As seen earlier, a technocratic model sees theory being applied in mechanistic and instrumentalist ways. The post-technocratic model, in direct contrast, sees an active and interpretive use of theory within practice and a number of educational methods are developed to facilitate this.

One early but well-cited method comes from Canada in the form of Bogo and Vayda's (1987; Vayda and Bogo 1991) 'Integration of Theory and Practice' (ITP) Loop, an adaptation of the experiential learning cycle developed by Kolb (1984). In Britain, Gould and Taylor's (1996) seminal text on methods of reflective learning in social work education emphasises this active use of theory as well as the personal, experiential, and critical thinking elements within the reflective process.

> "…it is not enough to teach students knowledge for practice, students must learn to use knowledge in practice. Students must acquire the ability to reflect on how they think and act in practice… As they encounter new and unpredictable situations, social workers must be able to make critically reflexive judgements and decisions..."
>
> (Taylor 1996b, p.153)

Taylor's (1996a) methods for facilitating reflective learning and promoting self-directed learning for social worker students culminate at this time in the development of the 'Enquiry and Action Learning' (EAL) project at the University of Bradford. This influential programme primarily follows work on adult learning and transactional dialogue, the use of self-directing study groups, and the development of critical reflexivity. Formal theory is used as a resource here, a way of bringing critical analysis to bear on "inductively derived situational insights" via the use of questions (Taylor 1996a, p.89).

Other innovative teaching and learning methods become developed for enhancing reflective capabilities, such as critical incident analysis (Fisher and Somerton

2000) and signposted portfolios (Doel et al. 2002). Fook et al. (1997), using work by Benner, and Dreyfus and Dreyfus, note the particular effectiveness of reflective discussion based on practice experience and critical incidents. In fact, discourse methods, dialogic frameworks and social learning models all prove useful techniques for reflective articulation (Taylor and White 2000; Saltiel 2003; Fook 2007; Fook and Gardner 2007).

Professional knowledge and knowing: summary

Reflective and post-technocratic models challenge and extend traditional, technocratic notions of knowledge, ways of knowing, and knowledge use. They validate the self and practice as sources of knowledge and ways of knowing, and reflection as a process for knowledge use and production. In effect, a 'reflective epistemology' (Mantzoukas 2007, p.243) is developed which relies on two key positions:

- Extended range of professional knowledge and ways of knowing;
- Active and interpretive ways of using knowledge - the theory practice relationship.

These two key epistemological positions can now be critically explored in more detail to uncover important issues, challenges and criticisms.

Reflective epistemology – key positions

Position 1: Extended range of professional knowledge and ways of knowing

The acknowledgment of knowledge within practice and an incorporation of self and experience into the knowledge process has a major impact on the consideration of what is valid knowledge for many professions. It means that professional knowledge, or a profession's knowledge-base, is potentially no longer restricted to formal theory or research findings. This extended range is essentially seen to encompass three main domains: cognitive, psychomotor and affective, which in turn involve propositional knowledge, process knowledge, and personal knowledge as defined by Eraut (1994):

- Propositional: discipline-based theories and concepts; generalised and practical principles; specific propositions;
- Process: how to conduct the various processes that contribute to professional action, e.g. skilled behaviour, deliberative processes;
- Personal: impressions, interpretation of experience.

These are alternatively labelled formal knowledge, practical knowledge, and self-regulative knowledge by Tynjälä (1999), later extended to include socio-cultural knowledge (Tynjälä 2009). Connelly and Clandinin's (1985) early work in America with teachers' modes of knowing in practice establishes the integration of these personal, practical, theoretical/conceptual and cultural elements.

Equality

The mix of formal and informal types of knowledge as well as internal and external sources is an important point in respect of equality and validity. The movement away from a modernist and technocratic view of knowledge can be seen simplistically as an oppositional standpoint; i.e. one that turns the hegemonic epistemological position around by privileging or validating subjective knowledge over objective knowledge. Barnett (1997) highlights that a reflective practice model in particular can be prone to neglect propositional knowledge because of its emphasis on action. Dyke (2006, p.113) claims that Schön does this because "he ends up arguing for practice at the detriment of theory". However, as Fook (2002, p.44) points out, postmodern thinking does not "upend hierarchies" but rather "unsettles polarised constructions by positing more complex ones", allowing an inclusive approach to "the many diverse and changing perspectives and ways of understanding".

Therefore, despite an emphasis on the knowledge within practice and self, it is the equal combination of academic and non-academic knowledge that appears to be the most prominent message from the literature. In Eraut's (1994, 2004a) view professional work requires the concurrent use of many different kinds of knowledge in an integrated purposeful manner; and they should be accorded "parity of esteem" in higher education (Eraut 1994, p.102). Barnett (1997) argues

that all types of knowledge should be given high priority in both academic and practice settings; a point reiterated later by Mantzoukas,

> "If knowledge is created by the individual, as purported by reflection, rather than found or waiting to be discovered, then all types of knowledge can be equally valid and no knowledge has any privileged positioning over any other type of knowledge."
>
> (Mantzoukas 2007, p.244)

A notion of parity will be seen to be problematic when explored in relation to higher education in more detail below. Nevertheless, the ideal of a wide and equally viewed range of professional knowledge can be seen to be achieved in places. Professional bodies' requirements, such as Skills for Care (part of the Sector Skills Council for social care, supporting adult social care employers in improving care provision), include obligations for students to analyse critically, evaluate and apply a wide range of legal, policy-based, theoretical, ethical knowledge (Shaw 2009). The literature also advocates particular combinations of procedural or practical knowledge, practice wisdom and personal knowledge (Drury-Hudson 1997); value knowledge and tacit knowledge (Narhi 2002); service user knowledge, organisational knowledge, policy and community knowledge (Pawson et al. 2003); and interaction-context knowledge (Osmond 2005). There is also a lack of hierarchy implied here; in general these lists do not privilege one source over another. Trevithick's (2008) review of social work's knowledge base also encapsulates this egalitarian view as it embodies the knowledge that all parties bring to the encounter, in particular that of service users and carers.

Criticality

An aspect associated with an extended range of knowledge being accorded parity of esteem is that all types and sources are subject to a critical and evaluative stance. For example, Lester's (1995) examination of a post-technocratic approach encompasses critical reflection on, critical inquiry into, and creative synthesis of, practice and theory. This notion will similarly be seen to be problematic when explored in more detail below, but particular emphasis is seen to be placed on taking a critical view of formal knowledge. For example, Jarvis (1999) states that

students need to engage critically with propositional knowledge in order to enable learning from the practice, research and ideas of others.

In health and social work White (2009) and Taylor and White (2001, p.937) note the particular dangers of uncritically invoking theory to warrant judgments in social work practice in order to make "certainty out of uncertainty". Fook (2002, p.68) agrees, in particular suggesting that a practitioner needs a liberated and critical approach to formal social work theory in order to be able to "bend it" to one's own use and context, rather than "feeling constrained to use it in prescribed ways". Her postmodern view sees theories as intellectual tools rather than as rule books. Pawson et al. (2003) produce a set of criteria specifically to assist the critical review of a wide range of social work knowledge, i.e. judging standards such as transparency, accuracy and purpose.

In social work education this call for a critical approach is similarly made.

> "Professional learning is often limited by unhelpful notions of theory and research findings which render these phenomenons unavailable for explanation and examination and leave practitioners to a practice wisdom that is unable to use theories and research findings in a reflective and useful way."
>
> (Saltiel 2003, p.108)

Prior (2005) agrees, using Aristotle's notions of technê and phronêsis, to argue that it is imperative for social work students to be able to question theoretical presuppositions inherent in social work practice because decision-making entails moral deliberation.

Constructed output

Most of the current ideas about experiential and reflective learning are based on constructivist models (Atkinson 2000). There is not the space here to critically explore constructivism in detail but the common view is that knowledge is actively constructed by individuals as part of social communities; i.e. we learn by fitting new understanding and knowledge into old understanding and knowledge, thus extending and supplanting it (Fry et al. 1999).

This view of knowledge effectively rejects the technocratic ideas that knowledge is passively received and not created in a practice environment (Tynjälä 1999). A critically reflective process is not about finding the right answers in a predefined body of knowledge, and so it creatively generates its own answer. Practitioners within practice situations actively reconstruct what is known as they make professional judgments in particular situations or individual contexts (Snow 2001). It appears to create a personally justified way of knowing, a new process of social work knowledge production and therefore a new producer of knowledge - the practitioner (Tynjälä et al. 2003).

The constructed result, though, is referred to and described in a variety of ways, as a type of theory emerging from and embedded in personal practice (Carr and Kemmis 1986), as 'theories in use' (Schön 1987), 'informal theory' (Usher and Bryant 1989), or 'personal theory' (Rolfe 1998). Rolfe et al. (2001) call the explicit articulated output 'experiential theoretical knowledge', explaining how it can be employed to improve performance, to justify it to others as a source of evidence, and to pass on or share with others.

Indeed, in social work practice literature the term 'theory' is extensively used and its validity assured. Thompson (2000) explains this by showing that the individual practitioner develops and constantly adjusts and modifies a framework for understanding their reality and thus produces their own theories, becoming an active agent in the process of knowledge use and understanding. He concludes that because of this the myths and the artificial barriers about who can develop theories, which incorporate old power issues and the divide between the theoretician and practitioner, can be dispelled. Fook's (2002) intensive social work study agrees that reflective practitioners inductively develop their own theory of practice. Glaister (2008) concurs that practice is seen as part and parcel of a continual process of theorising and evidence building to make experience more intelligible.

This idea of knowledge production also develops further with postmodern notions of language (Kearney 2004) and social constructivism (Jordan and Jordan 2000;

Taylor and White 2000; Cooper 2001; Oko 2011) to show how theory can be socially embedded in, and emerge for practice; and that knowledge is a creative and evolving cycle of deconstruction and reconstruction. Cooper (2008) and Rein and White (1981) all argue for knowledge construction and theory to be located within professional practice. However, the relational interdependence between the social and individual elements also makes any construction of knowledge even less easy to prescribe, describe, or account for (Billett 2008).

In social work education students work with reflective processes to synthesise formal theory with their experience and more informal knowledge, and they are also seen to start to form and justify new knowledge (Nixon and Murr 2006). Indeed, this construction or output stage can add another important critical dimension. Noble (2001) explains this clearly, showing that an approach that encourages students to speak or theorise from their own positions does not mean uncritically affirming their expertise. Instead, they become both the subject and object of their experiences in a process of critical thinking and reflection. This allows a critical exploration and justification of their practical reasoning, thoughts and emotions, and gives them an opportunity to explore their knowledge use and construction process and learn to trust it as a site of legitimate knowledge. Taylor and White (2001) argue that rigour is achieved because reflexivity critically analyses the authority of the knowledge and claims being used. Knowledge is not just a resource to be deployed, rather a topic worthy of scrutiny.

> "We assert that by acknowledging multiple accounts and by analysing how they are constructed to warrant particular claims and to undermine others we can in fact achieve a more rigorous approach to professional practice."
>
> (Taylor and White 2001, p.54)

Healy (2005) and O'Sullivan (2005) detail the underpinning reasons why such objectivity must be apparent for social work - for accountability and making reasoning explicit, improving service quality, and the shared responsibility for developing credible and valuable knowledge from a practice perspective to add to more formal debates. Significant connections to the moral and ethical aspect of social work are also highlighted by Gray and Gibbons (2007), who teach students

about ethical decision making as a critical thinking process, allowing the integration of values and ethics alongside other knowledge.

Tacitness

As seen above, the range of knowledge, whether that being used or that being constructed, extends to process/practical and personal/self-regulative areas, incorporating aspects such as sound judgment and thoughtful action, and a moral/ethical dimension as well as an intuitive one (Sternberg 1990; Fish and Coles 1998). This incorporation necessarily makes the nature of knowledge unclear because these elements are essentially tacit, subjective and embodied in nature (Van Manen 1995), and, it could be said, more associated with the idea of knowing than knowledge. Usher et al. (1997) confirm that some knowledge is so rooted in practice it is not always consciously present, and they make the subsequent important point that its articulation, coherence and consistency can be limited.

These are all key issues in respect of knowledge validation, and this issue has been debated for a long time in social work. Evans (1976, p.180) notes the problem of articulation early on, that academic theories of practice can be known because they are codified and written down, but to know practice theory presents an "empirical problem of quite a different order". As Oko (2011, p.10) states, "ways of knowing are not always rational". The issue appears to remain for the most part unresolved and therefore problematic.

> "A consequence of prioritising reflective practice in social work ought to be that different kinds of tacit knowledge will be recognised…This is a big agenda and one that social work has only begun to tackle."
>
> (Shaw 2009, p.187)

Position 2: Active and interpretive ways of using knowledge - the theory practice relationship

In the literature concerning professional expertise, Bromme and Tillema (1995, p. 261) note that it is imperative to clarify the mechanisms and correspondence rules between professional action and theoretical knowledge because the professional acts in a "field of tension between the two". Exactly how the integration of

theoretical and practical knowledge takes place becomes a central and pivotal, but essentially unanswerable question (Tynjälä 1999). Leinhardt et al. (1995) identify the underlying epistemological problem, that it involves the integration of opposing basic philosophies, i.e. objective and subjective perspectives. Van de Ven and Johnson (2006) state that the relationship between practical and scholarly knowledge has always been misunderstood, and this has contributed to limited success in bridging them.

From application to dialectic

In social work a concern with the nature of this relationship between 'theory' and 'practice' is seen as old as the profession itself (Healy and Rimmer 1981). There are long standing problems with the term 'theory' (Payne 1990; Camilleri 1996); with the idea of a technical-rational application of theory (Camilleri 1996; Duncan 2007); with the lack of a unique body of knowledge for social work (James 2004), and with systematic or evidence-based approaches to using knowledge in practice (Taylor and White 2001; Webb 2001; Parton 2003; Humphries 2003; Butler and Pugh 2004; Gray and McDonald 2006).

The main criticism, noted earlier, is that technocratic, hierarchical models of knowledge, and modernist or positivist approaches, involve knowledge being created by others using systematic, empiricist, or scientific methods which are then passively 'applied' to practice; in effect disallowing practice any authority or rigour of its own and the practitioner any personal agency. As Eraut (1985, p.124) explains, application implies working with "rules or procedures" which enable someone "to translate knowledge into prescriptions for action on particular situations", and by implication this type of use is for technical and vocational education, not professional education which involves "something more". Parton (2003) shows how evidence-based practice uses the application of research-based knowledge to the solution of problems of instrumental choice, thus only allowing practice to achieve rigour and authority second-hand, via,

> "...describable, testable, replicable techniques derived from scientific research and which is based on knowledge which is objective, consensual, cumulative and convergent."

> (Parton 2003, p.2)

A reflective epistemology, in contrast, encompasses a more holistic idea of professional knowledge that allows an active and interpretive relationship between theory and practice (Payne 1990; Thompson 1995). Indeed, many show that theory and practice are interlinked, reciprocal, and socially constructed (Evans 1976; Curnock and Hardiker 1979; Hearn 1982; Pilalis 1986; Howe 2002). In general, the terminology changes accordingly; whereas the technocratic model involves 'applying', reflective, post-technocratic models emphasise understanding and judgment as aligned with an interpretive mode of knowledge use (Eraut 1985, p.124), as well as synthesis and integration, e.g. 'fusing' theory and practice (Bromme and Tillema 1995).

> "Most professional activity is based not on the two-step application of knowledge to practice but on an integrated knowledge-in-action, much of which is spontaneous and tacit."
>
> (Bines and Watson 1992, p.13)

The role of dialogue and interpretation is emphasised here. For example, Usher et al. (1997) sees the theory practice relationship as a two-way dialectic process, about how one can help the other, so practice can be reviewed through theory and vice versa. The question is not a technical one of 'how can theory be applied to practice?' but rather, "in what ways can representation and explanation assist judgement and understanding?" (Usher and Bryant 1987, p.209). Hill and Morf (2000), using work by Shotter, use the concept of 'knowing from within', i.e. contextual, moral knowing within the person and the situation, to encourage a dialectical approach between theory and practice in order to show the synthesis at work here. For Kondrat (1992, p.246) the social work practitioner is able to "move from the subjective perspective to an objective view of that perspective and back again" via a critically reflexive dialogue.   For Thompson (2000; 2005) the concept of reflective practice unites theory and practice without presenting either as being superior. For Tynjälä et al. (2003) and others, it is specifically this dialogue between practice and theory that produces 'practice-based theory'. Oko (2011, p.xiii) sees the need for students to consider 'knowledge as process' rather than 'knowledge as product' in order to integrate theory and practice and see knowledge as something that develops by their "active involvement in using it".

Lack of clarity

The nature of this dialogue between practice and theory is, however, extremely unclear, and the resulting ambiguity and impreciseness becomes a problematic issue. The lack of clarity is apparent when the term most associated with a technocratic use of theory in practice, i.e. 'apply', is used when referring to a reflective approach, e.g. McGregor (2011). Recent social work textbooks do use more aligned terms, e.g. Thompson and Thompson (2008), 'integrate'; Walker (2008), 'relate' 'connect'; Oko (2011), 'utilise'; nevertheless, the terms 'apply' and 'application' can be used indiscriminately and ambiguously. Throughout the literature there is a corresponding sense of vagueness and inconsistency surrounding the use of knowledge and the concept of theory practice connection (Van de Ven and Johnson 2006).

The nature of reflectively working with and integrating such a wide range of knowledge is not precise or systematic; even Kolb fails to explain how the four separate elements of his model of experiential learning actually work together or relate to each other (Miettinen 2000). Eraut (1994) does initially detail a symbiotic theory practice relationship, and, using Broudy's four modes of knowledge use, shows how theoretical knowledge has to be adapted by interpretation and association involving practical reasoning, understanding and judgment. However, he later also shows that "knowing how to use theoretical knowledge is largely tacit knowledge" (Eraut 2004b, p.220). Van Manen (1995) notes an underlying issue that being reflective and therefore constantly critically aware of what we are doing and why, disturbs the functional epistemology of practice.

> "The aim of critical reflection is to create doubt and critique of ongoing actions. But it is obviously not possible to act thoughtfully and self-confidently while doubting oneself at the same time."
>
> (Van Manen 1995, p.48)

The nature of reflection itself as the generative and mediating mechanism within a reflective epistemology is seen to be problematic and functionally vague (Ixer 1999; 2010), and indeed confusing and ambivalent in respect of the thinking/doing relationship, resulting in a "theoretical void" according to Erlandson and Beach (2008, p.419). In fact, even Schön (2001) is still calling for

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an understanding of reflection in action and asks how textbook descriptions can be translated into professional judgments. Wilson et al. (2008) state that there is no clear path between theory and practice, or between formal or informal knowledge. In essence, Clegg (2009, p.411) notes that the literature on reflection, although extensive, does not actually provide "an adequate meta-theoretical account of the internal conversation such reflection presumes"; nor does it define its collective and social processes. Such impreciseness can only impact negatively on the perceived agency and authority of practitioners and students within this theory practice relationship and on the rigour of the process itself.

The dialogue and relationship between formal theory, professional practice and reflection appear to be extremely complex (Ford et al. 2005). The processes at work are not fully understood, but the problem is that for social work in particular, the "consequences of failing to confront the complexities of this issue" have been a "continuing chasm" between practice and theory (Cooper 2001, p.723) in both intellectual and practical senses. Prior (2005) is now concerned that as a result of this impreciseness, and in order to perhaps counteract it, reflection is in danger of becoming a technical and uncritical craft in social work. Others are similarly noting the problems and limitations of reflective practice (Bradbury et al. 2010).

Reflective epistemology – theoretical positions: summary

A reflective epistemology promotes extended notions of professional knowledge, ways of knowing and knowledge usage, to allow the incorporation of self and practice. The validity, authority and rigour of this informal content and the associated reflective processes are strongly argued for in the literature, relying not only on an equal view of such content but also an active and critical involvement of the practitioner and student. However, it is also seen that the tacit nature of such knowledge and processes, and the lack of clarity concerning these terms and their meaning, raise a number of problematic issues in this regard.

A wider view can now be taken to establish how well a reflective epistemology operates within practice and higher education arenas; and to note the particular

tensions reflective practice and post-technocratic educational models are exposed to. A more informed epistemological perspective can then be appreciated.

Reflective epistemology – operational tensions

In practice

As seen above, a reflective practice model should validate its processes and outputs within the workplace using the rigour of its critical and evaluative stance. It also requires practitioners to develop creative strategies for coping with uncertainties and change, rather than follow prescriptions (Adams 2002; Adams et al. 2002a). As an example, Taylor and White (2006) recognise that practitioners are often propelled towards early and certain judgments, and so they encourage a reflexive approach to theory in order to remain in uncertainty for longer and interrogate knowledge and reasoning, e.g. to avoid fitting the facts to existing hypotheses. Maintaining a position of not knowing is seen to enable practitioners to retain "an open-mind attitude about a situation", avoiding "reaching premature conclusions in a false search for certainty" (Wilson et al. 2008, p.106). Nevertheless, a key tension is created here because a search for certainty and truth, and the use of prescriptive and managerialist procedures, are inherent features of pre-existing but still active competency and evidence-based models in social work, which operate using realist and objectivist positions.

First, the competency model, originally underpinning the Diploma in Social Work (DipSW) created under the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) during the late 1980s and early 1990s, focuses on methods, skills and values rather than theory, knowledge and understanding (Jones 1996). It is still evident in the standards compiled by national bodies, e.g. the National Occupational Standards in social work, establishing particular practice-based requirements. A positivist stance associated with a competency model is enforced by a managerialist emphasis on agency procedures and imperatives, where quality standards are defined by more quantifiable outcomes than those of a value-driven and critically reflective view, setting up fundamental differences in the workplace (Ruch 2007). Dustin's (2006) research on front-line and team managers in social service departments shows this managerial emphasis on outcomes rather than

process, confirming their practice to be directed by procedure and orientation to task. This performance driven view of social work is, of course, itself also driven by central government control of local policies and priorities (Ruch 2007).

Second, and in contrast, evidence-based practice (hereafter EBP) focuses entirely on the use of academic knowledge for practice, taking a positivist approach towards its knowledge base. It starts with a number of prominent authors (e.g. Sheldon 1987; Rosen 1994; Sheppard 1995) promoting systematic methods of objective knowledge use as a series of solutions to the problems associated with an increasingly eclectic knowledge base during the 1970s and 1980s and in response to the anti-intellectual lobby at that time. This movement appears to merge during the 1990s with the notion of EBP, as two pivotal studies by MacDonald and Sheldon (1992) and Cheetham et al. (1996) promote the idea that a formal rationality of practice based on scientific methods can produce a more effective and economically accountable means of social service.

By the late 1990s a political turn towards EBP is also seen (DoH et al. 2000), with underpinning objective and scientifically-based research principles being advocated for social work practice. Policy documents begin to contain strong assertions that practice should be grounded in evidence or at least committed to it; e.g. 'Modernising the Social Care Workforce' (TOPSS 2000) states that the human resource strategy must have commitment to EBP as a key component. The use of EBP as an orthodoxy along with a 'what works' pragmatism, positivist orientation and formal rationality can still be seen as a dominant theme of official publications, as well as the discourse of research and professional literature. For example, a traditional notion of professionalism based on a robust knowledge base is reinforced too by the work of bodies such as the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) and the Research Excellence Framework (Higher Education Funding Council). Trevillion (2008) argues that this has created a new divide between research (and its objective disempowering relationship with practice), and theory (with its subjective empowering relationship with practice).

According to Hugman (2005), the ongoing process for professionalisation can be seen as an important reason why a positivist 'search for certainty' is ongoing in the twenty-first century with the formal registration of social workers, the protection of the occupational title and the establishment of a qualifying degree. Healy (2005) also points out that social work is unchanged in many ways from its traditional past. It is still a profession based on received ideas and draws substantially on discourses from other disciplines and fields of service activity. The process of knowledge usage is still primarily one-way and hierarchical, as the practices of social work do not substantially shape the discourses from which they are drawn (Healy 2005).

As Webster-Wright (2009) confirms, many of the professions exhibit a modernist inclination and legacy, and there is therefore an ongoing privileging of positivist epistemological perspectives that prevails in statutory social work settings in the UK. In essence, reflective practice principles, although argued as rigorous in their own right, have already been seen above to be unclear and ambiguous. They therefore imply more unsystematic processes and unpredictable outcomes and will be seen as problematic because the prevailing positivist models are based on the ideals of certainty and predictability. Smith (2001 cited in Parton 2008, p.260) has argued that while most agree that certainty in many areas of social work is not possible, "the political and organisational climate demands it".

Notwithstanding these oppositional stances, recent inquiries are using the language of reflective practice to support a more proactive and reflective notion of professionalism for social workers. The findings of the Laming Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié endorse the importance of practitioners developing their reflective capabilities, and retain a "respectful uncertainty" in their practice (Laming 2003, p.205). The Munro Review (Munro 2011) wants to help professionals move from a compliance culture to a learning culture where they have more freedom to use their expertise and judgment in assessing need and providing the right help. This review explains that prescribed procedures can deal well with typical scenarios but not with unusual ones, and an organisational

culture where procedural compliance is dominant can stifle the development of such expertise.

In summary, it can be seen that even though there may be a comparatively well-established reflective model in social work practice, it is operating within oppositional approaches somewhat fixated with certainty and predictability. On the one hand this tension is seen as something that can be accepted. For example, Hugman (2005, p.618) aligns the existence of tension in social work with the postmodern concept of contradiction where each idea denies another but where we cannot have one without the other; showing that "being between uncertainty and certainty is an appropriate metaphor for social work". On the other hand, this tension can be seen to fundamentally undermine a holistic conception of reflective practice, as well as the validity, authority and rigour of its processes and outputs.

In higher education

In essence, a post-technocratic model should validate reflective processes and outputs within an education system, but their appropriateness and legitimacy for assessment purposes can also be seen to be problematic. Subjective knowledge associated with reflective and post-technocratic models does not easily lend itself to assessment by independent standards as required by current academia (Bourner 2003). As Bourner (2010, p.31) discusses, traditionally epistemology has been focused on objective distanced knowledge "about the world external to the self"; by contrast, experience is "first hand, subjective and intimate", and so the central question concerns how to know, validly, something gained from personal experience.

The main issue is that this type of knowledge and ways of knowing can easily be seen as invalid in such a system. The lack of clarity and consistency of reflective processes and outputs, and the problematic recognition and verification of them, are compounded when the methods of knowledge verification in the education system are based on a different approach and therefore epistemology. In HE there appears an ongoing legacy of the modernist tradition, working to an idea of knowledge as something explicit that individuals possess and can articulate as a

product, a hierarchy of knowledge and a preferred scientific methodology. This legacy is seen early on in the debate as Meighan (1981) notes that universities can reflect a more technocratic model as their more dominant but hidden curriculum. Usher (1986, p.254) states that university aims are for the most part traditional ones of inducting students into a body of knowledge and academic ways of thinking, which accords with "traditional notions of standards and quality and is sanctioned by social and professional legitimation".

More recently, Hager (2001, 2004) agrees that higher education institutions are still firmly entrenched in the traditional model, focusing on developing and assessing individuals' mental capacity and propositional knowledge, rather than any reflective or ontological development. Tight (2003, pp 172-3) recognises that although there may be a "major significant change in the ownership, development and use of knowledge", it does not always make a large impact on universities that are set in more traditional forms of departmental and disciplinary organisation. Other leading educationalists (Barnett 2004; Beckett and Hager 2002) suggest that more current socio-political elements are a factor in actually maintaining a modernist perspective, with recent global changes in education and work producing increasing pressure for ensuring professional standards, measurable outcomes and accountability of practice. Clouder (2009, p.10) notes the way reflective learning has to "jostle" for position with other discourses seen above such as EBP and competency-based education; and Ransome sees the split between

> "...those who see higher education as a process of personal development using the academic techniques of qualitative pedagogy, and those who see higher education as meeting the instrumental economic need for employment."
>
> (Ransome 2011, p.220)

The process of linking professional effectiveness to the capacity to theorise practice is seen to be "much less valued and enacted" in educational institutions (O'Gorman 2001 cited in Lizzio and Wilson 2007, p.278). Thus, when the appropriateness and validity of reflective, experiential knowledge is considered in an outcomes-based or skills-based climate, such knowledge runs the risk of marginalisation and devaluation (Mantzoukas 2007).

This, in turn, has major implications not only for what knowledge is considered valid but also for *how* it is considered valid. The hegemonic privileging of academic knowledge means that informal or practice knowledge is deemed as not having enough authority in itself to count as valid; thus academic knowledge acts as an external authority to justify it and give it the necessary rigour. For example, Brookfield (1993, p.30) argues if personal knowledge is to be more than anecdotal then it needs to be "tested, analysed and viewed against formal research and theory", and McCormick and Paechter (1999, p.xii) state that learners cannot "merely create or recreate private knowledge". A recent project undertaken by Gordon et al. (2009) shows that although both intuition and personal experience are evidently valued by practitioners to inform practice, these types of knowledge were regarded with some caution and had to be set against more formal knowledge to confirm their utility. Clegg (2009) may show that an internal dialogue, i.e. reflexive deliberation, reinstates a person's agency and personal power but the validity of this is a different matter when considered in an academic context, and as seen above, is itself unclear and rather tacit.

The validity of a post-technocratic model's reflective and practice-based processes, content and outputs in an HE context is, therefore, essentially problematic. Again, as seen in the practice context, it is argued that there is rigour here, but it is seen as inadequate when viewed from a modernist perspective. Shaw (2009) concludes that social work knowledge needs a justifying account, but the fundamental tensions between the two ways of justifying what we know and believe, i.e. internalist/subjective or externalist/objective, are unavoidable. Wilson et al. (2008) observe a risk in theoretically informed knowledge being given greater recognition and status than the practically informed knowledge associated with informal knowledge sources, but Bourner (2003) states that reflective learning will not achieve full legitimacy within the academy until its assessment is secure.

Reflective epistemology – operational tensions: summary
Superficially, a reflective epistemology, operating as a reflective model for social work practice and a post-technocratic model for social work education, is in

evidence and can be vindicated. However, enduring competency, evidence-based and modernist approaches to social work practice and education are also apparent, presenting fundamentally opposing views on knowledge and knowing and undermining the rigour of reflective and post-technocratic models. The resulting tensions make the validity, justification and authority of reflective knowledge and ways of knowing problematic.

As a result an advanced level of personal epistemology (which sees knowledge as tentative and evolving, inter-related and complex, and knowing as constructing understanding for oneself involving evaluative and integrative strategies) may not always be aligned here. It will come into conflict with the technocratic principles underlying any enduring, opposing models. In addition, it may not always be adequate to deal with the complex and imprecise nature of reflective and experiential processes and content.

The two key positions associated earlier with a reflective epistemology can now be extended to include acknowledgement of the respective epistemological issues seen above.

1. Extended range of professional knowledge and ways of knowing: validity and justification issues.
2. Active and interpretive ways of using knowledge - the theory practice relationship: authority issues.

The impact of this situation on practitioners entering HE to become students on programmes such as PQ social work can now be explored further, as the student experience with a reflective epistemology becomes relevant at this point.

Reflective epistemology – the student experience

The epistemological issues noted above concerning the validity and authority of knowledge and the justification for knowing can also be seen in the literature that deals with the student experience. The notion of a prevailing modernist approach to knowledge in opposition to a reflective one is again pertinent.

Student issues

Initially, it can be seen that the issues lie with the students themselves. Eraut (1994, p.39) notes that one of the underlying problems when trying to meet reflective, post-technocratic requirements can be a student's "dominant conception of learning" that "involves the explicit acquisition of externalised codified knowledge". In effect, personal life, educational or work experience may have taught students to devalue their own observations and assessment of the world in respect of academic knowledge. Usher (1985) observes that adult students are often reluctant to accept their experience has any meaning from which they can learn. They can often see the university or college as a very formal institution concerned with the transmission and assessment of abstract knowledge in ways that encourage reproductive learning, 'right' answers and surface level approaches. The figure of authority, perceived in either theory or the teacher, is a "seemingly solid wall of certainty and 'truth'" against which use of subjective experience crumbles (Usher 1985, p.69). As Goldstein (1993) argues, wanting prescriptive models for use in practice or privileging theory are potential barriers to reflective learning because, as closed systems of beliefs, they can limit the range of questions a student might ask about any event.

More recently in social work education, Fisher and Somerton (2000) argue that although a didactic pedagogy is now questioned and challenged, it remains not only a hegemonic tradition in places but also one actually preferred by many social work students to a reflective or holistic approach. Fook (2002) observes how her students do not like it when they do not use formal theoretical labels for ideas in discussion, and they feel that their conclusions do not have the same authority or value as formal theory. Saltiel's (2003) post qualifying students do not think they are using any theory because they think of it as something separate and abstract, something written down, whereas practice cultures are largely oral. Trotter and Leech (2003) note that students may have a reluctance to acknowledge or value their own knowledge and ideas due to a lack of confidence about their personal theoretical perspective. Duncan (2007) shows that even competent social workers' confidence in their abilities to theorise and make underpinning knowledge explicit seems to disappear when asked to produce written analyses of

their work. Furthermore, Nixon and Murr (2006) demonstrate there is a belief among practitioners of an implicit hierarchy of knowledge which blocks the articulation of professional knowledge created through practice learning.

Curriculum issues

Epistemological issues can be seen within the curriculum too. The gradual upgrading of much professional education from certificate or diploma level to degree level, has raised unresolved questions about the relative status of knowledge bases that make up the curriculum and "the relative status of theory and practice" (Bines and Watson 1992, p.69). In effect, the validity, authority and justification of personal, process and propositional knowledge (Eraut 1994) may be left unexamined in an academic context, but also played out within oppositional forces.

As a result, a curriculum can lack the necessary clarity and explicit direction for students to follow, impacting negatively on their experience. One of the most problematic issues is the inclusion of personal and process knowledge. Bines and Watson (1992) note the difficulty students have in integrating a reflective evaluation of their own practice into the conventional essay mode and become concerned they are not complying with the academic expectations of the course. Eraut (1994) draws attention to the considerable intellectual effort needed by students working to a reflective model, because learning by using concepts and ideas in practice is usually a more difficult cognitive task than theoretically comprehending them. Lea (1998) finds that personal knowledge and the inclusion of 'self' become difficult issues in academic writing, creating a conflict of identity, and Lister (2000) notes that mature students returning to study struggle with the ability to relate theory to practice because of the wealth of their personal experiences. Hoadley-Maidment's (2000) survey identifies the difficulty Open University health and social welfare students experience in turning a narrative form associated with personal experience into a form that illustrates an academic argument based on abstract concepts, issues and theories. Pickering (2000) notes problems with student teachers' reflective academic written work aiming to combine theory and practice but ending up as defensive, descriptive and

superficial. In social work education, concerns have been raised in filtering personal agendas and stories (Trotter and Leech 2003) and in defining previous experience appropriately (Saltiel 2003) in written work.

In addition to these issues, there can be an assumption by staff that students understand what is expected of them, and also staff ignorance or ambiguity on what this is. Indeed, Lea and Street (1998) show that students' difficulties revolve around the fact that requirements for writing are frequently left implicit by academic staff unable to clearly articulate what constitutes successful writing or how to do it. Stierer's (2000b) study finds that professional students cannot understand or apply the discursive ground rules provided for writing in specific situations, and terms such as 'critical' and 'analysis', therefore, remain largely mysterious to them. Hoadley-Maidment's (2000) survey finds that students are not explicitly being shown the connecting links between higher-order academic competencies and the professional education and expertise they already have. Trevithick (2008) notes that the absence of a coherent framework to link theoretical and practice knowledge means that the link between theory and practice, or knowledge and its implementation, is not always made explicit or is left to students and practitioners to unravel.

There are further issues to be aware of. First, Taylor (2006) makes the point that educational reflective accounts make the practice of social work visible in a particular way for a particular audience, e.g. for assessment, and in this scenario they need to present a particular picture. They are not, therefore, pure descriptions, and the account will select and order facts accordingly as it needs to persuade the educator that the student can pass as a competent practitioner. This not only heightens the anxiety for the student writing the account but the question is raised as to how much the student is able to recognise or use appropriate devices and conventions in the text itself to create a favourable picture. Second, on the issue of criticality, Nixon and Murr (2006) note reluctance on the part of social work students to develop critical thinking skills with formal theory. Ford et al.'s (2005) study reveals there is much less encouragement and support to critique theory than to make connections between practices, theory, law and

values. They note that they expected to find more evidence of challenge to received knowledge and practice wisdom, and more critical engagement with theory, than was apparent. They also found that students are not always taught to think critically about the theories, methods and concepts in use; a finding reiterated by Gray and Webb (2009).

Third, the academic context is usually dominated by a requirement to write and be assessed in a particular, acceptable style. Eraut (1994, p.34) sees this as the hidden curriculum in higher education, as it is "not what you think or do but the way you write about it that counts". As Moon (2004) shows, unless learners can express their learning effectively what they know will not be recognised and, as seen above, for many students the representation of reflective learning is a further source of learning and a particularly difficult one. On the whole, written performance style assessments (e.g. case studies, portfolios, critically reflective work records, reflective evaluations of practice) are presented as the best assessment modes for measuring the more reflective and experiential type of learning associated with a post-technocratic approach (Biggs 1999). However, the use of multiple narratives and subjective interpretations make it necessary to modify and revise more traditional standards and notions of quality in higher education (Bourner 2003). Attempts to do this and thus accommodate a post-technocratic mix of knowledge, skills and values, theory and practice, can result in very broad but rather unclear assessment and grading criteria, which provide little instruction on what is actually required by the student (Potter and East 2000).

The student experience - summary

There are, therefore, multiple issues here. Students can have their own preconceptions or expectations regarding knowledge that may be misaligned with professional education based on a reflective epistemology, but if that pedagogy itself is unclear or misaligned within its own institution, the problems are compounded. Bines and Watson themselves note that,

> "...it is not easy to develop course elements which both develop professional understanding and also do justice to the substantive and methodological concerns of contributing disciplines, or to 'integrate' theory and 'practice' and in particular, institution-based course elements, with the experience of the practicum."

(Bines and Watson 1992, p.19)

Clouder (2009) more recently notes these as ongoing issues and conflicts associated with trying to embed a post-technocratic model at curriculum level.

In effect, and as seen earlier, adopting an advanced level of personal epistemology that ostensibly aligns with a post-technocratic model may not be either adequate or completely suitable if that model is operating in opposition with others (Bromme et al. 2008).

The key requirements and epistemological issues associated with reflective practice and post-technocratic models can now be extended to include this pedagogical aspect.

- Extended range of professional knowledge and ways of knowing: validity and justification issues.
- Active and interpretive ways of using knowledge - the theory practice relationship: authority issues.
- Pedagogy: alignment and clarity issues.

Conclusion

The shift to a reflective epistemology encountered across social work and other professions during the past decades significantly affects what counts as knowledge, how it is produced and where it resides. Reflective practice is still the most influential movement in social work today (Fook et al. 2006) and, notionally at least, seems to allow both objective and subjective aspects of social work knowledge, use, and production. In parallel, social work education has largely followed a post-technocratic trend with an accompanying shift in focus from product to process. Like much professional education it has moved beyond an approach where students are only taught a set of skills which focus on the logical, systematic aspects of reasoning, or which merely enables certain levels of competence, into reflective, experiential pedagogies (Potter and East 2000).

Nevertheless, a reflective epistemology is not a fully established concept; its requirements and positions associated with knowledge, ways of knowing and knowledge use remain vague, ambiguous or in contention. In addition it is operating within oppositional epistemologies of managerialism, EBP, sets of prescriptive competences, and a privileging of academic knowledge. This opposition can be seen as a tension between an objective need for certainty and knowing, and a subjective allowance of uncertainty and unknowing (Blom 2009).

Trevithick (2008) reviews the ongoing legacy of this for social work, listing major areas of concern, and concludes that at present the profession has difficulty identifying and articulating a precise practice language and a distinct knowledge base. As O'Sullivan (2011, p.84) argues, social work uses "multiple sources of knowledge both tacitly and deliberatively" but there is "no definitive way of deciding whether knowledge is valid or not". This creates epistemological misalignment, tension and confusion in areas of learning, teaching and assessment, which can impact negatively on students' learning experiences. The beliefs, assumptions, or expectations regarding knowledge held by PQ social work students become highly significant and of consequence to their learning experience, as issues of validity, justification and authority appear paramount.

However, personal epistemology is also a disputed construct, giving rise to concern and caution over its use of standards and levels. The latest perspectives suggest that the existing conceptualisation of personal epistemology is now inadequate for professional higher education encompassing a reflective epistemology (Brownlee and Berthelsen 2008; O'Brien 2002). As Kondrat (1992) notes early on, a broader and more aligned view of knowledge, or an 'expanded epistemology', is required to allow professional knowledge to contain formal and constructed substantive knowledge, and for both the subjectivity of the practitioner-knower and the objective imperatives of the context to be part of the integrating process. In addition, though, as a reflective epistemology is not fully established, and is operating within conflicting approaches, it cannot be assumed that an advanced level of personal epistemology is aligned here.

Nevertheless, and answering RQ1, personal epistemology has a central place and a pivotal role in social work education because knowledge and its use are central and pivotal, if complex and contested, elements within reflective and post-technocratic models. As all these notions are uncertain the epistemology of any post-technocratic curriculum and the nature of its students' personal epistemology need to be made explicit.

The advice that each context should empirically explore what positively affects learning and comprehension and establish its own understanding and definition of a required level of personal epistemology (Hammer and Elby 2002; Hofer 2006), or indeed the range of flexibility of epistemological judgments needed (Bromme et al. 2008), appears extremely pertinent here. Billett (2008, p.55) makes a strong case for a greater emphasis on "pedagogy as being about personal epistemology" in work-based learning arenas, and for conceptions of learning for professional practice to emphasise the role of personal epistemologies and agency. As O'Brien (2002) argues, epistemological understandings around student issues, assessment and curriculum design need to have a more central place within the dialogue of these pedagogies.

The aim of the narrative review is to develop understanding and direction for the study and a number of major influences can be identified at this point. Hofer and Pintrich (1997, 2002) clearly establish the key epistemological dimensions of knowledge and knowing, whilst Hammer and Elby's work (2002, 2003) allows a more contextually sensitive and dynamic approach to the subject. Brownlee's (2004; Brownlee et al. 2005; Brownlee and Berthelsen 2008) significant research on personal epistemology within a professional context incorporates a reflective epistemology by noting the interrelationship between self and theory. A clear understanding of the impact of a reflective and experiential dimension on professional knowledge and education has been gained from early writers such as Bines and Watson (1992), Usher and Bryant (1987, 1989), Kondrat (1992), Eraut (1994, Lester (1995) and Rolfe (1998). Later educationalists such as Barnett (e.g.2004), Billet (2008) and Hager (2001, 2004), help explain why a reflective

epistemology has not become fully established within our educational institutions, and point to the key tensions and misalignments.

This level of understanding provides further direction for the study's empirical design, detailed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Case Study

4a. Case Study Methodology

i. Research strategy

This thesis' pragmatic research approach, established in chapter 2, allows its particular requirements to drive the decision about which strategy to use, ensuring a good 'fit'. There is a need to accommodate the sequential and developmental design of the thesis, i.e. for the literature search to inform the empirical research, for each stage of the empirical enquiry to inform the next, and for the output from this to be applicable to the practice development. Also, the empirical research questions centre on a PQ social work programme, encompassing a range of epistemological issues concerning the programme as well as the students, and so there is a need for a variety of research methods to be used.

The chosen methodology (i.e. pragmatic, qualitative, interpretive) encompasses a number of alternative strategies, e.g. phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study, each of which can now be considered in respect of the research design. First, in its broadest meaning, phenomenology is a "theoretical viewpoint that advocates the study of direct experience taken at face value", and which sees behaviour as determined by the phenomena of experience (Cohen et al., 2000, p.23). In many respects it could provide particularly useful contextual and meaningful insights for this thesis. However, although a phenomenological study will describe or interpret the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals, the philosophical basis to this approach suggests that there is an essential, invariant structure (or essence) to a phenomena (Creswell 1998), the discovery of which is not the expressed purpose of this study.

Next, ethnography also appears relevant in certain ways as it involves an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context (Tedlock 2000). Ethnography investigates people in interaction in ordinary settings, looking for patterns of daily living, behaviour and practices resulting in a holistic view and understanding of a social group or culture (Walters 2007). Nevertheless, Creswell (1998) shows that ethnographic

researchers bring direct involvement and a strong cultural/social lens to research, which is not relevant here. Grounded theory is also not appropriate because its overall aim is to collect and analyse data before building theory (Charmaz 2000), and this thesis requires a theoretical framework to direct the research.

Although considered as the last option, case study appears the most appropriate. The pragmatic needs of the study, along with the chosen methodology and the initial requirements for understanding the puzzle as opposed to merely problem solving, appear to align well with the central components for a 'case study' as defined by Hammersley and Gomm (2000):

- Investigation of one or more cases in depth;
- Constructing the case/s out of naturally occurring social settings;
- Collection of unstructured data and qualitative analysis of it;
- Aim of capturing cases in their uniqueness.

Crotty (1998) explains that 'case study' is a strategy as well as an approach, with a focus on a specific instance or situation and an exploration of the interactive processes at work. This aligns well with the need to undertake the research at a local level. Education is one of Stenhouse's (1988) four case study styles where researchers are not involved with social theory or evaluative judgment but rather with the understanding of educational action. Again, this aligns well with the aims and objectives for the research and indicates an unproblematic adoption of this strategy. However, Bassey's (1999) review of the literature of case study research shows a less than coherent story as he explains that two of the key authors take rather oppositional approaches to case study work. Yin's writing establishes the more quantitative and positivist standards relating to scientific studies as ideals that case studies must meet, which Stake (although still taking a systematic approach) does not.

Also, there is no coherent definition or views about case study purpose and nature, even at a fundamental level. For example, Tight (2003) does not separately identify 'case study' as a method or methodology, stating that most pieces of research can be described as being in some sense case studies and so the term is

not a useful way for categorising and differentiating between outputs of research. Hammersley and Gomm's (2000) review shows that it is seen by some as a method and by others as a distinct research paradigm. This uncertainty leads to considerable methodological debate around issues of generalisability, authenticity and authority, analysis, and the role of theory, demanding key decisions to be explicitly made.

Notwithstanding the problematic areas noted above, the value of using case study for the empirical research is that it can capture the complexity of practice experiences and work with uniqueness (Cohen et al. 2000). In particular, this research approach suits the need to understand a real life phenomenon in depth, when such understanding covers important contextual conditions that are highly relevant to the issue being studied (Yin 2009). Creswell (1998, p.95) sees that qualitative case studies allow a researcher to "focus on an event, process or program for which there is no in-depth perspective", providing a picture to help inform practice or to see unexplored details of the case. The approach offers the opportunity to investigate issues where they occur (naturalistic settings) in order to generate understandings about them, involving the gathering of data from a variety of sources using different methods (Cousin 2009). In this respect there is still an alignment with all the thesis' major requirements so far.

In addition, Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson (2001) state that the depth and complexity of case study data can show the more situated and multifaceted educational understanding, as advocated by Haggis (2002) and discussed in chapter 2, by illuminating the ways in which correlated factors influence each other. Case studies appear to not only retain the complexity of real life but they can also permit the examination of the unexpected and the unusual, which may be valuable because practice is about engaging with non-standard students and circumstances. Also, examining the exceptional can always throw light on the more usual, especially when placed side by side. As Simons (1996) concludes, case study is the sort of research that is more likely to provide the kind of evidence, knowledge and insight that can make major contributions to educational

change, to search for new ways of seeing and new forms of understanding, not only to represent what we come to know but to see what we do not.

Overall, Yin (2009) agrees that case studies suit the need for an extensive in-depth description where there may be converging data from multiple sources of evidence. Case studies are a preferred method for 'what', 'how' as well as 'why' questions, i.e. exploratory as well as explanatory studies (Yin 2009; Creswell 1998). Underpinning all this, Stake (2000b, p.24) recognises that case study's best use appears to be for "adding to existing experience and humanistic understanding"; something seen at the heart of this thesis.

The value of a case study approach has also been recognised in addressing the issue between personal epistemology and learning because case studies can be conducted in a manner closely aligned to the context of learning under investigation and allow for depth of understanding (Stake 1995). This approach also avoids the problems inherent in personal epistemological studies that ask students to make generalised responses about their beliefs without regard to context and which ignore the profoundly different experiences students have (Hammer and Elby 2002)*.* As an example, Hofer's work (2004c) uses an embedded case study to explore how epistemological beliefs and theories develop within classroom contexts.

ii. Research process and rationale

As noted earlier, this thesis' requirements identify a need for flexibility in order to allow progressive development and understanding, as well as a need for a range of methods and applicable output. One way to ensure this is through the collection of extensive data, intensive analysis and evolutionary description of the case (Verma and Mallick 1999). Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson (2001) show that flexibility is possible in a case study because the researcher's expertise, knowledge and intuition becomes a vital part of that approach, deciding which questions to ask and how to ask them, what to observe and what to record. This study makes these decisions explicit through its reflective and reflexive approach.

Establishing the empirical research problem and questions

Bassey's (1999, pp.66-9) stages of case study research start with an identification of the research as an issue, problem or hypothesis. As Cousin (2009, p.132) states, the enquiry starts with a "research curiosity" about a particular case, asking what is going on. This aligns well with Allwright's (2003) notion of EP (exploratory practice) examined in the first narrative, and with the rationale of this thesis. The phenomenon should be defined carefully to map out its dimensions (Clarke and Reed 2006). In effect, the requirement for the study to determine its initial understanding and its direction from the literature review is further established here. Cousin (2009) agrees that an engagement with the literature can establish the concerns that stimulate the formation of research questions and secure a continual engagement with theory throughout the empirical research process.

By answering RQ1: *What is the place and role of personal epistemology in professional social work education?* the literature review has shown the importance of personal epistemology in a reflective, post-technocratic context. It has explored these theoretical frameworks and recognised their areas of conflict and contention. It has also established the need to identify and explore the required levels of personal epistemology within specific learning contexts by ascertaining what positively affects learning and comprehension there. Understanding epistemological issues more contextually at a local level, therefore, becomes the primary aim for the empirical case study now. This encompasses the

epistemological alignment of the BU PQ social work curriculum, as well as the personal epistemologies of the BU PQ students in respect of how they view, understand and use knowledge in this context.

The requirements and issues associated with a reflective epistemology, i.e. the areas of concern noted by the literature review, offer a conceptual framework which provides the direction for the research to take, and the specific research questions for the case study.

Conceptual framework	*Research questions*
Pedagogy: alignment and clarity issues	*RQ2: What are the epistemological requirements of the PQ social work professional programme at Bournemouth University?*
Extended range of knowledge and knowing: validity and justification issues	*RQ3: Do BU PQ social work students have particular views or assumptions about the nature of 'knowledge' as they start the programme?*
Active and interpretive ways of using knowledge – the theory practice relationship: authority issues	RQ4*: What is the nature of BU PQ social work students' ways of knowing and dealing with knowledge in the context of the programme and its learning, teaching and assessment methods?*

Table 1. Conceptual framework and research questions

Research sub-questions

From this initial stance, the design of the case study can now focus in more detail on RQs 2-4, in order to systematically identify and explore specific epistemological issues associated with the BU PQ curriculum and students. It is important to note that these issues are not mutually exclusive and need to be addressed across each of the research question areas.

For Clarke and Reed (2006) the research questions in a case study tend to be a mix of the descriptive and the inferential concerning what is happening and how these things are linked. As established earlier, though, this study is taking a mostly descriptive approach, and encompasses a range of 'which' 'what' and 'how' questions. These questions are the "engine which drives the train of enquiry" as they identify the actions to be taken by the researcher (Bassey 1999, p.67) and align with this study's progressive and developmental route. For Stake (1995, p.16) these questions "force attention to complexity and contextuality" and draw attention to "the problems and concerns" relating to the uniqueness of the case. They also provide a powerful conceptual structure for organising the study of a case (Stake 1995).

The use of the conceptual framework to direct the development of more detailed sub-questions for each of the RQs 2-4 enables a sharper and more insightful focus in order to guide the empirical data collection and analysis more fully and also establish necessary boundaries.

Conceptual framework	*RQ2: What are the epistemological requirements of the PQ social work professional programme at Bournemouth University? Sub questions:*
Pedagogy: alignment and clarity issues	Which educational approach is followed?
Extended range of knowledge and knowing: validity and justification issues	Which types /sources of knowledge are recognised?
Active and interpretive ways of using knowledge – the theory practice relationship: authority issues	What do students have to 'do' with 'knowledge', i.e. how are they expected to use it?

Table 2. Conceptual framework and RQ2 sub questions

Conceptual framework	*RQ3: Do PQ social work students at BU have particular views or assumptions about the nature of 'knowledge' as they start the programme?* *Sub questions:*
Pedagogy: alignment and clarity issues	What experience do students have of reflection on practice?
Extended range of knowledge and knowing: validity and justification issues	What types and sources of professional knowledge do students think there are? • Do students see these having equal validity on the programme? What experience do students have of constructing knowledge?

Active and interpretive ways of using knowledge – the theory practice relationship: authority issues	What experience do students have of:
	   • Linking theory and practice?
	   • Critical analysis of practice/theory using practice/theory?
	
	Do students work from theory or practice ideas first?

Table 3. Conceptual framework and RQ3 sub questions

Conceptual framework	*RQ4: What is the nature of BU PQ social work students' ways of knowing and dealing with knowledge in the context of the programme and its learning, teaching and assessment methods?* *Sub questions:*
Pedagogy: alignment and clarity issues	What experience do students have of this pedagogy? Do students understand what is expected?
Extended range of knowledge and knowing: validity and justification issues	Do students express/construct knowledge? How do they justify it?

Active and interpretive ways of using knowledge – the theory practice relationship: authority issues	How do students use theory in regard to practice? Are students critical of theory and practice?

Table 4. Conceptual framework and RQ4 sub questions

Selection of the case

The next aspect to be determined is the case itself, the central focus or 'unit of analysis' (Yin 2003). A case study allows a researcher to undertake a single case study or a number of them. Stake (2000b, p.23) calls whatever is of interest as the "bounded system".

As detailed earlier, the epistemology of any post-technocratic curriculum and that of its students needs to be established and made explicit. The research focus of the empirical study (the epistemological issues associated with the BU PQ curriculum) can be investigated effectively and efficiently by exploring a central or elemental programme within that curriculum which incorporates all its major aspects, rather than compare them across a curriculum. The research questions detailed above can be answered most effectively and efficiently with a focus on one particular PQ programme, aiming to understand its particular context and complexity. This establishes the need to concentrate on a 'within-case analysis' as "a detailed description of a case and themes within it", rather than a multiple or a cross-case/comparative analysis (Walters 2007, p.95).

In respect of the nature of RQs 2-4 and their sub-questions, it is necessary, indeed more productive, to research students who have not been exposed to our programmes before, to gain a more authentic understanding of their expectations and understandings. The PQ Consolidation and Preparation for Specialist Practice (hereafter CPSP) programme is chosen and is explicitly defined as the choice of object to be studied (i.e. the case) and the unit of analysis. This programme is chosen because it is the initial generic module on the PQ curriculum and has the largest numbers of students; for the majority it will be their first encounter with a BU PQ programme and the first module they undertake. The CPSP programme is

also the first programme developed for the PQ curriculum at BU and all other programmes have followed the basic approach of this course; it therefore incorporates all the major aspects of the complete curriculum. It is also a programme I do not directly teach on, an aspect discussed further below under ethics. As mentioned earlier, the students starting any PQ curriculum will already have undertaken a qualifying award but the levels at which this was achieved will range from certificate to masters level, creating student cohorts of very mixed educational backgrounds.

The CPSP programme consists of a single module and was developed in partnership with employers within the GSCC PQ Framework (GSCC 2005) for social workers. At the time of the research it was the first stage in continuing professional training and accreditation.

> "This module will enable students to demonstrate that they have consolidated their initial competence from the point of qualification and can apply that competence within an area of specialist practice. It will also provide a foundation for further professional development which will extend and deepen professional competence within a chosen specialist context."
>
> (CPSP handbook 2010, p.2)

Set at FHEQ level 6 (or third year undergraduate level H) the CPSP programme aligns to an appropriate level of epistemic criticality as defined by QAAHE (2008). However, it does not directly 'teach' any particular topic or subject area. Instead it concentrates on transferable meta-cognitive skills, e.g. reflection, critical analysis and evaluation, in order for the student to consolidate their knowledge and practice to date before undertaking a specialist course of study. In this respect a particular subject knowledge area or practice area does not unduly influence the research being conducted; it focuses on students' existing knowledge base and this will be a varied mix.

The case is not necessarily a fully 'typical' case as defined by Stake (1995) because CPSP courses are run all over the country by a number of universities and have different features. It is typical in some respects, though, as it adheres to the professional standards and requirements as set by the GSCC, which all such

courses meet; also the student profile is representative of students in post-qualification social work education, the majority being over 25 years of age and predominantly female (GSCC 2006a; Brown et al. 2008). However, it is in many respects an 'intense' case, as defined by Stake (1995), in that it is an information-rich case that manifests the phenomenon, i.e. the research issue.

Case study style

The case focused on is an instance of a wider phenomenon, i.e. epistemological issues in PQ social work education, and so the use of the case is an attempt to understand something other than just the CPSP programme as a phenomenon in itself. This case study will therefore adopt an instrumental style as defined by Stake (1995), as opposed to an intrinsic style where the case (or group) itself would be the ultimate focus of concern and inquiry. In other words, the aim is to investigate the epistemological issues associated with this programme in order to relate those issues to the wider phenomenon discussed within the literature review.

Sample

The overall sample is purposive as the case study is the CPSP programme and should involve participants from this programme only, but is also convenient as these students are easy to access. Participants were recruited from a student cohort (n=91) that started the CPSP module in 2010 and were taught by BU tutors. This cohort fits best within the thesis' overall time frame and constraints and its profile of students is not significantly different to previous or future CPSP cohorts or to the national profile, noted above. Further details are explored below in the sections covering the questionnaire and interviews.

Data collection

The techniques usually associated with qualitative case study research are asking questions, reading documents and observing events, states Bassey (1999), who also advises a researcher to work out their own methods based on the research questions. In order to answer RQs 2-4 and their associated sub-questions most effectively, the particular methods chosen for this case study are respectively

documentary analysis, a questionnaire, and interviews, undertaken in a staged process.

Stage 1 - A documentary analysis of selected programme materials aims to provide understanding from a curriculum level and context to answer RQ2 and its sub-questions.

Stage 2 - A student questionnaire aims to provide understanding about the range and diversity of students' experience with, and expectations of knowledge as they start the programme, to answer RQ3 and its sub-questions.

Stage 3 – Interviews conducted with students aims to provide more information concerning ways of knowing, as played out within the programme when undertaking its assessed work, to answer RQ4 and its sub-questions.

Observations were considered but dismissed as a choice of method as some areas under investigation, e.g. students' thinking and writing, would have been impossible to observe directly.

The choice of methods is made in keeping with the overall principles and requirements established in the introductory narrative as well as the methodology. In particular the range of methods also allows a detailed examination of the complexity within the case, using the research sub-questions as the basis of their design. As Gillham (2000, p.81) notes there are "several dimensions to an adequate picture of human activity" and so if a researcher uses a range of methods he or she can put together "a more adequate picture". A multi-method approach aligns with the pragmatic research approach noted earlier, and as all the methods are being operated within the same qualitative and interpretive approach, 'method-slurring' is avoided (Rolfe 2006).

There are always multiple perspectives because no one perspective can tell a full story; however it is also important to note that "all perspectives aggregated do not necessarily sum to the whole of the phenomenon" (Lincoln and Guba 2000, p.36).

In this instance, the case involves one cohort of students, a particular time and place, and a limited set of questions to be answered; it therefore cannot present a complete picture of the phenomena under investigation. Other perspectives, e.g. the tutors' views, are not included due to limitations in the research focus, available time and word count. As a result, only the most complete picture possible within those limitations is sought. From a quality point of view, triangulation or searching for convergence of data is pivotal in a case study (Stake 1995), and having three sets of data is extremely useful in this respect and is discussed further in the analysis section.

As seen above, the empirical research questions are informed and developed by the literature review via the conceptual framework, but there is also a sense of each stage of the data collection progressively informing each other, providing a finer understanding for the following stage. Allowing the findings of each stage to progressively inform the next before it is undertaken can also help build flexibility and responsiveness to the problem into the process. This strategy of ongoing data collection and analysis allows themes to emerge as well as being initially provided by the theoretical framework; an important aspect when there is a lack of established material in the area. Yin (2003) and Walters (2007) agree that case studies can be used to contribute to, or expand on, current explanations in relation to social issues.

Regarding the order in which the methods are undertaken, Gillham (2000, pp.81-2) advises that because questionnaires are necessarily superficial, providing standardised descriptive data that has a "thin, abstract quality, rather remote from people's lives", they need to be followed by interviews which can "illuminate" the results and not just "illustrate" them. This advice is heeded but it is also seen that the data would best inform each other in this particular order because there is a movement from a general stance to a more personal one. As Gillham (2000, p.11) also shows, any questionnaire is likely to be rather interrogatory and controlling, whereas interviews get people to talk, to reflect on their answers, and can be steered in a particular direction in a variety of ways, e.g. by "interested silence" and "appreciative comment".

As seen in the literature review a diversity of research methods is now advised for the study of personal epistemology, even within the same study (Pintrich 2002; Bendixen and Rule 2004; Hofer 2008). Questionnaires and interviews, in particular, are validated as methods in the field of personal epistemology because they are able to encompass, respectively, the generalisable notion of 'knowledge' and the more personal notion of 'knowing' (Schraw 2001). However, Bråten et al.'s (2008) recent review shows that interviews and observations are better able to represent the various dimensions in students' epistemic thinking than surveys or questionnaires. As already noted, there are continuing research design and analysis concerns within the field of personal epistemology and fundamental questions are posed about the effective use of questions to capture individual epistemology (Hofer 2002). Nevertheless, the use of questionnaires and interviews is also shown as valid for related educational issues, e.g. to investigate students' writing (Torrance et al. 2000; Campbell et al. 1998).

The particular data collection techniques are discussed in more detail later within each of their own sections.

iii. Consideration of case study ethics

The empirical research element of this thesis was given favourable ethical approval via an independent review of the Bournemouth University School of Health and Social Care's research governance committee in April 2009.

General considerations

Case studies can show an intense interest in personal views and circumstances and therefore participants are at risk of exposure and/or embarrassment. This means that something of a contract exists between researcher and the researched, i.e. "a disclosing and protective covenant" (Stake 2000a, p.447) and a moral obligation (Schwandt 1997). As Radnor (2001, p.30) argues, the research process is a transactional one and therefore "ethics-in-action". I have endeavoured to meet Bassey's (1999, pp.73-4) key ethical aims of respect for "democracy, truth and people". Relevant aspects of the following documents have also been identified and adhered to:

- Bournemouth University's Research Ethics Code of Practice (BU 2009).
- British Educational Research Association's guidelines for education research (BERA 2004).
- Joint University Council Social Work Education Committee's code of ethics for social work and social care research (JUCSWEC c.2007).
- The British Psychological Society's ethical principles for conducting research with human participants (BPS 2006).

A number of these are discussed further below. The aim is to constantly weigh up all aspects of the process of conducting educational research within this context and to reach an ethically acceptable position in which my actions are considered justifiable and sound (BERA 2004). In practice this means conducting myself professionally at all times, scrutinising language used to ensure it is appropriate and not offensive, reporting findings with credibility and impartiality whilst maintaining respect and concern to protect the rights of those being researched. As I am "the audience to whom the respondent is presenting himself in a

particular light" it is also necessary to locate myself as part of the data generated (Mishler 1986, p.74).

One of the reasons behind the decision to use the CPSP programme is that I do not directly teach on this course. Undertaking the case study with students I teach would create a number of major issues. There is a danger it would affect their responses, e.g. trying to please me, saying what they thought was the 'right' thing, or 'nice' things about their experiences because I was there. I am not able to completely eliminate this effect by choosing the CPSP programme as I have a potential relationship with these students as a lecturer on the PQ curriculum and for academic support. They may be talking to me or meeting me in the future for advice and help with their academic work on this module, and of course there is the issue of power imbalance, discussed further below. There are, therefore, associated areas of concern to take account of and manage appropriately; the element of power imbalance being one of the most important (Clark and McCann 2005; Cousin 2009), and also my own bias.

Participation

The CPSP programme is conducted as two half-day workshops. The 2010 cohort (n=91) attended as five separate groups at a number of geographical locations including Bournemouth. Students were made aware of the aims, purpose and methods of the research, their potential role in it, and the risks and benefits of taking part using an information sheet included in their induction packs (Appendix C).

At each of the second workshops, myself or the programme co-ordinator introduced the research, allowed time for the information sheets to be read and discussed and for students to consider whether they wanted to take part in the questionnaire and/or the interviews. We reiterated the main purpose and importance of the study and the key points detailed in the information sheets, especially their right to withdraw from the study at any time. It was important to allow refusal with no fear of detriment, and to ensure that no one felt under any duress to agree. One student did not want to take part during the second workshop

and chose to use the time to read an article as the other students filled in the questionnaire. Some participants had additional learning needs (e.g. dyslexia) and this was confidentially addressed with an option of alternative methods of undertaking the questionnaire (by phone or e-mail).

If students wanted to take part they completed the questionnaire during that workshop and then considered further participation in the interview stage with an additional interview information sheet and a written consent to take away and return (Appendices D & E). Individual contact was then undertaken by myself at a later date to arrange interviews. Written and verbal reassurance was needed to confirm that the disclosures students might make would not be seen or used in any way by tutors on the programme or by myself in any other association with them. Appropriate time was allowed for respectful contact with all participants and no incentives were offered for participation.

Sponsors and colleagues

My aim to extend knowledge and understanding in this area of educational activity is not at odds with any Bournemouth University principles or policies. I obviously hope to serve the purposes of the institution that has funded this professional doctorate programme. Although there are potential implications here for influence, I am assured that the research is under my control and the research agenda is my own. The areas of concern regarding my teaching and learning methods and approaches that have prompted this research also impact, or are dependent, on others in the PQ team. However, it is not the aim to negatively criticise or disrespect any of my colleagues, seniors, or their work, with this investigation or its findings. Butler (2003) recognises the ethical issues of research within the place where one works and I need to be aware of the potential for conflict and bias here. Issues that arise from this study which became relevant for the team as a whole were discussed with a senior manager for use at relevant team meetings where appropriate.

Questionnaires

Problems with disclosure on the questionnaire were not envisaged because broad, general views and experience were asked for. It was completely anonymous and kept separate to participants' consent forms for later interviewing.

Interviews

Individual written consent was obtained for interviews, again clearly explained and a signed record kept, with on-going verbal consent obtained at the subsequent meeting. As Kent (2000) shows, consent is needed to protect the important ethical principle of autonomy – the right to exercise self-determination. For the interviews, each individual was assigned a code, which was used to identify electronic recordings, interview transcripts and notes, stored in locked cabinets for up to five years after the study or deleted appropriately. Only I had access to any data that would link participants with interviews. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants was preserved in all reports or publications by the use of pseudonyms. All participants were made aware (via the interview information sheet and consent form and at the interview meeting) that data relating to gender, prior educational experience and age range might be referred to.

In the interviews there could have been disclosure issues arising from participants' critically honest views or 'out of turn' comments about certain learning and teaching methods or members of staff. It was therefore necessary to have in place procedures or strategies for dealing with these sensitively. The students needed the freedom to say what they felt but with the understanding that the material may not be used in the way they have expressed it, to protect affected members of staff (by omitting all names or titles, or more personal or rude language). Interviews could also touch on areas of deeply held beliefs, motivations and assumptions, which had potential to cause some discomfort. I was sensitive to this by being aware of signs of anxiety or reluctance to answer. Undertaking a trial interview (discussed below) helped this process.

No pressure was exerted on any participant to answer a question and I took necessary steps to reduce the sense of intrusion by being respectful of their time

and space, but also by being friendly and open. If a participant had become unduly distressed during an interview I would have stopped it and offered immediate support, discussing any further needs as necessary. I undertook brief verbal debriefings after the interviews to allow participants to discuss the experience of the interview and I monitored for any unforeseen negative effects or misconceptions. In the event of any participants experiencing distress, or needing to talk to someone else confidentially as a result of engaging in the research, referral would have been made to a pre-arranged 'support' colleague. An agreed method of dealing with complaints arising from the study was put in place with my supervisors and referred to on the information sheet.

The skills involved in interviewing require some practice and I do have experience in this type of interviewing by undertaking ten semi-structured interviews for an MA qualification in 2005. I also realise that the skills involved in interviewing require ongoing practice (Robson 2002) and I undertook one 'trial' interview with a student from a previous CPSP cohort before undertaking the main set. This proved invaluable as it raised an important issue I had not foreseen, and which could have caused distress. The student did not know whether they had passed the course at the time of interviewing as they had handed in late, so there was anxiety regarding some of the questions being asked. In particular, the student worried that they had not done something I was asking about, i.e. challenging theory in their written work, and I had to quickly reassure them that this was something not to be unduly concerned about. By becoming aware of this, I could provide appropriate reassurances and explanations at the start of the main set of interviews and throughout as necessary, as these students would be in a similar position of handing in but not knowing their marks or feedback. In essence this meant explaining that if I asked if they had done something within their written assignment it was not because they *should* have done it. The experience with the trial interview also sensitised me to some of the more personal ways anxiety became exhibited, e.g. nervous laughter, self-deprecating remarks, and I was able to recognise this behaviour or mannerisms in others at times and allay the anxiety. As Lee (2009) explains, research involves emotion, the interviewees as well as my own, which needs awareness and an ability to deal with it.

Rubin and Rubin (2005, p.34) raise an important question of reciprocity here, i.e. "what does the interviewee get back?". They are owed loyalty and protection in return for participating in the research and ideally it should leave them better off. After the interviews and the questionnaire I made sure the students realised the value of what they had given to the programme's development. I also asked if they had any questions about the programme and answered queries regarding the marking systems and next stages in the PQ curriculum.

iv. Analysis

In this section fundamental issues and decisions regarding the case study analysis are discussed, with more specific data analysis techniques presented in detail later within each method's section.

As stated earlier, a constructionist position demands an interaction between the subjective and the objective from which meaning can be constructed, and I was aiming to construct meaning from an interactive engagement with the research. Thus, the constructed meaning, as well as the construction process itself, is critically examined within the thesis using relevant criteria at a number of key points. Cousin (2009) sees case study analysis involving continual meaning making, allowing in situ judgments to be made. Here is where the researcher takes a very active and explicit role in deciding what data to exclude, include, focus on, plus which issues of interest to draw out from the data and how best to present it all. Stake (1995, p.77) also notes that each researcher needs to find "the forms of analysis that work for him or her".

Complexity

Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson (2001) explain that the complexity that is so important in a case study becomes difficult to summarise and represent simply (i.e. accessibly and realistically); but breaking down the data into categories can undermine the essential richness of the interrelationships the researcher is interested in. The need to generalise or to theorise can also draw attention away from features important for understanding the case itself (Stake 2000a). In response, the requirement driving the case study analysis is the need to preserve the intricacies of the case and avoiding the dangers of trying to find a set of common experiences or a single causal link.

Following the advice of Haggis (2004; 2007) and Cousin (2009) a more open picture is sought that allows for complexity and interacting variables rather than causes. There is a need to focus less on deep structures and regularities and instead explore local interactions, interconnectedness, singularities and differences within the case, i.e. seeing it as a dynamic system. Such analysis still employs

various forms of "reduction" and "abstraction", however, it does not exclude
unwanted variables in this process, rather it reveals the significance of some of
them for certain students, helping to understand the more complex inter-
relationships at work (Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson 2001).The aim is to
understand what emerges uniquely from the interactions of this particular system
rather than attempt to create categories of similarity which aim to transcend such
individual particularities. This aligns with the requirements of interpretive
research, which is not to search for true fixed meanings but instead to emphasise
"the descriptive nuances, differences, and paradoxes", the complexity of the
situation being studied and the relational unfolding of meanings (Kvale 1996,
p.226). Donmoyer (2000) shows how useful this understanding can be for other
practitioners because difference is illuminating.

There is one more key point to be made here. The analytical perspective is not
based on a "static condition-based view of the individual learner" but on a
"dynamic process-based view", which changes the overall question from "what is
wrong with the students?" to "what are the features of the curriculum or of
processes of interaction around the curriculum which are preventing some
students from being able to access this subject?", as advocated by Haggis (2006a,
p.17). This perspective aligns with the opening principles and rationale in the first
narrative.

Generalisation

Informing the decisions about how to best undertake the research analysis is a
detailed consideration of the issue of generalisation within case study research.
Generalisation is discussed throughout the literature as an issue concerning the
external validity of such studies, relating mainly to the positivist/interpretivist
debate. It is argued that case studies cannot 'generalise' in a positivist sense
because they are not following scientific research procedures or establishing the
necessary statistical probabilities (Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson 2001;
Hammersley and Gomm 2000). Stake (2000b) also suggests that abstract
propositional generalisations can be harmful in practical terms; as "false laws"
they foster misunderstandings or lead people to view any phenomena too

simplistically (Hammersley and Gomm 2000, p.7) Lincoln and Guba (2000) list the deficiencies of generalisation, reasoning that if generalisations must be truly universal, unrestricted by time and space and context-free, they are thus deterministic, making any type of unique or particularised knowledge worthless.

However, others argue that this does not rule out the possibility of case study researchers putting forward general conclusions or for case study research to make generalisations within and across cases. Inferences can be drawn about general, abstract theoretical principles which the case is taken to exemplify (Mitchell 2000). Theoretical inference and a comparative analysis approach can be used to identify the necessary and sufficient conditions underlying causal relationships in principle (Gomm et al. 2000b). In effect, it becomes apparent that case studies can have general relevance and inform us about situations beyond the actual case that was studied. As Haggis (2004) argues, this type of study will always be unique but it does not mean that certain similarities cannot be observed between this system and other related types.

Naturalistic generalisation

This study adopts Stake's (1995, p.42) position that instrumental case studies entail some form of "naturalistic generalisation" from the particular instance to the wider context; their intent is not truthful or "veridical representation" so much as a "stimulation of further reflection, optimising the reader's opportunity to learn". Whilst traditional generalisation presents formal, predictive propositions intact, Stake's naturalistic generalisation is 'situated' in that it relies on interpretation and judgment rather than rule or procedure to transfer knowledge from one context to another.

In order to achieve this, a researcher is advised to produce a wealth of detail and description to promote knowledge transfer from researcher to reader (Stake 2000a). This can provide the material for the reader's naturalistic generalisation or to produce detailed 'working hypotheses' that can be used in attempts by others to understand or to 'fit' other cases (Lincoln and Guba 2000). Koch (1994 cited in Rolfe 1998, p.79) similarly suggests that in reporting practitioner-centred research

the original context must be described adequately so that a "judgment of transferability can be made by readers".

The decision is therefore taken for this study to present a full range of data analysis from each stage of the case study (i.e. the documentary analysis, questionnaire and interviews – sections 4b, c, and d), which has the ability to disclose the "exemplary significance" of the setting it depicts so that it "proves capable of illuminating other settings without the need for re-routing through abstract generalities" (Dunne 2005, p.386). A possible limitation of case study research according to Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson (2001) is that there may be too much data for easy analysis, and the researcher can be swamped. By taking a staged approach to the data analysis and the presentation of findings, the aim is to ensure that clarity, as well as richness, is achieved. By analysing the data at each stage, in alignment with its method and its research questions, a set of 'pictures' can be formed which help show a particular aspect of the complexity of the case. The particular data analysis techniques used for each stage of the study are also discussed further within each of their particular sections (4b, 4c, 4di). In addition, these pictures taken together can create a larger, more holistic landscape (Creswell 1998) which can then be interpreted in a separate case study discussion (section 4e).

Analytic generalisation

Yin (2003, p.10) takes a different approach, stating that case studies are generalisable to theoretical propositions (but not to populations or universes), and so the goal is to expand and generalise theories via 'analytic generalisation'. Any analysis should produce emerging concepts and ideas and also expand on the theories from the literature review. It is about generalising to a broader theory, i.e. building theoretical explanations from the data, which others (or myself) may later utilise. It concerns emergent propositions for usage in practice and for advancing conceptual understanding and contributing to the debate; it is evolutionary, descriptive, and constructionist. Articulating 'theory' about what is being studied and what is being learned helps to operationalise case study designs and make them more explicit (Yin 2003).

The decision is therefore also taken for this study to achieve analytic generalisation within the separate case study discussion (section 4e), and in the principles drawn out from that discussion as recommendations for practice development (section 4f).

Retrospective judgments

It is necessary to stress the important difference in the nature of the generalisations being created here, and reiterate the approach being adopted by this study. Stenhouse (1980, p.4) expects the study of cases to lead to "retrospective generalisation" as opposed to the more traditional "predictive generalisation" from the study of samples. Predictive generalisations claim to supersede the need for individual judgment, whereas retrospective generalisations seek to strengthen individual judgment; the latter provides a true alignment with the aims of this study. Resonating clearly with Stake's ideas, Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson (2001) explain aspects of this further, showing that case study findings can 'ring true' in other settings. Readers of a case study can judge whether or not the analysis presented sounds convincing, based on what they know of similar situations and circumstances. This approach appears to align with a concept of 'situated generalisation' as described by Simons et al. (2003) of generating, validating and using research knowledge in a more practical, context-based inquiry with the use of interpretation and judgment rather than rule and procedure. It is a process of recognition and adaptation, on the basis of similarities and differences to one's own context.

This approach aligns with the thesis' qualitative perspective but also with the principles established at the start in enabling and empowering others, rather than seeking to prescribe what they do. Indeed, Stake (2000b) shows where case study is at an advantage in a practice-based context. He argues that the legitimate aim of many scholarly studies may be to discover or validate laws concerning regularity and system, but the aim of practice is "to get things done", and for this the better generalisations are often the more "parochial" and "personal" ones (ibid, p.23). But he also calls for an "ethic of caution", and for researchers to draw conclusions from their research in form of assertions only (ibid, p.21). Stake (1995) confirms

that it is the researcher's decision on how much input to provide into the readers' own naturalistic generalisations (e.g. as narratives), reiterating Cousin's (2009) point made earlier about a researcher's very active and explicit role.

In summary, the holistic case study discussion (section 4e) will critically analyse the development and detail of relevant issues (referring to the findings of the documentary analysis, questionnaires and interviews), generalising to a broader theory (Yin 2009; Creswell 2003) and making summarised assertions (Stake 1995). It is therefore an intensive analytical discussion with converging data from multiple sources (Yin 2009), bringing together the answers to the research questions detailed above.

v. Quality

There is a consequence to the flexible, progressive style of this case study and the researcher's expertise, knowledge and intuition becoming a vital part of the case study approach. As Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson (2001) point out, judging the worth of this style of case study research demands some understanding and careful thinking by the researcher as well as the reader, as common tests of objectivity, (e.g. sample size, clear numerical categories and positivist notions of generalisability) to establish validity and reliability are not applicable; there is no simple checklist of criteria against which a piece of case study research can be judged. Nevertheless, Cousin (2009) argues that there is no need to abandon any notion of objectivity just because an interpretivist tradition accepts the impossibility of removing the subjective. An evaluative stance can be achieved through appropriate standards and criteria applied to the process and output, e.g. transparency of process and results, triangulation of data, researcher reflexivity, and "collecting and surfacing sufficient data for plausibility and providing rich descriptive and analytical accounts" (Cousin 2009, p.8).

In respect of qualitative research in general, Lincoln and Guba (1985) advocate the use of ordinary language to discuss the truth value of findings (e.g. trustworthiness, credibility, dependability and confirmability). They also advocate an ethic of respect for truth (i.e. to not deceive self or others intentionally or unintentionally), and a respect for people (i.e. to recognise a person's initial ownership of the data and respect them as fellow human beings who are entitled to dignity and privacy). Miles and Huberman (1994) advocate specific types of internal validity (via credibility and plausibility of research findings; and rigour and suitability of the research process) and external validity (via transferability and fittingness of conclusions and processes). Bentz and Shapiro (1998) suggest 'mindfulness' rather than objectivity, with attention placed on the honesty and plausibility of research process and accounts. Criteria are thus not thought of in abstract terms or as something to use in a rational testing procedure, but rather as a list of features that characterises good or bad inquiry, and which can be challenged and changed as applied in actual practice (Smith and Deemer 2000).

In essence the key criteria in data collection and analysis are trust (researcher integrity) and validity (integrity of process) (Radnor 2001). A good interpretive study has an,

> "...explanatory and illuminating power about the situation under study, uncovering a multiplicity of individual perceptions about the situation and increasing understanding of issues that are present in the situation."
>
> (Radnor 2001, p.38)

For case studies in particular, Yin (2009) advocates the use of systematic design and rigorous procedures via a case study protocol involving audit and documentary trails. Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson (2001, p.12) ask questions such as "do the stories ring true?", "do they seem well supported by evidence and argument?", "does the study tell us something new and/or different, that is of value in some sort of way?"

Overall, there are two key features here, also seen by Kvale (1996). First, the consistency, quality control and craftsmanship throughout the stages of research and knowledge production; and secondly the credibility of the researcher and his or her moral integrity. In response, I have attempted to present an explicit and comprehensive strategy, adequate evidence from the data, a detailed ethical statement, and an 'audit trail' of decisions to show the path from the raw data through to analysis and discussion to conclusions. (In Appendices L and M a specific example shows the staged analysis of one interview transcript.) My work has also been regularly exposed to peer review through journal publications and conference presentation, as well as research supervision, and has been validated by the university's governance procedures. Nevertheless, any researcher cannot easily make transparent all the judgments made and so a certain amount still has to be taken on trust (Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson 2001).

Lastly, and in summary, there is a constructionist notion of allowing research to generate its own criteria and standards to be considered (Smith and Deemer 2000). In this case the need is to align with the principles and requirements set out in the initial narrative. Criteria for judging the quality of this research are therefore established from its pragmatic research position, i.e. 'does it answer the research questions effectively?'; and also from a practice, value-based or moral

position established from the principles in the initial narrative, i.e. 'does it have the potential to empower and enable others, the participants and readers of the study?' These questions are therefore also considered in later sections and narratives.

Chapter 4: Case Study
4b. Case Study Stage 1 - Documentary Analysis

The aim of this first stage of the case study is to gather primarily descriptive data from selected CPSP programme materials to provide understanding from a curriculum level and context to answer RQ2: *What are the epistemological requirements of the PQ social work professional programme at Bournemouth University (BU)?*

Design

In a traditional hierarchy of research sources the implication is that documents are secondary data and consequently inferior to primary data. This common belief appears within quantitative methodology where "secondary analysis has been considered to be a poor cousin to primary research" (Thorne 1994, p.264). However, where documents represent the main focus, they can be viewed as the primary objects of any research (Jupp 1992).

Unfortunately, the literature on documentary analysis is "both relatively limited in scale and fractured in focus" (Tight 2003, p.188). In general, an inductive rather than a deductive approach to documents is advocated but the specific relationship between theory and documentary sources is determined by the method of analysis (Hughes 2000). Clarity and explicitness concerning the type of documents used, their role and limitations, and methods of analysis is fundamental (Appleton and Crowley 1997). One strategy for reliability in documentary analysis is to make explicit the grounds for interpreting the data and this is undertaken below.

Robson's (2002, pp 352-7) content analysis process has been followed, starting with the research question and a sampling strategy, and proceeds by defining the categories and recording units or words for analysis. He notes that the categories need to be exhaustive and mutually exclusive and an explicit specification has to be made of what indicators one is looking for. Dew (2005) also points out the

need for explicit rules for determining what should be included in particular categories when analysing documents. This emphasis upon reliability is particularly pertinent to documentary research as the data is already available for other researchers to analyse and replicate studies (Silverman 2000).

The CPSP Programme Handbook 2009-2010 (hereafter handbook) is chosen as the key document to analyse within the specific case, the CPSP programme, because it is the primary document written for the students, and is used as an information and teaching tool. It is designed and written by the PQ team (myself included) as a guide to help students successfully complete the programme. It contains most of the information needed regarding the course (e.g. intended learning outcomes, PowerPoint slides and activities, assessment guidance) and is used during the programme's two workshops. My contribution in the handbook is Appendix E: Reflecting on the Practice Analysis, which provides student support for reflecting and writing. It has been considered no differently to any other part of the handbook, and is analysed in full.

Toohey (1999) argues that the approach adopted by a course teaching group relates closely (explicitly or implicitly) to how knowledge is viewed and defined. This document's content thus presents a view concerning knowledge and knowing for this context, and analysing it provides an opportunity to answer RQ2. Robson (2002) notes that all documents have a purpose, which is important in understanding and interpreting the results of the analysis. The purpose of the handbook is to inform students and help them successfully complete the programme. It is not the aim to evaluate the effectiveness of the document in this way, but it will be important to consider whether the handbook is an epistemologically consistent resource within this context.

The sub-questions to RQ2 (defined in section 4a) are now used to generate a set of search terms /recording units and categories for the content analysis of the handbook, and are also informed by the literature review.

Conceptual framework	RQ2: What are the epistemological requirements of the PQ social work professional programme at Bournemouth University? Sub- questions:	Documentary analysis – search terms/categories for content analysis
Pedagogy: alignment and clarity issues	Which educational approach is followed?	Competency-based: competency, competencies, competences Evidence-based practice: EBP, evidence-base, evidence Reflect: reflection; reflective, reflecting;
Extended range of knowledge and knowing: validity and justification issues	Which types/sources of knowledge are recognised?	Formal, e.g. theory Informal, e.g. experiential External, e.g. academics Internal, e.g. intuition
Active and interpretive ways of using knowledge – the theory practice relationship: authority issues	What do students have to 'do' with 'knowledge', i.e. how are they expected to use it?	Theory/practice connection: Technocratic: e.g. mechanistic, instrumentalist terms, e.g. 'apply' Post-technocratic: reflective, synthesising terms, e.g. 'integrate' Deductive approach; theory considered first Inductive approach: practice considered first 'Critical' approach to knowledge, theory and practice

Table 5. RQ2 sub-questions and documentary content analysis terms

The analysis seeks to show patterns of relevance through identification and categorisation of the chosen words and phrases. This explicit specification determines what is to be identified and included, and helps ensure the terms are as mutually exclusive as possible. The analysis then moves beyond enumerating the occurrences by seeking to interpret the use of such terms in respect of their sub-question in order to establish in turn: which educational approach is followed, which types and sources of knowledge are recognised and what students are expected to do with different types of knowledge.

Operation and results

This scrutiny of the handbook was quite straightforward as it is stored electronically, allowing the Word 'find' facility to search for occurrences of the required terms which were then recorded and tabulated into a content analysis framework (Appendix F). Presented below is a summary of those findings and their initial interpretation. Words taken from the handbook are presented in italics.

Sub-question a) Which educational approach is followed?

Distinct categories associated with the three educational approaches noted in the literature review are used with the following key words chosen as the recording units:

- Competency-based: competency, competencies, competences.
- Evidence-based: EBP, evidence-base, evidence.
- Reflective: reflection, reflect; reflective; reflecting.

Findings: The most frequently and consistently recorded terms are associated with a reflective approach, aligned with a post-technocratic educational model and its suggested methods of teaching and learning concerned with the professional knowledge base, competence in professional action and the development of reflection, i.e. "enquiry, analysis, experience and problem-solving" as defined by Bines and Watson (1992, p.61).

The Practice Analysis (one of the two main written assessed pieces of work for the CPSP assessment – see Appendix J*)* uses a reflection on practice approach (Schön 1983, 1987). Key elements of a reflective approach, e.g. critical reflection, thinking, examination, analysis, and evaluation of practice are all frequently mentioned and advocated very strongly within the handbook. The teaching and learning support materials (handbook appendices E: Reflecting on the Practice Analysis guidance, and O: the OHP slides) align well with this approach, providing models for practice analysis and reflection on practice, further exploration of a reflective practitioner, and reflective writing guidance.

Alongside a reflective educational approach it is apparent that there is also a competency-based element to the CPSP Programme as it meets the revised GSCC's PQ Framework requirements (GSCC 2005). This requires students to demonstrate how they have fully integrated the six key roles of the National Occupational Standards into their area of specialist practice. These are referred to as social work competencies, and are assessed within the second main piece of assessed written work, the Continuing Professional Development Review (hereafter CPD Review; see Appendix J). However, the reflective approach still dominates as the CPD Review is presented as a reflective account. Students are encouraged to reflect on their development since qualification within the CPD Review and present a reflective analysis of development of competence in the key roles, rather than present a descriptive or mechanistic account.

The word 'competence' is also used in a number of other places in the handbook, (specifically in relation to the purpose of the whole module, the CPD Review and the Practice Analysis) but is used in respect of a general ability to do the job, rather than referring to specific or regulatory professional requirements.

The single reference to an 'evidence-based' approach occurs in the advice given for the Practice Analysis specialist area of mental health, where a requirement for social workers undertaking the specialist award in mental health is to develop and

evidence their competence in facilitating evidence-based and value-based intervention.

Sub-question b) What types/sources of knowledge are recognised?

In the literature review distinct categories associated with the overall source (internal/external to the student) and/or type (formal/informal status) of knowledge were noted, and these were used to record and classify the forms of knowledge referred to in the handbook. Formal types of knowledge are codified, academic, or legitimised by formal bodies/organisations; and informal types are non-codified and/or non-academic. Sources are seen as either internal or external to the self.

Findings: The types of knowledge most frequently noted are formal types from external sources, i.e. theory, research, law, policy, codes of practice, sets of standards and prescribed sets of values. Intended Learning Outcome (hereafter ILO) 2: *Critically evaluate the effectiveness of their practice using a relevant knowledge base, including an understanding of legal and policy contexts and appropriate research,* specifically notes the requirement to use this knowledge to evaluate practice.

References to informal, internal or a practitioner's knowledge/theory/experiential knowledge or to any construction of such knowledge (both seen as valid knowledge within reflective and post-technocratic models) are not evident within the ILOs or the main text of the handbook. However, in the teaching and learning support materials (handbook appendices E and O) there are references to *practitioners' experience* and *practice development*, as well as their *experiential or practice knowledge*, and one mention of *colleagues* as a source of knowledge.

There are brief references to showing new understanding and further professional development, to self-evaluation and evaluation of practice outcomes and to identifying improved and extended competence and learning from experience. There is no explicit recognition within the handbook of either a student's personal

or process knowledge gained from experience, or a constructed knowledge output from their reflective process.

Sub-question c) What do students have to 'do' with 'knowledge', i.e. how are they expected to use it?

Distinct terms associated with technocratic or post-technocratic ways of connecting theory and practice are used to record and categorise any 'methods' mentioned in the handbook. Interpretation is based on how the literature review has shown certain terms to be associated with each approach.

- Technocratic (mechanistic, instrumentalist): passive, hierarchical terminology prevails, e.g. 'apply'.
- Post-technocratic (reflective, dialectic, interpretive): active, non-hierarchical, synthesising terminology prevails, e.g. 'integrate'.

Findings: A number of different words and phrases are used to tell students what to 'do' with formal knowledge in respect of practice but there is little consistency and a misalignment in places. Some terms are clearly associated with a technocratic approach, e.g. *systematically apply*, and *application of theory*. The process of using formal and external knowledge is also referred to as *link, support*, *underpin*, *use*, *identify*, *include*, and *inform* or *provide a framework for* and *guide practice*, terms which can be associated with the prescriptive, hierarchical nature of the technocratic model. However, the term associated with a post-technocratic approach, *integrate*, is used as well. Students are asked to *understand*, *adapt* and *relate* knowledge, terms which can also be associated more with the interpretive nature of the post-technocratic model. The main approach advocated overall is inductive, where a consideration of, or a reflection on, practice can be seen to precede the consideration of theory or other formal /external knowledge.

Analysis was also undertaken to establish whether students are required to take a critical approach to knowledge, theory or their practice. The only reference to critically engaging directly with formal knowledge occurs in ILO 3, *Critically*

review knowledge and theoretical frameworks relevant to their specialist area and demonstrate an understanding of how this knowledge can be systematically applied to support problem solving in complex and unpredictable situations, which also displays the most dominant technocratic language for connecting theory and practice (i.e. *systematically apply*). Other than in handbook appendix E when a question is asked about how knowledge was *adapted* for a situation, there is no other mention of a critical challenge or critique of knowledge.

The notion of being critical about practice is frequently referred to, as *critically evaluating*, *thinking about*, *analysing*, *examining* practice, and taking a *critical approach* to practice is also frequently explained in the handbook. However, how to critically use theory is not explained.

Limitations

The analysis presents a descriptive picture of the CPSP Programme Handbook and, in turn, presents a view of the epistemological requirements of this BU PQ social work programme. One limitation is that this view only deals with what has been ultimately produced and cannot show what led to the production and content or its subsequent interpretation, or indeed, what was left out. A further limitation is that the handbook itself only presents one view, and of course many views would be pertinent here, e.g. that of the programme leader, the lecturers, the University department head. Nevertheless, it would seem appropriate to presume that a programme handbook, especially one which is used as a teaching tool, will present a view which many people will have contributed to, and approved, in order to present an accurate picture of the course to the outside world (Toohey 1999). Overall, it is deemed an efficient and pragmatic way to answer RQ2 for the purposes outlined above.

A problematic item is the term 'values', which can refer to formal and external codes of practice or prescribed lists from professional organisations or agencies but also to internal, personal knowledge which directly affects one's approach to practice, i.e. a moral and ethical stance. Categorisation of this term was therefore

considered on an individual basis within the context of its sentence/section. If stated as 'social work' values it was categorised as external and if not it was categorised as informal/internal.

Conclusions

Answering RQ2: *What are the epistemological requirements of the PQ social work professional programme at Bournemouth University (BU)?*

The epistemological requirements of the BU CPSP programme as stated in the handbook can, for the most part, be associated with a post-technocratic educational model based on a critically reflective and experiential pedagogy. The handbook directs students to take a critically reflective stance on practice and inductively links this analysis to a knowledge base which includes a range of sources. However, some aspects concerning the language, processes and outcomes of this reflective, experiential approach are seen to be absent, not well defined, or to show more technocratic associations. In particular, an inductive approach to the theory practice relationship (where reflection on practice can be seen to precede the consideration of theory or other formal/external knowledge) misaligns with the use of the technocratic term *application of theory to practice*, and especially a *systematic application* which would consider theory first. This makes the epistemological requirements of the programme indefinite, ambiguous and contradictory in places. It is not clear if all knowledge is considered valid as few informal types or internal sources of knowledge are mentioned, and there is no clear process for students to construct and/or justify their own knowledge as a valid process or for critically challenging external sources or formal types of knowledge.

The complexity, contradictions, and ambiguities identified above, create a number of misalignments which appear to reveal a fundamental epistemological uncertainty within the programme.

Brief discussion and developmental progression

As seen in a similar piece of research undertaken with a postgraduate teaching CPD course (Stierer 2000b), this type of misalignment extends beyond the superficial issues of inadequate specificity in the programme requirements. Stierer concludes that the required style of writing on the course (associated with more traditional disciplines) may not be allowing professional knowledge to be adequately expressed or warranted. This issue highlights the underlying tension between professional and academic discursive cultures seen in the literature review, where a professional steer towards reflective practice recognises Eraut's (1994) process and personal knowledge, but more traditional assessment requirements in HE privilege propositional knowledge.

Emerging issues for the next stage of the case study

- Lack of parity for all sources and types of knowledge – is this apparent in students' views?
- Inductive approach dominant— is this apparent in students' ways of writing?

Chapter 4: Case Study
4c. Case Study Stage 2 – Questionnaire

The aim of this second stage of the case study is to identify patterns and trends in the range and diversity of students' experience with knowledge and their expectations regarding knowledge during the CPSP programme, gathering descriptive data using a questionnaire. Students arrive with existing epistemological perspectives that lead to interpretations of instruction (Hofer 2001). If these perspectives misalign with those of the educator or the course it can be unsettling and likely to carry accompanying affective consequences (Hofer 2005).

Design

A form of non-experimental survey using a questionnaire is an appropriate method of choice for such an aim (Robson 2002), and descriptive statistical analysis techniques (e.g. frequency trends) can provide ways of summarising and describing the information collected. The use of a mostly fixed-response questionnaire in an overall interpretive research design situation may seem inappropriate, but Knight (2001) states that they are frequently used in interpretive studies to collect background data or establish informants' views, attitudes or practices in preparation for open-ended interviews. He explains that well designed questionnaires rest on a good working theory of what ought to be explored and why it might be significant. In this situation the literature review and documentary analysis has provided a good idea of the factors that could bear on the research questions, as well as the conceptual issues to be kept in mind when addressing them.

Sample

There is a need to gather as wide a range as possible of the students' views and experiences for this stage of the study. The aim here is to encompass the whole

'case', i.e. as many students as possible within the 2010 cohort in order to establish and make sense of the variability of the case.

Administration

The 2010 cohort of CPSP students (n=91), being taught by BU tutors, were all sent information sheets in their induction packs. The CPSP programme consists of two half-day workshops. Those attending the second workshop from this cohort were given further explanation of the research and asked whether they would like to participate in the questionnaire that day. A total number of 83 students agreed and took part (n=1 preferred not to take part; n=7 did not attend workshop 2).

The timing was appropriate because at the start of the second workshop the students have been told something about the programme but have not yet undergone any teaching (i.e. direct influence) in the areas the questionnaire was concerned with. The students were therefore likely to retain certain preconceptions and expectations.

All participating students were presented with the same questionnaire to obtain high reliability of responses. Working with 'captive' groups such as this can mean a response rate of 100% but there are other issues that can become problematic. One is the way questionnaires are often filled in, i.e. "hastily and carelessly" (Gillham 2000, p.9); or generating "large amounts of data often of dubious value" because the participants are "uninvolved and not presenting their 'true' feelings or beliefs" (Robson 2002, p.231). This can be alleviated to some degree if the participants are fully briefed, know the researcher personally (or he or she is actually present), and the questionnaire seen as interesting and worthwhile to complete. In response to this issue, the research was discussed with the students at the start of the workshop (the issues mentioned on the information sheet, Appendix C, concerning the purpose of the research and the questionnaire) plus its importance in informing the design and operation of the PQ programmes. Further reassurance of anonymity was also given. Gillham (2000, p.38) in particular argues that if participants are clear about what the researcher is trying to

find out and why, they are much more likely to "respond appropriately and helpfully".

Questionnaire

The decision to use a self-completed questionnaire rather than an interview-based survey was made on practical grounds of the most effective and efficient use of time for myself as the researcher but also to gain maximum 'coverage' for a potential cohort of 91 students. As it is self-completed, the design of the questionnaire becomes a crucial element in its effectiveness. Good design is about how things look, i.e. that they are "attractive, accessible", but also how they work, i.e. whether they do what they are "supposed to do" (Gillham 2000, p.37). Consequently, the questionnaire design is an integral part of the overall case study design through the use of the conceptual framework and the research sub-questions (see below). To ensure its accessibility and effectiveness more specific instructions are also written into the questionnaire on how to answer questions etc., following advice from De Vaus (2002) and Gillham (2000). The order of questions as well as their language and phrasing are crucial to ensuring the questionnaire is fit for purpose. De Vaus (2002, p.110) suggests a logical flow to questions, to move from easy to more difficult, and from the concrete to abstract.

Question development

The sub-questions for RQ3, developed through the conceptual framework, were subsequently further informed by the documentary analysis, and used to design the questionnaire's range of questions, as seen in the table below. The design of the questionnaire is therefore, as Gillham (2000, p.16) notes, in some ways 'emergent'. Robson (2002, p.240) reiterates the importance of a theoretical framework to prevent the exercise becoming "a fishing trip", noting that it is the researcher's central task to link research and questionnaire questions. This process helps improve the questionnaire's content validity, which refers to its relevance and the extent to which items on a questionnaire cover the construct adequately (Murphy-Black 2006). All questions must "earn a place in the questionnaire" (De Vaus 2002, p.97).

Conceptual framework	RQ3: Do PQ social work students at BU have particular views or assumptions about the nature of 'knowledge' as they start the programme? Sub questions:	Questionnaire questions (final version - Appendix I) (* also informed by emerging issues from documentary analysis)
Pedagogy: alignment and clarity issues	What experience do students have of reflection on practice?	Q 4. Have you experience of reflecting on your practice in previous academic work?
Extended range of knowledge and knowing: validity and justification issues	What types and sources of professional knowledge do students think there are? • Do students see these having equal validity on the programme?	Q 1. Please list different types or sources of professional knowledge. Q 2. Do you think everything you listed above will be considered equally valid on this PQ programme? If no: *Q 3. Which do you think will be considered……the most valid type or source of knowledge on this programme…and the least valid type or source of knowledge on this programme?
	What experience do students have of constructing knowledge?	Q 7. Have you experience of constructing/building your own 'practice theories' in previous academic work?
Active and interpretive ways of using knowledge – the theory practice	What experience do students have of: • Linking theory and practice	Q 5. Have you experience of 'applying theory to practice' (i.e. using theory to inform your practice) in previous academic work?

| relationship:
authority issues | • Critical analysis of practice/theory using practice/theory | Q 6 a. Have you experience of critically analysing your practice/experiential knowledge in previous academic work?
Q 6 b. If yes, have you experience of doing this using formal types of knowledge (e.g. theory, research, policy, legislation)?
Q 8 a. Have you experience of critically analysing formal types of knowledge (e.g. theory, research, policy, legislation) in previous academic work?
Q 8 b. If yes, have you experience of doing this using your practice/experiential knowledge or your values? |
| | Do students work from theory or practice ideas first? | *Q 9. Which of the two following statements best describes the way you tackle academic written work?
a) I usually begin by looking for published ideas and evidence (e.g. theory/research/law/policy) and then think about how I can put them together.
OR
b) I usually begin by developing what I want to say and then look for published ideas and evidence (e.g. theory/research/law/ policy) relating to that. |

Table 6. RQ3 sub-questions and questionnaire questions

There can be a problem with routine, stimulus-response questions, which are not based in naturally occurring language, decontextualizing the meaning of responses

(Mishler 1991 cited in Robson 2002, p.231). Even though the questions here are prompting rather broad, generalised responses about knowledge, they are directly related to the specific context of this programme and the students' own experiences and should avoid this problem.

McKenna, Hasson and Keeney (2006, p.261) note that as the most common aim of this type of research is "to describe", the objective is to collect this information in a systematic way, working best with questions where it is possible to be confident that they mean the same thing to different people. This can be a difficult thing to ensure and involves addressing a number of issues in the questions' design and language. First, questions can assume people have ready answers or "answers available in an organised fashion" (Gillham 2000, p.12). Second, it is important to distinguish between the types of questions to be asked. A failure to adequately distinguish between types of question can arise from a lack of clarity about the overall research question and inadequate conceptualisation (De Vaus 2002), which can lead to the collection of the wrong type of information. Using Gillham's three categories (fact, opinion/beliefs/judgments and behaviour), Q1 concerns students' opinions and Qs 2-9 concerns their behaviour, and this aligns to the respective sub-questions.

The issue of question design becomes more complex when considering other issues such as the wording, the choice between open and closed questions and the range of possible responses. Wording obviously needs to develop clear, unambiguous and useful questions (De Vaus 2002). The problem is that ensuring this can mean the questions move "a long way from the original research question", or that one question will not do as it requires multiple questions to answer (Robson 2002, p.243). On the plus side, it may also positively change or redirect the research question so that what is of interest is more clearly recognised. Some of the later questions in this questionnaire were expanded in order to become more meaningful, e.g. Q6 and Q8 list examples of formal types of knowledge in brackets to be clear what was being referred to. Basic advice from Robson (2002) was taken into consideration to keep the language simple,

questions short, avoid misleading or double-barrelled questions, and keep open-ended questions to a minimum.

Open questions allow a wider range of responses and offer the participants the opportunity to decide for themselves what they want to include, but they demand more of the participants' time, and they take longer to analyse (Gillham 2000). Knight's (2001) view is that lightly structured questions allow free-flowing inquiries which discover what is on people's minds at the time, but they tend to get incomplete answers because they record what was at the front of participants' minds only. In this respect these questions can lead to "a greater level of discovery but their number and kind has to be restricted to justify the 'cost' " (Gillham 2000, p.5). It was decided to have one such question at the start, Q1, which allowed an open range of responses to be generated by the participants in order to find out 'what types and sources of professional knowledge do students think there are?', as opposed to offering a list of set answers.

In respect of closed questions, Knight (2001) shows that fixed response questions reduce a participant's ability to convey the complexity of their experience, perceptions or feelings and turn informants into respondents. A 'yes/no' answer can get a response that misses the complexity of emotional reactions to different circumstances. On the other hand, De Vaus (2002, p.100) notes the advantages of well developed closed questions, which are "quick to answer", help "increase motivation" for self-administered questionnaires, and are also easier to code. Using binary choice questions (Q4-8) potentially meant the possibility of a poor response distribution, because peoples' real position will usually lie somewhere between the two (De Vaus 2002). However, the requirement was to know whether students had had this kind of experience or not, so the yes/no choices were appropriate for a more predictable and factual response (Gillham 2000). The fixed response question (Q9) had the potential to create "false opinions", either by giving an insufficient range of alternatives from which to choose or by "prompting people with 'acceptable' answers" (De Vaus 2002, p.99). The questionnaire therefore also allowed for the expansion and explanation of these

answers in an attempt to try and take account of these issues. Three opportunities were given within the questionnaire to provide '*additional comments to clarify or illustrate your answer if you wish*', so that students could explain their answers if they felt it necessary or extend beyond the options given.

In effect, question design is about "question *and* answer construction", and there is a need to be clear in advance about the probable answers (Gillham 2000, p.23). Using the conceptual framework, literature review and documentary analysis was helpful here in determining some of that range of answers for the question formation, and again for the establishment of analysis categories.

Testing of the questionnaire

The remit to ensure that questions mean the same thing to everyone goes further than ensuring non-ambiguity of language, etc., and requires empirical testing to see how people answer them. A strategy of testing and piloting the questionnaire took place. This kept the questions developing as it clarified and redefined certain issues, and as the people and the context being researched became better known and understood. As Gillham (2000, p.17) notes, the danger is to assume that "you *know* what the issues are" because you are familiar with the context. The strategy aimed to ensure the internal validity of the questions as they became tested and re-tested for comprehensibility and clarity. De Vaus (2002, p.96) states reliability is about consistency and the fact that "ambiguous or vague wording may produce unreliable responses if respondents 'read' the question differently on different occasions". The reliability of the questionnaire can thus refer to the extent to which a questionnaire would produce the same results if used repeatedly with the same group under the same conditions. In this respect, it can be noted that the findings obtained from the test group were consistent with those from the case group.

Robson's (2002) stepped process for carrying out a small-scale survey was followed. Initially a draft range of questions was informally 'tested' with three PQ lecturers (including the CPSP programme leader) to see if they appeared

appropriate for PQ students. This stage produced positive comment but did not reveal any significant feedback. In future more structured questioning would accompany the drafts to prompt more specific responses.

The second stage or pre-testing enlisted the help of a volunteer student from a similar group of interest to fill in a more complete draft. A student on the previous year's CPSP programme filled out a draft questionnaire and was asked to note any thoughts that occurred to her as she filled it in. She was asked to focus on the meaning of the questions and how she answered it. The feedback (Appendix G*)* from this was more useful and suggested a change in wording to Q1 in allowing types and sources of knowledge to be listed. A number of design issues were also changed at this point, e.g. layout of boxes and small O's to tick rather than empty boxes.

The third stage involved a more formal pilot study with the next revised draft. A pilot study should check the flow, question skips, timing, respondent interest and attention (De Vaus 2002; Knight 2001). For Gillham (2000), a proper pilot study is one where you simulate the main study, but with fewer people. The pilot was undertaken with a CPSP group in May 2009 (n=18) with comments invited to be written on the questionnaire and prompted in an open discussion afterwards (see Appendix H – the draft version of the questionnaire used with the feedback – students' written comments transferred in black, my recording of the discussion and notes in red). In summary, the main issues concerned:

- The use of the term 'authoritative': changed to 'valid';
- The expansion of meaning, problems with terminology used in questions 4-6: questions were expanded and language changed to the most readily understood and recognised terms. The term 'applying theory to practice' was used in the final version rather than 'linking' for this reason.
- Needing more time to complete.

These were all addressed by the final version (Appendix I), as well as ideas from the ongoing literature research which prompted the need for an additional question regarding the constructed knowledge from practice, taking the total number of questions to 9.

Data Analysis

The completed questionnaires were analysed using the Windows Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v.16) and frequency distribution to show statistical trends and identify patterns in the range and diversity of students' experience with, and expectations of, knowledge during the CPSP programme. As advocated by Gillham (2000), absolute numbers as well as percentages are shown to ensure clarity.

Responses to Q1 were categorised initially according to Eraut's (1994) professional knowledge categories – propositional, process and personal knowledge, which are referred to throughout the literature review. However, it became hard to classify the large variety of students' responses into these categories; for example where did 'colleagues', 'the internet', or 'newspapers' fit? I noted that the more general and wider categories 'external/internal' sources and 'formal/informal' types used in the documentary analysis fitted the range of responses much better. The responses were again categorised as formal (codified, academic, or legitimised by formal bodies/organisations) or informal (non-codified, non-academic) types of knowledge; and sources as internal or external to oneself.

Nevertheless, a lot of interpretation was still needed; e.g. are items such as 'experience', 'practice', 'staff development', actually external or internal knowledge? The complexity became apparent here as most internal knowledge initially comes from somewhere external to us. A decision had to be taken on what 'internal' meant in this context. Further use was made of the literature, and the notion of agency or the active role of the person appeared relevant here. To count as 'internal' an item had to have some internal starting point via the senses

or have been internalised, i.e. made relevant to the self through thought or action. One of the most difficult individual items to categorise, again, was 'values'. As seen in the previous stage, values can represent prescribed external 'codes of practice' or a personal moral code, and because items are listed in the questionnaire by participants without any context they could mean either. The decision was taken to categorise them as internal unless listed specifically otherwise, because it can be reasonably assumed that the participants, as qualified practising social workers, would have made them relevant to themselves.

To show how responses are classified the listed types and sources are grouped into the four categories as follows. (They are presented in order of the strength of response, with the most frequently cited responses at the top of the table.)

Types - Formal	Types – Informal	Sources – External	Sources – Internal
Theories, models, frameworks	Service user /carer feedback	Books, journals, conferences	Experiential – work, study, practice and life; shadowing
Research findings	Discussion/dialogue with colleagues, supervisors, managers	Colleagues, managers, peers	Values, ethics, morals
Policies, codes of practice	Best practice guidance materials	Supervisors	Explicit understanding
Legislation; govt pubs	TV and radio shows Magazine articles	Training/staff development courses	Reflection; reflective practice
HE course materials	In-house training materials	HE courses; lectures seminars	Implicit, tacit understanding; intuition
Literature reviews	Case studies	Group/team work or meetings	Application of knowledge
Commissioned reports	Anecdotal evidence	Tutors	Practice wisdom

Statistics	Group/team work or meetings	Service users, carers	
Organisational procedures protocols	Case reviews	Internet/intranet	
		Professional bodies	
		Media	
		Libraries	
		Government	

Table 7. Categories for the types and sources of professional knowledge listed by students

The responses to the three opportunities to provide *additional comments to clarify or illustrate your answer if you wish* underwent content analysis. They were initially reduced to substantive points and key categories noted, they were each examined and then collated. Coding these comments by simplifying them into groups and categories inevitably meant some "loss of information" (Robson 2002, p.257) but enabled a small insight into any missing complexity. Some of the quotations were kept and used to ensure the essence of the original was not lost.

Results

Question 1 – Please list different types or sources of professional knowledge

It was recorded whether a participant had listed an item for a category or not. It was therefore only counted 'once' if a particular category had been included in a participant's list of items. As an example, if a participant listed 4 formal types, 0 informal types, 6 external types and 1 internal type of knowledge it would be recorded as follows:

Student	Types - Formal	Types – Informal	Sources – External	Sources – Internal
x	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

All participants (n=83) responded.

78 (94%) participants listed formal types;

77 (92.8%) participants listed informal types;

78 (94%) participants listed external sources;

46 (55.4%) participants listed internal sources.

Almost equal numbers of participants listed formal and informal types of knowledge and sources external to themselves. Fewer participants listed internal sources of knowledge, and only four participants listed 'reflection' or 'reflective practice' as items in their list.
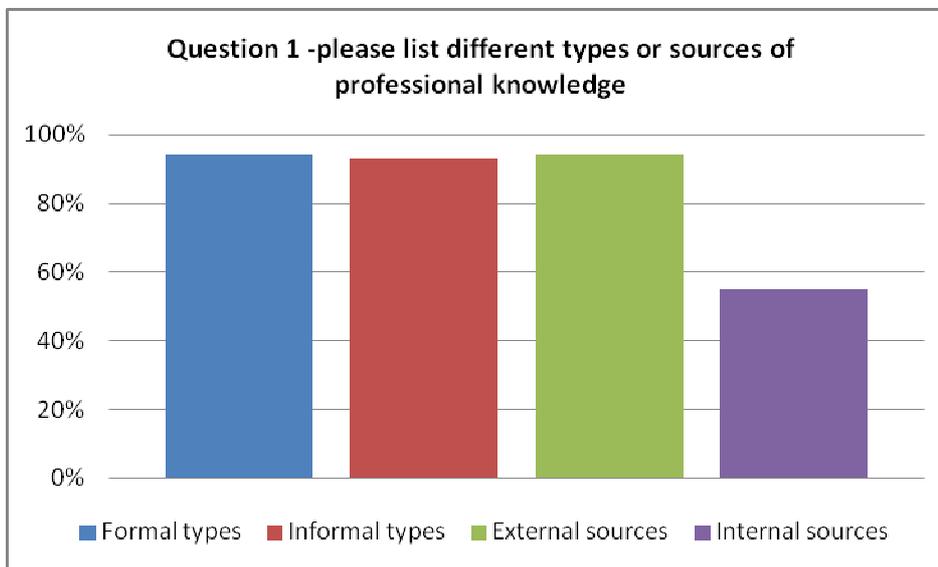
Table 8. Q1- % of participants listing formal/informal types and external/internal sources of knowledge

Question 2 – Do you think everything you listed above will be considered equally valid on this PQ programme?

All participants (n=83) answered.

66 (79.5%) participants responded yes; 17 (20.5%) participants responded no.

The majority think that all the types and sources of knowledge they listed will be considered equally valid on the course.
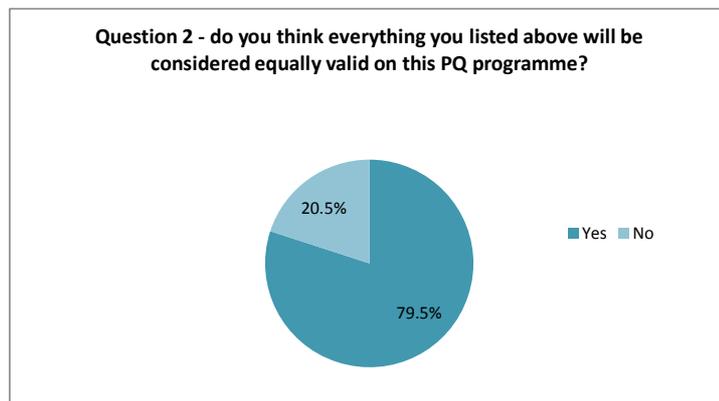
Table 9. Q2 - % of participants who think the sources and types of knowledge they listed will be/will not be considered equally valid on the programme.

Questions 3a and 3b – only for those that answer 'no' to Q2 (n=17) - Which do you think will be considered the most valid/least valid type or source of knowledge on the programme?

(N=25 additional participants answered Q3 even though they had answered yes to Q2, which makes their response invalid and so they are not included below.)

Under each section of 'most valid' and 'least valid' it was counted once if a particular category had been included in a participant's list of items or not (i.e. the same process as for Q1).

N= 17 participants answered.

a) Most valid:

16 (94.1%) participants listed formal types;

4 (23.5%) participants listed informal types;

16 (94.1%) participants listed external sources;

2 (11.7%) participants listed internal sources.

The vast majority think formal types and external sources of knowledge will be considered most valid on the course
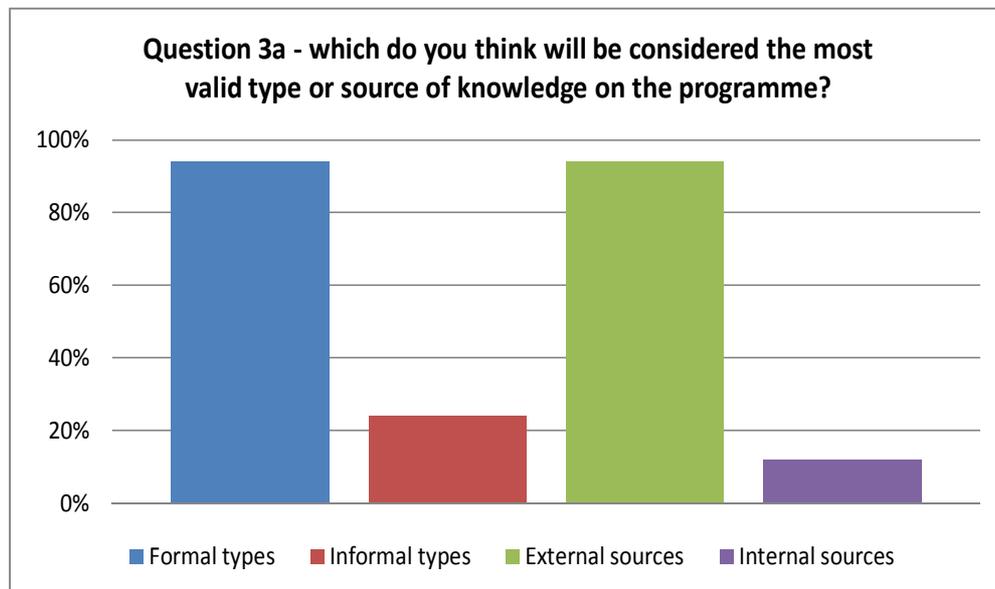
Table 10. Q3a - % of participants listing the most valid types/sources of knowledge

b) Least valid:

0 (0%) participants listed formal types;

10 (58.8%) participants listed informal types;

6 (35.3%) participants listed external sources;

5 (29.4%) participants listed internal sources.

The majority think informal types of knowledge will be considered least valid on the course.
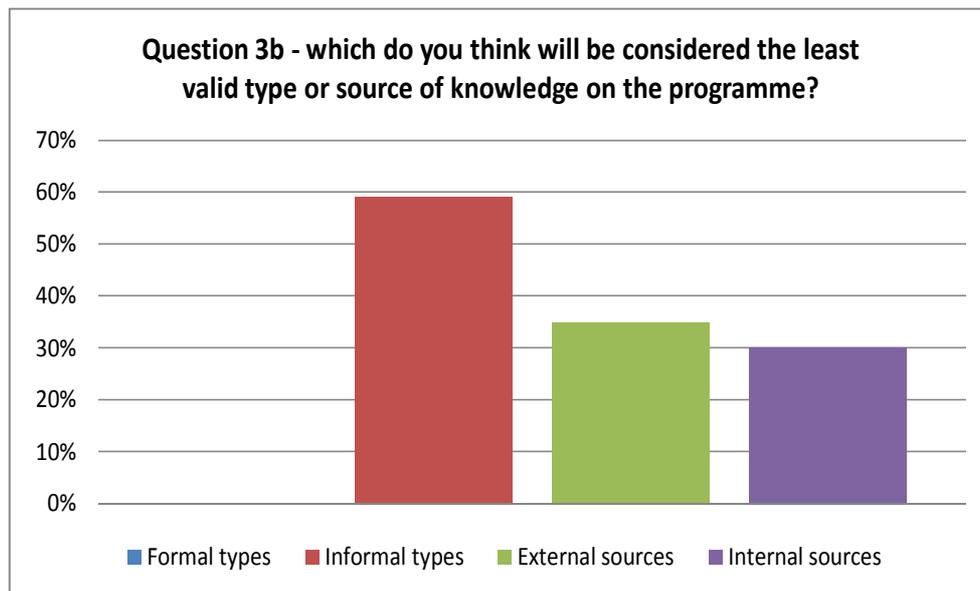
Table 11.Q3b - % of participants listing the least valid types sources of knowledge

Additional comments re: Q3

7 responses given in italics. Additional information provided in square brackets. Some clarify the answer why a certain source or type is considered least valid and note a perceived need for these types and sources of knowledge to have more formal or external validity, e.g.:

> *Sometimes hard to quantify discussions.*
> *Inability to reference/provide evidence for* [colleagues/peers].

One participant notes a tension here:

> *Use of self is sought after, yet sometimes within sw* [social work] *is not valued per se... research on high numbers of sw's* [social workers] *experiencing challenging situations themselves yet 'hiding' it.*

Another participant shows the importance of the context for their choice that research is considered 'most valid' whilst practice is 'least valid':

> *Seems fine for an academic course.*

Others note the political and practical sides to the question of validity of knowledge:

> *SW* [social work] *and sw ed* [social work education] *needs to be clearer about prioritising what drives the profession.*
> *I believe all above are important, they define me as a professional.*

One participant acknowledges the complexity in categorising the internet as 'least valid':

> *Certain websites are more valid sources of info; i.e. Joseph Rowntree; SCIE.*

Question 4 – Have you had experience of reflecting on your practice in previous academic work?

All participants (n=83) answered.

80 participants (96.4%) answered yes; 3 participants (3.6%) answered no.

The vast majority have had experience of reflecting on their practice in previous academic work.
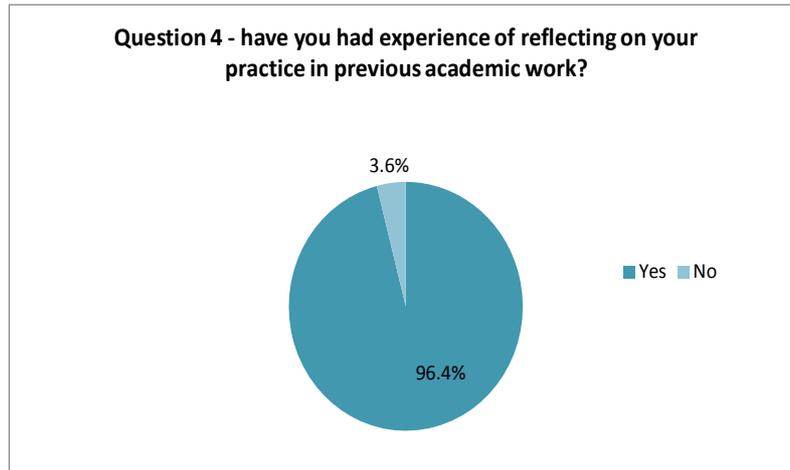
Table 12. Q4 - % of participants with/without experience of reflecting on their practice in previous academic work

Question 5 –Have you had experience of 'applying theory to practice' (i.e. using theory to inform your practice) in previous academic work?

All participants (n=83) answered.

82 participants (98.8%) answered yes; 1 student (1.2%) answered no.

The vast majority have had experience of 'applying theory to practice' (i.e. using theory to inform practice) in previous academic work.
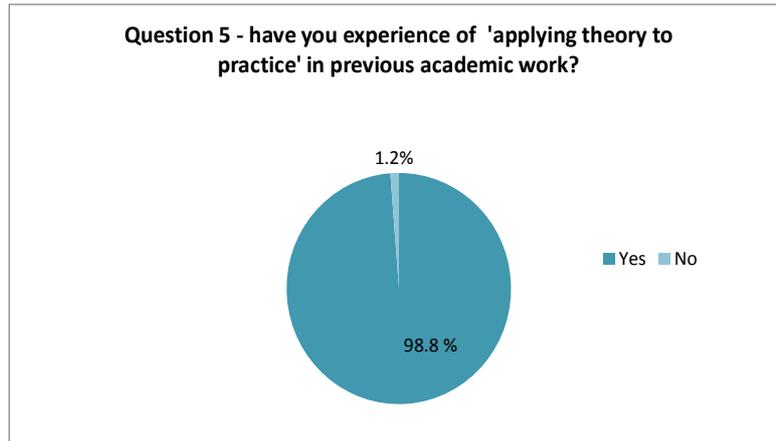
Table 13. Q5- % of participants with/without experience of applying theory to practice in previous academic work

Question 6 a - Have you experience of critically analysing your practice/ experiential knowledge in previous academic work?

All participants (n=83) answered.

81 participants (97.6%) answered yes; 2 (2.4%) participants answered no.

The vast majority have had experience of critically analysing their practice/experiential knowledge in previous academic work.
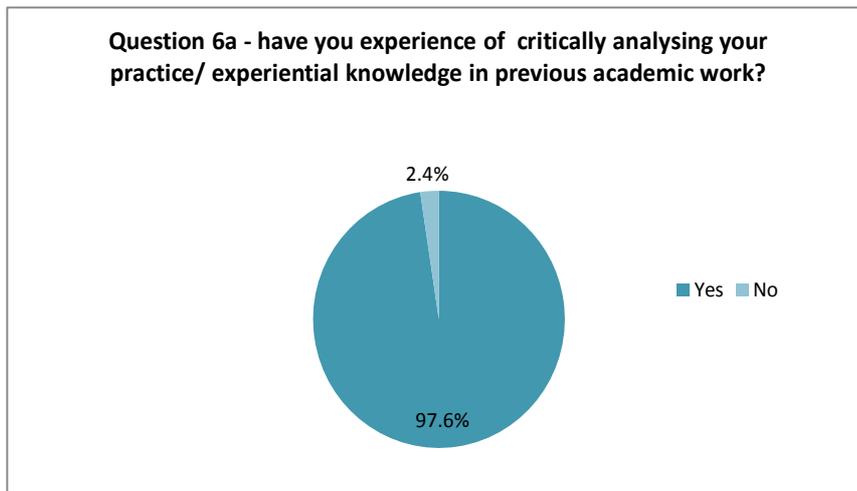
Table 14. Q6a -% of participants with/without experience of critically analysing their practice in previous academic work

Question 6b - If yes, have you experience of doing this using formal types of knowledge (e.g. theory, research, policy, legislation)?

Of those who answered yes (n =81):

79 (97.5%) answered yes; 2 (2.5%) answered no.

The vast majority have had experience of critically analysing their practice/experiential knowledge in previous academic work using formal types of knowledge (e.g. theory, research, policy, legislation).
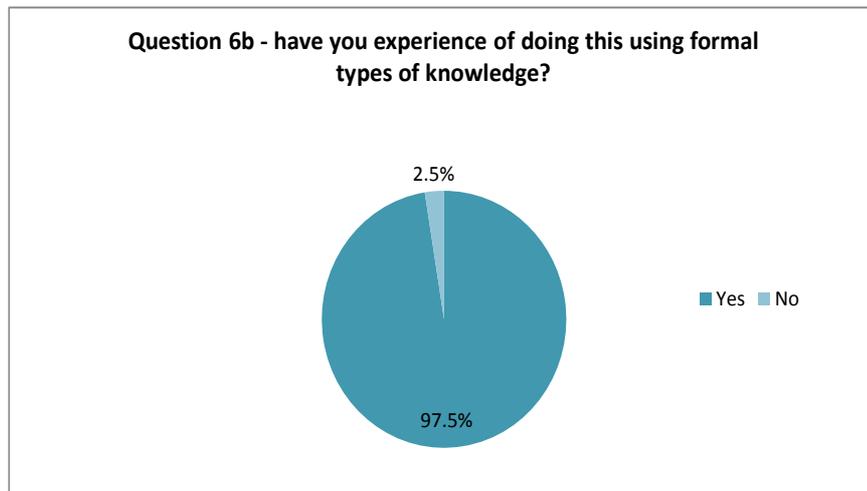
Table 15. Q6b - % of participants with/without experience of critically analysing their practice in previous academic work using formal types of knowledge.

Question 7 - Have you experience of constructing/building your own 'practice theories' in previous academic work?

82 participants answered; 1 student did not answer.

35 participants answered yes (42.2%)

47 participants answered no (56.6%)

A small majority have not had experience of constructing/building their own 'practice theories' in previous academic work.
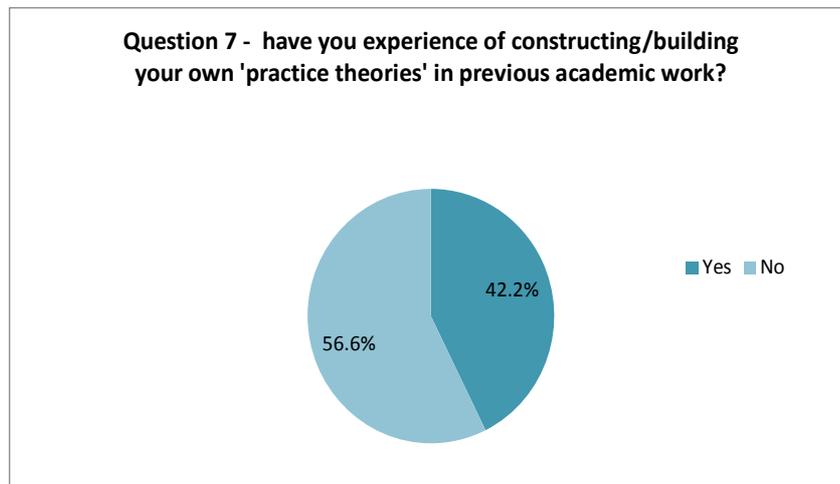
Table 16. Q7 - % of participants with/without experience of constructing their own 'practice theories' in previous academic work.

Question 8a - Have you experience of critically analysing formal types of knowledge (e.g. theory, research, policy, legislation) in previous academic work?

82 participants answered; 1 student did not answer.

75 (91.5%) participants answered yes; 7 (8.5%) answered no.

The vast majority have had experience of critically analysing formal types of knowledge (e.g. theory, research, policy, legislation) in previous academic work.
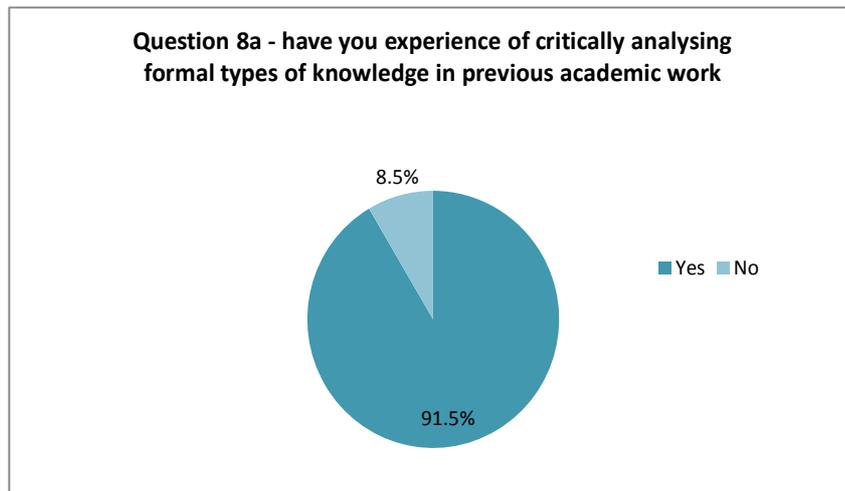
Table 17. Q8a - % of participants with/without experience of critically analysing formal types of knowledge in previous academic work.

Q 8b - If yes, have you experience of doing this using your practice/experiential knowledge or your values?

Of those who answered yes (n =75), 70 participants (93.3%) answered yes; 5 (6.6%) answered no.

The vast majority have had experience of critically analysing formal types of knowledge (e.g. theory, research, policy, legislation) in previous academic work using their practice/experiential knowledge or their values.
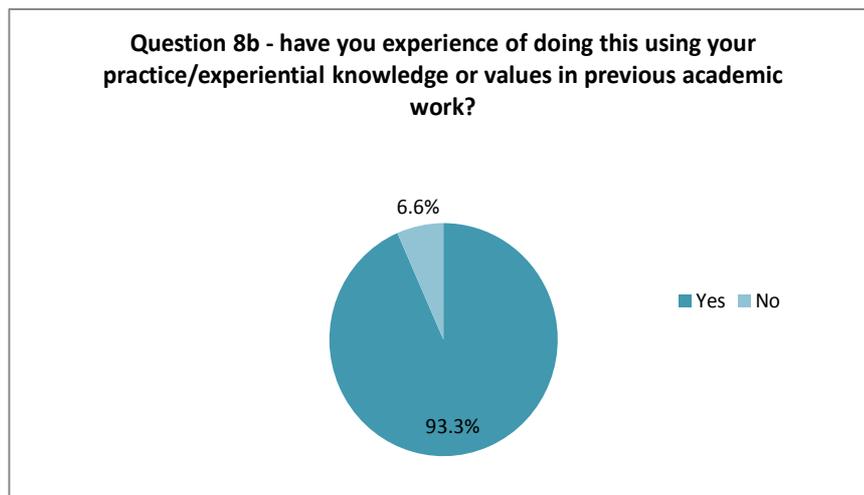
Table 18. Q8b - % of participants with/without experience of critically analysing formal types of knowledge using their practice knowledge or values.

Additional comments Qs 4-8

19 responses. The majority (n=14) of comments explain when and where this has been done, either in work situations (n=3, e.g. for projects) or on qualifying degrees (n=11).

One participant mentions a particular associated tension:

> *I would like the time to include more theory and legislation in my work and critically analyse outcomes. However, work load often prevents this as assessments need to be completed quickly in order to be able to take on more work.*

Q9 – Which of the two following statements best describes the way you tackle academic written work?

a) I usually begin by looking for published ideas and evidence (e.g. theory/research/law/policy) and then think about how I can put them together.

b) I usually begin by developing what I want to say and then look for published ideas and evidence (e.g. theory/research/law/policy) relating to that.

All participants (n=83; revised to 81) answered.

18 participants (22.2%) answered a; 63 participants (77.7%) answered b; 1 left both options blank and 1 ticked both options (the latter two are not counted). The majority usually begin by developing what they want to say and then look for published ideas and evidence (e.g. theory/research/law/policy) relating to that, i.e. work with their own ideas first.
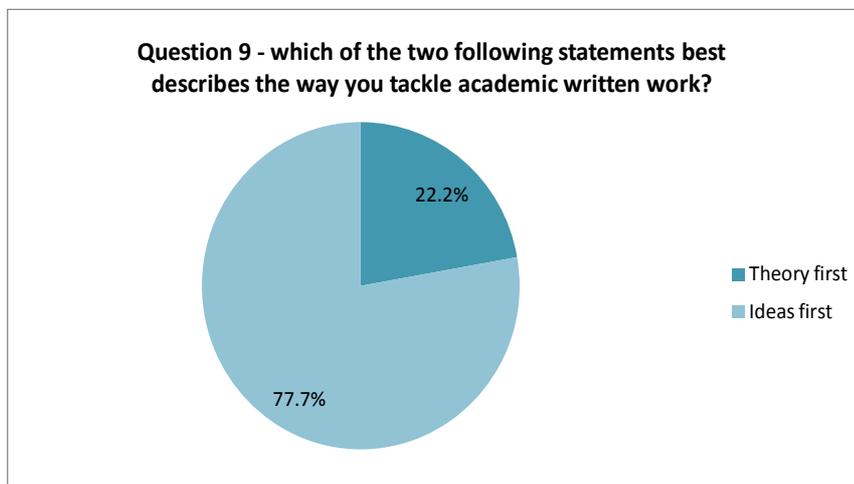
Table 19. Q9 - % of participants who tackle academic work by considering theory first and who consider their own ideas first.

Additional comments Q9

20 comments in all.

11 participants stated they actually used both methods: n=1 ticked neither option on the sheet, and n=1 ticked both options on the sheet (both not counted above); n=3 had answered a, and n=6 had answered b.

9 explained the need for both approaches, showing the situational dependency of the decision, e.g.:

> *I actually use both approaches depending on what I am writing about (and how much practice experience I may or may not have had in that area).*
> *It depends.*

Some participants show the complexity of the issue, e.g.:

> *Really, both occur together – it's a dialogue between you and the rest of the world. I ticked A as I think B implies inflexibility of thinking.*
> *This can vary. On occasions it is more valid to consider 'published' ideas first however I feel the importance of your own experience and process within your team/setting can sometimes outweigh pre-considered theories and ideas.*

8 participants who had all chosen b, explored or clarified this choice, e.g.:

> *I spend quite a lot of time reflecting pros/cons of what I plan to do and how I do it.*
> *I write what I want to say and then find research relating to that.*
> *I relate theory to practice by identifying a practice area or piece of work I wish to use and then research policies/legislation and theories relating to this. In analysis I also bring out my own ideas.*

Another participant shows an interesting tension here in the connection between theory and practice, highlighting an issue concerning authenticity:

> *I tend to work intuitively using values and 'common sense' which are always backed up by theory (even though I may not have read about it yet!)*

Limitations

Overall, of course, the questionnaire's results can only represent a brief and limited snapshot of these participants' views and ideas at this time and in this context.

One of the main considerations is the authenticity of the data. McKenna, Hasson and Keeney (2006, p.261) note a potential problem with questionnaires because participants can give "the answers that they believe the researcher wants to hear rather than their true views". Robson (2002, p.231) also notes that the lack of relation between attitude and behaviour is "notorious". These are limitations of any research method that involves questioning of people but the initial discussions with the participants at the start of the workshops may have alleviated this to some degree as the value being placed on their honesty was discussed.

The main issue with the data lies in the progression from question 2 to question 3. Question 3 was to be answered only if the answer to Q2 was 'no', but 25 of those who answered yes also answered Q3. I had tried to clearly signpost the instruction but as Gillham (2000) notes, routing instructions can be particularly confusing. The decision was taken to stay with these participants' initial answer to Q2 that everything they had listed in Q1 would be considered equally valid on the PQ programme. This made their subsequent answers to Q3 illogical and so they were not included in that question's analysis. In future research I would consider talking through the instructions on the questionnaire sheet with the participants prior to them completing it.

Another issue concerned Q9. Some participants did not like the dichotomy presented by the question's two prescribed answers and wanted a third option of both methods. It is also important to recognise that data may be missing here, though, as other participants may have felt the same but did not state this.

It can be seen that the usefulness of the questionnaire data is rather limited in this format. If the study was to be repeated it would perhaps be more productive to

undertake a larger and more detailed questionnaire as a preliminary study to the thesis. The questionnaire construction could then be more complex and questions worded to allow finer-grained and more meaningful distribution of responses.

Conclusions

Answering RQ3: *Do PQ social work students at BU have particular views or assumptions about the nature of 'knowledge' as they start the programme?* Most participants' views and expectations around knowledge at the start of the course align with a critically reflective approach and a reflective, inductive stance to the theory practice relationship appears familiar and common. However, there is less acknowledgement of, and less value placed on internal as opposed to external knowledge in this context. The findings align with those from the documentary analysis where the types of knowledge most frequently cited in the CPSP handbook were both formal and external, with references to informal, internal or a practitioner's knowledge/theory/experiential knowledge or to any 'construction' of such knowledge much less evident. Some participants comment on a perceived need for further justification from external or formal sources for internal or informal knowledge in this context, and thus a privileging of the former is evident. However one participant clearly states that they think experience and team knowledge can outweigh academic knowledge.

The findings show the percentages of participants who had experience of critically analysing practice/experiential knowledge and those who had experience of critically analysing formal knowledge to not be too dissimilar, although the literature review shows students are reluctant to critically analyse theory. Significantly fewer participants had experience of constructing or building their own 'practice theories', although the literature review supports the idea of the outcome of reflective practice being practice theories.

Brief discussion and developmental progression

The overall privileging of formal, external knowledge and the lack of recognition and acknowledgement of students' own practice-based knowledge in this PQ programme is important. It is especially so in a profession working to a reflective epistemology, and it highlights the hegemony of a more technocratic approach to knowledge in this environment. (This may also be seen in the preference for the term 'applying theory to practice' in the testing stage, although it was associated by the students with more reflective methods as well.)

This validity issue is highly significant. If formal and external knowledge is being considered more valid than informal, internal knowledge there is an impact on issues of authority and justification of knowledge. It means that internal, informal knowledge is validated through reference to external, formal knowledge. This in turn has an impact on the way students can express their practice in written work. In particular, and in very simplistic terms, it creates a requirement to justify and validate practice through the use of theory as an authority. The point is that this may not have been a PQ student's original way of working in practice. Fook et al.'s (1997) research argues that a worker's ability to articulate and use integrated theoretical frameworks may be unrealistic as such articulation is not an integral part of expert practice. At least one participant notes the value of experience and team knowledge which can outweigh that of theory. A tension is therefore created for inductive theory practice integration and a potential for unauthentic writing, seen in the final student comment under Question 9, which states that his/her values and common sense are always backed up by theory even though he/she may not have read about it yet.

As a majority of participants report having experience of working with knowledge in post-technocratic ways, there is potentially a lot of existing understanding to work with during the workshops. If this reporting does accurately reflect people's actual experiences then it gives tutors on the programme a potential resource to use and work with the students to improve their writing. However, it is also important to recognise that over-riding assumptions cannot be made regarding the

experience students bring with them. There are still participants who had not had experience of applying theory to practice, or reflecting on practice.

The increasing complexity of these issues shows the need for more in-depth questioning using interviews with some of the participants.

Emerging issues for the next stage of the case study:

- The issue of authority and the privileging of external, formal knowledge - is there a tension or misalignment here? Are students following perceived conventions which do not evidence their true processes and allow practice to be authenticated in its own right without a need for external authority?
- What type of experience with a reflective style and with critical analysis of theory are students bringing with them?

Chapter 4: Case Study
4d) Case Study Stage 3 – Interviews: i) Process

The aim of this third stage of the case study is to answer in-depth questions concerning knowledge and knowing as expressed within the programme and as students undertake its assessed work.

Methodology and Design

The human use of language provides a "unique window" on what lies behind our actions, and face-to-face interviews are a flexible and adaptable way of finding things out; offering possibilities of modifying a line of enquiry, following up interesting responses, non-verbal cues, and investigating underlying motives, all of which is beyond the scope of questionnaires (Robson 2002, p.272).

Sample

Students were self-selecting and chose to be considered for participation in the interviews at the time of the second workshop when the questionnaires were given out, whether they had completed the questionnaire or not. As noted earlier, if they did wish to be considered a further information sheet regarding the interviews, and consent form, was given to them (Appendices D and E). Ten volunteered and an eligible eight, i.e. those who completed the CPSP course (n=1 withdrew from the course and n=1 did not submit due to mitigating circumstances) were subsequently contacted and interviewed.

An initial interview was carried out as a 'dummy' run (details below) with a student from the previous cohort (July 2009) who had just submitted their assessed work. As the interview content was consistent with the later interviews and the participant's profile was deemed to provide additional variance it was also included in the final sample.

The final sample (n=9) consisted of 1 male and 8 female students, with a range of experience and qualifications as follows:

- n=1 qualified 20 years, CQSW qualification level
- n=1 qualified 9 years, degree level
- n=7 qualified between 2-3 years; n=6 degree level, n=1 masters level. Includes n=2 mature students starting a career change.

This number was considered adequate as the completed questionnaires numbered 83 and a simple ration of one interview for every ten questionnaires is "quite a substantial back-up" Gillham (2000, p.83). The male/female distinction is not made in the subsequent results because the male participant might have been identifiable, and also the issue of gender is not being considered as part of the analysis.

Design

The sub-questions to RQ4 were used to generate particular topic areas for the interviews (see table below). As Mason (2002, p.69) shows, these "mini-research questions" can lead to possible interview topics and questions providing a loose structure and format. In this case, the sub-questions have also been extended by the previous stages of research, showing a need to understand the students' previous experience (if any) of a post-technocratic educational model, their understanding of it in this context, their particular processes for using theory and linking theory and practice in writing (further exploring the reduced but seemingly more accepted term ultimately used in the questionnaire 'applying theory to practice'). Certain epistemological issues of validity, authority, justification of knowledge and knowing are aspects of concern here, and there is a need to identify areas of tension or misalignment, For example, the tension created by the privileging of external, formal knowledge and its impact on students' written work potential, seen in stages 1 and 2 of the case study. The interviews centre on the Practice Analysis, the CPSP programme's main assessment tool (a 5,000 word reflective/academic assignment, see Appendix J)

because it focuses on a reflective analysis of practice theory integration, and therefore corresponds to a post-technocratic model.

Conceptual framework	RQ4: What is the nature of BU PQ social work students' ways of knowing and dealing with knowledge in the context of the programme and its learning, teaching and assessment methods? Sub questions:	Interview topic areas (* also informed by emerging issues from questionnaire findings)
Pedagogy: alignment and clarity issues	What experience do students have of this pedagogy? Do students understand what is expected?	Previous experience –have they written anything like the practice analysis before... *Understanding - what /how to do it; what expected/required... *Process - what helped/ hindered; what like about doing it; anything you enjoyed or felt good/bad about?
Extended range of knowledge and knowing: validity and justification issues	Do students express/construct knowledge? How do they justify it? What role does reflection play?	Practice - able to express/show what you did & thought; your ideas/ understandings ...critical view taken? Reflection – where/how did it fit? Role /purpose... produce new learning...?

Active and interpretive ways of using knowledge – the theory practice relationship: authority issues	How do students use theory in regard to practice knowledge? Are students critical of theory and practice?	Linking/applying theory/practice – where; how; issues... *Theory - where fit in; how use /include it; what do = e.g. back-up/justify; question/challenge/ weigh up/ evaluate theory/research... critical view taken?

Table 20. RQ4 sub-questions and interview topic areas

The topic areas generated from the research sub-questions were used to produce an interview topic guide (Appendix K) to steer discussion, as advocated by Arthur and Nazroo (2003). All the topic areas were covered in each interview but the order and direction and particular nuance of questions was determined by the responses of each individual and the interactions between us, following a semi-structured approach. Rubin and Rubin (2005, pp.4-5) note that in qualitative interviews each conversation is "unique as researchers can match their questions to what each interviewee knows and is willing to share".

Semi-structured

A qualitative approach requires flexibility and active questioning but there was also a need for specific questions to be answered. The semi-structured in-depth interview is seen as an appropriate format as it allows a "shopping list of topics" but also "freedom" in the sequencing of questions, wording, and amount of time and attention given to different topics (Robson 2002, p.278), allowing structure as well as flexibility. Semi-structured interviews permit a free-flowing inquiry where necessary, but without getting incomplete answers or a range of different answers, as associated with using only respondent-led, open-ended questions (Knight 2001). The interviews needed to provide a picture of the 'case' and so each

student was asked a similar range of questions around the specific topic areas so that the data could be collated coherently.

As this research is an applied rather than a direct study of personal epistemology, it is not necessary to ask students about their beliefs or views directly. Indeed, as seen in the literature review, Hammer and Elby (2002, 2003) note that students do not typically reflect directly or explicitly on the nature of knowledge or knowing, and their epistemologies might not be accessible to conscious reflection and articulate reporting. The aim here, therefore, was not to ask students directly about their epistemological beliefs, but instead ask them about their ideas, approaches and methods in their written work or other aspects of the programme which convey epistemological assumptions. The analysis of these descriptions and stories would then aim to work out the underlying epistemological issues associated with the participant's individual situations.

Semi-structured interviews have also been employed by a number of key researchers in the area of personal epistemology, e.g. Baxter-Magolda (1994), Hofer and Pintrich (1997), Hammer and Elby (2002), Hofer (2004c), and although many ask direct questions regarding personal epistemology, they all show the worth of undertaking them within a particular context. Brownlee's professional education studies, in particular, use semi-structured and scenario-based interviews (Brownlee 2001, 2003, 2004; Brownlee and Berthelsen 2008; Brownlee et al. 2005, 2008). Semi-structured interviews have been used in many studies whose aim is to show the meaning of a particular educational experience and students' written work. Stierer's (2000a, 2000b) research project investigates post qualifying teachers' professional knowledge and development by examining aspects of their writing using interviews. Lea and Jones' (2010) project uses interviews to examine explanations for students' apparent difficulties with writing for assessment in practice-based professional courses, focusing on similar issues concerning epistemology and notions of authority to support argumentation. As they explain (ibid, p.5) by "foregrounding the relationship between writing and learning, writing is conceptualised in terms of epistemology" rather than "as a

cognitive skill", and in terms of "what counts as knowledge in the different contexts of the academy".

Undertaking the interviews

The main focus was thus on a descriptive approach to elicit the fullest and most detailed experiences and views. I encouraged contextual shifts and reflections as an 'active' interviewer as defined by Holstein and Gubrium (1995), following the responsive interviewing model of Rubin and Rubin (2005) which shows that qualitative interviewing is an adaptive, dynamic and iterative process, i.e. learning what is important to those being interviewed.

The interpretive constructionist approach behind the case study directed my interviews to try and elicit the interviewees' views of their worlds, their course and the assessment they have experienced. Although the interviews focused on specific items and events associated with the students' backgrounds and the course, e.g. their educational experience, the handbook and writing the assignment, these cannot be 'seen' other than through the students' individual subjectivity. There may be facts to be found, e.g. whether students had undertaken a degree course or not, but the meaning and outcome of this will be different for each individual. This is important data because it will have an impact on the student's experience. Therefore, I am looking for specific individual, contextual details and trying to build an understanding based on those specifics to understand the complexity here. This is where necessary depth can be achieved by pursuing the context and "paying attention to the specifics of meanings, situation and history", even though it can mean dealing with the "complexity of multiple, overlapping and sometimes conflicting themes" (Rubin and Rubin 2005, p.35). Mason (2002, p.65) agrees with the need to ensure the interview is as contextual as possible in order to generate this "situated knowledge", but which will also allow appropriate comparisons to be made. Each interview context is one of interaction and relation; the result is a product of this social dynamic (Fontana and Frey 2000).

Interview participants are therefore actively constructing knowledge around questions and responses (Holstein and Gubrium 1995), and in response the interviewing process needs to remain flexible to accommodate what is heard and any new information, i.e. there is a need of high tolerance for uncertainty and openness (Rubin and Rubin 2005). Indeed, the effects of the interviewer and the interview context need to be taken into account. The interviewer's presence and form of involvement:

> "…how she or he listens, attends, encourages, interrupts, digresses, initiates topics, and terminates responses – is integral to a respondent's account. It is in this specific sense that a "story" is a joint production."
>
> (Mishler 1986, p.82)

Space prevents discussion of this issue of co-production as a topic in its own right, although it can be said it aligns with the constructionist view (Silverman 2000).

As Kvale (1996 p.226) points out, the interviewer does not uncover some pre-existing meanings but "supports the interviewees in developing their meanings throughout the course of the interview". From my position as researcher it is important to recognise that my personality, style and beliefs matter because I am actively contributing to the conversation. I must be aware of own biases, experiences, cultural definitions and even prejudices as they will influence my questions and tone, which, in turn, influence how interviewees respond (Rubin and Rubin 2005). There is a balance to be achieved. People will not tell you what is happening unless they trust you but "trust cannot be built by keeping one's distance" (Cousin 2009, p.8). Personal involvement is a great strength of responsive interviewing because empathy can encourage people to talk; nevertheless emotions can also unduly influence the process. For example, questions may be asked too sympathetically or there may be too much empathy which becomes 'poor you' in tone, making the interview a colluding event.

A particular challenge with interviewing is that the things people claim they do, do not necessarily align with their actions, i.e. what they do in reality (Tight 2003)**.** For this case study there is a further consideration. The interviews were undertaken up to a month after a participant had submitted their Practice Analysis,

so there were possible recollection issues regarding what they had written and how they had achieved it. The participants were therefore asked to have a copy of their Practice Analysis with them in the interview to refer to. This was an extremely productive request as all participants did need to refer to their work in order to remind themselves of what they had written. Many commented on the fact that it was very difficult to remember, and what they had written seemed almost alien to them.

The interviews (all undertaken at the interviewee's place of work, n=8 face-to-face and n=1 via a telephone call) started with a brief discussion of the study to gain commitment and co-operation and as stated above, encourage honesty and openness, plus give assurances regarding anonymity and that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' things to say. I wanted to make the participant feel comfortable and work in a style compatible with my personality using a friendly, conversational style. I worded questions differently to adapt to each individual's personality and style of answering, aiming to gain their trust and alleviate anxiety. The initial questions gave the opportunity for the participant to answer from their own experience and the resulting answers suggested areas to pursue. I was able to develop a common understanding with most of the participants but a small number focused heavily on the detail of the case they used for their Practice Analysis rather than how they wrote it.

For the most part, it was important to allow the students the freedom to answer as they wanted to. This idea follows a "logic of enquiry", where I take on the role of learner and sought to be educated, thus aligning with the research objectives to explore, describe and understand the problem at hand (Blaikie 2000, p.77).

> "You have clear questions you want answered, but you ask them in a way that invites an open response; you prompt the interviewees when necessary and you have to keep them on track and keep them moving."
>
> (Gillham 2000, p. 82)

In accordance with advice from Rubin and Rubin (2005, p.13) I used "main questions, probes, and follow-ups", aiming to start a conversation on a specific matter and then ask for more depth and detail. This is about listening for and

exploring key words, ideas and themes and asking follow-up questions to encourage expansion where it seems relevant. This may not always have been achieved because conversations are so dynamic, although I did try to make a quick written note and then return to something later. It is also about noticing gaps and omissions and then asking about those aspects, as well as listening to "hear the meaning of what interviewees are telling" me (Rubin and Rubin 2005, pp.13-14).

I listened to each interview recording before undertaking the next, paying particular attention to my tone of voice, the way questions were worded and the responses they provoked and reflected on how they could be improved. I would look for places and ways to improve, for example the introduction being too rushed or too long, whether the person was easily able to match their experiences to my questions, if they introduced different aspects, where the depth was missing, where I could re-word things or ask for examples. One of the main issues was that some participants would spend a lot of time referring to the details of the case throughout the interview and so I began to ask them to describe the case concisely at the start. I also pointed to the Practice Analysis at certain points in the interview to remind them what the focus was.

Analysis

Lived experience cannot be treated as an unproblematic site for knowledge production (Johnston and Usher 1997). As the purpose of the qualitative interview is both a description and interpretation of themes in the subject's lived world, "a continuum" exists between the two (Kvale 1996, p.187); different interpreters will construct different meanings of an interview in a "relational unfolding of meaning" (ibid, p.226). Nevertheless, there has to be assurance that data was not invented or students' views misrepresented and so the route by which the analysis was achieved is presented below. Interviews were transcribed fully (with inflexions and pauses) in order to record the complete interaction of the interview. In order to respect the interviewees' input and involvement at this stage, 'summarised' transcripts were offered to the interviewees to view and/or review.

Four interviewees took up this offer. No changes were required. I then took full responsibility as the researcher for the following stages of the analysis and the resulting interpretations rather than rely on "intersubjective validation" (Kvale 1996, p.247).

There is no standard method to arrive at essential meanings and deeper implications of what is said in an interview during the analysis stage, but Kvale (1996) insists that the decision on how to analyse interviews has to be taken before undertaking them, because it depends on 'what' is analysed (the content) and why (its purpose). I had decided on template analysis (King 1998) as a method of analysis at the outset and before undertaking the interviews, for the reason that it had been identified as a useful method for case study analysis by a colleague and in my doctorate studies. Template analysis relies on clustering coded data into meaningful groupings of themes producing and modifying templates. King (1998) advises that the best starting point for constructing an initial template is the interview topic guide and so the initial concepts and themes were generated accordingly. Coding, labelling and indexing of sections of the texts then took place. However, as the themes started to be grouped using this data management system it began to feel wrong and the need to stop and think more deeply about what was happening became apparent. I realised that as the content and purpose of the interviews became more fully established and aligned with the rest of the case study I had failed to reconsider whether the method of analysis was still appropriate.

Two negative effects of using this method had become apparent. First, it meant that the interview topics became the main points of focus for the analysis as they created its conceptual framework. These topics had been used to guide the interview questions in order to elicit the epistemological issues, but as the topics became the analysis themes they were now overwhelming the epistemological issues. Second, this method fragmented the accounts told by the students into too many separate parts, losing useful contextual aspects to the answers and therefore the unique "matrix of intersecting factors and dimensions of experience" (Haggis

2004, p.339*).* Kvale (1996, p.182) notes this danger of reducing texts to a mere collection of words or single meanings conceived as verbal data and then "butchered into fragmented quotes", which effectively closes the door on possible meanings. I could hear some key epistemological themes and contextual issues, for example that students needed theory to back them up, but they were being dispersed rather than being consolidated and understood situationally as unique individual accounts. The individuality of each student needed to be preserved in the analysis but the template analysis method was not allowing this. I stopped and reconsidered my starting point.

I needed to express the nature of the students' ways of knowing and dealing with knowledge in the context of the programme in order to answer RQ4 effectively and to do this I needed to understand each student's account in depth first. I decided the analysis was not, therefore, seeking to uncover linear relationships or establish categories, but instead seeking to explore how, for each participant, different elements might combine to form certain views on ways of knowing and dealing with knowledge when writing the Practice Analysis. This re-aligns with the need to understand something of the full complexity of this case through the individual accounts.

Re-examining the more fundamental aims of the study provided a realignment with the underpinning pragmatic research approach as well. RQ4 in essence is aiming to understand more about how the students work within a reflective epistemology. If they were undertaking this successfully they would be integrating a range of knowledge, especially theory and practice, challenging external authority, constructing their own knowledge and justifying it via internal as well as external means. I needed the analysis to highlight these areas for each student and allow fuller understanding of them. In fact, this led me back to "the theoretical conceptions of what is investigated", which should "provide the basis for making decisions" regarding how the content is to be analysed, according to Kvale (1996, p.180). I therefore refocused the conceptual framework for the analysis of the interview texts on epistemological issues concerning the

integration of knowledge, the source and authority of knowledge and the justification for knowing - dimensions as detailed by the literature review, and in particular by Hofer (2004b). These dimensions could now be applied and used as constructs to explore the interview texts (Kember 2001). Further exploration of these dimensions by Muis and Franco (2009) provided the necessary detail to form key questions and build a new framework (below) in order to analyse and interpret each interview text, i.e. allowing a necessary refocusing on relevant epistemological topics which better inform the answers to RQ4 sub-questions.

Interview topic areas	The analysis framework for each student's account.

Previous experience –have they written anything like the practice analysis before...
 	
 Understanding - what /how to do it; what expected/required...
 	
 Process - what help / hinder; what like about doing it; anything enjoyed or felt good bad about?
	1.'Reflection on practice' writing style:
	
	    a) Previous experience?
	    b) Understanding of what was expected and what to do?
	    c) Handbook use?

Practice - able to express/show what you did & thought; your ideas/ understandings ...critical view taken?
 	
 Reflection – where/how fit? role /purpose... produce new learning ...?
	2. Producing/constructing learning/ knowledge in the Practice Analysis:
	
	    a) Whether; what?
	    b) Outcome?

Linking/applying theory/practice – where; how; issues...	3. Theory-practice integration in the Practice Analysis:
	    a) How?
	    b) Issues?

Theory - where fit in; how use /include it; what do = e.g. back-up/ justify; question/ challenge/ weigh up/ evaluate theory /research... critical view taken?	4. Criticising/ challenging/questioning *or* conceding/accepting the 'authority' of external sources (theory/research/'experts') in the Practice Analysis:
	    a) Whether critical of 'theory'?
	    b) What/when/how?
	    c) Why/why not?
	
	5. 'Justification' of knowledge and knowing in the Practice Analysis:
	    a) Whether /need to justify own ideas/practice wisdom etc?
	    b) How do it – theory/others?
	    c) By self?

Table 21. Interview analysis framework

The questions above were used to interrogate each interview text separately with the particular question references (e.g. 1a) noted on the interview scripts at relevant points where it was felt they were answered. (Appendix L provides an example of a mostly complete transcript with Jane with this first stage analysis.) The next stage collated the relevant sections together (shown in Appendix M) in the order of analysis framework; and particularly illustrative and informative phrases and words highlighted for use in the final stage. The interviews and the analysed accounts were listened to and re-read repeatedly in order to hear the complexity and keep the whole intact, but also to not miss anything which was an important part of this analysis.

The analysed accounts created from this process were then written up as short narratives which combine a summarised report of what was said in the third

person with the individual's own words; i.e. as a set of mainly descriptive rather than explanatory accounts as defined by Ritchie (2003). They were thus formed through a process of summarisation using meaning condensation, categorisation, and interpretation and the collection and synthesis of relevant pieces of interview text (Kvale 1996). These are not complete individual stories though; they do not become case studies in themselves, rather they are individual accounts to show the range and diversity of issues and experiences within the case. For Haggis (2004, p.350) such accounts need to get to the "unexpected factors and interrelationships involved in 'learning'" which are likely to be the cause of unpredictable outcomes. They are each presented in the following section (4dii).

Bassey (1999, pp.87-8) using work by Stenhouse, shows that this type of descriptive narrative or portrayal reporting may lack a natural story line but it aims to keep the qualities of a narrative account. It identifies key dimensions, paying particular attention to language and actual words used by the students so that the "fineness and detail in different perspectives or descriptions is understood" (Spencer et al. 2003, p.214). The third person perspective helps to condense and collate what was said for ease of presentation, and the student's own words are kept (and highlighted using red text) to amplify understanding and portray the richness of an individual account. This helps to demonstrate the students' expressions, language, terms, and concepts, and therefore the meaning they attach to something. The sections chosen may not be typical of the interview as a whole but they are pertinent in that they point to key issues for the understanding of the nature of personal epistemology in this context. This new analytical framework, therefore, allows the relevant contextual issues to be identified and included, rather than become fragmented and lost, and a series of individual, coherent and contextually-based accounts are formed.

 This change highlights a point made by Kvale that treating the interview as a transcript that can be categorised and broken up (as I did originally) rather than as a living conversation may promote a,

> "...reifying analysis that reduces the text to a mere collection of words or single meanings conceived as verbal data...The interviews become closed,

they no longer open up to a horizon of possible meanings, to be explored
and developed."

(Kvale 1996, p.182)

Instead, I was able to enter into such a dialogue with a more aligned and
appropriate framework by returning to the research methodology. This allowed
me to enrich and deepen the meaning of what was said, extending and continuing
the original conversation towards an enhanced unfolding of its meaning – the co-
authorship of the process. Also, focusing on the interviews as continuing
conversations and dialogue allowed the process of interpretation to unfold,
whereas treating the transcripts as "a collection of statements" to be coded and
themed had, indeed, allowed the interviews to "freeze" into "finished entities"
(Kvale 1996, p.183). Kvale notes that this is an issue of power as the researcher
decides what questions to a text are allowable, greatly influencing the knowledge
that is constructed from the process. This is a point I had not fully appreciated and
one that will be noted in the final narrative.

The revised analysis process elicited meaningful insights into the students'
personal epistemology. These responses show contextual issues and also
individual features, and therefore the inherent complexity of the individual
situations. Each analysed account (i.e. from each student interviewed) is presented
in the next section as well as a collated summary of the case. The aim is provide
"retrievable data" as advised by Stanley (2004 cited in Lee 2009, p.66) in order to
make the process and production of any knowledge in the case study open and
accountable.

Chapter 4: Case Study

4d. Case Study Stage 3 - Interviews: ii) Findings

A) Individual accounts for each student interviewed within the case.

The individual accounts of each student interviewed are anonymised through the use of pseudonyms and presented in the following boxes. As detailed in the preceding section, each account is a co-constructed descriptive account which presents the interviewee's own words in red text; there is a short summary at the end of each. There is a collation of all the accounts for the case at the end of this section.

Gillian's account

Reflection on practice writing
Gillian has not had previous experience with this style. The last piece of academic work she did was a management training course in 1995 as a team manager, and the time before that was her CQSW training in 1983 to 1985. She feels she is a good writer and has had 25 years of experience as a social worker, a team manager, and a planning officer.

'Theory-practice' integration
She wrote a history of the case first and identified the sections she wanted to illustrate with theory and then related the two.

She has a few issues with the connection between theory and practice and does not always see it as the practitioner's responsibility. She thinks someone else, like a consultant, should provide the theoretical input at case discussions in practice. She does not think about theory in practice where she is mostly using her skills, ideas and plans to ensure someone's safety; although she keeps up with latest addictions research and theory. She finds it difficult to meet the requirement to know, understand, articulate theory in practice. Theory is difficult to integrate because it is woolly, fluffy and not very well worked out, so it has to be bent to fit practice. There is a difficulty in trying to find one's own path through it. Experience does not help when applying theory because theory feels a long way from practice, it does not mesh. She feels that most of what she knows, which she says is quite a lot, is almost organic and held in her bones and so her long experience did not help in applying the theory, it made it more difficult.

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Once started on the writing she realised that the general social work theory/methods weren't anything new and she could understand them. However, updating herself on the more recent material was a big task as she hadn't done field social work since 1995 and it didn't make very interesting reading. In fact, she found it rather turgid and by the end of one book she felt like chewing the pages.

Conceding/accepting or challenging/questioning the 'authority' of external sources (theory / research /'experts'):

She did not question or challenge theory in the assignment because that would be another essay. She stuck to theory that supported what she was saying, although she could have looked at theories of addiction she didn't agree with. This was not because she felt she was being told she couldn't or shouldn't criticise theory, but she sees academics and theoreticians as being bound together and so she didn't want to, in effect, criticise the people marking her work. She felt she needed to be careful and respectful in her writing. She also feels on the same wavelength as many theoreticians on drug use and dual diagnosis and so does not see them as the enemy. Those she does see as the enemy are the politicians, media, policy makers who don't use evidence, and so she challenges and criticises their views.

However, she does have a critical view of theory overall in that she sees its direction is pulled by different stakeholders with different agendas. In her view, theory and policy lags behind what practitioners are doing and thinking and the profession needs to find out where social workers are coming from rather than telling them.

She sees many theories as wrong and dodgy and sees the best type as the critical, real stuff that says it like it is. She says that people only do things because they can and for most of the time social work is not do-able, it is political aspiration only – it's not what they want but what they want the public to think they want and social workers get dumped with it.

Whether, how and why students 'justify' they know something?

Gillian uses a range of theory and research to justify her points in the Practice Analysis. She sees her points and assertions need justification and finds this sometimes annoying, but she sees the reason why and does not advocate theory-less practice. Even though she says that what social workers do is as much art as science she also says that assertions have to be based on scientific methodology.

She uses theory to illustrate general points and statistics to show problem areas. She notes the use of one particular quote which she felt was real and useful and helped her express something personal.

She does justify her own ideas in places too, for example her beliefs on the current drugs policy are used to justify the argument for a rational debate. Overall she thinks that social workers should be able to express some of their beliefs without evidence as they need room to express their more personal views that relate to instinct and not be marked down for them. She says she is not a blank canvas and

comes to the PQ process with her own beliefs.

Learning /producing knowledge
Her length of experience made it difficult to find good points to bring out, because the knowledge is in her bones and very organic. For her it's been too long, with too much experience to put down. She doesn't know how much she's learnt or improved. There wasn't anything about writing the Practice Analysis that would make her change what she'd done in the practice being described. She thought she did exactly what was right – however she does wish she'd been able to have done it quicker.

Summary
Gillian's experience and expertise promotes a certain confidence about her own knowledge and knowing, but this also makes it difficult for her to become a learner in this situation and in a relationship with theory. There is a complexity about her relationship with theory - she is politically very critical, but has many preconceived views about what is acceptable 'critique' in academic written work. There is also a tension in her view of practice as she believes in the profession as an art, but also the need for a methodology for it.

Gina's account

Reflection on practice writing
Gina completed her degree in 2007 after a career change in mid life and she learnt the academic style whilst doing the degree, i.e. referencing, boundaries, reasoned argument, being evidence based. The degree was an amazing experience for her because she knew had good writing skills but it freed her writing up and improved it even more.

The massive difference on the CPSP programme was the use of the first person with the reflective style as this was not allowed on her degree. Initially this worried her and it took a bit of work but she was able to work out a way to include 'I' and it wasn't too bad. The exemplar in the CPSP Handbook helped as she could see what was wanted and it gave the permission to do it. She felt that without the degree it would have been a much bigger challenge - it helped her and gave her confidence. However, she is still unsure of what is required, it's still guess work.

'Theory-practice' integration
She says she sort of merged the two. Because of her degree training she was used to writing a bit and then seeing a need to evidence those thoughts, ideas and opinions, so she would integrate the two in that way. It was part of the reflection process, about thinking why?, where's my evidence?, where did I get that opinion from?

Conceding/accepting or challenging/questioning the 'authority' of external sources (theory / research /'experts'):
She is not sure if she has challenged theory in the Practice Analysis. She says that policies help her keep on track and stop her getting waylaid, showing her that this is what it is all about. The case she chose was also affirmatory and had little controversy, and so there was less need to challenge anything.

However, she had challenged certain theory on her degree and liked doing it. The difference on this course was the time restrictions with working full time when doing the CPSP. She says she was utterly in the zone on the degree but not here.

Another reason for not challenging theory was because she was writing reflectively rather than theoretically and thus it was a reflective piece, not an argument. For her it needed to be a debate in order to challenge theory, and then she would have argued for something, e.g. more time to do social work assessments. But a reflective piece is different – it's about exploring and understanding more, wanting to know more, asking why? However, she does also mention going through research and finding pros and cons, what worked, and what the controversies are.

Whether, how and why students show and 'justify' they know something?
Gina needs affirmation when she is reflecting and cannot leave any idea un-evidenced, because of her degree training. Her degree training around academic style means that all opinion and ideas have to be evidenced and therefore justified to an external authority. It's a natural way, about referencing and backing up opinion and she likes the idea of developing reasoned, evidence-based arguments. She is very wary of personal opinion and has to produce what she calls a balanced judgment.

If anything was learnt in practice she would find back-up and evidence through supervision. She states that she cannot be unilateral in her work. She sees the need for theory as a back-up, for her it makes sense and is associated with the level of responsibility of the job. You cannot just go off in social work and say 'well I think this' – for her it's also about asking, well, why do you think that?

Producing knowledge
She definitely learnt from doing the course and got something concrete in terms of the way she did practice. She hopes that came through in the Practice Analysis.

Summary
Gina's academic training has given her a confidence which she was able to transfer into working out how to incorporate the 'I' in her writing and integrate theory and practice on the CPSP programme. Her lack of experience in practice means she needs theories to guide her, to justify her practice and use as an authority to back it up. This is also bound up with the responsibility and accountability of the work and her job. The theory practice connection is part of the reflective process - she answers why she does something with theory/research.

The theory practice connection is very much tied up with the justifying aspect, theory is acting as the evidence to justify opinion. She also sees the reflective style as one which is not about academic argument/debate and therefore not about criticising theory. However, she can see how to challenge research.

Jane's account

Reflection on practice writing
Jane understood the nature of this writing as it was similar to the writing on her degree, completed in 2008.   She felt competent about the linking of academic and reflective writing because of this. The exemplar in the CPSP Handbook was helpful just to have something there to see that's what they're looking for.

'Theory-practice' integration
For Jane this is about linking things up - saying something but not saying it, having to think why saying it and backing it up. For her it is about putting theory and practice together to inform thinking and explain why she is making a decision, doing something a certain way or show what perspective it's coming from. The problem for her is the eclecticism of theory, which means it is easy to get a mishmash of stuff and that can make you lose focus. She feels bombarded with all this stuff and it can mean being jack of all trades and master of none.

Conceding/accepting or challenging/questioning the 'authority' of external sources (theory / research /'experts'):
Jane is initially unsure whether she has challenged theory in the Practice Analysis. However, she notes that she does look critically at the issues and challenges what is being said in books and in policies. For example, she identifies a gap between the law and guidance, and the difference between multiagency working in theory and practice. Her views are that theory is there **to** be criticised, that it's not a 'be all and end all' and it's there to test stuff out and act as a framework in which to begin to think about things, but she finds criticising it a struggle. She felt the CPSP course gave her permission to be critical and she thinks most courses do; her degree had **actively** encouraged it.

In fact Jane extends the notion of criticality to say that the next step is to ask, what could I do differently then to make it better?

Whether, how and why students show and 'justify' they know something?
Jane justifies practice using theory but also using other people via supervision. She says she can't do the job on her own and it helps her reflect by looking at it from a different perspective, provides in-depth questioning and the space to be unsure about something in an uncertain business where she wants the best for service users.

She likes to back her ideas up when writing as it adds more weight and helps her

to think something through and unpick it. It was the way she was taught on the degree. She has original ideas and would have said certain things anyway but this is a kind of academic way of showing it. She would not have left her own ideas in there without back up because she sees social work as an evidence-based arena, and the need to have to back up what we're saying and to justify why we're making decisions and doing things.

She feels wary that social workers learn their business on actual people and to her that is **scary** because of the vulnerability on both sides. Learning first with theories and then reflecting on practice that works, makes it safer. It has helped her be clear on role, clear on purpose. This methodology is the theory and is in her head helping her focus and not go in blind to a situation. She notes that it may stem from a lack of experience but it helps build confidence. It's about not being out there on a limb just saying 'Oh I think I'll do this today'... it gives something really to sort of build from or to back up what you're saying.

Producing knowledge
Jane definitely learnt stuff and developed new understanding by undertaking the Practice Analysis; by being able to look at the issue from a different perspective and talking through her thinking about a situation. It gave her the time and the opportunity to think about it in a different way and she saw a connection she hadn't made whilst doing it. It gave her more confidence to speak up. She has taken this learning back into practice onto another case.

The reflection helped her realise what she is doing and therefore what she is capable of, which makes her feel more confident.

Summary
Jane's academic experience allowed her to feel confident with the style and the need to be critical of theory. As she has only recently qualified, she uses theory a lot as an authority to back her practice up, and she particularly notes the accountability aspects of the work and the evidence-based arena the profession is in. She likes a methodology to work to. However, she also takes a critical stance on practice issues and uses others to enhance her own criticality. The theory practice connection is part of the reflective process as she answers why she does something with theory/research. Writing reflectively helps affirm practice knowledge for her and also allowed her to learn something new.

Kim's account

Reflection on practice writing
Kim did similar writing at University (she qualified in December 2008) which was not all in the third person. As it was not long since she had done her degree she did not find that style of writing too difficult. For her the Practice Analysis felt more practice based than her previous experience of that style. Although it was a bit nerve-racking at first she didn't find it difficult to go back into the style of

academic reflective writing. She felt other people who haven't done it for a long time might have done though.

Kim says that she has a different perspective now because she's accrued different knowledge since qualifying and is a more rounded practitioner from her experience.

'Theory-practice' integration
Kim used theory about people's previous experiences of solving problems that can help with current difficulties. It's about what fits the situation.

Conceding/accepting or challenging/questioning the 'authority' of external sources (theory / research /'experts'):
Kim does challenge external authority as she critiques the teenage pregnancy research over its relevancy for her situation and she has to think critically about whether it can help.

Whether, how and why students show and 'verify' they know something?
Kim says that she thinks she's unconfident as a practitioner and so likes to rely heavily on theories and what other people have done because that makes her feel confident. Theories are used for guidance and information in practice when she feels insecure or a need to get it right and not make mistakes. However, this can be retrospective, as she says when you're writing reflectively you're writing about what you've done, and so she would then go back and find theory to support the action taken. She laughs when she's explaining this. She also notes how theories help you discuss why you've taken a course of action because they can be used without realising. She feels great if she reads something that confirms her thoughts or actions and it helps her make sense of situations sometimes.

Producing knowledge
She notes that she finds it difficult to write what she's learnt, which is to do with her inexperience and lack of confidence. She also thinks she's more academic than reflective.

Summary
Kim's educational experience was useful although she finds more detailed and critical reflection difficult because of her lack of experience and confidence in the job. Theory is used to inform and support practice and she relies heavily on others to help her feel confident, but she is able to show the limitations of research for particular situations.

Sue's account

Reflection on practice writing
Sue did understand what to do and what a reflective style was. It mirrored the reflective placement portfolio on her degree, and she qualified in 2007. To her it felt like doing that again. Sue felt the guidance in the CPSP Handbook was good

but didn't read it all as there was a lot of it. She was comfortable doing it and had missed her degree because it was so stimulating and it keeps your brain ticking over, although getting back to studying was hard, she felt she had to step back into those shoes.

She felt she could put everything into this, and as she was new to the job she was trying to do it how she'd been trained to do it.

'Theory-practice' integration
She finds relating theory hard because it's about finding the right book that describes it and explains it so you can link it to what you're doing. For her the theory bit is the hardest and it doesn't come naturally. She says she has to read a lot to find the right theory that linked to her thinking.

Conceding/accepting or challenging/questioning the 'authority' of external sources (theory / research /'experts')
Sue did not challenge theory in the Practice Analysis and says she takes theory as gospel. Although underneath she may think 'well I don't agree with that' she wouldn't challenge it. She thinks a lot of theories work for some but not for everyone and she finds it easier to challenge her own practice and see where she's going wrong.

The reason given for this is her confidence as she's not been in the job long. On her degree she says critiquing or challenging theory wasn't discussed and never came up and that's why she thinks theory or whatever is in a book is right.

Whether, how and why students show and 'justify' they know something?
Sue uses theory to back up her ideas but also to go further and look at different ways of working and approaches that people had used. However, she says she doesn't **have** to back things up with theory as she sees the value of what's worked before from your own experience and the knowledge of others in the team. She also uses other people in the office to help her see where she's going wrong. Their different perspectives help her see where she is being blinkered and helps open her mind up.

Producing knowledge
This opening of her mind went into the Practice Analysis. She also says that the writing process helped her understand things better, it helped clear up a process and change her direction and the course of action in practice, it helped her work out what she was going to do.

Summary
Sue's previous educational experience allowed her to understand the reflective style but it didn't give her any confidence or understanding to challenge theory in writing, although in her thinking she is critical of it. She uses theory as a back-up but also other people too which help build her understanding in a more critical way. Writing the Practice Analysis did produce new learning.

Elizabeth's account

Reflection on practice writing
Elizabeth qualified in 2007 with a degree and had written similar portfolio pieces at the end of her 2nd and 3rd years. She felt she was able to use 'I'; on which she felt there was a real emphasis. She knew it had to be academic but not a ten page reference list at the end. Overall she had never felt so prepared for a piece of work with the help given in the workshops and the CPSP Handbook. She says the exemplar would have been useful for those who had not done this sort of writing and who wouldn't know what to expect.

'Theory-practice' integration
Elizabeth wrote down what she knew as a practitioner and then looked for something to back it up rather than looking for the piece of research in the first place. She did not find it too difficult linking theory and practice together, it was the cutting down and making it more relevant she struggled with. She enjoys the crafting, and finds it quite natural because she says your practice is going to relate either in a good way or a bad way to the codes of practice; it is either congruent or it's not, so you can always tie the codes in and then the research and law. She finds that easy and the simplest bit because you've got to know why you're doing something.

Conceding/accepting or challenging/questioning the 'authority' of external sources (theory / research /'experts')
Elizabeth says she did challenge theory when she wrote about the limitations of a person-centred approach, life course development theory, and a Life Model, although she doesn't think that was a really big criticism. She says it was quite nice to have the opportunity to challenge the person-centred approach and to write about theories that don't fit. She enjoys that as much as writing about the ones that do.

Whether, how and why students show and 'justify' they know something?
Elizabeth did not see a need to keep validating what she was saying for this piece of work. She knew there needed to be research in there and would have put in anyway, but she also thinks that other forms of knowledge are just as valid, just as acceptable. She says that she did not feel under pressure to do it, but that she **should** back up what she was saying with research.

She likes reading and finds that it validates what she's doing, and adds weight. In her work she produces a lot of funding applications and she notes that the 'powers that be' attach more value to research-based knowledge than professional experience, which to her is frustrating. In her assignments she always finds new bits that can be applied and which fit and feel right, and gets excited, feeling she has to put them all in.

Producing knowledge
Elizabeth feels that a lot of knowledge went into the assignment and it brought a

lot of things together for her and actually informed what she is doing with the service user now. She feels she got a lot deeper understanding from writing it all down, she identified her own learning and the issues that struck a chord and got to her, the personal impact.

Summary
Elizabeth's educational experience helped her and provided her with relevant understanding for the Practice Analysis. Her use of theory is to back up practice and answer the question 'why' you are doing something and she likes the reassurance this brings. But this can also mean that practice may not be congruent and she does enjoy challenging theory by showing its limitations. She is more confident in her use of knowledge and does not see a need to constantly validate what she is saying. Writing the Practice Analysis did produce new understanding for her.

Ann's account

Reflection on practice writing
Ann did find considering theory in relation to practice easy because it was all fresh in her mind. Her degree finished in 2008 and at college she was encouraged to consider theory in relation to practice on her placements, although she did find critical analysis hard. She thought the CPSP handbook was brilliant and was the sort of support she didn't get at college.

'Theory-practice' integration
For Ann it is about having a rough idea of what needs to be included and weaving in what's relevant in practice. It is about using general theories to understand someone's situation , considering this theory and that theory to guide intervention, and then knowing she has to get a critique of that theory in somewhere woven in as well. She used a framework learnt in college which allowed her to analyse and link the knowledge, research and skills used in a piece of work.

Conceding/accepting or challenging/questioning the 'authority' of external sources (theory / research /'experts')
At college for her degree they taught critical social work and therefore a critical stance on everything was encouraged. She says she would not have passed the degree if she hadn't critiqued the theories. She had been told that because theories contain prejudicial assumptions you always look at other theory. She was also told that you always have a theory even if you are not conscious of it, so you make it explicit.

Ann says she did challenge theories, colleagues' styles and different social work approaches. As seen above she knows she has to get a critique of theory woven in, and uses the framework learnt in college again. One of the headings in this framework was 'in what way could the client be discriminated against?' which encouraged the critical analysis of all the other information. She finds that she is

critiquing one theory against the other.
Whether, how and why students show and 'justify' they know something?
She uses general theories for understanding and guiding practice. She also sees where she does something anyway but then finds a theory that labels it for her. She says that she is adapting theory with a sort of practice wisdom.

She has also occasionally critiqued theory with her own opinion but only if she is **really** sure. She does this when she found she couldn't use a particular model, but she also says she would have preferred to have backed it up with something like 'indeed Trevithick says'. However, even though she wasn't too sure about putting her own opinion, this critique stood alone in the end (nobody **has** said that ... apart from me, as far as I know).

Producing knowledge
Writing the Practice Analysis made Ann reflect and change her practice because it made her assumptions about herself clearer.

Summary
Ann's educational experience did provide her with the necessary understanding for a reflective style. She uses theory a lot to inform and guide her but also insists on critiquing everything, as her educational training taught her to do. She is also able to critique using her own knowledge as well as others. Writing the Practice Analysis allowed her to uncover some assumptions she'd been making.

Sasha's account

Reflection on practice writing
For Sasha the course work was very similar to her master's degree which focused a lot on what an individual brings to social work. The masters degree was very challenging, and the assignments very reflective, asking what lens the students were looking through.

The CPSP presented a shift in looking at your own practice in particular and applying theories to it, as opposed to looking at case studies, and so it was more reflective of your own practice. She thinks this experiential aspect involves more self-awareness and therefore is more critical, but perhaps less academic in that you are not talking about a theory for the sake of it. The challenge for Sasha was to make this a practice analysis as opposed to a case study or a student social worker essay that she did in the masters, and to show more about how her identity has changed.

'Theory-practice' integration
Sasha was able to fit theory to what she did, describing a lot of what she did but

also looking at the themes that emerged. She tried to marry the theories with practice but there are too many theories.

She finds it quite hard with social work because it's not rules, it's not like a computer system where you put something through at the start and you've got an input, and then you use this theory, and then this theory... and then you've got your outcome.

Instead, you kind of muddle yourself along, and it can be quite difficult to navigate your way through.

Conceding/accepting or challenging/questioning the 'authority' of external sources (theory / research /'experts')

Sasha felt she did challenge theory in the form of models and approaches and their limitations. She feels able to challenge something based on whether it works or not and the limitation of such approaches when dealing with the complexity of real life cases. She felt the course gave her enough information to do this but she checked with her tutor to see if she was on the right track.

Whether, how and why students show and 'justify' they know something?

Sasha uses theory to back up her own work. She thinks it's quite helpful when it can do that as it can make you feel that you're doing the right thing, However, there are situations where she wouldn't rely on one theory or way of working with people, and she realises that working from some theoretical basis is limited, and so uses a more eclectic approach. She would like to use theory more and make it more ingrained in her practice, but sees this as a work in progress. For her theory is not like a set of rules that you rigidly put onto your practice.

She tries to put the reasons why she did certain things, but she also thinks there's certain things that she does naturally, that maybe she doesn't focus on enough, e.g. the way that she communicates with people, and holds them in a kind of unconditional positive regard.

Producing knowledge

Sasha felt it was quite hard to give herself credit for what she's doing, but writing it all down helped her understand that she was able to do something, and that it was important and that she should continue to do that. For her, writing it is a good thing and a release because she thinks that when things are quite complex and difficult it is quite a good way of getting your head round it.

She enjoyed the writing and being able to stand back and see that she did do some things well and although she didn't do other things as well as she could have, she knows that now, and there were things she did to try and correct them.

Summary
Sasha's masters degree did provide her with some understanding for writing the Practice Analysis, although it was much more theory than practice based. She finds there are too many theories which can make it very complicated to try and marry them up with practice. She is able to challenge theory in respect of practice but also uses theory to back herself up and it helps the confidence issue - feeling

you are doing the right thing. However she does not use them as rules. She can recognise her own knowledge and articulate it when reflecting.

Alison's account

Reflection on practice writing
For Alison, who'd done her degree in 2001, it was a long time since writing anything like this; but she also says it wasn't ever easy for her as she didn't find University easy, and the writing wasn't something that came naturally, so she struggled. The writing was similar to the evidence sheets for placements she did on the degree. She felt the instruction was clear and the exemplars in the CPSP handbook useful but she did not want to follow them too closely as she was conscious of not wanting to be led by what's been already written there and plagiarising them.

'Theory-practice' integration
She wrote the story first and then went back and pulled out parts she wanted to focus on, then reflected on them.

Conceding/accepting or challenging/questioning the 'authority' of external sources (theory / research /'experts')
She thinks she was challenging theory by showing the limitations of a model and using theory to prove the challenges of practice. A lot of material she read she agreed with anyway though. She says she hasn't done much of it and it didn't happen much on the DipSW , but she felt she was being asked to do this during the workshops and remembers writing down 'critically examine, critically reflect' 'not descriptive'. It was this she struggled with and in the end did not give herself the time to do it that well.

For Alison it was not just about being descriptive but about taking it up another level and that's where she felt wary and frightened as she felt she didn't have that skill. She agreed with the tutor running the CPSP workshop that as practitioners the students do examine and reflect critically every day without realising it, but writing it is another skill.

Whether, how and why students show and 'justify' they know something?
Alison feels you have to validate your practice and find something in a book somewhere that says that's ok to do or that's the right thing to do and for her this is really hard.

She says that she is naturally informed by theory, although because every service user is different and what might work for one doesn't work for another, experience is also important – the tried and tested. She says she was at one point starting to scrape around trying to find something to back up her communication approach but didn't really need to as she knows she's got that from her previous training and experience.

However, she still felt she had to include a quote for this piece of work because she felt the course was a different level, and a much more theoretical course than her DiPSW /degree. This made her really anxious as it felt like going onto a masters or post graduate level. However, she doesn't know where this feeling came from.

Producing knowledge
From this process Alison realised she had got quite a lot of skills that she had forgot she had, or didn't recognise. The Practice Analysis therefore reaffirmed things already there, there were a few learning points but it mostly confirmed her experience and skills. It was good for her to know a decision she'd made was the most appropriate and the best outcome for the person. However, she also notes that the Practice Analysis was not her best piece of work because of the lack of time and so was not able to bring out her own understanding as well as she might have.

Summary
Alison's educational experience was quite a long time ago but had given her some relevant experience for writing the Practice Analysis with reflective style but not for challenging theory. She found writing difficult then and now. She can challenge theory by noting its limitations for practice but struggles with being critical in her writing as she doesn't have the right skills, although she knows she is critical in her practice. She saw the Practice Analysis as being quite academic and so felt anxious about it and also the need to justify her practice more using theory. However, she also knows the reasons behind why she does things are down to her practical experience. Writing the Practice Analysis mostly reaffirmed this practice knowledge.

B) Collated summary of all accounts for the case

The uniqueness of each individual and their situation is apparent. The epistemological issues are complex and contextual but inherently associated with the reflective process, which is seen positively as a learning process. These issues are also multi-layered, with educational and professional experience, expertise and confidence emerging as key factors. Professional and educational expectations, assumptions and requirements are also important. This confirms the complexity, contradictions and ambiguities seen in documentary analysis and the questionnaires.

Reflection on practice writing

The processes of writing reflectively and linking theory and practice together are not seen as problematic by the interviewees when there is previous experience of writing in a similar style, which the majority of them have. This has usually taken place on the social work qualifying undergraduate degree and its placement portfolios. Transferring knowledge and skills from one educational situation to another is not unusual. Lahiff and Larkin's (2002) research (with masters level students undertaking a critical thinking course) finds that those who had come through a more traditional academic route were further along their journeys in relation to the development of academic literacy skills than the others. This confidence and self-awareness gained from previous academic experience can be noted with a number of interviewees, e.g. Gina, and also Elizabeth and Kim who are aware that their levels of understanding differ from others on the programme who had less or much earlier educational experience. A key issue emerging from Lahiff's later study (2005) is that of confidence and the increased self-awareness it brings concerning a student's ability to recognise their abilities in respect of what is required on a programme.

> "It appears that once respondents felt they knew something of the requirements of writing an academic essay they therefore felt able to 'judge' the extent to which they possessed those skills."
>
> (Lahiff 2005, p.286)

In contrast, those used to a more academic style in their previous education, e.g. Sasha, or no recent academic experience at all, e.g. Gillian, found the adoption of a reflective style based on discussing one's own practice more problematic.

The assignment guidance and the exemplars in the CPSP handbook are noted to be useful and help interviewees see what was required for the Practice Analysis. However, the guidance is seen as inadequate on its own if there is a lack of experience with this style of writing. The exemplars can also be inhibiting too, e.g. for Alison, who does not want to be led by them too closely.

'Theory-practice' integration

The most frequent noted process for theory practice integration is an inductive one (reflection on practice first). Interviewees use various ways of describing the process of linking theory and practice together, e.g. merge, link, relate, weave, tie in, marry, although it is interesting to note that the term most associated with a technocratic approach, 'apply' and which was preferred by the questionnaire pilot students, is not used. The notion of fitting theory to practice emerges strongly too, e.g. Gillian says it has to be bent to fit practice. This is also seen in Gordon et al.'s (2009) project, which investigates how social work practitioners make use of research, inquiry and other forms of knowledge evidence to inform their practice. It shows a similar kind of balancing act happening between theory and practice, assessing the relevance and validity of different kinds of evidence, as well as a kind of continuous triangulation to achieve a 'best fit' between practice and knowledge.

A strong concern regarding the wide range and very eclectic nature of social work theory can also be seen in some interviews, e.g. Jane's and Sasha's, with an associated need to navigate or find one's own way through it all, as there are no rules or simple equations to follow on which theory to use, or which may be the best for a situation. The integration of theory and practice is also strongly associated with aspects of authority and justification. These are discussed further below.

Conceding/accepting or challenging/questioning the 'authority' of external sources (theory/research/'experts')

The dominant theme associated with whether theory is questioned or not is the interviewees' previous educational experience. This could provide them with the know-how to do it, the idea that it could or should be done, as well as providing the confidence to do it. However, undertaking a qualifying degree is no guarantee that a student has learnt to question theory or to see this process as necessary. Sue, for example, does not have experience of challenging theory on her degree course; for her it is therefore much easier to challenge her practice. Those who have been taught 'critical social work', e.g. Ann, appear to be the most confident with doing it, as this promotes an overall critical perspective. Those interviewees who do question theory or research achieve it for the most part by actually judging it on its relevance and its ability to fit or work within a certain situation and showing its limitations, and by using other theories or pieces of research to make comparisons. However, doing this also provokes feelings of anxiety about un-evidenced opinion for some interviewees and the need for back up (discussed further below).

Interviewees who have not questioned or challenged theory in their Practice Analysis do not feel they are not allowed to do it, but they present a number of diverse reasons for not doing it. These include not having the time to do it, not wanting to be argumentative, not being in the zone, being less confident as a newly qualified practitioner and looking to more formal knowledge for guidance and direction. Two interviewees see it as part of an academic argument style which they feel is inappropriate for the Practice Analysis. The issue of different written styles becomes apparent – the reflective/practical and the academic. Both Gillian and Gina note the difference between a traditional academic style of writing (based on argument) and a reflection on practice style of writing (based on understanding). Seeing these styles as completely different affects the understanding of whether to, and how to engage critically with more formal knowledge, and link theory with practice. Lea and Jones' (2010) post-graduate

teaching students also see a clear distinction between writing as an 'academic piece' and writing about their own practice.

However, interviewees who do not question theory point to other challenges to authority present in their written work; for example, criticising the media or politicians' views, taking a critical view of the politics of social work or the National Occupational Standards, identifying and challenging certain gaps between theory and practice. (This could also explain the questionnaire finding which showed a majority had experience of criticising theory using their own practice.) Interviewees were also able to verbally express or demonstrate underlying levels of critical thinking in the interviews, even if they did not say they had expressed this on paper. These aspects point to where there may be a lack of authenticity in the way the interviewees present themselves within their written work. Some interviewees may not agree with theory but will not, or cannot challenge it on paper; others express critical views which they do not articulate in writing. Some find it easier and less of a struggle to challenge their own practice.

Whether, how and why students 'justify' they know something?
A prominent theme is the need to use theory primarily as an external authority to back-up and verify practice in writing and in the field. The need to back-up practice with theory emerges strongly as something a student has to do in academic writing, i.e. un-evidenced assertions and opinions are perceived as unacceptable. The perceived need to do it causes some anxiety in interviewees. For the more experienced practitioners being interviewed (e.g. Gillian, Sue and Elizabeth) who see an equal if not deeper authority within their own practice experience and understanding it presents a sense of frustration. Finding theory or other more formal knowledge to validate their practice becomes a duty rather than part of an authentic process, and shows an element of strategic game-playing to satisfy perceived academic requirements.

In a similar vein, Stierer's (2010a, 2010b) research suggests it should not be assumed that reflective styles of writing faithfully represent a process of reflection on the relationship between theory and professional practice. Lea and Jones' (2010) findings align closely here as they show that needing references to support claims and statements about practice strongly influences the processes of meaning making. These authors' students strategically meet academic conventions and expectations rather than those of their professional practice because their concern is to make their writing seem academic rather than reflecting accurately what they do. They feel that the basis for validity of their own view of practice in the assignments rests on the support of theory, yet they do not necessarily own this point of view. Although written work provides opportunities for these students to reflect on and enhance their practice, the ways in which they can write as confident practitioners can be "compromised by the necessity to view everything through the lens of theory" (Lea and Jones 2010, p.10). This is clearly also seen in some of the comments reported above.

As Fook et al. (1997) show (using the work of others on the notion of expertise) simple linear application of theory is, in fact, the mark of a novice worker, unaware of the complexities of practice; whereas experts' more complex definition of tasks precludes the use of formal theory in a routine, linear manner. This may be an additional reason for it being a frustrating and seemingly less than authentic exercise for some interviewees. Sue and Kim talk about how they retrospectively apply the theory to support practice already undertaken. The process becomes more about finding something that fits after the event than reflecting on a true event (Brownlee and Berthelsen 2008). A number of early empirical studies confirm that social workers do not necessarily use theory in their practice in any explicit, systematic or regular fashion (e.g. Carew 1979; Corby 1982; Barbour 1984; Secker 1993).

A further point here is that justification to an external authority is seen by interviewees to be a natural part of a reflection on action process, i.e. answering the question 'why' practice was done a certain way after it happened. This would

necessarily entail taking a retrospective view and finding the theory that fitted. Alison, as a more experienced practitioner, actually uncovers what is happening at one point. Initially seeing a need to back-up practice with theory she then 'scrapes around' for something to include, but then also realises she does not need to do this because she has attained that authority herself from her training and experience. Nevertheless, she still feels it is necessary to include a quote because of her perception of the programme being highly academic.

For those who are less confident or who have less practice experience a need for the authority of theory or research for confirmation, further understanding, or to 'add weight' to practice is seen in a more genuine way. For those interviewees who are newly qualified practitioners, in particular, there is a necessity to build confidence; and also a tendency to see a need to get things 'right' and not make mistakes as Kim says, which provokes a need for external verification. It again aligns with the notion of expertise where novices rely heavily on rules or others to tell them what to do, and to justify why and how they are doing something, because their experience does not provide enough understanding to reason and decide for themselves (Fook et al. 2000; Dreyfuss and Dreyfuss 1980; 2005). Moreover, there is also an additional level of complexity here, which picks up on an issue mentioned in the literature review. A systematic methodology, and/or some kind of external authority to justify or validate practice is seen as necessary not just to be better informed or to meet perceived academic or other requirements, but also because of the nature of social work itself, i.e. the position of the professional role, the responsibility and accountability of practitioners in the public sector. As Jane notes, practitioners are unable to be unilateral in their work, and they learn their business on real people. Also as Gina, Jane and Elizabeth note, it is not a bad thing to add weight to one's practice or to verify it. It helps novices gain more confidence, may ensure safer practice, and also affirms or reassures more experienced practitioners. On the other hand, a strict methodology may not always align with a view of practice as a more practical/moral activity, or as an 'art' as Gillian calls it, and this produces a particular tension here.

Other people also play a back-up role for the practice of some interviewees. These are individual colleagues, teams or, more commonly supervisors, who act as 'experts' and a justifying external authority. Similar themes become apparent here, e.g. lack of experience and/or confidence, and the uncertain nature of the job which demands a more collective rather than individual process. Trevithick (2008) notes that other people can be seen as more accessible external authorities than academic sources. Again, there is another level of complexity here. Other people may be used as an 'easier' source of external authority, but they also play a role in helping the interviewees to question and rely on themselves, and this is a key difference between them and academic or formal types of knowledge. Colleagues are seen to provide different perspectives (e.g. for Sue) and ideas that are crucial within reflective, critical and self-evaluation processes; and they also provide an important safe space for the interviewee to be open and honest in (e.g. for Jane). The deep learning associated with these processes and people is noted by Sue who has her mind opened by this, and for Jane who responds reflectively to in-depth questioning. With academic knowledge there is no mention at all of any learning or insight by the interviewees, making the use of people as authority a more dynamic and creative dialogic experience in this respect.

Learning /producing knowledge

It is apparent that interviewees' practice knowledge and understanding does get expressed within the Practice Analysis. Practice thinking or deliberation as well as action are able to be articulated in reflective writing, and this process can be very rewarding and insightful as it allows an exploration of practice. Black and Plowright's (2010) work shows that reflective writing can provide a type of evolving and dynamic permanence to the internal dialogue with self, and provide potential sources of further input to the reflective learning process, making the process more effective. The over-riding and dominant emphasis in the interviews is the usefulness of reflection and writing as ways of drawing issues out and the unique opportunity they give to think about things in a different way, to understand more because of it, and therefore to learn from it. This opportunity to take time out and reflect is valued by many, and the process is described as

therapeutic and a release. It is clearly associated with learning and developing new knowledge and confidence for practice, for example by seeing the bigger picture or reviewing what happened more thoroughly. It is particularly valued and articulated by Jane, Sue, Ann and Elizabeth.

For those with long practice experience there are, however, problems with articulating and evaluating practice knowledge because it is more tacit and implicit, e.g. in Gillian's bones, again picking up on issues noted in the literature review.

Finally, although not reported in the individual accounts above, the difficulty of expressing the process of writing is very apparent in the interviews. The interviewees would repeatedly say they did not know how they did it or the writing was not something they had thought about. They all needed to refer to their work to see what they had written or to work out how they had done something. Overall, it appears a very implicit process and the finished written piece itself appears almost alien to them at times:

> *I should have re-read this!* Sasha
>
> *I read this through again this morning and it feels like I wrote it years ago, or somebody else wrote it! ... I don't remember writing this!* Elizabeth
>
> *I'll have to have a look ...It's funny how when you're writing it, it all makes sense but when you go back to it seems over-complicated – it made sense when I wrote it. [Laughs]* Ann
>
> *...you know you read* [it] *and you think 'god did I write that'?* Alison

Limitations

It must also be recognised that interviews can only provide constructed or reconstructed versions of the experience and are heavily dependent on people's capacities to verbalise, interact, conceptualise and remember (Mason 2002). The interviews have an authentic meaning, but only in respect of that time and place of production. As Rubin and Rubin (2005) show, the interpretive approach recognises that meaning emerges through interaction and is not standardised. I

believe the interviews offered an authentic gaze into these students' experiences, but I would also contend that this gaze was dependent on this particular circumstance. The restriction on space here has also necessarily meant that much material produced from the interviews has been left unreported; however the use of the analysis framework ensures that the most relevant material has been included. In addition, longer quotes are included within the following case discussion.

Conclusions

Answering RQ4*: What is the nature of BU PQ social work students' ways of knowing and dealing with knowledge in the context of the programme and its learning, teaching and assessment methods?*

The interviewees adopt an overall reflective style in their writing; but their individual personal epistemology appears to be influenced by a number of factors associated with their professional experience and level of expertise, their prior educational experience, and their expectations and/or perceptions of the programme. How they write seems particularly associated with what they perceive to be required and whether they think they know how to do it. Some of the major themes seen earlier in the case study are reiterated here, particularly the tensions between academic and reflective requirements, and the effects of privileging external, formal and academic knowledge over reflective and experiential (or internal and informal) knowledge.

Interviewees' ways of knowing and dealing with knowledge are mixed; their epistemological understandings and assumptions can align with a critically reflective approach to learning and for practice, but also misalign in their assessed written work as they adopt more technocratic and mechanistic approaches to theory. This leads to their written work not representing an accurate picture of their practice capabilities. As Lea and Jones' (2010, p.10) project similarly reveals, certain tensions associated with identity and agency come into play when students have to reconcile their professional lives with a need to produce texts

perceived as acceptable to the university; the relationship between theory and students' knowledge of practice is "neither transparent nor straightforward". The interviewees' personal epistemology is therefore complex, situational, relational and multi-layered.

One serious epistemological misalignment noted at this point is that interviewees can be solely relying on an uncritical use of external sources of knowledge to justify their own knowledge and learning, even though a post-technocratic educational model should allow a valid internal justification and construction of knowledge, and a valid questioning and evaluation of all sources of knowledge within a reflective process. Soden and Maclellan (2004) show a similar misalignment associated with the overall aims of higher education, stating that if students are rarely appraising the ideas that influence their practice then it is difficult to see what is gained by being on a university programme.

Emerging issues for the case discussion:

Further research needed into:

- Whether and how a student's knowledge and authority gained from experience can be articulated in an academic context without the need for back-up by an external authority.

Chapter 4: Case Study

4e. Case Study Discussion

Introduction and framework

This case discussion will focus on the key epistemological themes (the uniqueness of each learning situation, knowledge use, validity, justification and authority) gathered from the findings of the staged data analysis of documents, questionnaires and interviews. The aim is to conceptualise new areas of interest with the wider literature. A case study derives its validity from the thoroughness of its analysis, which will also refer to a broader class of phenomenon than the particular case itself (Radnor 2001). Significant areas of tension and misalignment are explored as issues of complexity.

The questionnaire participants and interviewees are now all referred to as students, and the unit of analysis as the case.

Overall, the findings show this case to be following a post-technocratic educational approach, i.e. with an emphasis on reflective practice and experiential, reflective learning. Reflective approaches to practice and learning are frequently adhered to and acknowledged by the students and throughout the programme materials. The strongest alignment is the requirement to reflect on practice and undertake the main piece of assessed writing in the case, the Practice Analysis, which adopts a clear reflective style encouraging the use of 'I' and is a reflective account of experiential learning, integrating theory and practice. Students in both the questionnaire and the interview findings show a relative familiarity with reflective learning and its written style, especially those who have had recent experience of it on their qualifying degree programmes, and are able to transfer this understanding. As asserted in the literature (e.g. Thompson and Thompson 2008), reflecting on practice and writing about it can be a very productive way of exploring practice and developing further understanding. In addition it can also be a very positive and affirmative experience for students too.

Must be one of the most valuable things about doing this, and I found it the same at college – it made me reflect and change my practice in small ways and sometimes big ways... (Ann)

However, there are significant areas of complexity, tension and misalignment here. Some of these were seen in the literature review and the conceptual framework, and some are newly identified and explored with a different theoretical lens. They are explored here as the following key analytical themes.

- The learning situation.
- Knowledge and its use:
    o The theory practice relationship;
    o The validity of knowledge outputs from a reflective process;
    o The justification of less formal knowledge or knowing;
    o The relative authority of knowledge sources.

The learning situation

The wide range of difference in students' views and prior experiences means that the case cannot be viewed consistently, or assumptions made concerning that experience; especially in respect of what a student may already understand about this style or their existing skill base to undertake it. The case highlights not only the key differences in students' previous experiences with reflective academic writing (e.g. between Sue's experience of a degree where criticising theory was not discussed, to Ann's who would not have passed her degree if she had not critiqued theories), but also the effect this has on their views and understandings of what is now required and their ability to achieve it.

This theme echoes the findings from Lea and Jones' (2010) study, that students have implicit models of writing, which may be right or wrong, but which they still draw on to write and transfer previous experience of writing. Indeed, the ground rules governing 'successful' reflection can be taken for granted even more so than those for conventional forms, making reflective styles of writing more problematic than traditional essayist genres of writing (Stierer 2000a).The point is

that students' previous experiences are very different and impact in different ways on their current situation and their understanding of what to do. In some instances this is a positive thing when the previous understanding aligns with what is required now, but in others there is a misalignment which can lead to a more negative outcome. This is a key area of complexity inherent within the case.

This complexity and difference at the heart of any learning situation can be better understood in consideration with Prosser and Trigwell's (1999) constitutionalist model of student learning. It represents the factors within the student's situation (i.e. their prior experience and current understandings, perceptions of the context, approaches to learning) and those within the teaching and learning context (i.e. the course design; teaching methods; assessment; and teaching/learning materials). This model considers these factors relationally, allowing a 'space' for individual variations and for the complex interactions and implications between them.

> "...we have argued that, according to this model, variation in students' perceptions of their situation with variations in prior experiences will evoke or bring to the foreground aspects of awareness that lead to variations in approaches to learning, and to variations in the quality of the learning outcomes."
>
> (Prosser and Trigwell 1999, p.25)

Students bring to the learning situation a unique set of experiences and perceptions, which, combined with contextual variables, impact on cognitive development and the quality of learning (Boud et al. 1993). It has been shown that the same learner will approach different tasks in different ways, and different learners will approach the same task in different ways (Biggs 1987; 2003). Learning is,

> "…characterised by individual and unique processes of meaning-making that are created by, and situated within, specific social and cultural contexts."
>
> (Haggis 2002, p.218)

The overall point is that assumptions and generalisations about learning and/or students are not appropriate because the different aspects, relationships and connections in each individual learning situation will be unique. However, as a corollary to this point, if these aspects or factors are relational rather than static

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and fixed entities, changing one of them in the learning or teaching context will affect others, giving an educator the potential to make a difference. Learning environments can be manipulated in order to positively influence appropriate student responses; something that is advocated in the general educational literature (e.g. Prosser and Trigwell 1999; Biggs 2003) as well as the personal epistemology literature. This notion of manipulation aligns particularly well with a resources approach to personal epistemology (Hammer and Elby 2002, 2003), which supports the idea that an individual's appropriate epistemological resources can be activated and positively manipulated by a conducive learning environment. So, for example, even if students have implicit models of reflective writing that are unconsciously followed, there is a possibility that they can be made explicit and developed where necessary. This idea is developed further in the case study recommendations (chapter 4, section 4f).

Knowledge and its use

In this case, a wide range of formal and informal knowledge is acknowledged for use within the course materials and by students, and so an overall alignment can be seen with reflective, post-technocratic models. One student echoes Eraut's (1994) idea for a parity of esteem here.

> *I think ... from reading the material and also from the two sessions that we had, I felt that the other kinds of knowledge would be seen as being just as valid, if you like, I know that there needed to be research in there...but I think I felt that the other forms of knowledge ... would be just as acceptable.* (Elizabeth)

Nevertheless, there are areas of notable inconsistency and misalignment within the case too, seen mostly as a privileging of academic knowledge, which fundamentally misaligns with these and other reflective and post-technocratic ideals (Eraut 1994; Usher and Bryant 1987). In the CPSP handbook, formal, external knowledge is given much more emphasis than informal or internal

knowledge. This is particularly apparent in the lack of acknowledgement to a student's knowledge, theory, experience or to any construction of such knowledge within the CPSP intended learning outcomes. For the students, overall, there is less acknowledgement of, and less value placed on internal as opposed to external knowledge in this context.

Theory practice relationship

A reflective and inductive integration of theory and practice (i.e. with practice as the starting point) is advocated and noted across the case findings. However, this is not a consistent element in the CPSP programme as both course materials and students display varying degrees of adherence to this model.

There is contradiction and ambiguity apparent in the terminology in the programme handbook, which refers to technocratic terms (e.g. 'systematically apply') as well as post-technocratic ones (e.g. 'integrate') for a theory practice connection. The actual process of theory practice integration is not explicitly clarified within the case, but the use of certain terms can work against inductive reflective processes. A recent project (Cameron 2009) aimed at understanding an MBA programme also found technocratic terminology within the programme literature, i.e. stating the need for students to 'apply' theory in practice. The project team noted this as one factor which had both encouraged and rewarded a superficial approach rather than a true critical engagement with theory. The choice of language and placing of emphasis can be influential aspects in programme design and output, and the indiscriminate and ambiguous use of terminology from technocratic and post-technocratic models has been noted in previous sections and chapters. Students easily recognise the term 'apply' but use a wide range of other terms to describe what they do in written work associated with a deeper, integrative approach though.

In both the programme materials and in students' views, contradictory and ambiguous approaches are again apparent when theory is seen to inform and direct practice in a rather prescriptive and one-way direction. In many instances it

appears that theory alone answers the question 'why' something was done in practice, which does not allow the more active and interpretive use of this knowledge associated with a post-technocratic model. Privileging academic knowledge and using it in prescriptive and mechanistic ways in its relationship with practice fundamentally misaligns with reflective epistemological principles in two main ways. First, it disregards the notion of a reciprocal or two-way dialogue where practice also interprets and informs theory, producing new understanding and learning (Usher et al. 1997). Second, it disregards the agency of the professional, or the student, within this process to make reasoned judgments concerning the use of knowledge (Billett 2008).

Such privileging and hegemonic pre-dominance of academic knowledge has been noted in earlier chapters but another example can be noted here. Quoted below is advice from a senior lecturer working at a university centre for academic writing, aimed at health professional students writing reflective assignments synthesising theory and practice.

> "By integrating theory into their own arguments, student writers can establish an authoritative voice and convince readers that their chosen hypothesis or main insight is credible."
>
> (Deane 2009, p.45)

The remaining advice in the paper does not show how a student can present practice-based ideas validly without using theory, and it refers to personal experiences as anecdotes. It is easy to see how this privileging of theory can present the idea that this is the only way to validate one's practice. Such an emphasis works against a reciprocal dialogue and thus the student's own authority. Of course, the aim here is not to disparage this advice or the author in any way; indeed, by drawing on academic knowledge students will show an ability to engage with the literature and use meaningful conceptual ideas. Nevertheless, it can be questioned whether this is the only or most appropriate way for students to establish an authoritative voice or validate an insight in a post-technocratic model, especially if they are at a post-qualification level.

The issue at the heart of this, as noted in the literature review by Trevithick (2008), is the absence of a coherent but also epistemologically aligned and academically robust framework to link theoretical and practice knowledge. Tenkasi and Hay (2004, p.204) assert that there is little in the way of "established discourse genres or vocabulary" to help express the linkage and integration. This relationship between theory and practice is indeed "often-complicated" (Boshuizen et al. 2004a, p.5), but this should not stop attempts at a more explicit and aligned articulation of it. In effect, there appears to be the need for an approach to theory practice integration that explicitly details practice based, personal, as well as propositional knowledge, and acknowledges the professional reasoning and judgment required to integrate them.

Some of the key points made above can now be taken further. If the notion of a reciprocal dialogue between theory and practice has been undermined and the agency of the professional within this process ignored, students' professional expertise and capability essentially becomes negated or devalued. This affects a number of epistemological domains - the validity of knowledge outputs from a reflective process; justification of practice-based knowledge or knowing; and the relative authority of knowledge sources. These domains are fundamentally interlinked but the issue of validity is explored first, followed by the others in sequence.

Validity

The output from reflection on practice has been seen in the literature review to be another rather vague concept. In this case study, it is seen that the output is either left unacknowledged or given less validity than more formal and external knowledge in the documentary analysis and in the questionnaire results. However, although the majority of students in the questionnaires report not having experience in actively constructing 'practice theories', in the interviews students show that their thinking, beliefs, and deliberations are all being articulated in their writing, as well as particular learning points that are uncovered or developed as a result of the reflective process.

> *...there was a couple of things that came out of this that I wouldn't have possibly realised if I hadn't of done the practice analysis and had that time to think...* (Jane)

Even though the programme materials may not fully explicate or confirm practice experience or reflective learning as producing valid knowledge, and the students themselves not always recognise this, it would appear that students feel able to articulate at least some of it in writing. When this happens it is seen very positively, affirming or developing their practice confidence and expertise.

As Strasser and Gruber (2004) confirm, the key component of contemporary concepts of experience is reflection, which is why they fit so well together and lead to cognitive change. Boshuizen (2004) also explores this reflective process of learning as an explicit strategy, showing that it does not happen spontaneously or automatically. It not only needs an action–reflection-action cycle in order to foster it but as a systematic way of reflecting it also needs instruction in order to maximise the learning to deeper and more critical levels. The point is that if reflection can act as a positive and affirmatory learning process, as has been seen in this case, its output should be protected by being explicitly acknowledged and given valid status; otherwise it cannot become an authentic representation of a student's knowledge and wider ability. The literature review has already shown the problems students can have in articulating and validating the new understanding resulting from a reflective process in an academic environment (Trotter and Leech 2003; Duncan 2007). There is, indeed, a tension between developing and presenting original ideas and working closely with existing sources in traditional academic writing, which is made more complex within professional reflective courses (Pittam et al. 2009).

Justification
Use of academic knowledge
Students in this case acquire the idea, mostly from previous academic experiences, that any form of un-evidenced assertion is totally unacceptable

within an academic style. The need to 'back-up' practice with theory or research in their written work thus emerges strongly as a necessity.

> *..you feel like you've gotta validate it and you feel like you've gotta find*
> *something in a book somewhere that says that's ok to do or that's the right*
> *thing to do ...* (Alison)

This real or perceived higher weighting attached to academic knowledge in HE will mean that these sources become relied on. In epistemological terms this has a major impact for justifying how something can be known. If academic knowledge is privileged it has to inform and explain practice and back it up, because practice knowledge, even when produced and critically analysed by a reflective process, will not be deemed to have enough authority to justify itself. Privileging academic knowledge in this way reduces professional knowledge and judgment to the status of opinion, in need of external authoritative evidence to legitimise it. This leads to the idea of "practitioner-proof mode of practice" as described by Dunne (1999, p.709); it has a major, dismissive impact on the status of practice knowledge and knowing, and thus on the students' status. As Stierer (citing Bourdieu et al. 1994) explains,

> "...institutions of higher education use language to sustain and legitimate
> an epistemological hegemony – that is an ideology which 'naturalises' the
> superiority of certain kinds of knowledge, renders students' own
> knowledge 'vernacular' and positions students of any type as relatively
> powerless."
>
> (Stierer 2000b, p.203)

Students, even those who are experienced practitioners with a wealth of expertise, are only sanctioned by HE when they can be "overtly realised in the written language forms conventionally associated with the position of the novice academics" (Stierer 2000b). There are therefore issues of identity and agency here; how far do practitioners position themselves as students in their writing with a consequential loss of authority (and perhaps 'being')? Ropo (2004) sees that knowledge for experts is well organised and able to be accessed rapidly, but it is not a static, schematic structure, rather a way of relating and participating in social

networks. The key point is that it involves more complex and situated processes of justification than those associated with a technocratic approach.

This can leave the justification process particularly problematic for more experienced practitioners. Experienced CPSP students therefore see little space for their professional knowledge, judgment and expertise to be acknowledged in its own right.

> *It's frustrating because you can say, as a professional I've been working with this person for years, they [the service user] needs this... but if you say 'so and so' in America agrees with me then , yeah, [it's] fine..* (Elizabeth)

> *... I was a person before I did this [the CPSP course] and I think there was kind of a bit of, you know [as if] I was this blank canvas ...and I think [there] could perhaps be a little bit more room for people to express, or encouragement, for people to express their views and not necessarily have to evidence them all.* (Gillian)

There is a significant link here to levels of professional experience and confidence. Having a good level of expertise makes a simplistic or mechanistic theory practice connection more problematic and seemingly 'false'. At a post-qualifying level practitioners may not necessarily need theory to tell them what to do any more; they are not reliant on it as they use a range of other resources, e.g. experience, reason and judgment to decide what to do.

> *...if you need to discuss why you've taken a particular course of action then you would use theory in supervision...[but] we don't really have the time on a daily basis to do that really.* (Kim)

> *... I don't think anyone sort of sits there and goes like, right, this is a new theory of how to work with people... you kind of get a feel for what's*

> *working... it's not like a set of rules that you rigidly put onto your practice.* (Sasha)

> *I would like the time to include more theory and legislation in my work and critically analyse outcomes. However, workload often prevents this as assessments need to be completed quickly in order to be able to take on more work.* (Questionnaire comment)

As Lea and Jones (2010) saw in their study, reflection may be part of practice but practitioners do not typically substantiate or prove their reflection with theory in action. The tension created by the perceived need to use academic knowledge to justify practice is a key point here; especially if students see their experience as valid, if not more valid, on occasions than any academic authority.

> *I feel the importance of your own experience and process within your team/setting can sometimes outweigh pre-considered theories and ideas.* (Questionnaire comment)

The necessity to back that experience and expertise up with external sources can then become a forced process for students, creating superficial connections. It also represents a limited and epistemologically unsophisticated version of the theory practice connection process. In personal epistemological terms, such use of theory is seen to be less advanced, i.e. merely accepting 'truths' from others and becoming receivers of knowledge as defined by Brownlee and Berthelsen (2008).

> *I tend to work intuitively using values and 'common sense' which are always backed up by theory (even though I may not have read about it yet!)* (Written comment on a questionnaire)

> *I would have said that anyway, I was saying that- that was just a kind of academic way of showing that that's the wording that you're using.* (Jane)

> *...I was starting to scrape around trying to find ...something to back up my*
> *communication approach really...but actually I didn't need to, I've got*
> *that, that's come from specific communication training that I've had to do*
> *and my experience ... but you do, you've gotta write it don't you, you feel*
> *you've gotta quote a reference...* (Alison)

In effect, such use of theory is limited and deficient, having the effect of positioning these students as novices with simple epistemological capabilities rather than experienced professionals able to work effectively in complex and uncertain situations.

However, as noted at the start, this is not the place for assumptions or generalisations regarding the student experience, and the need for justification from academic sources is not always viewed negatively. Indeed, as seen earlier, there is a sociological perspective to knowledge and so an individual has to rely on certain authorities (Wong et al. 2008). Such use and reliance on authority can be helpful, supportive and very affirmatory to practice, developing further confidence in, and understanding of, one's own abilities. Indeed, in this case, having less professional experience, levels of expertise or confidence is likely to provoke a particular need for external justification for students' decisions and actions. External justification is seen to inform newly qualified practitioners' practice but also to ensure they get it 'right'.

> *I think I'm more ... unconfident as a practitioner so I like to rely heavily*
> *on theories and what other people have done that ... and so that helps me*
> *feel confident in the work that I'm doing ...* (Kim)

In many ways this is understandable. The lack of confidence due to limited experience in making reasoned judgments, as well as feelings of anxiety, may push some students to seek justification via the external authority found in academic knowledge. A technocratic approach based on prescriptive rules regarding use of academic knowledge may seem appropriate. However, the type

of thinking that looks for right and wrong answers, or relies solely on the authority of a source, does not allow for a more contextual and constructed approach to practice. It aligns with an undeveloped epistemological view (Hofer and Pintrich 1997) and does not encompass the necessary development of professional reasoning and judgment. As Bromme et al. (2010) point out, relying on others can be a well-adapted behaviour only so long as there are capacities for second-hand evaluation of these knowledge claims. Even for novice practitioners it can be seen that a technocratic approach to knowledge use, and theory practice integration, is still deficient.

Using reasoning and judgment with a full range of knowledge therefore needs to be explicitly included as part of any reflective or theory practice integration process, so that a more holistic and authentic practice is understood and fully developed.

Use of other people

In this case study, newly qualified practitioners use not only theory but also other people as external sources for verification and justification purposes, which relates to the idea of social work being a social or collective process (Dyke 2006; Walker 2008). This leads to a consideration of the differences in using other people as external authority within this process rather than academic knowledge, and why it may be more productive. In this case, students can engage with others as experts to justify their practice, but this can also become part of a reflective learning process as they verbally interact with them, i.e. be questioned and also ask questions. When done well, using others as external justification can help make a reflective learning process a more critical and developmental conversation if the expert acts as a critical mentor rather than an authority. A learning conversation can start to establish the learner's own reasoning and judgment processes in respect of their knowledge and that of others (Laurillard 2002). Fook et al. (1997), using work by Benner and Dreyfus and Dreyfus, note that because the development of professional expertise means practitioners are directly engaged in a continuous process of knowledge creation, the use of reflective

discussion of practice experience and critical incidents is necessary. Harre Hindmarsh (1993) confirms that reflective dialogue helps to articulate practice-based knowledge, but also connects tacit knowing and explicit knowledge by encouraging the reflexive questioning of ways of being and understanding; this would underpin reasoned judgment and decision making. Use of written, static sources is less able to provide such dynamic interaction and dialogue.

Accountability

There is an additional complexity here too. The need to ensure validity of practice by justification to an external authority is seen by students in the case study not only as an academic requirement but also necessary because of the accountability and responsibility of the job. Social work is a special profession, its sense of accountability and responsibility is an exemplary trait to ensure not only the safety of those it serves, but the quality of that service too. Walker (2008, p.31) notes that "as a consequence the reasons (the why) for a particular course of action should be justified" as this provides a "level of accountability". This is where external authority is also sometimes seen to provide the acceptable level of justification. For example, Gray and Gibbons (2007) show a need for individual self-awareness in order to know what moral and ethical perspective one is coming from as a practitioner, and to link this to outside authority. There is also a social responsibility for developing credible and valuable knowledge from a practice perspective for any professional (Dyke 2006). Social work, perhaps, has a further complication because of the length of time social work has taken to become a profession and its need to shake off an anti-theoretical past.

There is also a reasonable view that social work professionals need to have a shared framework for making sense of what they are observing and experiencing, and for articulation of their practice (Walker 2008). For writers like Horner (2003), Walker (2008) and Oko (2011) this is essential so that practice is not based on individual's thoughts and views but relies on a common understanding which can be discussed and debated with colleagues. Without theory,

> "...practice will be too limited by personal experience and too dependent on individual assumptions that have not been subjected to a wider professional scrutiny."
>
> (Rowlings 2000 cited in Walker 2008, p.31)

As seen in the literature review, the profession is also strongly associated with an evidence-based culture (Trevillion 2008), and a requirement for objectivity and justification to external authority is reinforced professionally as well as academically.

Outcomes

It appears the case is echoing social work's position of not having fully accounted for, adopted or developed an approach to knowledge which fully aligns with its preferred reflective model. The reflective process may be encouraging the professional need to ask 'why' in order to justify their practice, but it becomes a limited exercise if this question is answered only in reference to academic knowledge and aligns more with a technocratic process of application. Practice then becomes totally reliant on the ideas and views of others in the reflective process. In effect, it reduces the reflective process for linking practice and theory to a simple epistemological level when it should be aligned to an advanced one. It not only excludes process and personal knowledge, it appears not to encourage any 'internal' judgment to become part of the process, or to be formed in respect of the external authority. In these instances written work becomes an unauthentic representation of a student's wider abilities. Stierer's (2000b, p.204) study similarly found that many, even successful, students felt "unsure about appropriate ways to express personal viewpoints and how to draw upon their professional work" in their writing.

This is a pivotal point in the discussion here. Such a strong and dominant emphasis on justification to academic knowledge and therefore external authority seems to have resulted in a position where internal justification of practice, a necessary component of professional behaviour and an advanced epistemology, has not been fully acknowledged or explicated. Key elements of professional

reasoning and judgment appear absent and this has a dismissive and reducing effect on students' confidence in articulating their practice, which, as seen above, may be made up of their reasoning and judgment based on experience more so than referral to theory.

A professional's reasoning process is thus ignored or 'negated' when it is not made an explicit part of the reflective, theory practice connection or the learning process, making it difficult for students to articulate their 'voice'. The long-standing and continuing debate concerning this relationship between theory and practice, and their polarisation, has allowed theory to be linked with thinking, and practice with just the doing (Hugman 2005). The negation of professional reasoning may be accepted within a technocratic model where mechanistic application of theory does not appear to need the agency of the practitioner, but even this is a contentious assumption. Rosen (1994) argues that any theory is so generalised it cannot, and is not meant to be, applied 'off the shelf' to specific, contextual, practice-based problems. Nevertheless, in a post-technocratic model the agency of the practitioner appears vital and needs to be acknowledged as such.

It is, therefore, necessary to explore more complete approaches which acknowledge the cognitive aspect of practice (professional reasoning and judgment) and therefore align with a post-technocratic stance and a more advanced epistemology. For example, Eraut (1994) uses Broudy's four modes of knowledge to show that in a practical context theoretical knowledge has to be adapted to suit the particular demands of each situation by interpretation and association, as these processes involve practical reasoning, understanding and judgment. Biesta (2007) provides a useful exploration of Dewey's ideas to show how any process of using knowledge is about interpretation and judgment.

Allowing a process of internal justification for practice via practice reasoning and judgment to stand alongside external justification allows the use of one's own as well as others' expertise and authority. This does not have to mean that internal and external sources of knowledge and knowing become equally valid without

any standards or criteria used to evaluate them. Rather it is about allowing a wider range and more aligned processes of justification to ensure parity of practice and theory, as well as a balance between objectivity and subjectivity, seen as necessary within a social work perspective (Healy 2005; O'Sullivan 2005). This is how the interpretive and constructive process of using knowledge in and for practice can be critically explored and justified so that it becomes trusted by both the student and HE as a site of legitimate knowledge, as advocated by Noble (2001).

Authority

It can be seen that the issues regarding inequality of knowledge, noted above, also appear relevant to the epistemological issue of authority and the critical evaluation of knowledge. Of course, even when using theory as a justifying authority in the theory practice connection there is an expectation to show the limitations of theories and also to use theory with values, reflection, analysis and a critical stance in academia (Walker 2008).

> "It is important for students to be aware of the contestable nature of the knowledge they meet, and the expectation is that they should be able to support a position in relation to this knowledge with adequate evidence and reasons."
>
> (Ridley 2004, p.95)

In this case, the requirement to critically review theory and other sources of knowledge is seen in the CPSP programme's intended learning outcomes, but whereas the process for being critical about practice is explained in the student handbook, the process for being critical about theory is not. The idea of critically engaging with all knowledge appears to be another process which suffers from a lack of clarity in its execution.

The questionnaires show that students have experience of critically analysing theory and practice. When questioned in detail about their work in the interviews a distinct difference between the two operations is apparent. Practice is seen as something that naturally is critically examined and questioned as part of the reflective process, and there is little anxiety here. Challenging theory on the other

hand can be seen differently; it can create an anxiety and it is not always undertaken (Nixon and Murr 2006; Ford et al. 2005; Gray and Webb 2009).

> *I find it easier to challenge my own practice– I can see where I'm going wrong...(*Sue)

One of the main issues here links back to the use of theory as a sole justifying source. If someone is using theory exclusively to verify, guide or inform practice (either through a conscious or unconscious, true or forced belief that this is the way practice can be justified) then it appears problematic to become critical of it at the same time. The hegemonic privileging of theory can make it 'gospel'.

> *But I mean, in myself, I probably think, well I don't agree with that but I wouldn't challenge it...* (Sue)

Another issue relates to how students fundamentally view a reflective as opposed to an academic written style. Critically challenging theory can be seen as necessary within an academic style of writing, i.e. associated with the idea of an academic argument which will critique theories with other theories in a logical framework; however, challenging theory in this way can be seen as irrelevant or unnecessary within a reflective style of writing.

> *...that would be another essay.* (Gillian)

> *I could have done an argument but it's not an argument ...it's a reflective piece ...* (Gina)

A further issue relates to having the necessary level of confidence and/or understanding to do this under such conditions. Overall, it appears that previous educational experience is the key factor in how students view theory and whether they are critical of it or not. An educational experience that has developed a student's methods of critical appraisal can build ability and confidence in

challenging or critiquing theory within a reflective style. This is about more than having 'permission' to do it; it is about knowing how to do it effectively and validly. Whatever the reason for not doing it, though, it leads to an unsophisticated epistemological stance again, where theory is seen as 'right' and left unchallenged. As Lea and Jones' (2010) study shows, this leads to little attempt being made by students to engage in any discussion or debates of other people's ideas, as they merely insert chunks or quotes in their written work that are not critically analysed.

Unless a student is taught, or understands, how to challenge the authority of others in a way that is seen to be appropriate for a reflective style, he or she may not have the necessary understanding, skill base or confidence to achieve it.

> "...students are not necessarily inept thinkers but they are rather insufficiently familiar not only with information about specialised topics but also with the specific conventions or techniques of expository discourse."
>
> (Glaser 1999, p.94)

In addition, though, this is not to be dealt with simplistically as a deficit issue (Cottrell 2001). An important level of complexity is apparent here. The case shows that students report having experience of both critically analysing practice and theory, and in the interviews they are seen as fully engaging in critical thought. It is also not an issue of students being unable to think critically or express a critical view. They demonstrate this ability in other areas of their practice and their written work, but they may not be able to transfer this skill to challenge theory effectively in writing. In these instances, again, written work becomes an unauthentic representation of a student's wider ability.

Conclusion

The empirical case study aimed to explore the epistemological issues associated with the PQ curriculum and the students at Bournemouth University. On one level the findings show an overall alignment with post-technocratic and reflective practice models, and a positive outcome associated with the reflective process.

However, on another level there are fundamental issues concerning the individual and relational nature of the learning experience which misalign with these models. There is a wide range of difference between students' previous experiences which impact in different ways on their current situation and their understanding of its epistemological requirements. There is also an inconsistency apparent in the CPSP programme's epistemology. The terminology in the programme materials is confused and the process of theory practice integration is not explicitly clarified. Overall, an inherent privileging of academic knowledge over practice creates particular epistemological tensions and misalignments for the validity of knowledge resulting from a reflective process. This produces an unrealistic reliance on external sources for justification purposes whilst ignoring internal processes and sources, and a lack of critical engagement with formal or authoritative sources of knowledge.

In essence, attempting to enact a reflective epistemology within an academic arena exhibiting certain technocratic features which privilege academic knowledge has, in effect, reduced the potential for enabling professional learning. In such contexts Hager (2004) argues that the resulting, more theoretically-based accounts of practice draw on the wrong concepts, i.e. those associated with a technical application of theory, when more appropriate (post-technocratic) concepts should produce a better understanding of practice. As a result, the tensions and misaligned epistemological expectations and assumptions can impact negatively on the students, i.e. resulting in frustrations, strategic game-playing, unauthentic work which does not accurately represent a student's knowledge and ability or promote their professional thinking and development.

These issues resonate with, and also inform the wider literature. Such fundamental epistemological misalignment within an ostensibly post-technocratic programme is not unusual. Stierer's study (2000b) similarly identifies tensions which appear to reveal a fundamental uncertainty with a programme's epistemology. This suggests that the genres of writing imported from traditional disciplines may not be appropriate for promoting the professional knowledge that is (implicitly)

warrantable within these courses; indicating a clash between professional and academic discursive cultures. Changes to effect a more appropriate discourse and aligned epistemology appear necessary at an institutional as well as an individual level and are discussed further in the following section.

Chapter 4: Case Study

4f. Case Study Recommendations

A number of recommendations emerge from the case study discussion. The first refers to the finding that the reflective process is seen to impact, for the most part, positively on professional learning and development, creating meaningful outcomes. There is a feel-good factor associated with reflecting on experience and learning from it, and this should be protected during any change or development.

The second links to the issue of complexity, as each student and his/her learning situation are inherently different. As Haggis' study (2004, p.349) notes, the challenge of complexity and diversity does not mean there is a need to know or to respond to each demand, but rather to "practice with the idea of 'difference' in mind". Also, PQ students can be seen, for the most part, to be working and thinking in epistemologically advanced ways, whether they write in this way or not, and this should not be ignored. The principle at stake is to keep the idea of difference but also the inherent abilities of the students in mind, allowing education and the support of learning to be strengths-based, and achieved without using deficit-based or generalised approaches (Cottrell 2001).

The third area of recommendation concerns the active role of the educator in manipulating the learning environment. This is not to suggest there is a requirement to set out to develop students' personal epistemology through the use of instructional interventions. The implications of doing this may appear on the surface to be fairly well established (Schommer 1994; King and Kitchener 1994; Kuhn 1999; Sinatra 2001; Baxter-Magolda 2002), but on a deeper level there are problems. Hammer and Elby (2002) point out that the form in which these epistemologies reside in students' minds still remains unclear. Consequently, very little research has examined how personal epistemology is actually related to learning, motivation and affect (Bendixen and Rule 2004).

By adopting the less well established approaches to personal epistemology, a view can be taken not in terms of outcomes or product but rather as a dynamic process of learning and knowledge-building within a particular context. Hammer and Elby's (2002, 2003) resources approach to personal epistemology affords such a different approach to fostering change. It does not require teaching to elicit, confront, and replace student's misbeliefs or misconceptions. Instead, as epistemological resources can be activated by the right context, students are able to draw on more productive epistemological resources when the context motivates, encourages and supports them to do so. Much may be achieved by manipulating the context of learning to help students find these resources and use them. Adopting this overall view of students' personal epistemology inherently aligns with the strengths-based principles required for practice development as detailed in the narrative chapters.

Hofer (2004c, p.161) confirms that students do not arrive as "blank slates" in regard to their personal epistemology. Their perceptions are malleable; findings congruent with Prosser and Trigwell's (1999) earlier research into the relational factors within a learning situation. If factors within learning situations and the nature of personal epistemology exhibit relational features, the role of the educator becomes pivotal in manipulating the best type of learning environment and re-aligning all pedagogic features to the approach being used. Kember's (2001, p.218) study concludes that it is not necessary to "confront students with the incompatibility of their current beliefs" in order to cause a developmental shift; but they do need to be exposed to teaching based on a model that does not reflect factual material based on an authority. Baxter Magolda's (2008; Baxter Magolda and King 2004) Learning Partnerships model similarly shows the importance of portraying and defining knowledge as complex and socially constructed.

In addition, of course, an educator's own personal epistemology may impact negatively on their instructional choices and therefore learner experiences. Many educators exhibit misaligned enacted and espoused epistemological beliefs. They

may feel the need to repeat the rhetoric of certain constructivist pedagogies, but their practice is didactic or teacher-centric due to their prior ingrained experience, or because they are working with standards-based education and a misaligned assessment culture (Chai and Khine 2008). As a result, educators can draw on epistemological resources that privilege academic knowledge or treat knowledge as something to be transmitted rather than constructed (Chai et al. 2006 cited in Hofer 2008, p.13). This rather unconscious and subtle technocratic hegemony has already been identified and discussed in earlier sections and chapters. This third area of recommendation therefore promotes the pivotal role of the educator in manipulating the best type of learning environment and explicitly re-aligning certain features to a post-technocratic approach for their own as well as the students' benefit.

There is, however, a final consideration to take into account for this recommendation. Although it is necessary to manipulate a learning environment in order to align students' epistemologies to the approaches being used there, it is important to also remember the uncertain and contradictory nature of this subject. There will continue to be a variety of technocratic and post-technocratic viewpoints being used or adopted within HE programmes and in the workplace. As seen in the literature review, the EBP debate and others are ongoing. It is therefore also essential to develop students' epistemological agility so they are able to adopt the necessary flexibility of epistemological judgments toward both different disciplines and in different contexts, as shown to be needed by Bromme et al. (2008). Taking a pedantic and exclusive stance may restrict the students' ability to adapt their view, as required, in the future.

The fourth recommendation concerns a more explicit consideration of personal epistemology within the learning experience. An area of concern noted in the case discussion is that levels of professional experience as well as prior educational experience can be seen to have a major influence on students' epistemological expectations and assumptions. Goldstein (1993, p.178) identifies the fact that we cannot assume that all students will share common ways of viewing and defining

reality, which raises doubts about the utility of any type of standard curriculum that "prescribes what we believe students ought to know". We cannot anticipate how or even if this knowledge will be processed. His solution is to use the classroom for,

> "...educing and making explicit students' cognitive orientations to reality as a prelude to the development of students' reflective and critical talents."
>
> (Goldstein 1993, p.178)

As Limon (2006) warns, students may be aware of teachers' spoken expectations about what is important in the classroom; they may adopt such beliefs only at a superficial level and respond with behaviours they believe to be appropriate.

This does not necessarily mean that any course should be "dominated by lengthy investigations into epistemology and the sociology of knowledge" (Hearn 1982, p.112). Laurillard (2002) suggests creating an environment for students to develop an appropriate epistemology but also to provide opportunities for discussion of the subject.

> "The status of knowledge, one's personal commitment to it, and the appropriate ways of approaching the study of it, are all topics that should be figural in any course. They equip students to take personal responsibility for their knowledge and their learning."
>
> (Laurillard 2002, pp.203-4)

Brownlee (2004) notes that sophisticated epistemological beliefs may also be facilitated directly through explicit reflections on them. Individual epistemological differences can impact on student learning and epistemological development, but again it is important to stress that it is not "feasible to tailor instruction to individual students' epistemological stances" (Palmer and Marra 2008, p.343). Billett (2008, 2009) similarly sees an active responsibility for both the learner and the educator in the development of appropriate personal epistemologies. In short, the recommendation here is that personal epistemology could be included as dialogue about preconceptions on a course (Lucas and Meyer 2004), so that students can become aware of and explore their personal beliefs developed prior to their entry into HE and adapt them if necessary (Stacey et al. 2005).

To move on to the next recommendation, it is apparent that a clear and explicit justifying account for social work practice is necessary to ensure that it is accountable and able to be subjected to wider professional scrutiny. One of the most important points to be made in the case discussion is that an inherent privileging of academic knowledge over practice, and the issues concerning clarity and consistency of processes and language, create particular epistemological tensions and misalignments for such validation. It creates a sole reliance on external sources for justification purposes whilst ignoring internal processes and sources, resulting in a lack of critical engagement with formal or authoritative sources of knowledge. Instead, as Dyke (2006, p.121) argues, reflective learning should treat theory and practice equally, to be seen as "mutually interacting" as they are "reflected upon and translated into frameworks for knowledge, understanding and future action"; "received wisdom" should be "acknowledged and valued" , but also critically engaged with and "not deferred to". Such an approach aligns with relational views of epistemology and pedagogy developed by Baxter Magolda and Terenzini (2004) and Brownlee and Berthelsen's (2008), where an equal relationship between the' knower' and the 'known' is built and modelled within the educational context.

In response, the fifth and final recommendation is for an explicit, consistent and post-technocratic aligned approach to theory practice integration and the wider reflective process, which would allow the necessary reflective epistemological requirements:

- Validity of all types and sources of knowledge;
- Internal and external means of justification for knowledge/knowing claims;
- A critical engagement with all types and sources of knowledge.

It can be seen that alignment to a post-technocratic model is achieved when approaches or processes are made relevant to PQ students by taking account of their expertise, reasoning and judgement, i.e. acknowledging their professional thinking and their agency. Such expertise presents a certain perspective on a situation and therefore incorporates a situated or contextual view of knowledge. It

becomes apparent that this professional perspective appears a necessary part of any reflective or theory practice integration process. It is evident in the descriptive accounts of practice students provided in the interviews as they interpret and use their own and others' knowledge proactively in respect of situational needs and restrictions, and in studies of practitioner expertise. For example, Gordon et al.'s (2009) social workers are very clear about the contextual nature of their knowledge and the need to regard each service user's circumstances as unique, with each producing a very individual knowledge map. Therefore critical best practice involves "not only the skills to identify relevant knowledge but also an understanding of how to judge its relevance to diverse practice situations" (Gordon et al. 2009, p.11). In this respect it almost naturally encompasses critically engaging with a wide range of knowledge by allowing a transfer of critical thinking from the situation to the knowledge needed to understand and deal with it.

Overall, recognition of the necessary inclusion of a practitioner's professional perspective within a reflective epistemology can be identified as pivotal new knowledge achieved from the research so far. It is an important point in understanding how knowledge can be used and engaged with authentically within a PQ programme. It leads to the idea for the fifth recommendation to include situated professional reasoning and judgment in any reflective, theory practice integration process so it is able to incorporate the epistemological requirements listed above.

Conclusion

Our PQ programmes need to be epistemologically aligned with Barnett's (2000) 'supercomplex world' in order to fully address the fundamental questions regarding what counts as valid knowledge and how can it be articulated; and to fully explicate the answers for our own needs as educators and assessors but more importantly for our students. An understanding of self as a purposeful professional practitioner may have brought a necessary additional reflective dimension to the learning experience of practitioners within professional education, but it also

demands an "expanded epistemology" as defined by Kondrat (1992, p.250) in order to promote effective learning and development for post qualifying students.

There is an overall requirement for a more explicitly defined and aligned course epistemology which fully encompasses the ideals of reflective practice and post-technocratic models. Questions about what is considered valid knowledge and how it becomes valid should be explicitly asked and then addressed appropriately, giving these epistemological understandings a more central place within a post-technocratic pedagogy, as advocated by O'Brien (2002). A parity of esteem for all knowledge in higher education (as advocated by Eraut 1994 and Dyke 2006) should be established; explicit, authentic processes for knowing developed; and fundamental tensions associated with validity, authority and justification addressed. This is all to be underpinned by a shared and facilitative approach to teaching and learning.

Recommendations
Positive and meaningful outcomes of a reflective approach to be protected during any change or development.
To practice with the idea of difference in mind but also the inherent abilities of the student, allowing education and the support of learning to be strengths-based, and achieved without using deficit-based or generalised approaches.
The role of the educator is to manipulate the learning environment and re-align certain features to the approach being used.
Personal epistemology to be included as dialogue about preconceptions on a course and develop students' epistemological agility and flexibility.
To include situated professional reasoning and judgment in an explicit and consistent, post technocratic aligned approach to theory practice integration and the

wider reflective process, to allow:

- validity of all types and sources of knowledge

- internal and external means of justification for knowledge/knowing claims

- a critical engagement with all types and sources of knowledge

Table 22. Case study recommendations

The practice development chapter develops these key recommendations into a series of personal practice development areas in order to evidence my own professional development and achieve the overall aims and purpose of the professional doctorate. The educational aim is to enable PQ students to be aware of and understand relevant, underlying issues concerning their own and the programmes' knowledge and knowing. The ultimate purpose is to develop teaching, learning and assessment processes and materials which will prepare students to engage critically with the range of academic and practice knowledge on their programmes, and enable them to articulate their understanding and knowledge in a valid way for this context. In preparation for that the following narrative chapter critically considers my approach and methodology for practice development.

Chapter 5: Narrative 2

The first narrative **i**ntroduced and critically reflected on my approach for the research design and methodology. This second narrative introduces and critically reflects on my approach and methodology for the practice development section of the professional doctorate, and, by further exploring a strengths-based, student-centred approach, also deals with the first two case study recommendations:

- Positive and meaningful outcomes of a reflective approach to be protected during any change or development.
- To practice with the idea of difference in mind but also the inherent abilities of the student, allowing education and the support of learning to be strengths-based, without using deficit-based or generalised approaches.

My educational aim is to enable PQ students to be aware of and understand relevant, underlying issues concerning their own and others' knowledge and knowing. The ultimate purpose is to develop learning activities and materials which will prepare them to engage critically with the range of knowledge on their programmes and encourage them to articulate their own understanding and knowing in a valid way for this context. More personal reflections on the concepts of knowledge and knowing are developed in the final narrative. As Allwright (2005) notes, there are epistemological implications in doing the research and then using it as a practitioner rather than having it handed down.

The case study approach has allowed a localised enquiry to explore and understand some key epistemological issues, and I intend to use the findings and discussion to develop my practice and ensure it aligns with the key principles stated in the initial narrative. As shown earlier, my wish for practice development is that it does not become a technical fix, concerned only with means and methods, but something more holistic and developmental concerned with aims, ends, and purposes as advocated by Badley (2003a). However, the need is to find

a workable outcome that is suitable for this context and this gives a very practical and focused perspective to the research now. The dilemma is that this could position the study in an overtly mechanistic, problem-solving paradigm, creating a misalignment with the original approach and principles. If the practice development is viewed as a series of practical problems (e.g. as writing skills issues) it can be approached in an instrumental and operational way.

In my day-to-day practice I can see the results of dealing with learning in such a way. As mentioned in the first narrative, any PQ student may be 'sent' to me by other lecturers and tutors if he or she is struggling or failing on a programme. I have found it extremely frustrating to be seen as a remedial solution, as someone who can 'fix' these students' 'problems', and indeed to see the students being viewed within a deficit model (Cottrell 2001). In brief, although I know I can help some students become aware of the areas they can improve on and share certain methods and techniques with them, in many cases I have been unable to make any significant difference. Many students' underlying issues are too complex to deal with or manage effectively in the system we have created, or else the issues are more to do with the system itself. I have spoken of my concerns in the past on an individual basis and in team meetings but have felt relatively powerless and lacking in authority to change this situation. If I am honest this feeling is as much to do with my compliant personality as my status or the power structures in the department. If making my point starts a conflict with senior colleagues I tend to back down.

As a result, though, I have come to appreciate the complexity of learning, and any development of my own educational practice will not contain imposed interventions but rather try and enable students' independent learning and understanding. In summary, I do not wish to 'reduce' the issues to simplistic problems, or compartmentalise them and ignore the relational nature of learning (Kember et al. 2008; McLean 2001). This is not about developing 'study skills'; it is about addressing certain epistemological tensions and misalignments

concerning validity, justification and authority. It is also about developing my own area of expertise and confidence for practice.

The findings from the individual stages of the study have provided the material for 'naturalistic generalisation' as defined by Stake (1995). The findings have been interpreted and debated together in the case study discussion, producing emerging concepts and ideas or 'summarised assertions' (Stake 1995), and also expanding on the theories from the literature review, providing 'analytic generalisation' as defined by Yin (2003). The emergent ideas for understanding, contributing to the debate, and for usage in practice help to operationalise the case study for the practice development.

By following a reflective practice model myself, the aim is to interpret and integrate this new knowledge into my practice rather than technically apply it. This follows a key 'integrative' principle from Allwright's (2005) exploratory practice (EP) approach, as well as Schön's (1987) conception of reflective practice, where knowledge and practice interact in a cyclical or spiral relationship. In essence, theory practice integration allows my research and practice to interact using interpretation and judgment. It follows a broad pragmatic approach, so that where thinking suggests feasible action, this action is taken, and then evaluated. Although not following a formal research methodology, it is a process aiming to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice.

The practice development also aims to follow other EP principles by involving students participatively, allowing a more collective understanding and making this work a continuous enterprise. As Allwright (2005, p.358) confirms, understanding is not necessarily a 'good' in itself, it needs to be "attached to a suitable target", which for him is the nature or quality of "life in the classroom for teachers and learners". In effect, this encompasses more than knowledge and associates with the holistic notion of practice encompassing knowing, acting and being (Barnett and Coate 2005). The approach being adopted here has a fundamental, underpinning strengths-based and ethically motivated respect for students. In

essence, this is about enacting my basic educational philosophy, i.e. focusing on what can be improved in my practice to enable students' potential, rather than focusing on what is wrong with the students and how I might 'correct' them. It gives me an opportunity to try and enact the approach I believe in. To reiterate Haggis' (2006a) point, the focus is on the features which may be preventing students from learning, rather than what is deficient with the students.

The approach to practice development is also dialectic and ongoing; "understanding will never be final and will need to be constantly revisited" (Allwright 2005, p.360). Barnett (2000, p.68) argues that research itself can only provide "tentative responses, possible reading and suggested ideas for action and intervention" in an uncertain and supercomplex world. Badley (2003a) notes that pragmatic research cannot be used with certainty to specify educational practice; all it can do is provide possible lines of action. These lines of action have to be considered and reasoned through to produce a "useful, if temporary, equilibrium" (Badley 2003a, p.305). This may allow a particular resolution to be reached at one point in time, but the impact of any ensuing action and the continuously changing environment mean that an ongoing critically reflective stance and dialogue is required. Achieving a temporary equilibrium requires a meditative approach to the integration of knowing, acting and being in order to achieve a more contemplative direction or way of being for this scholarship, an "empathetic imagination" as a kind of practical wisdom (Galvin and Todres 2007, p.36).

In summary, having understood the 'puzzle' and its associated issues better, and established the key principles to underpin this work, I now move on to deciding what to do. I can ask what features of my practice may be disabling students in this regard, and how I can develop my practice and my confidence in order to establish an initial temporary equilibrium at this point in time. In essence, the study so far has been driven primarily by practical issues and now the focus is on generating practitioner action, which also represents high-level professional scholarship as befits a professional doctorate (Lester 2004). Lester's ideas (2004, p.761) can be used further here to show the potential of the doctorate to become a

"vehicle for self-managed development" with myself as "a leading professional taking forward an area of practice". A move is now made from a concern with knowledge to a concern with,

> "...capability (the need to create effective change) and wisdom (the ability to see beyond the immediate and integrate the needs of the present and future, the local and the distant)."

<div align="right">(Lester 2004, p.766)</div>

Chapter 6: Practice Development

The primary concern of the thesis has been to understand this educational issue and to improve my practice in order to prepare and develop learners to deal with the complex nature of professional learning and knowledge. In effect, a further question, leading on from the original research questions, can be asked at this stage: *How can this understanding be used to develop educational practice and facilitate student learning?*

The thesis has explored knowledge and knowing within professional and social work education in the literature review and concluded that professional education needs to develop further in order to fully realise a post-technocratic model and enhance students' reflective practice. It has also researched knowledge and knowing within a specific case study and concluded that further alignment with a reflective epistemology is necessary.

The next step is to actively integrate this new understanding into practice, to allow the research and practice to interact using my interpretation and judgment, following the principles established in the previous narrative chapter. In effect, my role becomes pivotal in re-aligning and developing certain pedagogic features in order to address the identified issues, and to develop a scholarship of teaching and learning as defined by Badley (2003b).

The case study recommendations are now used to develop practice development aims, to ensure that the direction and guidance for practice is provided from the core of the research so far, and that practice development is connected and aligned within the thesis as a whole. (The range of developments presented below is restricted in respect of the thesis' time frame and word limitations.)

Case study recommendations	Practice development aims
The role of the educator is to manipulate the best type of learning environment and re-align certain features to the approach being used.	Design appropriate teaching, learning and assessment activities.
Personal epistemology to be included as dialogue about preconceptions on a course and develop students' epistemological agility and flexibility.	Incorporate epistemological discussion within a taught unit.
To include situated professional reasoning and judgment in an explicit and consistent, post technocratic aligned approach to theory practice integration and the wider reflective process, to allow: • validity of all types and sources of knowledge • internal and external means of justification for knowledge/knowing claims • a critical engagement with all types and sources of knowledge	Develop a new model

Table 23. Recommendations and practice development aims

The practice development aims are undertaken in the following order:

Section 1. Incorporating epistemological discussions within a unit:
> BA (Hons)/Graduate Diploma Vulnerable Adults & Community Care
> Practice: Unit 4. Enabling Work-Based Learning

Section 2. Developing a new model

Section 3. Designing appropriate teaching, learning and assessment activities, divided into two separate programmes:
> 3a. BA (Hons)/ Graduate Diploma in Leadership and Management in
> Health and Social Care: Introduction to Leadership and Management Unit
> - Improving Personal & Organisational Performance - assessment
> 3b. BA (Hons)/Graduate Diploma Vulnerable Adults & Community Care
> Practice: Enabling Work Based Learning Unit - teaching and learning

These courses are all part of BU's PQ social work curriculum, working to the PQ framework as detailed in chapter one and presenting essentially the same student profile as the CPSP programme.

For each section and practice development aim the following framework, informed by evaluative methods advised for EP, exploratory practice, (ProDAIT 2006) and the scholarship of teaching and learning (Badley 2003b), has been used to structure the discussion and present findings.

- *Planning* – aims and objectives
- *Implementation* – reasoning, decisions and actions
- *Outcomes* – what happened
- *Evaluation* – reflection on implications and future planning

Finally, a brief overview of further work undertaken in the dissemination of these ideas is provided in **section four** of this chapter.

A final analysis and the conclusions emerging from the complete thesis, plus areas for future research, are presented in the following chapter.

1. Incorporating epistemological discussions within a taught unit

Planning

As discussed in chapter one, I am a unit leader for a generic unit: Enabling Work Based Learning on the PQ specialist awards (Unit specification provided in Appendix N*).* I planned to incorporate a 'new' epistemological discussion within the first workshop of this unit undertaken with the BA (Hons)/Graduate Diploma Vulnerable Adults & Community Care Practice students (n=6) in January/February 2011. It is the final unit undertaken on this programme. Following the advice detailed in the case study recommendations and discussion, prompting dialogue with students on epistemological issues aims to:

- Allow students to reflect on their existing experiences, assumptions and expectations;
- Help them align to the approach being adopted by the unit;
- Discuss the nature of these views and the need to remain flexible.

As also concluded in the previous chapter, these discussions do not have to be explicit investigations of personal epistemology or involve direct confrontation of beliefs; they can be focused on the course requirements and involve a more active awareness and consideration of preconceptions and assumptions.

Implementation

At the start of the first workshop I made the time for an additional discussion asking for students' experiences to date with the critically reflective writing style required by this unit. This workshop begins with an introduction to the unit and its assessment requirements, and it seemed appropriate to improve the interaction between myself and the students at this early point by opening up a discussion around the required style of written assessed work.

I revisited the recent study by Lea and Jones (2010, p.19), which details how they became "more sensitive" to the range of experiences participants brought to a course. They asked the students to share their academic and professional experiences of writing and to think about the implications of this experience for

their written work on the course. Stierer (2000a, 2000b) agrees that courses which bring together theoretical and practice-based professional knowledge may benefit from providing spaces for foregrounding students writing histories. Starting such a dialogue potentially achieves a key aim by acknowledging the complexity and difference in learning situations. As established by the case study, the educational experience, confidence and expertise of the student has a significant influence on how they view authority and justification, and their ability to express their views in writing.

The 'original OHP 9' at this point in the workshop (see below) prompts the clarification of the unit's expectations regarding a more equal theory practice relationship. I designed the 'additional OHP 10' (see below) to deliberately open up a dialogue at this point. It asks the students about their ideas and experiences of reflecting and writing so far on this or other programmes. I hoped this discussion would help me gain an impression of their personal epistemologies and understandings, rather than making assumptions about them. I also hoped it would enable students to actively consider their experiences, uncover the inherent assumptions and expectations they have brought with them, and become aware of any issues that may be problematic.

Original OHP 9:

Assessment – written assignment

2. A critically **reflective assignment** – 4,000 words (see section 4.2.2 and appendix 5 in Student Guide)

   - in which you **critically reflect** on and analyse small areas of practice relating to each of the 3 domains, identifying and discussing key issues about managing/ facilitating / assessing learning

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Additional OHP 10:

Discussion – what is a critically reflective style?

For this assignment there is an equal relationship between 'theory' (formal knowledge) and practice (your professional reasoning and judgments) and both are critically reflected on - theory/research can help to explain and /or inform practice but they should also be challenged and any limitations shown in respect of practice

Open discussion – what are your thoughts /experience/issues with theory/practice integration and critically reflective style when writing assignments

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Outcomes

Workshop discussions are reported in italics (with direct student quotes in quotation marks) followed by my reflections.

Discussion prompted by OHP 10:

a) The focus of the discussion centred on the difference between this and the previous units on the programme in the way knowledge is handled. For the students this unit seemed a slightly different style because there is more interlinking of theory and practice here, which is seen as rather separate on other units, and "not so 1st person". This unit appears as very practice-based to the students, and seems "personalised", with more "freedom". Another idea started to emerge that there is no right or wrong 'way' to write per se, but the general feeling was a need to get it "right" for this unit. The discussion moved on to the use of 'I' and how far that allows practice-based understanding to be expressed. This was a useful point which moved the discussion onto views of what knowledge and knowing are and issues of authority etc. which provoked a couple of students to discuss their beliefs on this. These students felt anxious with having more freedom to voice their experience without the need to always back it up with theory as they'd been taught. Further information from myself to reassure them that this was ok, and they would be shown how to do it differently, did reassure them.

Reflection: This response did not altogether surprise me as I was already aware from previous cohorts and from discussions with my colleagues that my unit may take a slightly more active and reflective approach. I was made much more aware of the impact of this within this discussion, though, and the anxiety it has the potential to cause if students are left unsure of what to produce or how to do it.

b) The students mentioned that the main problem when trying to achieve this style was, or would be, time, i.e. there was not enough time for thinking/reflecting properly and for writing assignments when in full time practice. Some students do not get additional study time for the unit, so they are doing it all in their own time, with the pressures of a demanding job, family life and other personal issues.

Reflection: This was interesting and a lesson in the dangers of only considering, or being aware of, my own perspective and concerns. Initially I was proud this unit had the potential to empower students to reflect on and articulate their practice, perhaps more effectively than others on the programme, and I was ready to deal with 'epistemological' issues to emerge. Instead, the first issue they raise is much more basic and even more limiting. At the time I felt almost ashamed in asking them, in effect, to now undertake something 'extra' for this unit when their limited time meant they were struggling anyway.

c) The students also find it hard to relate to theory in practice as they don't use one approach or method, rather a collective approach which is very hard to analyse effectively and they end up trying to find something which reflects what they do.

Reflection: This was another interesting point which picked up on comments made in the case study interviews. Again, it made me aware of our different agendas and starting points, and reiterated the need to work from their practice perspective later in the unit when theory is discussed. (This can be seen below in section 3a.)

Evaluation

Again, students' verbal feedback at the end of the workshops is reported in italics (with direct student quotes in quotations mark) followed by my reflections.

Workshop 1.

Question*: Was the initial discussion about what is a critically reflective style useful?*

Student responses: *Yes, overall. It was "useful" to talk about what is required, it is "different to other units on the course" which concentrate on "stating things and then evidencing them with theory". Students appear not to be made more anxious by discussing and explaining the course requirements and they can appreciate different way of thinking/doing it.*

Reflection: This response made me feel that it was worth undertaking the discussion and exploring the style as a group. As the issues started to surface I was worried the discussion may have made the students more anxious, when the aim was to enhance the nature or quality of life in the classroom (Allwright 2005). However, it appeared that at least being explicit about this style was seen as helpful. For myself, by hearing and understanding more from the students' perspective and their particular concerns, I was also able to tailor the learning later on and pick up or reiterate points made. The key message for me is that students are necessarily very strategic (Entwistle and Ramsden 1983) in their thinking and their learning approaches. In effect, for all my desires as an educator to promote students' epistemological alignment, resourcefulness and flexibility, they want and need to know what is required and how to do it, but they appear ready to adapt as necessary. It is a salutary lesson in many ways, but also one which should not diminish my aims, rather ensure I also align them with the student perspective. In this respect working to the ideals of EP, especially of working to understand classroom life and integrating such work for understanding into classroom practice as Allwright (2005) advocates, proves extremely useful and is something to continually work with. The necessary student perspective is there, feeding back to me in real time.

2. Developing a new model

Recognition of the need to include a practitioner's professional perspective (i.e. situated professional reasoning and judgment) within a reflective epistemology has been identified as pivotal new knowledge in chapter 4f. I planned to develop a new model which would allow this professional perspective to become part of any reflective, theory practice process and promote:

- Validity of all types and sources of knowledge;
- Internal and external means of justification for knowledge/knowing claims;
- A critical engagement with all types and sources of knowledge.

The first objective was to research the literature further to identify the key aspects of professional reasoning and judgment. The next was to decide how best to incorporate them in a new model which would support the approach as detailed above. The ultimate objective was to use the model in designing appropriate teaching, learning and assessment activities, and manipulate the best type of learning environment for post-technocratic requirements.

Implementation

As the case study discussion makes clear, it is necessary to explore ideas which acknowledge professional reasoning and judgment processes, especially in association with knowledge and knowing. In the literature review it is the theory practice relationship, when it is viewed as a dialectic, that provides the first clear direction (e.g. Curnock and Hardiker 1979; Hearn 1982, Pilalis 1986; Usher and Bryant 1987; Kondrat 1992). For Thompson (1995) a dialectic relationship between theory and practice demands a reciprocal, critical, questioning approach towards all knowledge as they are both judged by the practitioner or student in respect of a practice goal or outcome. This not only makes formal theory more applicable and accountable to practice (i.e. theory cannot be seen as an objective truth) but it also makes informal knowledge more open to scrutiny, debate and development, (i.e. practice cannot only have a subjective legitimacy). Extending the relationship between theory and practice towards a particular goal allows both

subjectivity and objectivity to be encompassed within a focused critical dialogue. This in turn helps to ensure critical rigour for multiple ways of knowing (Taylor and White 2001), for practice accountability and transparency (Healy 2005; O'Sullivan 2005), and for moral and ethical intentions (Gray and Gibbons 2007). As Kondrat (1992, p.246) notes early on in the debate, the practitioner or student needs to be able to "move from the subjective perspective to an objective view of that perspective, and back again". Or, as Noble (2001) explains, students become both the subject and object of their own experiences, aiming to achieve the right balance so there is not an unquestioning reliance on either external authority or on internal feelings.

The next stage is to look at how a dialectic relationship works and the principles it follows. If a dialectical structure is examined further it can seen to be characteristic of practical reasoning and argument, i.e. it is about questioning and answering (Lucas 1994). Practical reasoning is reason directed towards action, determining how to figure out what to do and how to do it; and it concludes with a belief about what one ought to do, an intention or an action (Streumer 2009). It helps identify the logic used in decision making when assessing problems, analysing situations, developing questions and negotiating processes (Kundin 2010).

Theory of practical reasoning
Further investigation into the nature of practical reasoning confirms a range of different starting points and processes which align with, and also more fully realise, reflective practice.

Fenstermacher (1994) argues that practical reasoning of this sort aligns with Aristotle's notion of phronĕsis, a deliberative reflection of the relationship between means and ends, but goes further to argue that although this is a different language it can provide the necessary justification or warrant for doing something. As he says, claims to practical knowledge cannot be subject to the same scrutiny as claims to formal knowledge (which would rely on theoretical reasoning and

evidence), but one can offer good reasons based on practical reasoning for doing or believing something. Beckett and Hager (2002) show that practical reasoning must also contain a different kind of premise to academic conventions, one that sets out a goal to be achieved; the rules of practical logic are to see that,

> "...we do not pass from a plan which is adequate to achieve our goals to one which is inadequate to achieve them."
>
> (Kenny 1989, cited in Beckett and Hager, 2002, p.60)

Mantzoukas confirms that a,

> "...reflective epistemology purports that knowledge derives primarily from activities that have practical (and not theoretical) objectives."
>
> (Mantzoukas 2007, p.250)

Kemmis (1985), also using Aristotle's broad forms of reason, argues for a connection between reflection and practical reasoning, as opposed to technical or theoretical reasoning, because it is the process which aligns best with reflection's active relationship between thought and action. Technical or instrumental reasoning only concerns itself with choosing between available means to achieve a known end, and theoretical reasoning is the pursuit of truth through contemplation. In contrast, practical reasoning,

> "...takes place in context where both means and end have to be considered, and where choices need to be made about the criteria by which to judge the action to be taken (and where there may be competing criteria by which to judge it)."
>
> (Kemmis 1985, p.141)

Practical deliberation, therefore, extends beyond technical problem solving to an appraisal of whole situations to consider what will be right and appropriate, and how to best act in the situation as a moral question. As he points out, questions of efficacy and efficiency are not ruled out, but the primary concern is to decide what course of action will prove afterwards to have been the wisest, most prudent and most contributing to the good, because questions of conscience require practical deliberation.

For Kondrat (1992, p.242) the difference between technical and practical reasoning (or as she also describes it, substantive rationality) is that the latter is

not linear or predictive but more holistic, and is a dialectic process in which, "the emerging recognition of the structure of the problem and the imposition of 'puzzle forms' interact in some combination" that may "result in tentative solutions". It is concerned with the need to understand, first, the immediate meaning and implication of context. This understanding is necessary for the kind of deliberation in which "decision rules are discovered within the evolving context itself", instead of being "formulated a priori" (ibid, p.242). To reiterate, practical reasoning is therefore not instrumental reasoning, which is concerned with procedural problems where requirements are already established and the problem defined.

Such practical reasoning and logic is, indeed, said to be a key part of professional independent judgment making (Kondrat 1992; Beckett and Hager 2002). Some (e.g. Clinton 1998) restrict practical reasoning to reflection-on-action only, arguing that reflection-in-action does not consist of a conscious or complete enough reasoning process. Others say it is intrinsically linked to Schön's reflection-in-action (Orton 1998), which Rolfe (1998) sees as testing and modifying practical hypotheses or personal theories in use. As already noted, this is an active and creative process. It involves moral or ethical judgment and with intuitive reasoning is seen as necessary to bring the knowledge production processes of practice wisdom under critical control (O'Sullivan 2005). In fact, Rolfe (1998, p.45), working directly with Schön's ideas, argues that such personal theorising *is* the process of professional judgment, being a "combination of personal, experiential and scientific knowledge synthesised for the purpose of understanding a particular and unique" practice problem. Rolfe's argument, interestingly, makes the connection to pragmatism and Peirce's work on abductive reasoning as "inference to the best explanation" (ibid, p.47).

The overall point is that a practical reasoning process lies at the heart of professional practice, providing a complete judgment-based process, a more explicit focus for reflection as well as an output of understanding and further knowledge. Usher and Bryant (1989, p.22) argue that practical reasoning, by

being "concerned with interpretation, understanding and justification – through communication and dialogue" and the reasons themselves needing to "make a good case rather than establish unassailable foundations", avoids the dangers of privileging either practice, theory or research, or treating any as foundational, by establishing an equal and critical relationship between them all.

Polkinghorne (2004), using the works of Aristotle, Dewey, Schön and Gadamer, argues for its use with a reflective judgment-based practice of care.

> "Effective practices of care require that practitioner actions are decided by their situated and timely judgments [and] ...take into account the timing and context of the action, as well as the uniqueness and particular characteristics of the situation and person for whom the action is undertaken".
>
> (Polkinghorne 2004, p.21)

Polkinghorne's responsive 'situated judgment' model encompasses practical 'reflective understanding' to inform practitioner decision making. The validity of this process, echoing the ideas of Kenny above, is established by "doing the correct action or sets of action to produce the desired outcome", and "correct actions are determined by the situation" as opposed to using any pre-determined sets of rules or procedures (ibid, p.171). The emphasis, again, is on the relationship being developed between means and ends. Galvin and Todres (2007, p.36) also link Polkinghorne's work to Aristotle to show this is phronêsis, i.e. it is about deliberating well in the complexity of a living situation; this reasoning "varies of situations, is receptive to particulars, and has the quality of improvisation", encompassing an "empathetic imagination as a kind of practical wisdom". As Munro (2011) acknowledges quoting Turner (2005 cited in Munro 2011, p.93), the situation itself "talks back" so that effective practice is more than having the "right expert knowledge", it is about judgment, i.e. being able to accommodate "social work knowledge and expertise to the demands of the context with great flexibility".

Making professional judgments and the practical reasoning this involves, therefore, appears central to the idea of professionalism and reflective practice; and is further developed by Hager (2000, 2001), and later Beckett and Hager

(2002) in this respect. Their notion of 'new vocationalism' confirms judgment to be at the core of professional practice and, for them, professional education is about learning to make judgments. Such education focuses on developing students' capacity to exercise judgment by reasoning and acting, valuing professional knowledge acquired from work performance as well as disciplinary knowledge, and reconciling academic and operational knowledge. All knowledge is continually judged according to its contribution to the making of judgments.

In essence, incorporating the notion of practical reasoning within reflective and theory practice integration processes, appears to allow validity of all types and sources of knowledge, internal and external means of justification for knowledge/knowing claims and a critical engagement with all types and sources of knowledge. It effectively challenges hegemonic academic approaches and the privileging of propositional and formal knowledge because the focus is placed on the practice situation and its needs.

Design

At the start, though, including these ideas in a new model that focused on theory practice integration and reflective processes felt very wrong in the sense that they became lists of procedures which I knew would be unworkable in practice; they were too linear, prescriptive and academic and the whole idea jarred with the principles I was trying to work to. The more I thought about it, the more I began to realise that practical reasoning, in itself, actually encompasses and allows the very notions and features I was looking for. It naturally exhibits a reflective epistemology and could become the overall approach needed to inform theory practice integration and the wider reflective process. The new model therefore became a 'Practical Reasoning Framework' in my mind and the next step was to decide what type of framework this would be.

One fundamental feature of practical reasoning is that there is no established process to it because, as seen above, the decision rules are discovered within an evolving context (Kondrat 1992). Practical reasoning, therefore, cannot be viewed

or approached as a prescriptive list of rules to be followed, and if it starts to establish too set a path, impose rules, or use any tools as an algorithm it aligns, instead, with a technocratic and mechanistic approach. This feature is also seen as characteristic of the way experts authentically practice; as Ropo (2004, p.163) explains, experts are "irrational". The rules of decision making are hidden and intuitive, or tacit, even for the expert themselves. A person is an expert because he or she seems to understand the requirements of the situation better and is able to fit his/her own decision, actions and interaction into the context.

On the other hand, it is important that there are principles available to enable practical reasoning to be as good as it can be, and to allow an objective evaluation of it. The decision was taken to create a set of key principles by amalgamating ideas from further research of the topic. This would create a framework which could be used as a professional tool to guide and/or evaluate practical reasoning, whether it was being presented as a reflective practice activity in itself, or being used to guide a range of teaching, learning or assessment activities within a post-technocratic model. This idea aligned more with my working principles and with the aims of this section, and the 'Practical Reasoning Framework' started to take shape.

Outcomes

A review of relevant literature was undertaken, which was then analysed for recurrent and established features of practical reasoning (Appendix O). It forms the basis of the frame of reference presented below as the Practical Reasoning Framework.

Practical Reasoning Framework

Practical reasoning activates and interprets a range of knowledge, skills and values for use in professional understanding and judgment. It takes an inclusive and critical stance to knowledge and uses both internal (e.g. own authority/expertise) and external (e.g. the authority/expertise of others) means of justification for knowing.

Practical reasoning works by encouraging a clear, moral and reasonable relationship between coherent situational 'premises' or goals and actions; thus promoting a critically reflective, reciprocal dialogue between means and ends.

Situational appreciation, i.e. sensitivity to, and discernment of the particular characteristics and features of a situation (including ethics, circumstances and needs).

Attention paid to the complexity and uncertainty of a situation, i.e. this is not ignored or overly reduced.

Transparent purpose and intentions, e.g. explicable aims/objectives.

A clear exchange between the particular characteristics and features of the situation (e.g. a person's behaviour) and the wider context (e.g. social/cultural norms) in order to gain a fully informed view; as well as between subjective (personal) and objective (neutral) perspectives.

A moral and reasonable relationship is established between goals/objectives

and resulting decisions/actions via a critically reflective, reciprocal dialogue between means (how we do something) and ends (the outcome).

Critical thinking is used within the process to:
    o weigh up risks, options, pros and cons, contingencies;
    o adjudicate between competing goals and demands;
    o generate and deliberate between alternatives, choices;
    o create review or monitoring points;
    o take into account relevant constraints and limitations.

Outcomes, decisions/actions are prudent, appropriate and useful to the situation's needs, etc.
New understanding and meaning (expertise) is developed.

Table 24. Practical Reasoning Framework

Evaluation

As mentioned above, the framework is not how I initially imagined it would be. I had envisaged an approach or process that focused on theory practice integration or the process of reflection. However, by making the principles of practical reasoning the focal point a new and more appropriate outcome has been produced which provides an explicit, aligned and consistent framework that can be used to inform theory practice integration and the wider reflective process. The framework achieves a number of other ideals by promoting a holistic stance, and also the active role of the practitioner/student as well as professional accountability and responsibility. Overall it appears to establish a professional authority and promote the use of imagination, flexibility, and insight.

Obviously, no framework is ideal or complete, and all that can be offered here is a suggested set of principles to inform professional learning and development. The framework can only truly be evaluated by its use and judging the impact on students.

The following section, therefore, discusses the use of the framework for different purposes within two PQ programmes.

3. Designing appropriate teaching, learning and assessment activities using the Practical Reasoning Framework

3a) Assessment

BA (Hons)/Graduate Diploma in Leadership and Management in Health and Social Care: Introduction to Leadership and Management: Unit - Improving Personal & Organisational Performance (IPOP).

(Unit specification provided in Appendix P)

Planning

The unit leader, Jane Holroyd MBE, asked me to work with her and produce an initial design for the assessment strategy and activities for this unit, being run as a pilot in February 2011. Poikela (2004, p.267) notes that the problem with traditional assessment based on perceiving and measuring knowledge possession and practical performance is that it provides "limited information about the capability of the learner" to develop professionally and learn at work. Jane's particular desire with this unit was for the assessment strategy to encourage and enable the students to express their professional reasoning and judgment when using the unit content to achieve specific professional and organisational goals in practice. Their professional judgment was to be reflectively explored and evaluated.

The need was to assess whether students were able to:

- integrate theory and practice (not replicate theory or use it prescriptively);
- challenge external authority in and for practice;
- construct their own knowledge and justify through internal as well as external means.

The aim was therefore to develop the assignment structure, guidance and assessment criteria with a post-technocratic focus. Palmer and Marra (2008, p.342) argue that assessment strategies, "as much if not more so than instructional

strategies", communicate a programme's epistemology to students. This request provided a good opportunity to 'road-test' the alignment, appropriateness and usability of the Practical Reasoning Framework.

The key aspects of practical reasoning gathered from my research were linked with the national qualification descriptors (QAAHE 2008), PQ requirements (GSCC 2006b) and BU local assessment criteria to meet the particular focus and needs of the programme. I presented my initial thoughts and guidance in the form of a comprehensive draft proposal (Appendix Q*).*

Implementation

The Practical Reasoning Framework was used to direct the design of the assignment, decide on the key areas and elements required to be assessed, and inform the wording and style. The students were being asked to put what they have learnt on the IPOP Unit (communication principles of Neuro-Linguistic Programming) into action in practice and then present particular aspects of this in a reflective assignment. This design and guidance seeks to establish the student's reasoning and judgment as the primary feature of the assignment and therefore of the assessment too. The following documents were designed and produced.

- An assignment outline and structure based on professional judgment and reasoning and detailed guidance for students. (Appendix R).
- Explicit assessment criteria for tutors, also to be shared with students. (Appendix S).

Outcomes

Relevant extracts from these two documents are presented below, where the red text shows the direct influence provided from the Practical Reasoning Framework. The Practical Reasoning Framework proved useful and productive as it directed the necessary structuring and stages of the assignment. It provided a specific focus

on particular aspects of what the students were being asked to achieve and allowed an explicit articulation of those requirements in the guidance.

For example, in section 2 of the assignment, the term 'critically discuss and analyse the rationale for your choice' is further expanded to show more specific details of what is expected here regarding the need to show *clear purpose and intentions, a situational /contextual appreciation and understanding of uncertainty, complexity and uniqueness, and a practical-moral understanding and interpretation*. Similarly, the phrase 'refer to relevant theory, research, policy or methodology as appropriate' is expanded to show that we are expecting *'mediation' between any general theory/method and the particulars of the situation - practically reason/deliberate between the 'means and end' and any conflicting demands.*

All these aspects were gleaned from the framework and therefore also align with the students' professional reasoning and judgment and to a post-technocratic model. The framework also proved useful in ensuring the necessary key elements and matched wording were included in the assessment criteria so that it aligned with the guidance.

Assignment Guidance – extracts provided in table below (full document in Appendix R**).**

The text in red shows the direct influence from the Practical Reasoning Framework.

A two part assignment (A and B) will be the format for assessing all the learning outcomes for this unit.

The assignment will focus on the critical evaluation of an identified and straightforward project that enables a planned change in your leadership/management practice behaviour related to an organisational or team objective, which puts into practice relevant methods/techniques learnt on the programme.

Part A : **Objectives, rationale and action plan**

This part of the assignment will focus on the following: what you are aiming to achieve with this piece of work (section 1), why you made this choice (section 2), and the development of an action plan to put this into practice (section 3).

Section 2) Critically discuss and analyse the rationale for your choice:

This section will interpret the objectives, explain and critically analyse the choice of desired outcomes linking to relevant issues, policy context, and evidence of best practice in the field.

- o Show clear purpose and intentions.
- o Demonstrate situational/contextual appreciation and understanding of uncertainty, complexity and uniqueness.
- o Show a practical-moral understanding and interpretation.

Part B Critical reflection, analysis and evaluation of the implementation of the above action plan

This part of the assignment will focus on critically analysing and evaluating: what you did (section 1), what happened (section 2) and your learning (section 3).

Three sections with suggested questions to answer:

Section 1) Critical analysis of what you did

- • How and why were certain approaches and methods chosen and/or actions undertaken in a particular way? Refer to relevant theory, research, policy or methodology as appropriate. Show a theoretical understanding of the use of

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the taught methods for the improvement of leadership and management practice.

- Show relevance and sensitivity to context and situation as well as sound practical reasoning and professional judgment. Identify and articulate independent judgment, as well as activation of relevant knowledge, values and skills.
- Show 'mediation' between any general theory/method and the particulars of the situation - practically reason/deliberate between the 'means and end' and any conflicting demands.

Section 2) Critical evaluation of what happened

- What worked or not (evaluate in respect of your original objectives and desired outcomes and other appropriate points of reference), and why? Refer to relevant theory, research, policy or methodology as appropriate.
  - Show professional attributes such as critical questioning, perception, discernment, insight, moral consideration, flexibility.
  - Show an understanding of the use of the taught methods for the improvement of leadership and management practice.

Section 3) Critical analysis of learning and impact

- What was the impact on you - what have you learnt, and what else do you need to do to develop further? What was the impact for the organisation?
  - The emphasis is on professional and personal development, i.e. 'improved' practice through experiential learning. Identify the new understanding/learning gained from this experience and show how it has, or will, change practice, linking to relevant organisational objective.

Table 25. Assignment guidance - extracts

Assessment criteria – extracts provided in table below (full document in Appendix S**).** The text in red again shows direct influence from the Practical Reasoning Framework.

	1. Understanding of subject area: **includes informal and formal knowledge**	3. Progression of ideas and structure; **practical reasoning/judgement**	4. Theory / practice connection	5. Evidence of critical reflection – **learning from experience; constructed knowledge output**
Defer – not enough evidence *0-39%*	No understanding, wrong/inappropriate knowledge. Significant omissions.	No reasoning evident. Unstructured. Incoherent. Inconsistent. Unclear. Confused. No awareness of or relationship between situational goals and resulting action	No evidence of linkage	Unstructured recall of experience. No self awareness.
Very good evidence 60-69%	Sound conceptual understanding and some synthesis of theory etc. Up to date, wider reading. Integration of knowledge into debate/discussion.	Shows a good flow and progression of ideas with clearly made and justified points. Clear 'signposting' of structure and outcomes in the text. Appreciation of situational complexity and uncertainty seen in developed deliberation and reasoning between goals and actions.	Theory and practice integrated in discussion. Critical interpretation of a range of knowledge in and for practice.	As above and the learning for practice is itself evaluated. Appreciation of other perspectives. Constructing new, critically evaluated understanding for the situation.

Table 26 Assessment criteria - extract

Evaluation

Evaluation of this work was sought from the unit leader and the students. With regard to the students the aim of the assignment guidance, etc. was to encourage and 'allow' them to express their professional reasoning/judgment in the assignment, and so a specific question was included in their evaluation questionnaires. Further feedback was sought from the 2nd cohort via a short discussion.

- Unit leader's (Jane Holroyd's) evaluation of my work (Appendix T) confirms my involvement and the successful implementation of the assessment strategy.

  Extract : *Lynne's input ensured the above particular requirements were met with the development of an assignment which would focus on practical reasoning. She ensured that the guidance was not only more robust, but also more helpful and pertinent for the students.*

- Student evaluation questionnaire responses (March 2011)

Cohort 1 (no=13): 12 replies	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel able to express my professional reasoning/judgment in the assignment	7	4	1	0

Table 27. Cohort 1 evaluation

Cohort 2 (no=15) 8 replies	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel able to express my professional reasoning/judgment in the assignment	2	6	0	0

Table 28. Cohort 2 evaluation

- Student verbal feedback (cohort 2)

  I presented the guidance and assessment criteria in person to cohort 2 and asked for an open discussion of their thoughts. Overall, it was generally well received and there was relief for many who appreciated a structure to work to. However, for some the language was still obscure and they wanted to see examples of what this all looked like in practice, e.g. exemplars of students' work.

Reflection: Overall, as a first attempt in putting the framework into action, the results are fairly pleasing but some key areas need addressing. As this was a pilot there were no existing examples of work; however, I realised I could have provided some small practical and illustrative examples of text, and this is something that can be included for future versions of this unit. The comments about language from cohort 2 (and the high number of non-respondent to the evaluation question) made me re-read the guidance with 'fresh' eyes and I could see that I had transferred many of the phrases from the framework directly to the guidance without thinking. Of course I would understand what they meant, but realistically it was not the language the students would necessarily recognise and I could see how obscure some of the phrases were, especially without an example to actually show what was meant. For example, what does *'a situational /contextual appreciation and understanding of uncertainty, complexity and uniqueness'* actually mean? In effect, I had in my own way provided another batch of rather meaningless assessment words and phrases, which the literature review had already shown to be problematic for students. In hindsight the guidance should have been evaluated by showing it to students or other colleagues before it was published and my aim is to ensure this is done for the revised version.

(Postscript: In her report for the November 2011 exam board, the programme's external examiner noted this unit's "very useful" and "clear assignment guidance for students", and that the guidance also provided a "good structure against which comments were made in the feedback".)

3 b) Teaching and learning
BA (Hons)/Graduate Diploma Vulnerable Adults & Community Care
Practice Unit 4: Enabling Work based Learning
(Unit details as given in section 1 above and in Appendix N)

Planning

As the recommendation suggests, the role of the educator is to manipulate the best type of learning environment and re-align certain features to the approach being used. The aim was to design appropriate teaching and learning activities within my unit's workshops, which incorporated an explicit practical reasoning process using ideas and criteria from the Practical Reasoning Framework.

The first objective (i) was to introduce practical reasoning and use it to encourage an equal relationship between theory and practice and a more critical use of formal knowledge in this process. The idea was to encourage an informed focus on the particular characteristics and features of a situation the students would be working with for the unit, i.e. enabling learners in their workplace (e.g. qualifying students on placement or colleagues). Better understanding of a situation improves the clarity and relevance of one's goals, aiding reasoning and judgment towards decisions and action. The theory and research presented in the workshop could then be challenged, and limitations shown, in respect of these specific practice situations.

The second objective (ii) was to work towards a more equal theory practice relationship in the written assignment by reviewing how practical reasoning worked and encouraging its transfer. The use of an exemplar assignment would also be able to show how this could be achieved.

In previous workshops theories and ideas being presented had always been discussed but the difference here would be that students would have been able to produce their own set of situational goals against which the theories and ideas could be evaluated, in effect modelling how it should be used back in practice as

well as the style required for the assignment. In the past I had also used an exemplar assignment but had not linked the discussion to practical reasoning.

Implementation i) Highlighting the purpose of practical reasoning and encouraging a more equal relationship between theory and practice, and more critical use of formal knowledge.

Practical reasoning was introduced near the start of the first workshop with an activity (see W1: OHP 3 below) which provided the opportunity for students to start thinking about their situation, i.e. the learners they were or would be working with and noting their particular characteristics. By undertaking this activity a set of characteristics could be produced by each student which formed part of their situational appreciation, creating a set of initial working principles which could be used throughout the unit. These working principles were referred to using additional OHPs throughout all the workshops to stimulate specific group discussion and other activities on using and transferring theory and ideas in practice (see example of W1: OHP 4 below). They enabled the students to work directly with explicit situational requirements and goals, allowing a more focused and realistic critical appraisal of any theory for use.

Workshop 1 Subject Area: Managing learning- The Learner

W1: OHP 3 - group discussion and exercise - starting the practical reasoning process with an initial situational appreciation of the learner each student is working with, and link to creating working principles for further decision making.

Learners...

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1. *Note* some personal and professional ***characteristics*** of the 'learner' you are/will be working with – e.g. experience/ age/ attributes/attitude to learning.

2. These characteristics should provide some overall *goals or **working principles*** for this learning situation (and direct more specific aims and objectives later on) - *discuss* what they might be and *note down.*

   This situational appreciation allows informed practical reasoning and good professional judgments to be made – forms a reciprocal relationship between principles/aims and decisions/ actions --- and outcomes

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Workshop 1 Subject Area: Managing learning- The Learner

W1: OHP 4 - group discussion and exercise - raise questions to critically

examine Knowles' principles for practice purposes and evaluate them in respect of

a practice situation.

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Other general principles from theory - 'adult learners' - based on Knowles (1990)

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Adult learners:
- have **pre**-**existing knowledge**, understanding, views and attitudes
- are more interested in immediate **problem-centred approaches** than subject-centred ones
- expect to be treated as the **responsible** and **mature people** that they are
- are **independent and self-directing**
- are more **motivated** to learn **things** that will be **useful** to them

Be critical - how well do you think these principles apply to adult learners in general and/or the learner you are enabling ?
Use them - how do they inform the situation and your working principles?

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Outcomes (i)

Workshop discussions reported in italics, followed by my reflections.

Discussion prompted by Workshop 1, OHP 3:

The students thought about their particular learner's characteristics and this led

them to thinking more deeply about this person's particular needs as well. The

examples discussed ranged from anxious placement students to over-confident

members of staff. The resulting goals and working principles included the ideas of

ensuring previous experience is used positively, and giving learners choices in

their work.

Reflection: I was pleased with how this activity was undertaken. The necessary links were made naturally from thinking about their learner to appreciating how this provided clear and more explicit underlying goals to work with.

Discussions prompted by Workshop 1, OHP 4:

The resulting principles from the previous discussion (e.g. ensuring previous experience is used positively; giving learners choices in their work) raised areas for specific evaluation of Knowles' principles of adult learning. The students saw very positive alignments (e.g. the use of previous experience to encourage older learners) but also some limitations (e.g. young learners who were not that independent or self-directing yet).

Reflection: this activity also worked well to provide a more focused and active debate around Knowles' principles than had happened in the past. Students talked easily about their existing or past practices and appeared to enjoy this process of working ideas through in a critical and practical sense. The 'authority' of Knowles' work was not a barrier to the students who easily identified and articulated its limitations as well as its strengths.

Implementation ii) Working towards a more equal theory practice relationship in the written assignment

This aim was undertaken with the use of a further discussion in the final (3rd) workshop, using two OHPs (W3: OHPs 2 and 3 below), which highlighted the use of practical reasoning to make explicit the professional judgment to be included in the assignment. Here the way more formal knowledge had been critically used throughout the workshops to help understanding of the situation was reiterated and encouraged to be used in the assignment. This was done alongside the analysis of an exemplar of a previous student's assignment to show how both inductive and deductive methods of theory practice integration could be achieved.

Workshop 3: Subject Area: Assignments

W3: OHPs 2 & 3 - discussion and analysis of exemplar - establish a more

equal theory-practice relationship in the assignments

Assignments – key aspects…

Focus/content - meeting the ILOs
- Check the learning outcomes - cover the three domains, be critically reflective /analytical on practice and on the literature. **Keep it focused and simple**

- **Your practice** = your **practical reasoning /professional judgment**– between principles/aims (based on the situation) and resulting decisions/actions; theory/research help understanding and interpretation but not use uncritically as conclusive 'proof' or 'authority'

- About **interpreting** ideas, not merely applying it or 'repeating' them

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Key aspects …

- **Reflect** first - define the **issue/s** and the '**point/s**' you want to make first - use a reflective/ experiential learning process: move beyond description towards questioning and evaluation of a small experience

- **Integrate theory and practice** in analytical/critical discussion:
  - If start with theory/research– discuss the ideas to show how they help explore/explain or to inform/influence your understanding/reasoning/judgment and show where they are limited in being able to do this, or compare/combine different author's ideas
  - If start with practice 'examples' and situations - discuss how they support, enlighten, enhance or show the limitations of theoretical ideas/research findings, etc.

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Outcomes (ii)

Workshop discussions reported in italics, followed by my reflections.

Discussions prompted by Workshop 3, OHPs 2 and 3:

We discussed the OHPs and related the ideas to the previous workshops where students had achieved this style of theory practice integration and a critical view of theory in respect of a situation through their practical reasoning.

To see how this ability to view theory and practice 'translated' into the assignment, groups of students noted where and how the exemplar assignment had achieved this. They noted some key phrases that link theory and practice in a more critical connection, e.g. 'Knowles mentions that ....however in practice...'. The discussion moved on to discuss the ways theory and practice can be linked in writing when the relationship is not equal and descriptive detail is merely presented.

Reflection: It appeared quite empowering for the students to see a natural progression from the ways they had been thinking and critically using the ideas and theories in the workshops to now being allowed to do this is a written format. Some students still felt anxious, however, because their previous experiences with written work had not been very positive, i.e. gaining poor marks; and they identified more with the ways theory and practice are usually just described and then linked in written work.

Evaluation (i and ii)

Students' verbal feedback at the end of the workshops reported in italics (with direct student quotes in quotations mark), followed by my reflections.

Workshop 1, OHP 3:

Question: Was it useful to start using your own specific example of a learner and situation in the workshops?

Student responses: Yes, for those who had a situation with a learner already agreed and set up already; not so much for those who didn't. More "useful than

using 'pretend' scenarios because we're working with real problem areas" e.g. a mature member of staff who doesn't think they need to learn any more.

Reflection: This confirms the overall aim of using practical reasoning here, but I also need to be aware that students will bring a variety of practice situations and problems with them and it is important to remain open and flexible with the activities. For instance, not all students had a placement or a situation with a learner already set up, so the instructions need to be more inclusive, maybe asking them to consider themselves as the learner instead, or having case studies to work with.

Workshop 1: OHP 4

Question: Did you feel comfortable taking a critical look at Knowles' adult learning principles and seeing it's limitations, i.e. challenging the 'theory' in this way.

Student responses: It made it "easier by having something concrete to focus on" and see where the theories were and weren't so useful.

Reflection: Again this confirms the usefulness of practical reasoning as a tool to allow students to articulate their ideas more effectively and provide a focus for a more critical examination.

Workshop 3: OHPs 2 & 3

Question: Was this exploration of the assignment useful to you?

Student responses: Yes, but it would "not have worked so well without the exemplar" to actually show how to achieve this and see where the exemplar gained the marks for doing it well.

Reflection: This is an interesting comment and one which echoes those made by leadership and management students in section 2 when asking for examples to see exactly what this style of writing looks like. For me, it highlights the inadequacy of language here, and reiterates the findings from the case study in respect of the issues concerning clarity and consistency of processes and language. It is very

easy for unclear and confusing messages to be presented and therefore the need to always 'show' rather than just 'tell' appears to be a major lesson to take forward.

Overall, I was also struck by how much reassurance and support students need to write as opposed to talk with authority from their own perspective. Written work appears to present further issues. A student's professional understanding can be expressed in informal workshop discussions confidently and he/she can easily adopt an advanced epistemological stance, but the translation into a written physical 'product' for assessment can undermine that confidence and the student is then less able to adopt that stance.

The different style employed on other units within this programme was also rather problematic in this regard (seen in section 1 in this chapter). I could hear technocratic expectations and assumptions for academic written work embedded in some of the student's comments, echoing views expressed by students who were interviewed in the case study. They need explicit permission and assurance that it is acceptable to use 'I', and to articulate ideas from their own perspective. This is clearly reasonable, especially in light of the findings from the interview which showed a number of students believing their professional knowledge had the status of opinion in an academic setting until it was supported by academic knowledge. Rolfe (1998) highlights this issue within nursing practice, stating that as we acquire personal and experiential knowledge we begin to get a dilemma – when to allow professional judgment to over-ride applying other people's knowledge. He advocates that when there is conflict between experiential and scientific knowledge, professional judgment should take precedence but he also acknowledges the fundamental academic dilemma here as, "personal and experiential knowledge" is not acknowledged by many academics and practitioners as "a valid formulation for practice" (ibid, p.63).

The majority of these students' submitted assignments did show evidence of practical reasoning to establish why something was done or decided on or not. Their professional perspectives were in evidence and this was very heartening to

read. However, these accounts of reasoning were rather naive and awkward, and it was evident that the writing of some students appears locked in a descriptive style. Although a certain level of understanding was established with this group during the workshops, I believe this process needs further work so that professional reasoning and judgment can be evidenced using a critically analytical written style. By trying to avoid a technical, quick fix and a reduction of the practice problem to an instrumental writing skills issue, I had overlooked the need to combine the new approaches and methods with some form of support for writing as well.

The outcome of my masters research has shown that writing assignments needs to be seen as embedded learning within the unit itself and continually practised, but the time to achieve this is not readily available. Ridley argues for,

> "...a space for communication between tutors and students, and amongst students themselves, as part of the process of doing an assignment."
>
> Ridley (2004, p.105)

It appears that the confidence and ability needed to write effectively and with authority from a professional perspective needs to be learnt and improved developmentally as a dialogic, reflective and iterative learning process or 'conversational framework' as described by Laurillard (2002). Seeing how this can be achieved is a key area for future practice development, highlighted as further recommendations in the following chapter.

4. Further dissemination of ideas

4 a) Conference presentation

Initial ideas presented at the 7th Learning Development in Higher Education Network Symposium: Celebrating Partnerships in Learning: Nottingham Trent University: April 2010. Presentation: Knowledge and Knowing: Partnerships for Professional Education.

Focus:

- Problems articulating a 'partnership' between theory and practice in written reflective assignments;
- Key 'features' - different ways of achieving and articulating valid self/practice /theory partnerships, based on this analysis of the literature and examples of students' written work.

4 b) Ideas included in a new publication

Williams, S and Rutter, L., 2010. *The Practice Educator's Handbook.* Exeter: Learning Matters. Chapter 12: Continuing Learning and Development Section: Linking knowledge, knowing and action, pp.132-134 incorporates key ideas relating to practical reasoning.

4c) Ideas included throughout revised edition of 'Critical Thinking for Social Work'

Rutter, L. and Brown, K., 2011, *in press*. Critical Thinking and Professional Judgment for Social Work. 3rd edition. Exeter: Sage/Learning Matters.

Limitations

Practice development was unable to include the CPSP programme directly because it was undergoing its own development at this time in respect of incorporating the Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) assessed year. However, the findings and discussions from the case and the practice development have been shared with the CPSP programme leader, and key ideas included in the programme's Information Skills Handbook, which includes a section on guidance and exercises for writing reflective assignments. The work undertaken with the BA (Hons)/Graduate Diploma Vulnerable Adults & Community Care Practice: Enabling Work Based Learning Unit is limited in some ways by the small cohort numbers in 2010, which has reduced the amount of feedback expected. Overall, though, the response and experience gained from this group has been in-depth, meaningful and worthwhile.

Conclusion

The key recommendations from the case discussion allowed a transfer of ideas and understanding into a number of practice-based aims and Narrative 2 provided a set of underpinning principles to work with. In effect the practice development worked to provide strengths-based educational approaches and support of learning, and not merely a technical fix. The feedback shows that students were engaged and involved in the operationalisation of the ideas and a collective understanding was gained from the whole process. Overall, I feel that including epistemological discussions in unit workshops, and developing and using the Practical Reasoning Framework for designing appropriate teaching, learning and assessment activities, has in many ways achieved the educational aim of the doctorate. I have been able to develop teaching, learning and assessment processes and materials which have prepared students to engage critically with the range of academic and practice knowledge on their programmes. It has enabled PQ students to be aware of and understand relevant, underlying issues concerning their own and the programmes' knowledge and knowing. These practices are worth continuing and developing.

I did establish a "useful, if temporary, equilibrium" (Badley 2003a, p.305) in this process, especially after the Practical Reasoning Framework was created and the Enabling Work Based Learning Unit (sections 1 and 3b) workshops had been undertaken. Nevertheless, an area for further development became obvious when the assignments for this unit were marked, and a new stage of uncertainty ensued regarding the need for students to develop more critical analytical styles of writing. The aim to enable students to articulate their professional understanding and knowledge in a valid way for this context is one which is multi-layered and will be ongoing. The positive outcomes of a reflective approach appeared to be for the most part protected, at least in the workshops; however it is apparent that further work is required to ensure this is achieved for the students' written work. Addressing the epistemological tensions and misalignments concerning validity, justification and authority is a major task and has become a continuous exercise.

> "The act of knowing involves a dialectical movement which goes from action to reflection and from reflection upon action to new action."
>
> (Freire 1972, cited in Jarvis 1999, p.133)

I am also aware of the areas I cannot control and which will continue as barriers to students' success, e.g. time constraints due to employment demands, personal motivation.

This study has also become a vehicle for self-managed development for me as a professional producing ideas and taking forward an area of practice and leading change, aspects highlighted in the second narrative chapter. The dissemination of ideas shown in section 4 above has already provided, and hopefully will continue to provide, feedback from other professionals and forums for this undertaking.

Chapter 7: Final Analysis and Recommendations for Future Research

In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is.
(Attributed to Yogi Berra, Jan L. A. van de Snepscheut and Albert Einstein)

Review

A review of the literature established a number of key requirements and epistemological issues associated with reflective practice and post-technocratic models. It also showed that these were not fully established concepts in this context, and their epistemological requirements remained vague, ambiguous or in contention, impacting negatively on students' learning experiences. Although beliefs, assumptions, or expectations regarding knowledge held by social work students (i.e. their personal epistemology) were highly significant and of consequence to their learning experience, it was seen that personal epistemology was also a disputed construct. It was advised that each context needed to establish its own understanding and definition of a required level of personal epistemology.

The empirical case study research undertaken with a BU PQ programme aimed to clarify the local epistemological issues. Overall, post-technocratic and reflective models could be seen to be followed and students were able to express their practice and develop further understanding in a positive way. A number of major concerns were noted, though, including an inconsistency and ambiguity in the programme materials, an inherent privileging of academic knowledge over practice, and a lack of recognition of professional reasoning and judgment as part of reflective or theory practice integration processes. In respect of the students' experience, the most negative effects were a sole reliance on external sources for justification purposes, and lack of critical engagement with formal or authoritative sources of knowledge.

Practice development explored and further investigated a range of pedagogic responses with two different programmes. It confirmed the overall worth and value of epistemologically informed and aligned teaching, learning and

assessment materials, discussions and activities. Practical reasoning was seen to provide a necessary professional perspective for PQ students, allowing the articulation of professional reasoning and judgment, establishing an internally based authority. A new Practical Reasoning Framework was developed and used successfully as a tool to inform learning, teaching and assessment activities and support students to authentically and critically integrate academic knowledge with their practice. The articulation of practical reasoning in written work requires further development.

Discussion

The original themes of the thesis seen in the Introduction and Narrative 1 have become pivotal aspects. The nature of students' personal epistemology is highly significant but also diverse and complex. Fundamental conflicting approaches to the nature of professional knowledge, on both a national and local front, create tensions that have prevented an aligned reflective epistemology being fully explicated and operationalised for professional education.

A major thread can be seen concerning an ongoing privileging of academic knowledge over practice. This issue needs to be addressed in order to enable professionals to deal in appropriate ways with the complex nature of knowledge, to learn and effectively develop their practice.

> "Indeed, it is questionable whether the high status of theory should be retained in its present form in light of the current emphasis on practice, reflective practice, practical knowledge and practitioner-researchers' research into practice".
>
> (Jarvis 1999, p.144)

The full operationalisation of a post-technocratic curriculum is problematic if the 'old' technocratic paradigm is still very much in evidence in academic and professional arenas, because any new or different models or approaches will inevitably be judged according to its fundamentally different standards and rules. There is a strategic level problem here.

"Although reflective practice has become a standard in initial and continuing professional education and development, it is a state of mind, an attitude, an approach, and therefore elusive to curriculum planners".

(Bolton 2005, p.3)

In respect of this, students' personal epistemology has to be approached in a non-prescriptive and flexible manner by educators as something that should be made explicit and considered in respect of the various situations they encounter.

Notwithstanding these tensions, a reflective epistemology involves a new paradigm and a radical shift in understanding and defining what knowledge is, how it is generated and how it is transmitted (Jarvis 1999). However, Rolfe (1998, p.3) notes that by failing to fully recognise or account for these specific epistemological requirements, reflection becomes just another technique for *applying* theory to practice and it can "subvert" its "original aims and intentions" of enabling practitioners to take control of their own practice and generate knowledge. In respect of this it appears that a robust professional perspective needs to be made explicit and able to be evaluated and assessed within this approach. I would contend that from the research and practice development undertaken for this thesis the explicit use of practical reasoning in association with professional moral judgement is one way that an alignment to a reflective epistemology can be attained, and these aims and intentions more fully realised. In epistemological terms PQ social work students need to assess the relevance and the veracity of their own and other's knowledge claims, but the key point here is that this is *in respect of the situation at hand.* It is this pivotal element that provides an appropriate focus for reflective and theory practice integration, and an active and authentic role for the student in reasoning what to do and how.

It may also provide, at least in part, "some kind of justifying account" for social work knowledge (Shaw 2009, p.189) that can pragmatically combine both internal and external accounts without tension. Practical reasoning, encompassing as it does a range of higher-order cognitive skills, e.g. critical thinking, analysis and evaluation, as well as performance and exercise of professional judgment, can

help link a narrative form of expression associated with personal experience with one based on more abstract concepts and theories.

In this respect, a particular problem with the post-technocratic curriculum is its reconciliation with the requirements of higher education, and in particular its assessment (Rolfe 1996). There are certain academic conventions and standards that privilege academic styles of reasoning and argument and which make the validity of a professional perspective problematic, i.e. unable to be critically assessed "from within the framework of its construction" (Jarvis 1999, p.150). As Cameron (2009, p.11) notes, there is a "deeply embedded hierarchy inherent in the system" which suggests that simple superficial changes (i.e. to assessment wording or teaching styles) may not in themselves be sufficient to allow the necessary validity to this practice perspective. As mentioned in previous chapters, using theory in support of practice in any configuration can become the *only* way that practice is (or is perceived to be) justified and validated, and I argue that other, internal professional methods of reasoning and judgement should also be employed here to more fully align with reflective practice and post-technocratic models.

It can be noted, though, that national HE frameworks do not present a major obstacle here, and were used successfully when designing appropriate assessment activities for the Leadership and Management Unit - Improving Personal & Organisational Performance (chapter 6, section 3a). The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (QAAHE 2008) details a range of qualification descriptors equally suited to critical thinking and action in a practical sense as well as an academic one, e.g. for level 6: "critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem"; "the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility" and "decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts" (ibid, p.19). There may be a requirement for "conceptual understanding that enables the student to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems

using ideas and techniques" (ibid, p.20), but there is no specific statement that this has to be an academic or theoretical argument. As Bourner (2003, pp.271-2) notes, "the academy has a great deal of experience in detecting good critical thinking" which he argues can be a "secure means" for assessing reflective learning and development.

Additional criteria have also been considered by others. Stenhouse (1984) describes key criteria within the process of practical theory-building and hypothesis testing as prudence (discernment and discretion) and perceptiveness (interpretation); but which, he warns, may necessarily remain very tacit in their nature and possibly unavailable to a reflective process and thus to evaluation. An ongoing consideration, of course, is this tacit nature of practice. As Rolfe (1998) explains, professional reasoning does not always leave an audit trail.

Nevertheless, there are two clear points to be made here. First, a certain level of consciousness regarding professional reasoning and decision making can still be reached in order to promote a meta-awareness of one's professional judgment (Rolfe 1998). Even if action "constitutes a type of knowledge that cannot always be translated back into prepositional statements or cognitive theories" or indeed reduced to a set of techniques, this "tact" (i.e. perceptiveness, understanding, feeling and insight) has its own integrity and is of value (Van Manen 1995, p.45). Second, this 'tact' will be more aligned with practical reasoning rather than academic reasoning, and this allows an appropriate and explicit focus, i.e. the situation at hand. The major argument here is that pedagogic alignment needs to be achieved in order to accommodate a reflective epistemology; the use of practical reasoning in association with professional judgement is one way that such alignment and enablement can now be realised for HE assessment purposes.

This need for valid, relevant assessment of professional reasoning and judgment processes within an academic context is more important now than ever, with recent reports (Laming 2003, 2009; Munro 2011) emphasising these processes and their associated abilities as necessary components of professional

development, both individually and at an agency level (Munro 2008). A new CPD framework for professional social workers (SWRB 2010) is similarly highlighting these aspects of practice. These all serve to confirm the relevance of the Practical Reasoning Framework, its content but also its potential use for formal assessment of professional practice learning and development.

Personal epistemology, itself, is also more relevant than ever in this climate. Bath and Smith's (2009) research with university students in Australia shows that epistemological beliefs make an independent and significant contribution to the prediction of lifelong learning characteristics. Epistemological awareness is,

> "...perhaps the 'keystone' of being a lifelong learner, because along with having the skills and ability for lifelong learning, an individual would need to have a certain view or particular beliefs about knowledge in order to possess the internal motivation to engage in a process of discovering new knowledge or building on existing knowledge."
>
> (Bath and Smith 2009, p.175)

Recommendations for future research and practice development

As seen in the practice development chapter, students' written style can need developing from a descriptive account into a critically analytical one. Therefore, on an individual professional level, there is an additional need to understand how to best enable a 'transfer' of the critically analytical thinking abilities being enacted during the workshop discussions and activities into a written format.

In considering this, it is clear that a professional perspective is not based on technocratic logic. The knowledge of the practitioner is instead "grounded in interpretive judgments of a dialectical form, constructed by the reflections of the practitioner" rather than in facts that can be externally verified (Clarke et al. 1996, p.177). By acknowledging professional reasoning and judgment, and the practical reasoning involved, the status and importance of the professional perspective is also raised. This, in turn, raises the status and importance of the practitioner from the applier of other people's theories to the generator and tester of his/her own

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theories (Rolfe 1998, p.60). However, we also need to understand how these processes and knowledge outcomes can be articulated in written form in an academic setting. The practical aspect of explicitly understanding and then showing students what to do and how to do it is imperative. Ryan (2011, p.109) suggests that providing students with examples of writing is not enough and the need is to teach students how to "identify, compare and contrast" the features that are required with those that are not, e.g. via annotating key features on exemplars and their own work.

 In order to achieve this, further research and practice development could take the form of:

- A discourse analysis of PQ students' written assignments;
- Using the good/poor examples alongside the Practical Reasoning Framework as a tool for reflective assignment writing;
- Enhancing opportunities to practise, annotate, share and discuss written work in workshops.

As seen above, the hegemony of the technocratic approach also needs to be addressed here because any inherent knowledge hierarchy has the potential to adversely affect the impact of individual pedagogic changes. The recommendations, therefore, extend to a social level too, involving PQ team and department members in discussion, new projects and research which explore and review our shared views of the programme and its goals with respect to epistemology issues. Discussion with, and feedback from, other professionals and wider forums, e.g. the newly formed College of Social Work and the online discussion network *Social Work Reform Ning*, will also be sought.

Chapter 8: Narrative 3

The first and second narratives introduced and critically reflected on my approach to the research design and methodology and the practice development sections respectively. This final narrative synthesises the main themes of the thesis and presents more personal reflections on the process of undertaking this doctorate, the achievement of new understanding and knowledge, and my role as a practitioner-researcher.

The opposition between different epistemologies noted throughout the thesis can be played out in professional doctorates in the tension between academic and professional practice. This thesis has, in response, not only followed a robust methodology of research to ensure an open and meaningful case study, it has also followed a robust methodology of development as advocated by Lester (2004) to create new knowledge for practice. I, like the professional doctorate itself can be seen to be,

> "...moving beyond both abstract-universal and contextual-relative views of knowledge into a more mature realisation that balances the uncertainty of knowing with the need to create knowledge structures in order to take action and move forward."
>
> (Lester 2004, p.765)

For Jarvis (1999 p.67), it is the "ability to pose problems" that is as important as the ability to solve them, and it is reflective practitioners who engage in this form of practice. This is about stopping the process of routine, unthinking practice in performance by problematising the situation in which the problem occurs. Practitioner-researchers therefore become the agents as well as the recipients of the forces of change. They can create new knowledge, attitudes, values and skills by responding positively to potential learning situations. Radnor (2001) notes this position of 'not knowing' for many practitioners and the push this presents to become practitioner-researchers.

At times during this process I have encountered my own epistemological issues regarding validity, justification and authority. For example, during the interview

analysis I relied too heavily on the authority of experts to provide a process to follow, which in the end did not work. Just like some of the students, my epistemological view 'reverted' to the more simple position of wanting someone to tell me the right answer when I knew I could be challenged, and was feeling anxious and unsure of what I was doing. My confidence as a researcher developed as soon as I realised that it is I, as the researcher, who needs to decide on the questions posed to the data and I made a key decision on how to analyse the interview texts which put me back in control. One issue becomes clear, that understanding and confidence are at the root of being able to successfully validate, justify and authorise knowing for oneself and to others as explicated knowledge. As Kvale (1996) says, this is an issue of power and greatly influences the knowledge that is constructed from the process. In respect of this, such decisions are necessarily explicated in order to be transparent and able to be evaluated by self or others.

Another interesting feature of this journey is the way a more conscious understanding grows. As the thesis has developed, ideas that were initially either consciously or unconsciously viewed as meaningless, inappropriate and ignored or overlooked have became relevant and useful. The difference is there is now 'something new' which connects or relates to this material. In this instance, it was an awareness of the importance of the professional perspective within a reflective epistemology and the development of the Practical Reasoning Framework. The point seems to be that an input of new material or understanding is required in order to make sense of, and recognise, particular issues and connections.

The originality of this thesis is a key point here. Lee (2009) reviews a number of angles on this notion and notes that professional doctorates can demonstrate originality in several different ways, e.g. application or adaptation of existing knowledge or expertise, new models or frameworks of practice, development of new knowledge or skill. In respect of this thesis, it is evident that epistemological issues relating to PQ social work programmes and students have not been researched, either quantitatively or qualitatively. This is one key area where it has

made an original contribution to knowledge and relates to Prosser and Trigwell's (1999) definition of academic development.

> "Academic development less about the development of teaching skills, and more about the development of an enhanced awareness of students' perceptions of the teaching and learning situations."
>
> (Prosser and Trigwell 1999, p.173)

This thesis not only investigates these issues and presents the findings but also makes the processes and decisions open and accountable, as also advocated by Lee (2009). It has also interpreted and used the research to achieve a further contribution of new knowledge for practice development, in the form of a Practical Reasoning Framework. It is hoped that the reader is able to evaluate the conclusions and claims presented throughout the thesis and use this knowledge to make interpretations in respect of their own situation.

Like my colleague Lee-Ann Fenge (2010), I have also become increasingly reflexive about my role as a practice developer as the thesis progressed, and have developed a deeper critical understanding of some of the tensions and paradoxes that affect continuing professional education and development. For me the notion of scholarship of teaching and learning (Badley 2003b), initially studied in my MA, provides the most appropriate framework for how I see my role. My perspective has always been that I am a lecturer who is doing research and also naturally learning along the way; the learning becomes the lynchpin for the holistic experience.

Overall, I believe I reflected on many of the issues during the study in the same way, i.e. from the perspective of an educationalist who is trying to make sense of the situation. The differences in role between researcher and practitioner did become apparent in the choices of methodology and therefore the style adopted by the empirical study and the practice development differs, with the latter taking a more reflective evaluative approach. This provided more opportunity to include behaviours, thoughts and feelings. Indeed, Bourner notes that the individual professional practitioner,

> "...has access to a much richer source of data in their own experiences, feelings, values and cognitions that is available to remote researchers."
>
> (Bourner 2010, p.25)

Understanding my own personal epistemology as an educator is crucial because it obviously influences the nature of my teaching, learning and assessment (Schommer-Aikins 2004). Making it explicit also helps align elements more cohesively for an improved learning experience.

Overall, I have come to appreciate the fuller extent of my own position in respect of how much I can 'know'. There is no sense of objective knowledge that everyone can share in a complete sense; rather, by coming to an understanding, knowledge is generated between people negotiating meanings in an intersubjective way (Usher 1996b). Following Radnor (2001, p.20) I concur that a research commitment is about "coming to grips" with the social world which people inhabit, i.e. seeing myself and others as "valuing, meaning-attributing beings" to be understood and known through interpretive processes. I can only come to 'know' through my subjective understanding and this reiterates my position as stated in the first narrative.

The aim is to do research in a postmodern way, taking a critical stance towards the practice of research and to ask questions such as, 'why do we do research?', 'how has it been constructed?', 'what is it we are silent about?', 'to what extent does research empower or disempower those involved in it?' (Usher 1996a, p.32). For Usher (ibid, p.29) being reflexive is to "be aware of how values permeate research both in its methods and outcomes" as an ongoing activity during the course of research, which is why there are three narratives spread across the thesis. By embracing the notions of reflexivity, complexity and a situated perspective, the research has endeavoured to investigate my own, the programme's and the students' epistemology and look at ways to improve the learning experience.

The journey of knowing is also a continuous one. Jarvis (1999, p.133) points out that a professional's way of knowing is "a dialectical movement from action to reflection in a continuing loop". Badley (2003a) notes that this continuing cycle or spiral aligns with Dewey's philosophy of experience and the notion of inquiry being thought intertwined with action, as we move from doubt to resolution to new doubt and uncertainty.

In conclusion, being a practitioner-researcher, i.e. doing the research and then using it rather than having it handed to me, has empowered me in a number of ontological and epistemological ways. A key advantage is that Doctor of Professional Practice programmes offer the opportunity to frame real world practice issues as research and develop and document aspects of professional expertise. The phrase 'knowledge is power' for me has been about increasing professional and personal potential and capability, and enacting a continuing professional learning model (Webster-Wright 2009). This new knowledge and understanding has allowed me to gain enhanced confidence and awareness of my own expertise and an ability to speak from a position of 'knowing'. I feel better able to argue against others who may be in positions of greater power but whose understanding may not be so well developed. However, as Forbes (2008, p.453) notes, doctoral learning is not characterised by gaining a "mastery" over knowledge (or indeed others), rather it is characterised by the "experience of epistemological uncertainties, ambivalences and oscillations". This also aligns with my original pragmatic research position which entails an epistemological humility and an acceptance of complexity and uncertainty.

In summary, I feel I have generated meaningful and robust (although still tentative) knowledge through a reflective critique of research and practice, which has helped construct my own repertoire of useful methods and strategies and which can hopefully help others build theirs.

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Yin, R. K., 2009. *Case study research. Design and methods.* 4th ed. London: Sage Publications.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
SUMMARY OF PUBLICATIONS –
LYNNE RUTTER

Summary of publications – Lynne Rutter

Peer Reviewed Articles

Keen, S., Parker, J., Rutter, L., Williams, S. and Brown, K., 2011, *in press*. Practice Education: Where next? *Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning*, 10 (3).

Gray, I., Parker, J., Williams, S., Rutter, L., 2010. Developing communities of practice – a strategy for effective leadership, management and supervision in social work. *Social Work and Social Science Review,* 14 (2), 20-36.

Bates, N., Immins, T., Parker, J., Keen, S., Rutter, L., Brown, K., Zsigo, S., 2010. Baptism of Fire: The First Year in the Life of a Newly Qualified Social Worker. *Social Work Education,* 29 (2), 152-170.

Rutter, L., 2006a. Supporting reflective practice-based learning and assessment. *Reflective Pratice,* 7 (4), 469-482.

Rutter, L., 2006b. Skills support for post qualifying education: tailoring programmes to meet student needs. *Social Work Education,* 25 (3), 279-287.

Parker, J., Hughes, M., and Rutter, L., 2006. Shadowing and preparation for practice learning. *The Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning.* 7 (3), 49-69

Books

Rutter, L. and Brown, K., 2011. *Critical Thinking and Professional Judgment for Social Work.* Exeter: Learning Matters/ Sage.

Williams, S. and Rutter, L., 2010. *Practice Educator's Handbook.* Exeter: Learning Matters.

Brown, K., Keen, S., Rutter, L. and Warren, A., 2010a. *Partnerships, CPD & APL: supporting workforce development across the social care sector.* Birmingham: Learn to Care.

Brown, K. and Rutter, L., 2008. *Critical Thinking for Social Work.* 2nd ed. Exeter: Learning Matters.

Williams, S., and Rutter, L., 2007. *Enabling and Assessing Work-based Learning for Social Work.* Birmingham: Learn to Care.

Book Chapters

Keen, S., Galpin, D., Rutter L., Brown, K., Ixer, G., 2009. Lifelong learning, continuing professional development, post-qualifying awards and post-registration training and learning. *In*: Keen, S., Gray, I., Parker, J., Galpin, D., Brown, K. *Newly Qualified Social Workers: A Handbook for Practice*. Exeter: Learning Matters, pp 42-65.

Dale, P. and Rutter, L., 2004. Ways to engage widening participation students. *In*: Brophy, P., Fisher, S. and Craven, J., eds. *Libraries Without Walls 5: the distributed delivery of library and information services*. London, UK: Facet Publishing, pp. 87-96.

Project reports

Brown, K., Keen, S., Parker, J., Rutter, L. and Williams, S., 2010. *Formative assessment of the practice educator framework demonstration projects. Final report*. Commissioned by Skills for Care on behalf of the Social Work Development Partnership. Bournemouth: Bournemouth University.

Brown, K., Immins, T., Bates, N., Keen, S., Parker, J., Gray, I. and Rutter, L., 2007. *Tracking the Learning and Development Needs of Newly Qualified Social Workers.* Project Report. Leeds: Skills for Care**.**

Non- peer reviewed articles

Brown, K., Rutter, L. and Keen, S., 2006. Think about it. *Community Care,* 1625 (June), 32-33.

Brown, K., and Rutter, L., 2004. Critical Thinking. *Community Care,* 1549 (November) 38-39.

Brown, K., Rutter, L. and Young, N., 2003. Students need study skills. *Community Care.* 1461. (March), 42-43.

Published conference proceedings

Rutter, L., 2004. Meeting Academic and Reflective Requirements for Written Assignments: an Integrated Response. *In: WDHE 2004 Conference Proceedings.*

10th Annual Conference: Writing Development in Higher Education - Valuing and Evaluating Writing in Higher Education. 11-12th May 2004 Sheffield. Sheffield: Learning and Teaching Institute, Sheffield Hallam University. [CD-ROM].

Papers presented:

Williams, S. and Rutter, L., 2011. A Critical Thinking Approach to Practice Education. *In: 9th International Conference on Practice Teaching and Field Education in Health and Social Work: Learning for Practice, Learning in Practice 2011,* 11-13 April 2011. Bournemouth.

Rutter, L., 2010. Helping students with reflective writing. *In: National Organisation for Practice Teaching Annual Conference 2010. Shaping the Future: Opportunities for Change,* 21-22 June 2010, Birmingham, England.

Rutter, L., 2009. 'Theory' and 'practice' within HE professional education courses – integration of academic knowledge and experiential knowledge. *In: 6th LDHEN Symposium. The Challenge of Learning Development. Bournemouth University,* 6- 7 April 2009, Bournemouth UK.

Rutter, L., 2008. Personal epistemology. *In: ALDinHE Symposium 2008 - Learning Development: Who Needs It?* 17-18 March 2008, Bradford, UK.

Rutter, L. and Williams, S., 2008. Post qualifying specialist awards: approaches to enabling work-based learning in social work. *In: 8th International PEPE Conference. Practical learning: achieving excellence in the human services,* 23-25 January 2008, Edinburgh.

Rutter, L. and Williams, S., 2007. PQ Specialist awards: Approaches to enabling work-based learning. *In: Learn to Care Annual Conference.* 23-24 April 2007 Bournemouth.

Rutter, L., 2006. Sharing best practice: the role of critical thinking and critical reflection in making CPD activities meaningful, valuable and assessable. *In: UK Standing Conference of Stakeholders in Social Work Education and Training Annual Conference.* Birmingham University Conference Park, November 2006.

Rutter, L., 2006. A student perspective on learning support in professional higher education. *In: Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) Academic Practice Network. Learning Development: Theory and Practice,* 11th July 2006 Liverpool Hope University. (Invited presentation on MA dissertation).

Rutter, L., 2006. Student Perspectives on Learning Support in Professional Higher Education. *In: Enhancing Student Success. 1st Pedagogical Research in Higher Education (PRHE) conference*, May 2006. Liverpool Hope University.

Rutter, L., 2006. Student Perspectives on Learning Support in Professional Higher Education. *In: 3rd LDHEN (Learning Development in Higher Education Network) symposium – Excellence in Learning Development: Theory and Practice*, April 2006 Liverpool Hope University.

Rutter, L., 2005. Supporting Reflective Work-based Learning and Assessment. *In: The Higher Education Academy Annual Conference. Enhancing the Student Experience,* 29 June-1 July 2005 Herriot Watt University, Edinburgh.

APPENDIX B

LITERATURE REVIEW INITIAL SEARCH STRATEGY

Literature review initial search strategy

Search terms and strategy:

Tailored Boolean searches were carried out within electronic databases using the following search terms in a number of combinations in a graduated approach. In addition to the electronic database searches, the bibliographies of retrieved studies were scanned for further relevant articles. Articles, reports, conference papers, and books judged to be of relevance to the review were retrieved.

Personal epistemology OR Epistem* beliefs OR Epistemolog*	AND	social work social work education PQSW or post qualifying social work professional (learning or education or development)
Knowledge OR Knowing	AND	higher education
Post-technocratic	AND	academic writing
Theory adj3 practice	AND	

Sources:

Electronic Databases	Subject areas

Bournemouth University E-Journal Database search, incl.
    EBSCO EJS
    PsychArticles
    Academic Search Premier
    Sage Journals Online
	All

Ingenta Science Direct Social Work Abstracts	
ISI Social Science Citation Index	Social sciences
BLACKWELL SYNERGY	Medical
PsychINFO	Psychology and social sciences
SOCIAL CARE ONLINE	Social work
ERIC	Education research
British Education Index	Education
BU OPAC – for textbook searches	Education /social work topics
Index to Theses	UK masters and doctorate theses
Other sources	**Content/examples**
ZETOC MIMAS	Journal title alerts; keyword search alerts
Websites	HEA - Higher Education Academy SCIE – Social Care Institute for Excellence
E-mail discussion lists	LDHEN@JISCMAIL.AC.UK - Learning Development in Higher Education ISL@JISCMAIL.AC.UK - Improving Student Learning network Learn Higher network. CETL PersonalEpistemology@qut.edu.ac - Joanne Brownlee's list at Queensland University of Technology
Personal contacts	Professor Jonathan Parker: Associate Dean HSC – discussion on current social work education context Kim Shahabudin: Study Advisor University of Reading – discussion on academic skills of social work students David Clancy: just completed PhD in personal epistemology and HE at University of Bradford – discussion on social and contextual epistemological processes.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria:

Inclusion:

- Personal epistemology as the main focus of paper;
- Direct or indirect relationship of either personal epistemology or knowledge/knowing to social work practice and/or social work education;
- Theory/practice relationship to professional education; work-based learning;
- Reviews; opinion pieces; theoretical, discussion and research papers (qualitative/quantitative/mixed).

Exclusion:

- Children or adolescent-related papers;
- School settings;
- Organisational theory related items;
- Non-English language publications;
- Pre-1960 publications unless foundational work.

*Screening and appraisal***:**

Title/abstract/date screened first using exclusion/inclusion criteria. The remaining material was then obtained in full text, read and re-read iteratively at later stages to assess relevance to the research questions, and capacity to illuminate aspects of personal epistemology relating to professional higher education, and epistemological issues relating to social work practice and education.

Further interpretations and decisions:

The range of material accessed and reviewed included referral to a number of professions, notably teaching and nursing. Whilst appreciating the differences between these and social work as a profession, it was decided that for the most part they did not detract from the overall relevancy of the content and ideas. In

fact, some important insights have been gained from the teaching profession's literature, and it is surprising it is not used more widely in social work field.

In respect of nursing, much of the material refers to both health and social care arenas, e.g. Gary Rolfe's work, which has been extremely useful in exploring the reflective process and output. However, if I was discussing post-technocratic or reflective approaches I would then not use certain nursing profession material unless it referred specifically to an evidence-based approach. In other words, material was included where it aligned to the ideas being discussed. In most places the material being referred to for social work practice or education has been discussed together and made clear this is what it is referring to.

What has been noted is that most of themes, issues and debates are similar, which although useful and enlightening can also make for frustrating reading at times. In particular it has been annoying to read about ideas (which, if put into practice, could have made a significant difference to educators and students), which have essentially been ignored or maybe just forgotten. The essential debate between objectivism and positivism seems one which perseveres, even though some very interesting alternative routes between or beyond these positions have also been advanced. I have aimed to try and include these as much as possible.

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION SHEET – CPSP PACKS

Information Sheet: Study 'Knowledge and knowing for professional education'. Researcher - Lynne Rutter

Dear CPSP candidate   Nov 2009

I am undertaking a research study for a professional doctorate and wish to invite you to participate in a short questionnaire during workshop 2 of your CPSP programme. Your participation in this study is voluntary. **Before deciding to take part, it is important that you understand what will be involved, and the reasons why I am undertaking the study. Please read this information sheet carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.** If you have any questions, or would like further information, contact details can be found at the end of the sheet.

Purpose

The aim of the study is to improve methods of preparing and developing learners like yourselves to deal with the many different types of knowledge (e.g. theory, research, practice wisdom, legislation) within the post qualifying PQ awards – for example, in workshops and when you undertake your assignments. The anticipated impact is that practitioners undertaking the PQ programme will be better prepared for their learning experience. The programme leader has agreed to the study taking place.

For this first part of the study, **I wish to collect a small range of data via a** questionnaire **which will investigate how you view these types of knowledge and your experience of working with them. The questionnaire will be given out in workshop 2 of your CPSP module.**

Why have I been invited to participate?

The Consolidation and Preparation for Specialist Practice (CPSP) module has been selected for the study because it is the first Module being undertaken on the

PQ Specialist Award programmes. Everyone on the CPSP module has the opportunity to participate.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation is completely voluntary and it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide not to take part there is no detriment to you, your current or future studies.

Is there any risk?

Any decision you make in relation to this study, and any input you may provide, will not in any way affect the process or outcome in respect of the CPSP module or any subsequent course of study or qualification with Bournemouth University. You are also free to stop at any time during the study, without giving a reason. The questionnaire is short, completely anonymous and should not pose any risk in itself.

If I decide to take part, what would be my involvement?

For this first part of the study I am asking if you would complete a short questionnaire during the second CPSP workshop. It should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

You can also choose to be considered to be an interviewee for part 2 of the study. For this, one interview will be required at your workplace or agreed location after your CPSP hand-in date, and will last around 45 minutes. I will collect names of anyone interested in taking part in the interviews at the end of the workshop and give you a new information sheet. Participation in part 2 of the study is not dependent on participation in part 1.

Would my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

Yes. See below on what will happen to the findings.

.

What will I get out of it? What are the benefits of taking part?

It is hoped that you may benefit as a learner from consideration of your ideas about the type of knowledge you are dealing with. Overall, it is hoped that you would also gain satisfaction in contributing to the improvement of learning support offered on the PQ programme.

What will happen to the findings of the study?

Bournemouth University is a registered Data Controller. Any information you supply will be used anonymously and securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and will only be used for the purposes of this project. Completed questionnaires will be kept in a locked cupboard for the duration of the project and any information about you will be kept strictly confidential. Your personal details will not be made available outside the University. Once the project is complete, questionnaires and interviews data will be kept for five years in line with University Codes of Practice (2004).

The questionnaire is completely anonymous and therefore no personal information can be included in any subsequent publications from the questionnaire, e.g. academic journal articles, conference papers and reports.

What if something goes wrong?

Although taking part in this project carries no significant risk of psychological harm, if you do have any concerns about the way you have been approached or treated, please follow Bournemouth University's normal complaint mechanisms as given in your Programme Handbooks; or contact Steve Keen, Senior Researcher, on 01202 964765 in the first instance.

Who has approved this project?

This study has been peer reviewed and received favourable ethical opinion from the School Postgraduate Committee at Bournemouth University. This study is undertaken with the full co-operation and assistance of the CPSP programme leader and tutors.

What happens next?

1. I will attend the second CPSP workshop and explain the study and answer any questions you may have. You can discuss the issues with your fellow students there, and then decide whether or not you wish to participate.
2. I will distribute the questionnaire for you to fill in at that time. If you prefer to do this online or via the telephone you can provide your name, e-mail address or phone number on the consent form and I will contact you later.
3. If you decide not to take part in the study you can choose to do a self-directed learning activity during this time in workshop 2.

Please contact me for any further information or with any queries:

Lynne Rutter. Tel: 01202 962019 ; lrutter@bournemouth.ac.uk

Centre for Post-Qualifying Social Work; 4th Floor, Royal London House; Bournemouth University; Bournemouth; BH1 3LT

Thank you

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW INFORMATION SHEET

Information Sheet: Study 'Knowledge and knowing for professional education'

Part 2 – Interviews   Researcher – Lynne Rutter

This study is part of the work being undertaken by myself for a professional doctorate. Your participation in this study is voluntary. **Before deciding to take part, it is important that you understand what will be involved, and the reasons why I am undertaking the study. Please read this information sheet carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.** If you have any questions, or would like further information, contact details can be found at the end of the sheet.

Purpose

The aim of the study is to improve methods of preparing and developing learners like yourselves to deal with the many different types of knowledge (e.g. theory, research, practice wisdom, legislation) within the post qualifying (PQ) awards – for example, in workshops and when you undertake your assignments. The anticipated impact is that practitioners undertaking the PQ social work awards will be better prepared for their learning experience.

For this second part of the study, I wish to collect a range of views and experiences via **interviews** to understand your own ways of dealing with the different types of knowledge, especially in academic written work.

Why have I been invited to participate?

During the second CPSP workshop you will have given your name to participate in part 2 of this study and this is why you have been given this information sheet. The Consolidation and Preparation for Specialist Practice (CPSP) module has been selected for the study because it is the first Module being undertaken on the Specialist Award. Everyone on the CPSP module has the opportunity to participate.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation is completely voluntary and it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you elect not to take part there is no detriment to you, your current or future studies.

Is there any risk?

It is not envisaged that the interview will have the potential to cause undue levels of anxiety or distress. However, these interviews may touch on deeply held beliefs, motivations and assumptions, which have potential to cause some discomfort. No pressure will be exerted on you to answer any question and I will take necessary steps to reduce the sense of intrusion. If you do become unduly distressed during an interview it will be stopped and immediate support offered. You are also free to stop at any time during the interview and the study, without giving a reason.

Any disclosures you do make will not be seen or used in any way by tutors on the module, or by myself in any other association with them.

Any decision you make in relation to this study, and any other input you may provide, will not in any way affect the process or outcome in respect of the CPSP module or any subsequent course of study or qualification.

If I decide to take part, what would be my involvement?

For this part of the study I am asking if you would like to put your name forward for interview by myself after completion of the CPSP module and submission of all your assessed work in May 2010. One interview will be required at your own workplace or agreed location – anticipated time 45-60 minutes.

Would my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

Yes. Please see below on what will happen to the findings.

What will I get out of it? What are the benefits of taking part?

It is hoped that you may benefit as a learner from a consideration of your own ways of dealing with various types of knowledge, especially in academic written work. Overall, it is hoped that you would also gain satisfaction in contributing to the improvement of learning support offered on the PQ programme.

What will happen to the findings of the study?

Bournemouth University is a registered Data Controller. Any information you supply will be used anonymously and securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and will only be used for the purposes of this project. Only the interviewer will have access to any data that may link participants with interviews. Written or recorded interview data will be kept in a locked cupboard for the duration of the project and any information about you will be kept strictly confidential. Your personal details will not be made available outside the University. Once the project is complete, questionnaires and interviews data will be kept for five years in line with University Codes of Practice (2004).

Confidentiality and anonymity of participants undertaking interviews will be preserved in all publications (e.g. academic journal articles, conference papers and reports) by the use of pseudonyms. Names, organisations and places will also be changed. Personal information that may be used from the interviews would be age range, gender and educational experience.

What if something goes wrong?

Although taking part in this project carries no significant risk of psychological harm, if you do have any concerns about the way you have been approached or treated, please follow Bournemouth University's normal complaint mechanisms as given in your Programme Handbooks, or contact Steve Keen, Senior Researcher, on 01202 964765 in the first instance.

Who has approved this project?

This study has been peer reviewed and received favourable ethical opinion from the School Postgraduate Committee at Bournemouth University. This study is undertaken with the full co-operation and assistance of the PQSW director and the Consolidation and Preparation for Practice (CPSP) programme leader and tutors.

What to do now?

Participation in this study is voluntary. **If you decide to take part and be interviewed by myself after the CPSP hand-in date (14th May 2010) please complete the consent form attached and send back to me in the stamped addressed envelope**. This information sheet and a copy of your consent form are yours to keep.

Selection of those to be involved in the interviews will be based on the requirements of the study, e.g. numbers, location. **I will contact you in early June 2010 and, where appropriate, arrange a mutually convenient date for the interview.**

Please remember that your participation is voluntary and you are still free to stop at any time during the study, without giving a reason and without detriment to your education as a PQ social worker.

Please contact me for any further information:

Lynne Rutter 01202 962019 ; lrutter@bournemouth.ac.uk

Centre for Post-Qualifying Social Work; 4th Floor, Royal London House; Bournemouth University; Bournemouth; BH1 3LT

Thank you.

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM

Consent form: Study 'Knowledge and knowing for professional education'

Consent form for involvement in part 2 of the study: Interviews

Name of researcher: Lynne Rutter

Please initial the boxes on this page, and on the reverse side give your consent by signing and filling in your contact details

	Please initial box
1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated March 1st 2010 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to stop at any time, without giving any reason and without my education as a PQ social worker being affected.	
3. I understand that my involvement will be to participate in an interview discussion with the researcher as named above, on my understanding of 'knowledge' and 'knowing' within the context of my course. The interview may take place on an educational or work site, and should take no longer than 60 minutes.	
4. I understand that by participating I agree for any interview to be audio-recorded using a digital recorder. I also understand that anonymity will be provided by the use of a code to identify taped or electronic recordings, interview transcripts and notes. Confidentiality and anonymity will be preserved in all publications by the use of pseudonyms. Names, organisations and places will be changed. I understand that the only personal information that may be used as data in the study from the interviews is gender, prior educational experience and age range.	
5. I understand that interview recordings and consent forms will be retained for a period of 5 years before disposal in line with University Codes of Practice (2004).	
6. I agree to take part in this interview.	

Please turn the page over to complete the consent form…

....

Printed name of participant   Date

Work address:

Work telephone number:

Work e-mail:

When completed please hand to Lynne (or post to me using the stamped addressed envelope provided). I will retain this copy for my records and send you a photocopy of it.

Lynne Rutter   1/3/2010

....

Printed name of researcher   Date   Signature

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this part of the study. Please contact me (Lynne Rutter) on 01202 962019 if you have any queries about this form.

APPENDIX F
CONTENT ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

Content Analysis Framework: CPSP Handbook 2009

Sub question a) which educational approach is followed?

> Record occurrences of key terms within the distinct categories associated with the three educational approaches noted in the literature review.

> **Table 1**. Occurrences: Competency-based: competency; competencies; competences

> **Table 2**. Occurrences: Evidence based practice: EBP; evidence based practice; evidence

> **Table 3**. Occurrences: Reflective: reflect; reflection; reflective; reflecting

Sub question b) what types of knowledge are recognised?

> **Table 4**. Occurrences: Types/sources of knowledge; analyse as:

> - o Formal/ Informal
> - o External/Internal

Sub question c) what do students have to 'do' with 'knowledge'?

> **Table 5.** Record occurrences of theory/practice connection; analyse as:

> - o Technocratic: apply: Post-technocratic: integrate
> - o Deductive/inductive

> **Table 6.** Record occurrences of 'critical' approach to knowledge, theory and practice

Table 1. Occurrences: Competency-based: competency competencies, competences

Handbook Pages:	*Occurrences : Competence/y/cies/ces/*
p.2-3	**ILO 1.** Consolidate and consistently demonstrate in direct work with users of social care services and carers the full range of social work **competencies** across all modules of the National Occupational Standards for Social Work, in the context of one area of specialist practice.
p.2	The focus of the module is on the consolidation of initial professional **competence**, building on the qualifying award within a chosen specialism.
	This module will enable students to demonstrate that they have consolidated their initial **competence** from the point of qualification and can apply that **competence** within an area of specialist practice. It will also provide a foundation for further professional development which will extend and deepen professional **competence** within a chosen specialist context.
p.10	Students Need to Demonstrate CPSP **Competences**
	CPSP students must demonstrate that they have consolidated their initial **competence** from the point of qualification and can apply that **competence** within an area of specialist practice. This will also provide a foundation for further professional development, which will extend and deepen professional **competence** within a chosen specialist context.
p. 16	Continuing Professional Development Review (CPD)
	The purpose of this CPD review is to give the student the opportunity to demonstrate their current **competences** in their specialist area. Students must demonstrate how they have fully integrated the six key roles of the National Occupational Standards into their area of specialist practice, or for practitioners in related professions, applied the six key roles to their development of professional practice. This review should encourage the student to reflect on their development since qualification, to identify in particular *how* the student has acquired new skills, knowledge and **competence** in their specialist area of practice.

p.20	Practice Analysis. The study must show a level of critical and reflective analysis, which demonstrates confidence and **competence** at post qualifying level.

Table 2. Occurrences: Evidence based practice: EBP/ evidence based practice; evidence

Handbook Pages:	*Occurrences: EBP/evidence*
p.23	Practice Analysis Specialist Area Mental Health - It is therefore a requirement for social workers undertaking the specialist award in mental health to develop and evidence their competence in the following areas of knowledge and skill:- Facilitating **evidence-based** and value-based intervention that recognise the knowledge, needs and aspirations of service users, their families, children and young people and carers.

Table 3. Occurrences: Reflective: Reflect/ion/ive/ing

Handbook Pages	*Occurrences: Reflect/ion/ive/ing;*
p.3 and throughout	**ILO4**. Use **reflection** and analysis to think critically about their own practice in the context of relevant codes of practice, professional ethics and in the principles of diversity, equality and social inclusion in a wide range of situations including those associated with inter-agency and inter-professional working.
p.16	CPD. This review should encourage the student to **reflect** on their development since qualification, to identify. It is essential that this is a **reflective** account of a student's developmental progress since qualifying and not simply factual and descriptive.
p.18	The student is required to write a Practice Analysis **reflecting** on and analysing a current or completed piece of work undertaken within the last three years.
p.19-20	Practice Analysis - The study must show a level of critical and **reflective** analysis, which demonstrates confidence and competence at post qualifying level. One of the key aspects of this Practice Analysis is that it provides the opportunity for the student to link theory to practice and to critically **reflect** on the work within a broad theoretical framework.
p.20	Practice Analysis . The introduction should lead the reader into the themes and issues which provide the focus for the Practice Analysis. The study must show a level of critical and **reflective** analysis, which demonstrates confidence and competence at post qualifying level. This is not a description of the case and its outcome, but a fully integrated and evaluative piece of work.

	The detail of what happened on the case is not necessary. It is the quality of **reflection** and the critical analysis using relevant theory that is essential.
p.42	Appendix D. Continuing Professional Development Pro-forma Please use this format to present your **reflective** analysis of your development of competence in the key roles within your specialist area of practice.
p.55. App. E	Appendix E. **Reflecting** on the Practice Analysis – all relevant
p. 126 App. O W1 OHPs and p.142 W2 OHPs	What **is a Reflective** Practitioner? Someone who shows: • Understanding and self-awareness • Openness to different ideas- able to apply theory and research • Sensitivity and empathy • Not being a 'technocrat' • Self evaluation
p. 139 App. O W2 OHPs	OHP -Model to help Practice Analysis – last point **Reflection** on Practice should be integrated throughout the Practice analysis
p. 142 App. O W2 OHPs	**Reflective** Writing Using 'I'

Table 4. Occurrences: Types/sources of knowledge

Handbook Pages:	**Occurrences: Types/sources of knowledge**	**Categories**: **Formal/informal** **External/internal**
p.2-3 and throughout	ILOs 2. Critically evaluate the effectiveness of their practice using a **relevant knowledge base**, including an understanding of legal and policy contexts and appropriate **research**.	Formal; external
	3. Critically review **knowledge and theoretical frameworks** relevant to their specialist area and demonstrate an understanding of how this **knowledge** can be systematically applied to support problem solving in complex and unpredictable situations.	Formal ; external
	4. Use reflection and analysis to think critically about their own practice in the context of relevant **codes of practice, professional ethics** and in the principles of diversity, equality and social inclusion in a wide range of situations including those associated with inter-agency and inter-professional working.	2 x Formal; external
p. 8-9	**Codes of Practice** listed Their practice must be founded on, informed by and capable of being judged against a clear **value base.**	Formal ; external

p.18	They need to define the context of the piece of work and integrate **research, theory, law** and **policy** into their Practice Analysis.	4 x Formal; 4 x external
p.19	Focusing on these 'pivotal' points to identify **the knowledge base used, i.e. the relevant legal** and **policy framework; research and social work theory;**	4 x Formal; 4 x external
p.55 App. E	Then we can look more carefully at the reasons behind our actions and decisions. As we start to ask 'why' we begin to *analyse* these decisions and actions, and we can begin to note down the **knowledge (theory, experience)** that has underpinned them, any **information (research, colleagues)** This can take some time – especially tracking back to theoretical knowledge, because most practitioners are using a combination of approaches mixed with **their experiential or practice knowledge.** The Practice Analysis's main aim is to show and evidence **your practice knowledge**, the understanding and application of any **theory** or **research,** and professional development that has informed them, and the **policies** or **legislation** that provided frameworks and boundaries for them.	2 x Formal; 3 x external 2 x Informal; 1 x internal Informal; internal Informal 4 x Formal ; external
p.57 App. E	What **knowledge** base underpinned or informed this understanding and my decisions and actions and how was this knowledge adapted for the situation? • **method/theory/definitions** • **research/new information in this area** • **policy** or **legal framework** Suggested stages This is definitely not a prescriptive list and it may not be compatible with the way you work. Not all the	4 x Formal; external

	questions will be relevant to your experiences. Use it only as a guide. 1. Think about your practice - which areas can best show how you have consolidated your level of competence with your specialist area of practice. 2. Decide on an appropriate case on which to base your 'Practice Analysis'. 3. Write out brief notes on the chronology of events or give an overview of what happened. 4. Look through the chronology or overview and decide which pivotal points/events/instances can best show **your practice development and knowledge areas**. Remember the more you choose the less words you will have to fully analyse them.	Informal ; internal
Throughout	Adherence to **Codes of Practice** (values and ethics)	Formal; external
p.124 App. O W1 OHPs	**Continuing Professional Development Review** – bullet point 5: • Explicitly demonstrate adherence to **codes of practice**	Formal; external

p.125 App. O
 	
W1 OHPs
	Planning your Practice Analysis – bullet point 3
	
	• Focus on these pivotal points for the analysis:
	   • identify knowledge base
	   • **policy** and **leg**
	   • **theory** and **research**
	   • social work methods
	   • specialist **knowledge and skills** (refer to handbook)
		4 x Formal; external

	Planning your Practice Analysis – bullet point 4: • Consider **Codes of Practice** and **social work values**	Informal; internal 2x Formal; external
	Codes of Practice for Social Care Workers – detailed on 2 OHPs - and ref to GSCC	Formal; external

pp. 128-9 App. O
 	
W1 OHPs
 	
p. 126 & repeated p. 141 App. O
 	
W1 and W2 OHPs
	What evidence?
	
	   • **Theory** underpins practice
	   • **Research** informs practice
	   • **Policy** and **legislation** provides a framework for practice
	   • **Values** guide practice
		4 x Formal; external
		
		Informal; internal

Table 5. Record occurrences of theory/practice connection

Handbook Pages:	Occurrences: theory/practice connection	Categories: Technocratic / Post technocratic	Categories: Deductive / Inductive
p.2-3	ILO 3. **Critically review** knowledge and theoretical frameworks relevant to their specialist area and demonstrate an understanding of how this knowledge can be **systematically applied** to support problem solving in complex and unpredictable situations.	T	Deductive
p.16	CPD - Some appropriate theory should be **included** along with explicit adherence to professional codes of practice.	T	
p.18	The Practice Analysis must relate to direct work with a service user(s). They need to define the context of the piece of work and **integrate** research, theory, law and policy into their Practice Analysis.	PT	Inductive
P.19	One of the key aspects of this Practice Analysis is that it provides the opportunity for the student to **link** theory to practice and to critically reflect on the work within a broad theoretical framework. Focusing on these 'pivotal' points to identify the knowledge base used, i.e. the relevant legal and policy framework; research and social work theory; **linking** this to the practice is essential.	T	Inductive
p.20	Practice Analysis - It is the quality of reflection and the critical analysis [of practice] **using** relevant theory that is essential.	T	Inductive
p.55 App. E	The Practice Analysis's main aim is to **show and evidence** your practice knowledge, the **understanding** and **application** of any theory or research, and professional development.	T/PT	

P.55 App. E	Then we can look more carefully at the reasons behind our actions and decisions. As we start to ask 'why' we begin to analyse these decisions and actions, and we can begin to **note** down the knowledge (theory, experience) that has **underpinned** them, any information (research, colleagues) that has **informed** them, and the policies or legislation that **provided frameworks and boundaries for** them.	T	Inductive
p.57	What knowledge base **underpinned** or **informed** this understanding and my decisions and actions and how was this knowledge **adapted** for the situation? • method/theory/definitions • research/new information in this area • policy or legal framework	T PT	Inductive
p.58	What were the issues of discrimination/oppression/disadvantage/ inequality or injustice? Name them and **relate** to any theory/definitions on the subject.	PT	Inductive
p.124 App. O W1 OHPs	**CPD review – bullet point 3** • **Integrate** theory into your reflection	PT	Inductive

Table 6. Record occurrences of 'critical' approach to knowledge, theory and practice

Handbook Pages:	**Occurrences: 'Critical' approach to knowledge: theory and practice**
p.2-3	ILOs 2. **Critically** evaluate the effectiveness of their **practice** using a relevant knowledge base, including an understanding of legal and policy contexts and appropriate research. 3. **Critically** review **knowledge** and **theoretical frameworks** relevant to their specialist area and demonstrate an understanding of how this knowledge can be systematically applied to support problem solving in complex and unpredictable situations. 4. Use reflection and analysis to **think critically** about their own **practice** in the context of relevant codes of practice, professional ethics and in the principles of diversity, equality and social inclusion in a wide range of situations including those associated with inter-agency and inter-professional working.
pp 18-19	**The** critical **evaluation and analysis of the practice in question is essential as this is a post-qualifying award and it is expected that the work be written at a University Level H standard (Degree level 3rd year).**
p.56 App. E	Then we can begin to **critically examine** these decisions and actions against social work values/ethics, and our original aims and objectives, and evaluate this experience in terms of what was achieved in these respects. **Critically evaluate** these reasons and the eventual outcome.
p. 125 App. O *W1 OHPs and* *p.139 App. O W2 OHPs*	Planning Your Practice Analysis – last bullet point: • **Evaluate practice** – outcome, learning, strengths, weaknesses

APPENDIX G

DRAFT QUESTIONNAIRE – TEST COMMENTS

Post-Qualifying Social Work - CPSP Unit

Questionnaire Survey – Social Work Knowledge

This is a questionnaire to collect your views and previous experience. This is an anonymous survey so please don't write your name on it. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

Q 1. Please list different types of professional knowledge
Text books. Journals. Policy and procedures, senior members of staff, legal department, colleagues and professionals from other agencies. Government information and guidelines. Legislation. Research. On line information. Knowledge gained through experience of case work on placement and in post. Training courses, workshops, conferences and seminars. Leaflets and small publications from voluntary agencies. I am listing sources as well as types - is that ok?

*Please **tick a box** to **indicate yes or no**.*	**Yes**	*No*
Q 2. Do you think everything you listed above will be considered equally authoritative on this PQ programme?		X
If you answered 'no' please go to question 3; if you answered 'yes' please go to question 4 (overleaf)		

Q 3. Which do you think will be considered…	*Please **list one type or source** in each box below…*

…the most authoritative type or source of knowledge on this programme	Government guidelines, textbooks and journal articles, good quality research, information provided by specialist voluntary organisations underpinned by research.
and the least authoritive type or source of knowledge on this programme	On line information, as this can vary in quality and is not always supported by research.

Please **add any additional comments** *if you wish*

I like to collect as much information as I can on areas of interest and draw on elements from a variety of sources. The internet provides access to a wide range of information but does need to be used with care. The quality of internet sources varies considerably.

Please **tick a box** *to* **indicate yes or no.**	**Yes**	*No*
Q 4. In written academic work have you ever critically analysed (i.e. appraised or evaluated) more formal types of knowledge, e.g. theories, models, research, law?	X	

Please **add any additional comments** *if you wish*

In my assignments for my Social work Degree.

*Please **tick a box** to **indicate yes or no.***	**Yes**	*No*
Q 5. In written academic work have you ever critically reflected on (i.e. appraised or evaluated) the knowledge gained from practice experience?	X	
*Please **add any additional comments** if you wish*		
Yes, both within my assignments while on placement while studying for my degree and within my assignments for the Consolidation Unit.		

*Please **tick a box** to **indicate yes or no.***	**Yes**	*No*
Q 6. In written academic work have you ever linked more formal types of knowledge with knowledge gained from practice experience?	X	
*Please **add any additional comments** if you wish*		
I was encouraged to reflect upon my learning, linking theories to practice and to critically analyse outcomes to see how tasks could have been done differently and to learn and build on the learning from my practice experience.		

*Please **tick a box** to **show** the **most appropriate statement.***	
Q 7. Which of the two following statements best describes the way you tackle an assignment?	
a) *When writing an assignment I usually begin by looking for the ideas and evidence from theory/research/ law/policy I can include and then think about how I can put it together.*	
or	

b*) When writing an assignment I usually begin by thinking about what I want to say and then look for ideas and evidence from theory /research/ legislative/policy relating to that.*	X
*Please **add any additional comments** if you wish*	

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire

X

APPENDIX H
DRAFT QUESTIONNAIRE –
PILOT COMMENTS

Post Qualifying Social Work - CPSP Unit

Questionnaire Survey – Social Work Knowledge

This is a questionnaire to collect your views and previous experience. This is an anonymous survey so please don't write your name on it. **There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.**

Q1. Please list different types or sources of professional knowledge
Appears quite a broad catch-all notion

Q2. Do you think everything you listed above will be considered equally authoritative on this PQ programme?

Perceptive questions

Don't understand 'authoritative'

Change wording to 'valid', and below

*Please **tick a box** to **indicate yes or no.***	**Yes**	**No**
	❏	❏

If you answered 'no' please go to question 3; if you answered 'yes' please go to question 4 (overleaf)

Q 3. Which do you think will be considered…	*Please list one type or source in each box below…*
…the most authoritative type or source of knowledge on this programme	
and the least authoritative type or source of knowledge on this programme	
*Please **add any additional comments to clarify or illustrate your answer** if you wish below*	

PTO

Q 4. In written academic work have you ever critically analysed (i.e. appraised or evaluated) more formal types of knowledge, e.g. theories, models, research, law?		
*Please **tick a box** to **indicate yes or no.***	**Yes**	**No**
	❏	❏
*Please **add any additional comments to clarify or illustrate your answer** if you wish below*		
Appeared odd wording – change 'Have you ever' – to' Have you had experience of'? Discussion showed a lot of complexity on how it was done – some use more theory and others use their experience from practice to do this - need to capture both ways here		

Q 5. In written academic work have you ever critically reflected on (i.e. appraised or evaluated) the knowledge gained from practice experience?		
*Please **tick a box** to **indicate yes or no.***	**Yes**	**No**
	❏	❏
*Please **add any additional comments to clarify or illustrate your answer** if you wish below*		
Discussion and written comment reveal they are more used to the phrase 'reflection on practice'; - Need to split this up – have they experience of reflecting on practice; and do they then critically analyse their practice using their experience and/or theory. Need to expand question to capture both ways here again.		

Q 6. In written academic work have you ever linked more formal types of knowledge with knowledge gained from practice experience?		
*Please **tick a box** to **indicate yes or no.***	**Yes**	**No**
	❏	❏
*Please **add any additional comments to clarify or illustrate your answer** if you wish below*		
Discussion reveals that the wording seemed odd again – they are more used to the phrase 'applying theory to practice', even when they meant integration or linking. Need to change wording. Q 4- 6 Yes/no answers not enough – did need the space to expand.		

Q 7. *Which of the two following statements best describes the way you tackle an assignment*	
Please **tick a box** to **show** the **most appropriate statement.**	
a) *When writing an assignment I usually begin by looking for the ideas and evidence from theory/research/ law/policy I can include and then think about how I can put it together.*	❏
Or	
b*) When writing an assignment I usually begin by thinking about what I want to say and then look for ideas and evidence from theory /research/ law/policy relating to that.*	❏
Please **add any additional comments to clarify or illustrate your answer** *if you wish below*	
Ran out of time to discuss this one.	

Everyone - Need more time to complete it

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire – please hand in to Lynne before you leave.

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE – FINAL VERSION

Post-Qualifying Social Work - CPSP Unit

Questionnaire – Social Work Knowledge

This is a questionnaire to collect your views and previous experience. It is an anonymous survey so please don't write your name on it. **There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.**

Q 1. Please list different types or sources of professional knowledge below:

Q 2. **Do you think everything you listed above will be considered equally valid on this PQ programme?**		
*Please **tick a box** to **indicate yes or no**.*	**Yes** ❏	**No** ❏

If you answered 'no' please go to question 3; if you answered 'yes' please go to question 4 (overleaf)

Q 3. Which do you think will be considered…	*Please write at least one of your types or sources in each box below…*
a)…the *most* valid type or source of knowledge on this programme	

b)… the *least* valid type or source of knowledge on this programme	

Please add any additional comments to clarify or illustrate your answer if you wish below

	Yes	No
Q 4. Have you experience of reflecting on your practice in previous academic work?	❏	❏

	Yes	No
Q 5. Have you experience of 'applying theory to practice' (i.e. using theory to inform your practice) in previous academic work?	❏	❏

	Yes	No
Q 6 a. Have you experience of critically analysing your practice /experiential knowledge in previous academic work?	❏	❏
Q 6 b. If yes, have you experience of doing this using formal types of knowledge (e.g. theory, research, policy, legislation)?	❏	❏

	Yes	No
Q 7. Have you experience of constructing / building your own 'practice theories' in previous academic work?		

	❏	❏

	Yes	No
Q 8 a. Have you experience of critically analysing formal types of knowledge (e.g. theory, research, policy, legislation) in previous academic work?	❏	❏
Q 8 b. If yes, have you experience of doing this using your practice/experiential knowledge or your values?	Yes ❏	No ❏

Please add any additional comments to clarify or illustrate your answers to questions 4-8 if you wish below

Q 9. Which of the two following statements best describes the way you tackle academic written work?	
*Please **tick a box** to **show** the **most appropriate statement.***	
a) I usually begin by looking for published ideas and evidence (e.g. theory/ research/ law/ policy) and then think about how I can put them together.	❏
or	
b) I usually begin by developing what I want to say and then look for published ideas and evidence (e.g. theory/research/law/policy) relating to that.	❏
Please add any additional comments to clarify or illustrate your answer if you wish below	

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire – please hand it in before you leave.

APPENDIX J

CPSP PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT

CPSP Programme Assessment

Programme Details

Each student is required to produce the following in their portfolio:

Part A:

1. Curriculum Vitae (from the point of professional qualification)   (1,000 Max)
2. Continuing Professional Development Review (4,000 Max) (ILO 1)

Part B:

3. Practice Analysis (5,000 Max) (ILO 2-4)
4. Third Party Testimony

These four components will form the submission of the portfolio. All elements within the portfolio must be of a pass standard to achieve an overall pass.

For students who have already completed a PQ1 programme from another institution, they will be required to submit their portfolio alongside part B of this module (i.e. a Practice Analysis and Third Party Testimony) within their chosen specialist area.

Note: It is essential that all evidence is **anonymised** throughout the Portfolio and including third party Testimony and this is the student's responsibility. You must state that all names have been anonymised, i.e. "All names have been changed to protect confidentiality".

Practice Analysis - 5000 words

The Practice Analysis is an opportunity for the student to demonstrate Intended Learning Outcomes 2-4 within their own Specialist area, i.e. Childcare, Mental

Health and Working with Adults. In addition to the generic ILO 2-4 below, students must also demonstrate the requirements for their own specialist area. These can be found on page 21 Working with Adults; page 23 Mental Health; Page 26 Childcare.

It is essential that students read these requirements.

Intended Learning Outcomes 2-4:

2. Critically evaluate the effectiveness of their practice using a relevant knowledge base, including an understanding of legal and policy contexts and appropriate research.

3. Critically review knowledge and theoretical frameworks relevant to their specialist area and demonstrate an understanding of how this knowledge can be systematically applied to support problem solving in complex and unpredictable situations.

4. Use reflection and analysis to think critically about their own practice in the context of relevant codes of practice, professional ethics and in the principles of diversity, equality and social inclusion in a wide range of situations including those associated with inter-agency and inter-professional working.

The student is required to write a Practice Analysis reflecting on and analysing a current or completed piece of work undertaken within the last three years. The Practice Analysis must relate to direct work with a service user(s). They need to define the context of the piece of work and integrate research, theory, law and policy into their Practice Analysis. The critical evaluation and analysis of the practice in question is essential as this is a post-qualifying award and it is expected that the work be written at a University Level H standard (Degree level 3rd year).

One of the key aspects of this Practice Analysis is that it provides the opportunity for the student to link theory to practice and to critically reflect on the work within a broad theoretical framework. It is essential that the student demonstrates an explicit adherence to Codes of Practice and to the provision of ethically sound practice. Students must be able to demonstrate an understanding of anti-discriminatory practice and their own adherence to it.

As a first step in preparation, they may wish to undertake for themselves a casework analysis or a chronology. It is advised then to identify 'pivotal' events/instances within the piece of practice, i.e. to highlight issues/ dilemmas/interests that arose for them as a practitioner when analysing the piece of practice. It is essential that all the following points are addressed: -

- Focusing on these 'pivotal' points to identify the knowledge base used, i.e. the relevant legal and policy framework; research and social work theory; linking this to the practice is essential. The method(s) used also need to be discussed.

- Focus on the Codes of Practice and requirements and apply these to the practice. Draw out particular requirements and demonstrate how these were addressed in practice.

- Demonstrate how the Practice Analysis is located within the broader context of social work and social policy.

- Students should fully reference the knowledge used on a separate bibliography at the end of your Practice Analysis. It is essential to use the Harvard style of referencing **(Appendix L page 106)** to accurately and appropriately cite relevant references, law and policy, and to include a full bibliography.

The introduction should lead the reader into the themes and issues which provide the focus for the Practice Analysis. The study must show a level of critical and reflective analysis, which demonstrates confidence and competence at post qualifying level. This is not a description of the case and its outcome, but a fully integrated and evaluative piece of work. The detail of what happened on the case is not necessary. It is the quality of reflection and the critical analysis using relevant theory that is essential. Please refer to **Appendix E page 56** for guidance on reflecting on your Practice Analysis

APPENDIX K

INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDE

Interview Guide: **Study 'Knowledge and knowing for professional education'**

Researcher - Lynne Rutter

Introduction

- Introduce **myself; state** - I do not take part in CPSP marking – separate process to this research

- The **aim of the study** is to improve methods of preparing and developing candidates like yourselves to deal with, use, and integrate the many different types of knowledge (e.g. theory, research, practice wisdom, legislation)

- The **aim of the interviews** is to see how candidates view and use different types of knowledge in their written assignments; **there are no 'right or wrong' answers** – if something mentioned, it does not mean it was necessary to have done it; will be informal in style

- I am **interested** in what writing the CPSP practice analysis was like for you – the issues involved in writing it. I'll ask a few basic questions to start us off – please feel free to refer to your work if it helps or ask if you're unsure what I mean

- The interview will **last** no longer than 60 minutes. Please do say if you would like a break during this time or if you wish to end the interview .

Topics:

Previous experience - written anything like the practice analysis before...

Understanding - what/how to do it; what expected/required...

Process - what help/hinder; what like doing it; anything enjoyed or felt good/bad about...

Theory - where fit in; how use/include it; what do = e.g. back-up/justify; challenge/weigh up/evaluate theory/research...

Linking theory/practice – where**;** how...

Practice - able to express/show what you did & thought; your ideas/ understandings ...critical

Reflection – where/how fit? role / purpose... new learning ...

Ending

- Reaffirm confidentiality and use of the information
- Any questions to ask me?
- Would you like to see a summarised copy of the transcript?

Thank you

APPENDIX L

TRANSCRIPT AND FIRST STAGE ANALYSIS

Transcript and first stage analysis: Jane

(Missing sections noted – to do with case study or course details)

Time	L	*First off, have you ever written anything like that before?*	Areas
	J	Well, **for** my degree, because I qualified 2 years ago, so in terms of like academic writing, then um and reflective writing as well then that, that, I kind of like felt quite competent about that and um sort of linking um you know saying something but not saying it but having to think why am I saying that and backing up what I'm saying so that sort of the process of academic and reflective writing really is I felt ok about. Um before I sort of started the practice analysis really- and that **was** doing the degree	1b; 3a
	L	So it seemed very similar	
	J	Yeah yeah yeah	
	L	Did you feel happy with um the amount of information that was given on how to do it?	
	J	Um, **well** I didn't stay for the workshop cos i had a meeting - emergency as it was, but yeah i used the um exemplar that was in the guidance and that was really helpful, really to just have something else there so you could link and say ok I can see that's what they're looking for.	1c
	L	It aligned with what you expected	
	J	Yeah, yeah	
	L	So your degree was about 2 years ago? Did they expect you to do a lot of writing about your placements?	
	J	Well, yes, there was um there was 2 portfolios like one from each year, but also um ... I think it was at least two and possibly 3 ...modules...essays for those modules you had to kind of link to stuff you were doing in placement, so for example when I wrote about assessment intervention I had to write about an assessment that I'd done, so that- within a placement, so you couldn't just write about sort a pretend assessment or a theoretical one you had to sort of say well this is the type of assessments I'm doing on placement and sort of draw from it from there really, so it was kind of almost always..related back to your actual practice within a placement.	
	L	So did you get used to putting examples of practice with theoretical ideas?	
	J	Um, yes, yeah, well, yeah because I suppose .... it was expected to sort of inform your thinking or to explain why you were making a decision- sort of ...to go in a certain way or, ... what perspective you were coming from really so, so yeah, I don't know if that was a conscious thing though or whether it was just because you did it because you had to do it – you know that was what you were told to do in Uni.	3a
	L	And so you transferred the style over into this?	
	J	Yes, yeah, yeah , I think that probably um ...that this would have been very much, very similar to what I would have been writing and the way I would have been writing in, in for my degree, yeah.	1a
	L	So overall you were kind of happy with that?	
	J	Yeah, yeah yeah yeah,	
	L	Because a lot of people feel a lot of tension in doing something that's quite new but obviously with your experience it was different for you.	
	J	Yeah, I think um, I think that- because I actually got a lot out of the practice analysis and in fact of all the module- all of the CPSP this was the bit I got the most out of because I think a lot of the other stuff was quite similar to the reflective and right linking it to GSCC codes of practice and all that – you kind of spend 3 years doing that at Uni so that—was kind of like more of the same whereas this I kind of felt - cos in Uni kind of like you are practising and, but you're learning as well... um and I think here it was really good to just take a piece of work and, and think about well why did I make that decision, what was that all about really because actually what happens when you	2a

		come out, as you know, is that you just kind of hit the ground running and, and it's very easy to just like sort of whoosh that's it – so, because there was a couple of things that came out if this that I wouldn't have possibly realised if I hadn't of done the practice analysis and had that time to think about gosh ... that, you know, like compare 2 pieces of law like for looked after children and for a child protection process and you know, like there's a real gap there - a) in my practice or b) in the process that the local authority or through national guidance, you know, so that was really helpful to me actually to have the opportunity to do that.	
	L	So it was a particular new bit of understanding that you found?	
	J	Yeah, yeah it was new understanding because um I guess if you'd have sat down and err- I just hadn't made the **connection** really because what I thought about in with this... is it all right for me to tell you what this is about ? CASE STUDY DETAIL *MISSING – meeting more frequently/regularly more shared understanding in a looked after process*	2a
	L	How did you write about that understating in your practice analysis – how did you express it?	
	J	Um,. *Looking at PA* I said I explained that if she'd been made subject to plan in line with working together and so I kind of linked it back to what sort of guidelines are um and core groups um, and then I talk about the LAC processes and what those are, um, ...reading "use supervision to talk through the policy procedure and guidelines with my manager...p.6 – the concept of multi agency working developed from those meetings so for example...um...one of our key sort of indicators ... CASE STUDY DETAIL MISSING - *mixed message from all the meetings , weekend activities for mum – multi agency working* I kind of feel that you know, for me that new knowledge what that gave me was more **confidence** in sort of my practice and more confidence in um that ability to sort of speak up and think oh gosh this isn't working and that it's ok to say that it's not working and what can we do to make it different? Yeah so yeah that was good.	2b
	L	You were talking earlier about backing stuff up like sort of the academic style and I'm not saying you **should** but did you feel you also needed to back this new knowledge up in any way or were you able to express it as it came out?	
	J	Um ... I think I **do** try to um I do I mean, when I write doing assessments and stuff I do use my books a lot, you know, and I do think sometimes that for example I put quotes in there about opportunity to develop networks as well as promote you know, so I guess that I do try , yeah I do try to back things up. I think, I just I just think it ... I just think it adds more weight really and sort of helps me to think something through. Um, ... I don't know, don't know to be honest with you, cos I think, other than – I would have **said** that anyway, I was saying that, that just kind of was just a a a an academic way of showing that that's the wording that you're using really. Um, I don't know...	5b, c
	L	So without it, without the theory bits being put in would you still feel it was a justified um, piece of understanding for you... as I say there's no right or wrong....	
	J	...yes, no no no, well, no I like – I like to back things up I do like to back things up – I just- I think that um, I don't know whether that's necessarily true **all** of the time but I think certainly in this process of, you know having to um- and I did think we're operating in an evidence-based arena and we do have to be able to back up what we're saying and to justify why we're sort of making decisions and, and doings things and I suppose sometimes, and this may be down to sort of like lack of experience really, um, is that actually if you, if you know that, that you it kind of like helps you to build that confidence because it's giving you um you know you're not out there on a limb just saying 'oh I think I'll just write this today or just try that, it does sort of give you something really to sort of build from or to	5a, c

		back up what you're saying. .... But I don't know whether that the original idea that I was having – that – that didn't - that came from just actually what was happening out there – you know, and but it, it's only through unpicking it, I think through this process you sort of think ah yes that- that's the bit where you think **that's** multi-agency working – **that's** what we mean when we say that, not just all sitting around a table having a chat about- you know, this multi-agency working is about well, you know this is **me** doing this bit and **you** doing that bit and us actually finding a solution **together** rather than you know just saying it for saying its sake really.	
	L	Yeah	
	J	CASE STUDY DETAIL MISSING I do think that there's buzz words and there's thing you're expected to say and do and stuff and actually in practice that doesn't happen and you know but, yeah, probably I do like to back things up.	3b;5b
	L	Were you like that before your degree?	
	J	Um... well.um well my previous job...I think it's probably been more so because that's the nature of how we were taught on my degree, and I'm actually- because I get very, very sort of not nervous but I've always kind of felt that- really wary that actually as social workers we learn our business on actual people and I think that's quite **scary,** cos that leaves you vulnerable but also you're dealing with vulnerable people and you're learning your job and therefore if you can learn that with like, if you're using theories about our sort of like you can reflect on an- and the practice that you know works or has been known to work, actually that makes it safer for you and also safer for the um for the service user but I ..I... I think also, agh, I think also it's always helped me to sort of, you know, ' clear on role, clear on purpose', you know, so you're not going into somewhere blind, just having a chat with somebody - Why am I here? And **that's** the theory, do you know what I mean, to be absolutely clear about what's the point of this meeting today, you know, is there an end point and so having that sort of, just even that, that **methodology** in your head really that that sort of like theory about that you need to be clear on role clear on your purpose really sort of **helps** me to focus my work really, I think.	5a
15.54	L	Would you say it was a reflective process that was going on while you're writing it?	
	J	Yeah, yeah – I think um and I **like** to reflect , I enjoy supervision, um and can un- you know and I find that I like formal supervision, I also like , you know, just having a chat across a table because then I think that – I guess some of it is about you know you, it's an unknown and uncertain sort of business that we work in and... I just think you want the best for the sort of kids that you're working with and sometimes you're **not**, you can't do it in your own and um, I guess I might be like that in other areas of my life really but I do, I like reflecting and having the opportunity to talk through some of that stuff and for other people to say have you tried that or .. you know so yeah, I would say I'm reflective	5b
	L	Can you better understand things when you're in supervision as well?	
	J	Yes, yeah um and just – just different perspectives – I do I quite, I do really like supervision and I like the whole sort of you know the student-teacher bit you know um where you know – and my supervisor's very very experienced you know so for example my previous job was in Germany and missing *court processes* - to have that space where you can say well I really don't know about that, and you know, cos, is really helpful so I do use supervision for that, but also um what she brings for me is that, you know, 'have you thought about it **that** way' and 'why did you do that', um cos that enables me to feel safe and go 'oh I don't know why I did that'.. because I **did** I had a really I came out of it an initial assessment and thought that	2a; 5b

		was a really crap piece of work, you know and I don't know why I wasn't interested or why it hadn't gone well, you know but I then I was able to say to her like I think that was the worst meeting I've ever had just came away feeling like I'd achieved nothing, you know so therefore what was the purpose of that, you know really and cos I think it is important that you have that space to do that...um... so yeah yeah and you do- and it is, you know I do often come away from supervision thinking oh you know I learnt something today or I found something out or I was able to look at it from a different perspective and to look at that specific experience and just – and I did talk about that in here actually (refers to PA *assignment*) I did actually talk about supervision throughout this practice analysis and how we used it., cos for me that is actually a **key** part -you know one of the biggest parts of my sort of um learning as a practitioner really.	
	L	A lot of people say the same, it's almost part of the process	
	J	Ahhh yeah yeah	
19.17	L	If we can go back to the use of theory there and you say you're using quotes – did you feel happy using the quotes as well as paraphrasing particular ideas?	
	J	Yeah *and so there was a mix?* Yeah, yeah because I think actually um I think ...directly – if the direct quote can say it succinctly what you're trying to get across , that's always good to put in, but actually you know if you can paraphrase it then you've unpicked it, you understand it, yeah... um so yeah, I think I use a mix actually	
19.53	L	Again, there's no right or wrong here do you um, sorry, do um, criticise theory in any way, critique it, or challenge it ?	
	J	Um, I don't know if I'm – I've challenged in here – I've sort of talked about um... *looking at assignment*... when I talked about um, the er... the law and the guidance around looked after children and child protection .. I talked about there being a gap there... so I kind of challenge that – I don't know that I do much of that in here- did I?- I had talked about care and control ...and actually you know um ...the difficulties of actually that in practice, you know cos I think sometimes it's very easy to look at theory and think... to actually then take that out and actually ...ah cos I think for me I'm very **ordered,** ok, I do things in a certain order so if a theory's says well you do x, y and z - if I did x and it went to z when I was out there I don't know how I'd get back to y to then get it back to z, do you know what I mean- I do struggle with that so and I **know** that – um... but ...but yeah well I think theory's there **to** be criticised in that I don't think it's a 'be all and end all' , it's just there for you to just sort **of** to test out stuff really, to try it out and it gives you almost like a framework really in which you can just sort begin to think about things, um because like when we know, I know sort of like with um ... and I do think... I think particularly with social work I do get a bit fed up sometimes in terms of like this professional um our professionalism cos I **do** think it is important we use theory but I think sometimes this notion of us being eclectic and drawing on what we want as we see fit, you know you draw on what you know then and what's easy for you rather than- you know, and I think it can, it's easy to get a mishmash of stuff rather than, you know, and that can make you lose your focus really.	3b; 4a,b
	L	And there's a lot to use really isn't there!	
	J	Yeah because- and there's a different theory for lots of different things really and you're bombarded with all this stuff I think it can be you know jack of all trades, master of none sometimes you know in this work you know but I suppose there are a couple of theories that you know we- child development and um you know attachment theory um which I draw on you know really quite a lot really um and just general person-centred stuff. So er yeah.... which I guess links into our values and ethics as well really	3b
22.49	L	Do you think the course gave you um the ok to sort of challenge theory?	
	J	In this course, yeah, yeah I think um most ...I think um most...	4a,b, c

		courses do and my university course did as well in fact it **actively** encouraged it, you know and I think that- I suppose sometimes I **am** challenging it throughout the CPSP cos I do sort of talk a lot about you know well its easy to say we're multi agency working but **actually** you know when we actually get together, you know it's not as simple as that, you know trying to get people together for a meeting and stuff, so you know it's nice to have a book that says oh you should all be joint working –well actually we all know in practice that's very difficult so um I think there I do talk about that quite a lot really. Um... but then the other side of that as well is like I do feel quite strongly that you know sometimes ...if you're gonna **critique** it then you have to then **take** that next step and say ok if this is a critique what could I do differently then to make it better rather than just falling into the 'it don't work so therefore I'm not gonna use it' brigade, you know. So, if it doesn't work, why doesn't it work, let's find a different way to do it, you know. So...	
24.13	L	Was there anything you didn't feel happy with or didn't go quite right?	
	J	For the practice analysis? *mmm* Um, not in terms of the actual content of it, I felt um, I felt I really it was actually fitting it all in around everything else more than anything- it was more of a practical thing um... but no I actually found it a very sort of therapeutic process really, I think you could probably have written reams and reams and reams and gone on- I think it was um hard to ...not to lose focus of the sort of key things you want to talk about and I think that I am quite ordered and so for me I sort of picked out ok these are the sort of things I'm gonna talk about and then keep to that cos you can find yourself sort of veering off in it and I don't know and I suppose um so that was hard cos there was you know I'd be writing about something and then I'd really like to look at that in more depth really um but in terms of actually doing it no, I didn't cos I quite like, I enjoyed it cos it gave me an opportunity to think about it in a different way really that I **hadn't** been thinking about when I was doing it um and don't know necessarily that I would have done- and I don't know if the outcomes are different now- than what they were– that what they **would** have been if we'd just chugged along doing what we were doing, but actually for me the learning I got out of that I've taken to another case, so rather.. when the same sort of situation occurred again I thought right instead of waiting three months for it sort of not make any progress let's put some multi-agency meetings in **now** , you know and do that, so I kind of feel what I learnt from that I've then been able to then take back with me into sort of the rest of my practice as well. And I think as well what I got from it is just that opportunity to unpick some of the... some of your thinking around stuff really and why you, why I was gonna do it a certain way and also um so for example, *looking at assignment* where we talked about um.... well I kind of think with, ugh- its easy for us to- or perhaps easy for me and I guess I have spoken to other social workers about it – it's easy to get caught up in parents' issues and lose sight of the **child** ... and I think that that was one of the things that came out of this as well for me because actually what I've found as I've talked about parents' issues a lot – and I think that was natural in a way **because** the child was in care so she was **safe** and for me to get the child back home the mum had to sort her issues out um, - but it kind of like brought it out to me that how **easy** it is to get sort of **drawn in** to what's going on for the parent and kind of miss- and then I sort of thought about Baby P and Victoria Climbie because you know I have no doubts social workers are doing the best they can do, but actually it's not a conscious thing, you sit there and you try and engage with the adult cos they're the one you can have the conversation with and it's um, yeah so I did sort of think – it did help me to think through this well actually am I focusing – am I **spending** too much time focusing on what her issues are as opposed to thinking about what's going on for the child?	2a, b

27.56	L	It's quite a deep process going on there really?	
	J	Yeah and it would be nice if you could um you know, this is one of like you know god knows how many cases and you just – it would be nice if you had the opportunity really to do this step-level of analysis really on all your cases.	
	L	You'd probably go mad!	
	J	Well, you would go mad! And actually, you know, I was **so** relieved when it was over – *laughs* – cos it did, it ... overtook my life for sort of a period of time and you just think oh god no I can't do this, you know, anymore, you know, I've got enough to do on my plate, writing up core assessments and getting things done and stuff, you know, to be doing that but **actually** on reflection <mark>it was a really, really, really useful process.</mark>	2b
28.41	L	Do you think with that and the other piece of work you had to do with the key role that it does show your practice as much as it could?	
	J	Um, yeah I think so, I think that um, I think it was um... <mark>you don't realise really sometimes what you are doing, cos you just do it ... um, and to actually sort of sit down and think about that then you kind of feel more confident in what you're doing cos you think gosh yes I did do that and I can-</mark> and to actually to – there wasn't enough words in that either cos you're kind of looking and think oh god I don't think I've got anything to put in that but when you sort of sat down and thought about it I think oh gosh yes, you are doing that which is sort of what you guys were saying right at the beginning you know that you're all doing it anyway it's just a matter of sort of linking it up, you know. So... I hope it shows my practice anyway!	2b
29.30	L	Were you able to talk through your thinking as well as your actions within that practice analysis?	
	J	Yes, I think so, um yeah because I well... I talk about um - *reads -the emergency protection order gives the authorities um authority to retain or remove a child.... p. 2* So this was interesting because <mark>what I realised is that you know, I could show that you know – I knew my thinking- I knew what I was doing but kind of like it was only through this that I was able to sort of like look at it from a different perspective really</mark>. Um, and I did talk about my thinking, um my relationship with the mother, and my thinking... um around how- not how I treated her that's the wrong- my attitude I guess really, um and that I kind of was aware- and I was aware at the time really that sort of my own personal experiences were probably..um....**could** influence my viewpoint, really and I was able to talk about that through there, so that was good., that was good. Yeah, because I remember at the time being quite shocked and angry at her reaction to the situation and I did, I told her to stop blaming other people and um ... and I kind of know that that was my own personal experience sort of coming into play there um...and that can lead to sort of, some negative stereotypical attitudes really and I kind of know that, so yeah it was good because, um yeah <mark>well cos for me if it's gonna be reflective I have to be able to talk through my thinking about a situation, so I hope that was right anyway</mark> ...yeah cos I did use Kolb's model when I talked about that and I did use that in supervision to sort of think through, you know cos I guess I felt, you know, **why** didn't I establish that rapport with her, what happened, what was going on that stopped that and, you know, actually it was probably a bit of her and probably a –you know it's not her role to establish a working alliance with me, it's **my** role to do that so, you know, I was able to sort of like talk through my- I **know** what I was thinking and my thought processes behind sort of like what was going on there	2a
33.05	L	Do you ever find it gets too negative going so deeply?	
	J	What this? <mark>I think I've always had a problem with always having to find what you did wrong, um in social work practice I think we spend you know um and or 'find three things that you could have improved</mark>	2b

		on' well you know actually what's wrong with just saying actually that was a really good piece of work and I'm really proud of what I did there, you know? Um and I don't know that we necessarily promote that enough, I think we're very **eager** to find what we did wrong and to – and I guess I do **understand** that but I think it can lead to you kind of actually ever really being confident about what you're doing because you're always thinking like what could I do better next time. Well, sometimes you're reacting to something that's instant, that's an **emergency** and you know actually that's the best you could do at that time, and I do think there is a lot of emphasis placed on you know 'it couldn't possibly have been a good piece of work you therefore must have' - what could you do better next time sort of thing and I think that's just a recurrent theme. I don't mind it and I think it's important, I suppose I get a bit fed up when it's like – 'find **3** things you could do better' - cos it's like grrrrh – what if it's one thing but it's one thing that really makes a difference to your practice? You know or one piece of knowledge or one bit of understanding that actually that light bulb goes on and you can think –think about what can do and what have achieved- it's always about you know –'3 things'... We try and come from a strengths perspective with service users – but we don't want to do that for ourselves. We would never dream of saying that to our parents and in fact we would probably get told off if we said that – you know cos you'd be making them feel even worse but it's ok to make us as workers feel like that.	
37.45	L	The last bit was about the course really – was there any comments about the course itself or anything else?	
	J	No, I think it's good it's short – I think it needs to be because actually you know we're all incredibly busy ... DETAIL MISSING-*discussion on course*	
42.31	L	Anything else you'd like to say about the practice analysis or your writing?	
	J	Um, I think it was nice to get back into some academic work, it was nice reflective piece of work for me, um, ...it was nice to - I suppose I did come away from some of it thinking – I definitely learnt stuff from it I definitely got something out of that which I think that you know something concrete really in terms of the way I did my practice and also being able to think about different pieces of law, different pieces of guidance , different theories, what was I using , what could I have done differently, what I did well, sort of thing and yeah and it was nice, it was good.	2a

APPENDIX M

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK - JANE

Interview analysis framework: Jane

Missing sections indicated by []; highlighted word/phrases used in Jane's individual account

1. Academic-reflective 'reflection on writing' style

1a. Understanding	1b. Previous experience	1c. Programme handbook use
p.1-2 ...I think that probably um ...that this would have been very much, very <mark>similar</mark> to what I would have been writing and the way I would have been writing in, in for my degree.	*p. 1 ...because I qualified 2 years ago, so in terms of like academic writing, then um and reflective writing as well then that, that, I kind of like felt quite <mark>competent</mark> about that and um sort of linking um you know saying something but not saying it but having to think why am I saying that and backing up what I'm saying so that sort of the process of academic and reflective writing really is I felt ok about.*	*p.1 ...I used the um exemplar that was in the guidance and that was really helpful, really to just have <mark>something</mark> else there so you could link and say ok I can <mark>see that's</mark> <mark>what they're looking for</mark>.*

2. Knowledge production/reflection

2a. Reflection as learning; producing knowledge – whether/what	*2b. Outcome, how feel*
p. 2 I actually got a lot out of the practice analysis and in fact of all ... all of the CPSP this was the bit I got the most out of because [ ] ... I think here it was really good to just take a piece of work and, and think about well why did I make that decision, what was that all about really because actually what happens when you come out, as you know, is that you just kind of hit the ground running and, and it's very easy to just like sort of whoosh that's it....[ ] because <mark>there were a couple of things that came out of this that I wouldn't possibly have realised if I hadn't done the practice analysis and had time to think about</mark> ...[ ] so that was really helpful to me actually to have the opportunity to do that. *p. 2 it was new understanding because ...[ ]I just hadn't made the <mark>connection</mark> really...* *p. 5 ......I did talk about that in here actually [refers to PA assignment] I did actually talk about supervision throughout this practice analysis and how we used it,*	*p. 3 I kind of feel that you know, for me that new knowledge, what that gave me was more <mark>confidence</mark> in sort of my practice and more confidence in um that ability <mark>to sort of speak up</mark> and think oh gosh this isn't working and that it's ok to say that it's not working and what can we do to make it different?* *p.7 ...I actually found it a very sort of <mark>therapeutic</mark> process really...[ ]* *I enjoyed it cos it gave me an opportunity to think about it in a different way ...* *p.8 ...it was a really, really, really useful process...*

cos for me that is actually a **key** part -you know one of the biggest parts of my sort of um learning as a practitioner really.

p.7 it gave me an ==opportunity to think about it in a different way really== that I **hadn't** been thinking about when I was doing it um and don't know necessarily that I would have done- and I don't know if the outcomes are different now- than what they were– that what they **would** have been if we'd just chugged along doing what we were doing- but actually for me the learning I got out of that I've taken to ==another case==

p.7 ...so I kind of feel what I learnt from that I've then been able to then ==take back== with me ==into== sort of the rest of ==my practice== as well. And I think as well what I got from it is just that opportunity to unpick some of the... some of your thinking around stuff really and why you, why I was gonna do it a certain way...

p.8 ...what I realised is that you know, I could show that you know – I knew my thinking- I knew what I was doing but kind of like it was only through this that I was able to sort of like look at it from a ==different perspective== really

p.9...well cos for me if it's gonna be reflective I have to be able to ==talk through my **thinking**== about a ==situation==, so I hope that was right anyway....

p.10- I suppose I did come away from some of it thinking – I definitely ==learnt stuff== from it I definitely got something out of that [ ] something concrete really in terms of the way I did my practice.

p.8... you don't realise really sometimes ==what you are doing==, cos you just do it ... um, and to actually sort of sit down and think about that then ==you kind of feel more confident in what you're doing== cos you think gosh yes I did do that and I can...

p.9.... I think I've always had a problem with always having to find what you did wrong, um, in social work practice I think we spend you know um and or 'find three things that you could have improved on' well you know actually what's wrong with just saying actually that was a really good piece of work and I'm really proud of what I did there, you know. I think we're very **eager** to find what we did wrong and to – and I guess I do **understand** that but I think it can lead to you kind of actually ever really being confident about what you're doing because you're always thinking like what could I do better next time[ ].

I don't mind it and I think it's important, I suppose I get a bit fed up when it's like – 'find **3** things you could do better'- cos it's like grrrrh- what if it's one thing but it's one thing that really makes a difference to your practice? [ ] We try and come from a strengths perspective with service users – but we don't want to do that for ourselves.

3. Theory-practice integration in writing

3a.How - connection process/ method	3b.Issues
p. 1 ...and um sort of ==linking== um you know ==saying something but not saying it but having to think why am I saying that and backing up== what I'm saying so that sort of the process of academic and reflective writing really is I felt ok about.	p. 4. I do think that there's buzz words and there's things you're expected to say and do and stuff and actually in practice that doesn't happen.
p.1 ... it was expected to sort of ==inform== your thinking or to ==explain== why you were making a	p.6 ...I think particularly with social work I do get a bit fed up sometimes in terms of like this professional um our professionalism cos I **do** think it is important we use theory but I think sometimes this notion of us being ==eclectic== and drawing on

decision- sort of ...to go in a certain way or, ... what ==perspective== you were coming from really so, so yeah, I don't know if that was a conscious thing though or whether it was just because you did it because you had to do it – you know that was what you were told to do in Uni.	*what we want as we see fit, you know you draw on what you know then and what's easy for you rather than- you know, and I think it can, it's easy to get a ==mishmash of stuff== rather than, you know, and that can make you ==lose== your ==focus== really.* *p. 6 ...and there's a different theory for lots of different things really and ==you're bombarded with all this stuff== I think it can be you know ==jack of all trades, master of none==.*

4. Authority – theory/others

4a. Whether question/challenge	**4b. What/when/how**	**4c. Why/why not**
p.5 ...==I don't know== if I'm ... I've challenged in here. *p. 6 ... I do ==struggle== with that [ ]* *well I think ==theory's there to be criticised== in that I don't think ==it's a 'be all and end all'== , it's just there for you to just sort **of-** ==to test out stuff really== , to try it out and it gives you almost like a ==framework== really in which you can just sort begin to think about things...*	*p. 5 ...I've sort of talked about um... looking at assignment... when I talked about um, the er... the law and the guidance around looked after children and child protection... I talked about there being a ==gap== there ... so I kind of challenge that – I don't know that I do much of that in here- did I?* *p. 6 ...I suppose sometimes I **am** challenging it throughout the CPSP cos I do sort of talk a lot about you know well it's easy to say we're multi agency working but **actually** you know when we actually get together, you know it's not as simple as that...* *p. 6–7... if you're gonna critique it then you have to then take that next step and say ok if this is a critique then ==what could I do differently then to make it better== rather than just falling into the 'it don't work so therefore I'm not gonna use it' brigade.*	Do you think the course gave you um the ok to sort of challenge theory ? *p. 6 In this course, yeah, yeah [ ] I think um most... courses ==do== and my university course did as well in fact it **==actively encouraged it==** , you know.*

5. Justification - knowledge; knowing

5a. Whether - need to do it	5b. Doing it - using theory or 'others' - how	5c.By self
*p. 3 I don't know whether that's necessarily true **all** of the time but I think certainly in this process of, you know having to um- and I did think we're operating in an evidence-based arena and we do have to be able to back up what we're saying and to justify why we're sort of making decisions and, and doings things and I suppose sometimes, and this may be down to sort of like lack of experience really, um, is that actually if you, if you know that, that you it kind of like helps you to build that confidence because it's giving you um you know you're not out there on a limb just saying 'oh I think I'll just write this today or just try that, it does sort of give you something really to sort of build from or to back up what you're saying. .*	*p. 3...yeah I do try to back things up...I think it adds more weight really and sort of helps me to think something through.* *p.4 ...probably I do like to back things up.* *... I enjoy supervision, [ ] and I find that I like formal supervision, I also like, you know, just having a chat across a table because then I think that – I guess some of it is about you know you, it's an unknown and uncertain sort of business that we work in [ ] you can't do it in your own.*	*p.3 ...I don't know, I don't know to be honest with you, cos I think, other than – I would have **said** that anyway, I was saying that, that just kind of [ ] academic way of showing that that's the wording that you're using really.* *p. 3 ...the original idea that I was having – that – that didn't - that came from just actually what was happening out there.*
*p.4...I think it's probably been more so because that's the nature of how we were taught on my degree.[ ] because I get very very sort of not nervous but [ ] really wary that actually as social workers we learn our business on actual people and I think that's quite **scary**, cos that leaves you vulnerable but also you're dealing with vulnerable people and you're learning your job and therefore [ ] if you're using theories [ ] and the practice that you know works or has been known to work, actually that makes it safer for you and also safer [ ] for the service user [ ] I think also it's always helped me to sort of, you know, ' clear on role, clear on purpose', [ ] so you're not going into somewhere blind, just having a chat with somebody - [ ] so having that sort of, [ ] that **methodology** in your head really [ ] sort of **helps** me to focus my work really...*	*p5. I do really like supervision and I like the whole sort of you know the student-teacher bit you know [ ] to have that space where you can say well I really don't know about that, and you know, cos, is really helpful [ ] what she brings for me is that, you know, 'have you thought about it **that** way' and 'why did you do that', um cos that enables me to feel safe and go 'oh I don't know why I did that' [ ].* *I do often come away from supervision thinking oh you know I learnt something today or I found something out or I was able to look at it from a different perspective and to look at that specific experience...*	

APPENDIX N

UNIT SPECIFICATION - EWBL

UNIT SPECIFICATION

Unit Number

Unit title	**ENABLING WORK-BASED LEARNING – THE FACILITATION AND ASSESSMENT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
Level	**H**
Credit value	**20 credits**
ECTS	**20 credits**

_____

Intended Learning Outcomes

Having completed this unit the student is expected to:

1. To organise and critically evaluate opportunities for the demonstration of assessed competence in practice.

2. To enable learning and professional development in others by selecting, implementing and critically evaluating appropriate learning and teaching strategies in a work environment.

3. To manage the assessment of learners in practice, using and critically evaluating an appropriate range of methods, basing assessment decisions on relevant evidence and using professional judgment to resolve any inconsistencies in the evidence available.

4. To demonstrate the ability to critically apply appropriate theoretical frameworks in practice.

5. To demonstrate critical reflection on own practice, particularly with regard to the application of an appropriate professional and personal value base.

6. To demonstrate the competences specified by the General Social Care Council for Practice Education as part of the Specialist Award for Post Qualifying Social Work Education.

Learning and Teaching Methods

Student learning will be supported by a series of workshops and through a self-managed workbook. Workshops will provide opportunities for group work and discussion.

Assessment

Definitive Assessment Information:

All learning outcomes will be assessed via two individual pieces of written coursework (4,000 words & 1,000 words). Both coursework pieces must be of a pass standard for students to pass the unit.

Indicative Assessment Information:

- **Summative Assessment**

All learning outcomes will be summatively assessed through a portfolio containing two pieces of coursework:

- A reflective assignment (4,000 words) (ILOs 1-5)

- A record of competence workbook (1,000 word equivalent) (ILO 6). This assessment element will be marked on a PASS / FAIL basis.

- **Formative Assessment**

Students will be formatively assessed against some of the professional requirements (ILO 6) via presentations to the student group and through feedback on the completion of part 1 of the competence workbook.

Indicative Content

- Introduction to adult teaching, learning and assessment theories and methods

- Identification of learning needs and the use of learning agreements

- The evaluation of assessment information, reaching assessment judgments based on evidence and the provision of feedback

- The development of effective teaching / learning relationships including working with power and difference

- The management and organization of learning in the workplace

- Working in partnership with others to support learning and facilitate effective assessment through the creation of an appropriate learning environment

- Standardisation of assessment

- Evaluation of learning and contribution to a learning organisation

Indicative Key Learning Resources (*Core texts)

Books

* key texts

BECKETT, C. and MAYNARD, A. 2005. *Values and Ethics in Social Work*. London: Sage.

*BEVERLEY, A., and WORSLEY, A., 2007. *Learning and Teaching in Social Work Practice*. London: Palgrave.

BROOKFIELD, S. 1987. *Developing Critical Thinkers. Challenging Adults to Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

CREE, V.E. & MACAULAY, C., 2000. *Transfer of Learning in Professional and Vocational Education*. London: Routledge

DOMINELLI, L. 2002. *Anti-oppressive Social Work Theory and Practice*. London: Palgrave.

*HAWKINS, P. & SHOHET, R. 2000. *Supervision in the Helping Professions*. 2nd ed. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

HEALY, K., 2005. *Social Work Theories in Practice*. London: Palgrave.

MOON, J. 2000. *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development. Theory and Practice*. London: Kogan Page.

PARKER, J., 2004. *Effective Practice Learning in Social Work*. Exeter: Learning Matters.

PRITCHARD, J. 1995. *Good Practice in Supervision.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publication.

*ROGERS, A. 2002. Teaching Adults. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

ROLFE, G., FRESHWATER, D., and JASPER, M., 2001. *Critical Reflection for Nursing and the Helping Professions.* London: Palgrave.

SCHON, D. 1998. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. 3rd ed. Aldershot: Ashgate Arena.

*SHARDLOW, S. & DOEL, M. 1996. *Practice Learning and Teaching*. London: Macmillan.

THOMPSON, N. 2001. *Anti-Discriminatory Practice.* London.: Macmillan

THOMPSON, N. 2003. *Promoting Equality.* 2nd ed. London: Macmillan.

*TSUI, M. 2005. *Social Work Supervision, Contexts and Concepts.* London: Sage.

WALKER, J., CRAWFORD, K., and PARKER, J., 2008. *Practice Education in Social Work: A Handbook for Practice Teachers, Assessors and Educators*. Exeter: Learning Matters.

YELLOLY & HENKEL. 1995. *Learning and Teaching in Social Work. Towards Reflective Practice.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publications.

Journals

British Journal of Social Work

Community Care

Journal of Advanced Nursing

Journal of Practice Teaching in Social Work and Health

Learning in Health and Social Care

Web-based books and journals and other online resources

Use the PQSW 'Information Skills' Handbook.

Extract from Unit handbook

The Unit involves a total of five days of learning. This consists of attendance at workshops totalling 3 days, together with self-managed learning based on support material provided by the University. The workshops will provide the opportunity for learners to come together, share ideas and experiences in a structured environment. The workshops introduce and encourage critical debate about some of the key themes involved in enabling work-based learning and provide an opportunity to explore some of the work carried out independently by students.

Workshop 1.

This workshop will introduce students to the Unit, the self-managed learning material and other requirements for the Unit. It will critically explore key ideas around work-based /practice learning and the role of the practice educator. This workshop will also introduce and critically explore some of the key themes in managing and organising work-based learning.

Workshop 2.

This workshop will introduce and critically explore some of the key themes in facilitating and enabling work-based learning; and look at core principles of enabling capability.

Workshop 3.

This workshop will introduce and critically explore some of the key themes in assessing work-based learning. It will also support students' with their assessed work for the Unit.

Assessment:

Project: The GSCC **require** that you 'teach mentor and support social work or other students and/ or colleagues and contribute to assessment against the National Occupational Standards'. This could include, for example, working with

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newly qualified social workers, social work students, PQ students or mentoring colleagues.

Contents of Portfolio

1) **Record of Competence** (using GSCC set of requirements)

The Record of Competence enables you to collate brief descriptions of your work with learners [against each requirement]. This will help you to identify and critically analyse your practice in the key areas which have been identified by the GSCC as essential to the effective support of practice learning.

2) **A reflective assignment**

The reflective assignment provides an opportunity for you to extend your learning by exploring selected areas from your experience in greater critical depth.

APPENDIX O

PRACTICAL REASONING LITERATURE ANALYSIS

Practical reasoning literature analysis

Phelan 2009	Chain of reasoning	Discernment of particulars	Moral perception; values	Creativity/ imagination	Sensitivity to complexity	Relationship – Judgments Actions Consequences	Play of thought between general/specific	Flexibility in applying knowledge	New meaning produced	Non determining
Reid 1979	Deliberation and judgment		Moral aspect Values central to decision making and choices		Uncertainty - undefined questions and grounds			Skill rests on identification and refinement of stock of experiential knowledge. Not rationalist search for one theory – multiple theories for multiple contexts	Intellectual and social process – need group deliberation for wide range of expertise and evidence	Unpredictable outcomes
Waghid 2006	Deliberation and choice		Caring respectful Accountability	Imagine other possibilities					Social and group based	Alternatives
Kondrat		Prime directive = need to understand the	Prudence		Not assume ends or given means known –		Rely on specific knowledge but also on sources of	Practical knowledge valid	How go about constructing knowledge as	Tentative solutions

1992		immediate meaning and implication of the context	Accountable thru critical reflection		ends may be ambiguous and means questionable or inadequate. Take complexities into account		knowledge and understanding that transcend and condition the personal perspective. Conceptual and ethical objectivity as well as retain commitment to own viewpoint as valid and applicable.		well as incorporating received knowledge as part of that construction	
Pullen Sansfacon 2009			Reflective	Flexible, creative					'Collective' nature	
Kandlebinder 2007		Engage with context						Away from external authority		
Fenstermacher 1994	Offering good reasons		Moral aspects			Deliberative reflection between means and ends				
Dunne 1999	Rigour – identifying the predicament or difficulty	Discernment, perceptiveness	Sensitivity Flexibility Discretion	Creative Insight	No predetermined ends – need deliberation about the end		Mediation /fit between general and particular	Activates knowledge – with relevance etc to context	Learning from experience create knowledge output and	

			Inherent ethics		itself				acquire judgment
Gholami 2007	Critical reflection - analytic-productive	Situational appreciation= criteria	Moral considerations = criteria			Establish good reasons			
Pendlebury 1990	Judgment and reasoning	Situational appreciation	Morality and values						
Tirri et al 1999			Moral aspects important as criteria				Personal and rational interact	Authority of the person – personal epistemological capacity	
Eraut 1985							Interpretive k use	New k produced as interpretive k use is further learning with output	
Kitchener and Benner 1990	Judgment about the problem	Contextual nature							Uncertainty of knowing
Tyreman 2000		Link to specific context	Using professional principles and values				Critical reflection on knowledge	Perhaps refashioning of that knowledge	

Taylor and White 2006			Moral reasoning and judgment	Include emotion and intelligence for insight					Knowledge making process inherent in practice	
Van de Luitgaarden 2009		Assessment of situations; contextuality								
Fenstermacher and Richardson 1993	Thinking, forming intentions and acting.	Discerning of context	Ethical and moral considerations			Practical argument		Own justification	Critical friend	
Pendlebury 1993		Emphasis on discernment of contextual particulars		Emotion, intelligence imagination, insight	Attention to the complexity and conflicting demands					
Vasquez-Levy 1993									Critical friend partner essential Practical argument produce knowledge from knowing	

Beckett and Hager 2002	Independent judgment = reasoning and action							All knowledge evaluated according to contribution to judgment making		
Dunne 2005		Perceptiveness in reading situations		Creative insight in each fresh activation			Mediation between gen and particular – illuminating connection	Flexibility in possessing and applying gen k with relevance, appropriateness, sensitivity to context		
Carr 2005	Reconstructing practice thru reflective inquiry					Means and ends reciprocal relationship; dialectic				
Schwandt 2005					Not eradicate complexity – are preconditions for creativity, innovation and growth of practice					
Dunne and Pendlebury	Dev practical arguments and discernment	What makes it wise	Values inherent in way discern salient features	Imagination	emotions				Own internal justification for independent	

2003	capacity		–about character; moral reasoning						judgement	
Thiele 2006		Discernment of relevance	Reflexive		Means never incontestably right or wrong					
King and Kitchener 1994									Knowledge constructed – outcome of process of reasonable inquiry	

APPENDIX P

UNIT SPECIFICATION –

IPOP

UNIT SPECIFICATION

Unit Number

Unit title	**Introduction to Leadership and Management – Improving Personal and Organisational Performance**
Level	**H**
Credit value	**40 credits**
ECTS	**20 credits**

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Pre-Requisite

None

Aims

- To allow the student to critically reflect on their existing competence in basic management skills developed as a result of experience or those typically found in organisation-based training programmes.

- To identify skills deficits and plan to meet these through the programme itself or by construction of a Personal Development Plan.

- To enable practitioners to meet the specialist standards and requirements for post-qualifying (PQ) programmes of education and training for the consolidation of initial competence.

Leading and managing in complex, ever changing, and financially challenged organisations requires flexible and adaptive professional leaders. This unit will encourage the student to explore their leadership capability starting with self, critically reflecting upon their impact and experience, developing matched action plans of personal improvement focused upon meeting organisational and individual identified learning objectives.

This leadership and management programme meets the specialist standards and requirements for post qualifying education and development**.**

Intended Learning Outcomes

Having completed this unit the student is expected to demonstrate:

- An ability to evaluate the effectiveness of their existing practice in managing self and others, using evidence-based knowledge, an understanding of legal and policy contexts and the policies and procedures of their own organisations.

- An ability to access a range of strategies and behaviours that will help them to achieve and maintain effectiveness in managing self and the performance of others.

- A critical application of appropriate theoretical issues and frameworks in reflecting on and analysing a complex, work related situation.

- That they have met the specialist standards and requirements for post-qualifying (PQ) programmes of education and training for the consolidation of initial competence.

Learning and Teaching Methods

- In this unit the student will be supported via formal presentations and workshops.
- A workbook designed specifically for this unit will contain readings, teaching materials and pose questions for discussion in groups.
- Students' reflections on their own experiences of managing self and others and the small group discussions related to activities undertaken between sessions will help in applying theoretical concepts to practice.

Please also see preparatory work guidance for this programme.

ASSESSMENT

Summative Assessment

All ILOs will be assessed via coursework - 100% coursework - pass/fail

The above intended learning outcomes will be accessed via a portfolio of work containing a third party testimony and a two part assignment, which focuses on developing, delivering professional organisational and personal outcomes for improving and enhancing existing practice.

Indicative Content

- Health and social care change, vision and values
- Current challenges in meeting the new health and social care agenda
- Implications for managing self and others in changing climates
- Management and leadership behaviours
- Skills analysis using the national management and occupational standards, GSCC codes of practice and the principles of social care management
- Study skills
- Modes of reflective practice
- Personal development planning

INDICATIVE KEY LEARNING RESOURCES

Argyle, M. (1994). The psychology of interpersonal behaviour. Penguin Books Ltd.

Bavister, S. & Vickers, A. (2010). Essential NLP.

Blanchard, K. (2007). Leading at a higher level; Blanchard on how to be a high performing leader. FT Prentice Hall.

Brown, K. & Rutter, L. (2008). Critical Thinking for Social Work. Learning Matters.

Goleman, D. (1998a). What Makes a Leader? Harvard Business Review, 76 (6), 93-102.

Gray, I., Field, R., & Brown, K. (2010). Effective Leadership, Management and Supervision in Health and Social Care. Learning Matters.

McDermott, I., & Jago, W. (2003). The NLP Coach – A comprehensive guide to personal well-being and professional success. Piatkus.

O'Connor, J. (2001). NLP Workbook – a practical guide to achieving the results you want. Harper Collins Publishing.

O'Connor, J. & Seymour, J. (2002). Introducing NLP Psychological skills for understanding and influencing people. Harper Element London.

Rose-Charvet, S. (1997). Words that change minds – Mastering the language of influence. 2nd Ed. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

Senge, P.M., Kleiner, A.,Roberts, C., Ross, R.B., and Smith, B.J. (1999). The Fifth Discipline- Strategies and Tools for building a learning organisation - Field book. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Learning resources

M.E.S.O.L *The Health and Social Services Manager.* Open Business School, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Electronic sources

SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence), 2007. *People Management Website.* Retrieved May 1st, 2007, from

http://www.scie-peoplemanagement.org.uk

Department of Health	**www.dh.gov.uk**
Electronic Library for Social Care -	www.elsc.org.uk
Joseph Rowntree Foundation -	www.jrf.org.uk

APPENDIX Q

DRAFT PROPOSAL FOR ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

Draft proposal: guidance for the coursework – Introduction to Leadership and Management IPOP Unit

Assessment and Marking

Students must demonstrate that they have consolidated their initial competence from the point of qualification and can apply that competence within an area of specialist practice. This provides a foundation for further professional development which will extend and deepen professional competence within a chosen specialist context.

Each student is normally required to produce the following in their portfolio:

1. A critically reflective practice analysis to evidence practice judgment and understanding. This work will be signed off by a third party.

2. A critical and analytical knowledge review to evidence representation and explanation of learning.

The evidence produced within these pieces of work will be assessed against the Intended Learning Outcomes to assess the student's suitability for the award.

It is essential that all evidence relating to service users/members of staff is anonymised throughout the portfolio, and this is the student's responsibility. It is recommended that a confidentiality statement is provided at the beginning of the portfolio to confirm this:

i.e. 'Where practice with service users/members of staff has been referred to, all names have been changed to protect confidentiality.'

Practice Analysis – judgment and understanding

Students are required to write a Practice Analysis that critically reflects on and analyses their direct work with...

The Practice Analysis provides an opportunity for the student to reflect on the use and interpretation of *NLP methods* in their specialist area showing relevance and sensitivity to context, identifying and articulating the independent judgment, activation of knowledge, values and skills required for professional practice.

The emphasis is on professional and personal development, i.e. 'improved' practice via experiential learning. Students are therefore required to reflect onand articulate their learning from this experience and show how this has, or will, change their practice, linking to relevant organisational objectives.

Content areas:

- Critically analyse the situation - explain the issue and identify its salient/significant features.
    - o *Show deep situational/contextual appreciation and understanding of the uncertainty, complexity and uniqueness - provides the decision 'rules'*

- Using relevant organisation/service/managerial aims and objectives and your analysis of the situation, develop appropriate and feasible goals and an aligned action plan:
    - o *Show a practical-moral understanding (incl. ADP) and interpretation*
    - o *Show clear purpose and intentions*

- Explain and critically explore the choice, interpretation and use of particular approach/s and method/s in practice - what you did, how you did it, and why (your practical reasoning and professional judgment*). Link to relevant knowledge, skills, values etc., as appropriate.
    - o *Show 'mediation' between the general theory/method and the particulars of the situation - practically reason/deliberate between the 'means and end' and any conflicting demands*
    - o *Show professional attributes such as critically questioning, perception, discernment, insight, moral consideration, flexibility*

- Critically monitor and evaluate outcomes and consequences of this practice - explore what happened – how far the original goals were achieved and why
    - o *Show self and practice awareness - relevance and utility*

- Identify your learning and development - define your new understanding (*NLP*) and explore what it means for your future L&M practice and the impact on/implications for the organisation
    - o *Show self and practice awareness - relevance and utility*

- This account need to be signed off by ...

The critical evaluation and analysis of the practice in question is essential as this is a post qualifying award and it is expected that the work be written at a University Level H standard (Degree level 3rd year). One of the key aspects of this Practice Analysis is that it provides the opportunity for the student to use NLP theory in practice and to critically reflect on this work.

It is essential that the student demonstrates an explicit adherence to Codes of Practice and to the provision of ethically sound practice. Students must be able to demonstrate an understanding of anti-discriminatory practice and their own adherence to it.

Critical and Analytical Review –representation and explanation (learning reviewed through formal knowledge)

This review uses the learning and new understanding developed from the Practice Analysis and critically discusses it in respect of leadership and management theory, research, and policy, i.e. locating and interpreting the student's learning within the theoretical discussion of 'practice' in a wider social and political context.

- Define the relevant area of leadership and management practice
- Identify the relevant leadership and management frameworks (theory and research) which seek to inform or explain this area of practice

- Conceptualise your new situational learning/understanding and explore where these ideas 'fit' - how do they support or challenge, inform, explain, explore, extend theory or research...

  - *Show a theoretical understanding of the use of NLP methods for the improvement of leadership and management practice*

The review is essentially a critical and analytical exploration of theoretical perspectives that support practice and is set at an academic level consistent with work produced for higher education, i.e. at degree level.

Practical reasoning and professional judgment – key features:

- Practical reasoning activates and interprets a range of knowledge [formal and informal, general and specific, internal and external], skills and values for independent professional judgment

- There is no prescribed process, imposition of rules, or use of tools as an algorithm

- Practical reasoning works by encouraging a clear, moral and reasonable relationship between coherent situational 'premises' or goals and actions (promoting a critically reflective, reciprocal dialogue between means and ends)

- It establishes its own authority and justification for professional judgment

- Situational appreciation is a central feature or practical reasoning requiring sensitivity to and discernment of particulars

- There is a play of thought between the particulars of the situational and the wider context or more general norms and procedures, between subjective and objective perspectives

- Attention is paid to complexity and uncertainty. Critical thinking weighs up risks, options, pros and cons; adjudicates between competing goals and demands; deliberates between alternatives, choices; and takes into account constraints and limitations

- Resulting actions should be prudent and 'context relative', testing their appropriateness and utility

- New understanding and meaning (knowledge) is constructed throughout

Meeting national qualification descriptors and local assessment criteria

1. The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

QAA 264 08/08 . The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2008.

Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 6: Bachelor's degree with honours.

Bachelor's degrees with honours are awarded to students who have demonstrated:	Practice analysis (PA)/ Critical and Analytical Review (CAR)
• a systematic understanding of key aspects of their	PA

field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline	
• an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline	CAR
• conceptual understanding that enables the student:	
o to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline	PA
o to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline	CAR
• an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge	PA: CAR
• the ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).	PA;CAR
Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:	
• apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects	PA
• critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem	PA
• communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.	PA; CAR
And holders will have:	
• the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:	
o the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility	PA
o decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts	PA
o the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.	PA

APPENDIX R

ASSIGNMENT GUIDANCE - IPOP

Assignment Guidance - IPOP

ASSESSED PROCESS FOR THE INTRODUCTION TO LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT UNIT – IMPROVING PERSONAL & ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Students must demonstrate that they have consolidated their initial competence from the point of qualification and can apply that competence within an area of specialist practice. This provides a foundation for further professional development which will extend and deepen professional competence within a chosen specialist context.

The intended learning outcomes will be assessed in a two part assignment which focuses on developing, delivering professional organisational and personal outcomes for improving and enhancing existing practice. The assignment will be submitted with a third party testimony. (The third party testimony is detailed in section 12).

Assignment

A two part assignment (A and B) will be the format for assessing all the learning outcomes for this unit.

The assignment will focus on the critical evaluation of an identified and straightforward project that enables a planned change in your leadership/management practice behaviour related to an organisational or team objective, which puts into practice relevant methods/ techniques learnt on the programme.

Part A: **Objectives, rationale and action plan**   2,000-3,000 words (3,000 max)

This part of the assignment will focus on the following: what you are aiming to achieve with this piece of work (section 1), why you made this choice (section 2), and the development of an action plan to put this into practice (section 3).

Three sections and additional guidance:

Section 1) Develop two key objectives:

a) The first will relate to a professional organisational or local team aim/objective/goal

b) The second will focus on a planned change in behaviour to enhance your professional practice

Be careful not to be over ambitious in the choice of objectives, for it is important that you can set an objective/desired outcome and work towards this and evaluate it within the timescales available. Importantly, a more complex objective can be broken down into identified component parts and desired outcomes established to match more realistically the timescales for this assignment. Examples of areas could include; setting up of a learning community, peer support which brings together people from different teams with an interest in specific area of practice or need to change, improving supervision strategy or practice, or involving service users in an identified change. A behavioural personal desired outcome may include systematically improving your communication using identified the ideas and methodology discussed on the course.

The importance of organisational goals and the dissemination throughout for effective implementation is recognised as an important aspect of leadership. For the individual their component role in aiming to achieve an organisational objective is key. Organisational objectives should incorporate current governmental policies and directives. It is therefore important when choosing the objective/desired outcome to identify and discuss the relevant policy context particularly with regard to the professional implications for social workers.

Section 2) Critically discuss and analyse the rational for your choice:

This section will interpret the objectives, explain and critically analyse the choice of desired outcomes linking to relevant issues, policy context, and evidence of best practice in the field.

- o Show clear purpose and intentions.
- o Demonstrate situational/contextual appreciation and understanding of uncertainty, complexity and uniqueness.
- o Show a practical-moral understanding and interpretation.

Reasons for choosing a particular change in behaviour could also include a reflection of your personal development needs.

Section 3) Develop an action plan for the piece of work:

Knowing precisely what an individual wants to achieve makes clear what to concentrate and improve on, and prioritises the chosen outcome. By setting clearly defined outcomes these can subsequently be measured. The production of an action plan is the tool or methodology which demonstrates in writing this process, and the clear steps to achieving the desired outcome or goal.

The action plan should include a specific identified learning objective/desired outcome with a planned series of actions, tasks or steps designed to achieve the outcome(s) within an established timeframe or deadline. The outcome set should be specific, measurable, attainable, and realistic and the timescales established.

The action plan can be included in the word count and would typically be established as an appendix, and referred to in the body of the assignment text, for example, "see the action plan for details in appendix one".

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Inter-module support

It is advisable to identify the above two objectives/desired outcomes and bring these to day 3 of the course to ensure the opportunity for discussion and further development if this is required.

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Part B Critical reflection, analysis and evaluation of the implementation of the above action plan. (3,000-4,000 words) (4,000 max)

This part of the assignment will focus on critically analysing and evaluating: what you did (section 1), what happened (section 2) and your learning (section 3).

Part B provides students with the opportunity to reflect on the usage and interpretation of the taught methods in their specialist area in order to meet the outcomes detailed in Part A. This necessarily would incorporate the new ideas and methodology discussed on the course in relation to leadership and management, and the personal and professional organisational application.

Three sections with suggested questions to answer:

Section 1) Critical analysis of what you did

- How and why were certain approaches and methods chosen and/or actions undertaken in a particular way? Refer to relevant theory, research, policy or methodology as appropriate. Show a theoretical understanding of the use of the taught methods for the improvement of leadership and management practice.

  o Show relevance and sensitivity to context and situation as well as sound practical reasoning and professional judgment. Identify and articulate independent judgment, as well as activation of relevant knowledge, values and skills.

  o Show 'mediation' between any general theory/method and the particulars of the situation - practically reason/deliberate between the 'means and end' and any conflicting demands.

Section 2) Critical evaluation of what happened

- What worked or not (evaluate in respect of your original objectives and desired outcomes and other appropriate points of reference), and why? Refer to relevant theory, research, policy or methodology as appropriate.

  - Show professional attributes such as critical questioning, perception, discernment, insight, moral consideration, flexibility.
  - Show an understanding of the use of the taught methods for the improvement of leadership and management practice.

Section 3) Critical analysis of learning and impact

- What was the impact on you - what have you learnt, and what else do you need to do to develop further? What was the impact for the organisation?

  - The emphasis is on professional and personal development, i.e. 'improved' practice through experiential learning. Identify the new understanding /learning gained from this experience and show how it has, or will, change practice, linking to relevant organisational objective.

Written style

The assignment should take a critically reflective stance, and a personal view using 'I' is permitted. A narrative or report style may be adopted. One of the key aspects of this assignment is that it provides the opportunity for the student to use the course content and taught methods in practice and to critically reflect on this in terms of their organisational, leadership and management application.

The critical evaluation and analytical exploration of your own ideas and practice, and the ideas of others, is essential as this is a post-qualifying award and it is expected that

the work be written at a University Level H standard (Degree level 3rd year). Both parts of this assignment should therefore extend beyond the practical detail and integrate appropriate theory, methodology, policy and research where appropriate to critically inform, explain or explore ideas in a wider context and in more conceptual terms. There is no minimum or maximum set number of references here – this is about the quality and use, rather than just the quantity, of references. You will be gaining 'marks' for demonstrating your critical understanding and use of relevant ideas, rather than the amount of ideas you refer to.

Importantly this guidance should be read together with the post-qualifying social work (PQSW) Information Skills (April 2010) handbook provided, which includes further advice and help with writing assignments.

References list

To be included for both parts of the assignment, using Harvard Referencing System (see appendix 8 for full details).

Third Party Testimony

The above work will be signed off by a third party to confirm real application in practice. This would normally be the student's line manager. ***See section 12 for full details.***

Confidentiality

It is essential that **all** evidence relating to service users/members of staff is anonymised throughout (assignment and testimony), and this is the student's responsibility. It is recommended that a confidentiality statement is provided at the beginning of the assignment to confirm this. For example, 'Where practice with service users/members of staff has been referred to, all names have been changed to protect confidentiality.'

Assessment Deadlines

1. Proposed objectives/desired outcomes identified by day 3 of the course.

2. Both written components to be usually completed within 12 weeks following day 4 of the programme and submitted with the third part testimony, unless alternative instructions are provided.

The above two part assignment will be marked on a pass/fail basis. Both elements must be of a pass standard to achieve an overall pass (however, students will be given evaluative feedback with an overall indicative mark).

APPENDIX S

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA - IPOP

Assessment criteria: IPOP assignment

	1. Understanding of subject area: includes informal and formal knowledge	2. Critical, analytical and evaluative skills.	3. Progression of ideas and structure; practical reasoning/judgement	4. Theory/ practice connection;	5. Evidence of critical reflection – learning from experience; constructed knowledge output	6. Referencing	7. Meets learning outcomes/ objectives
Fail – not enough evidence **0-39%** **Defer**	No understanding, wrong/inappropriate knowledge. Significant omissions.	Uncritical acceptance and reproduction of ideas and knowledge. Majority of unsubstantiated opinions.	No reasoning evident. Unstructured. Incoherent. Inconsistent. Unclear. Confused. No awareness of or relationship between situational goals and resulting action.	No evidence of linkage.	Unstructured recall of experience. No self awareness.	Numerous errors. No bibliography. Wrong system used.	None or significant omissions.
Some Evidence **40-49%** **Sufficient**	Relevant but limited knowledge. Some omissions and unsubstantiated / generalised opinions. Much reproduced or described detail.	Some awareness of limitations and contradictions; limited analysis and evaluation of ideas and knowledge .	Some structure and focus but lack of coherent development. Telling us about a lot of things with a few clear point/s. Limited awareness of situational goals and links to action.	Mechanistic, application of 'theory'. Simple and limited connections between theory and practice.	Key and relevant theme/issues identified from experience. Self awareness evident.	Errors. Short references list. Long, misused quotes or too many quotes.	Majority met.

Clear evidence **50-59%** **Good**	Some conceptual understanding of knowledge as well as practice-based understanding. Coherence and clarity in presentation of knowledge.	Interpretation, analysis and evaluation evident – i.e. significance and meaning identified. Some independence of thought. Comparison/contrast used.	Overall structure, clarity, and focus. Some flow or progression of ideas. Has points being made well with some justification. Clear expression of situational goals with deliberated and reasoned links to action.	Some developed links and discussion between theory and practice.	Themes/issues also measured or evaluated in some way. Learning for self/practice is identified. Critical self awareness.	Few errors etc. Some misused or long quotes.	All
Very good evidence **60-69%** **Very good**	Sound conceptual understanding and some synthesis of theory etc. Up to date, wider reading. Integration of knowledge into debate / discussion.	Range of skills/ techniques of interpretation, analysis, evaluation, critical appraisal. Good awareness of limitations and contradictions. Some independent thinking; use of alternative perspectives.	Shows a good flow and progression of ideas with clearly made and justified points. Clear 'signposting' of structure and outcomes in the text. Appreciation of situational complexity and uncertainty seen in developed deliberation and reasoning between goals and actions.	Theory and practice integrated in discussion. Critical interpretation of a range of knowledge in and for practice.	As above and the learning for practice is itself evaluated. Appreciation of other perspectives. Constructing new, critically evaluated understanding for the situation.	Minor errors. Appropriately used quotations etc	All

	1. Understanding of theory and knowledge area	2. Critical, analytical and evaluative skills.	3. Argument, practical reasoning and structure	4. Theory / practice partnership - links and application	5. Evidence of reflection – learning from experience	6. Referencing	7. Meets learning outcomes/ objectives
Excellent evidence **70% +** **Excellent**	Highly developed conceptual understanding. Creative synthesis and integration of knowledge to create and articulate understanding and interpretation. Up to date, extensive reading.	Highly developed level of judgment in interpretation, critical appraisal/analysis, evaluation and synthesis of material. Enhanced awareness of limitations and contradictions; excellent use of independent view and alternative perspectives.	Discussion tightly structured with ideas rigorously deliberated, reasoned through and justified. Exceptional ability to appreciate and take account of situational complexity and uncertainty in resulting decisions and actions. High standard of presentation, mature and original style.	Creative /original /insightful interpretations between theory and practice – two way process. Seamless, critical integration within a reasoning process and adds to debate.	Creative synthesis of this learning, e.g. with past, future. Insightful and explicit understanding developed. Developing new, critically evaluated knowledge/ understanding by extracting and evaluating generic principles.	No errors. Creatively used ideas and quotations etc.	All

APPENDIX T

JANE HOLROYD'S FEEDBACK

Development of Student Guidance for the Assignment – Introduction to Leadership and Management- Improving Personal and Organisational Performance

Lynne Rutter's role and involvement

Introduction

As programme lead for this new introduction to leadership and management course I had asked Lynne Rutter for her assistance and input into producing the guidance for the students enrolled on the above course. This is a new pilot four day programme created for post qualifying social workers who are managers or aspiring managers. The course has been developed in partnership with the service to better match front line needs.

Background

A number of Local Authorities have been funded to develop leadership courses as pilots. These organisations approached the Centre for Post Qualifying Social Work at Bournemouth University to assist in this process. The University is developing National guidance regarding leadership and management development in the sector for Learn to Care, and in partnership with Skills for Care.

There is, and has been a keen focus on leadership and management development in the public sector as the panacea and definitive answer for perceived problems. Importantly the programme developed really needed to meet service requirements and make a real difference for the attendees.

Leadership development can often focus on explaining what leadership is, in the hope that this understanding would help develop leadership skills. This programme however, is more focused on increasing self and in particular self-awareness, self-management, resilience and fundamentally better communication in its fullest interpretation.

To meet the above requirements ensured that the approach was very different, focusing more on behavioural psychology and therefore needed a distinctive approach. In addition, the necessity to both match service and individual needs ensured the course provided was focused on practical reasoning and practical organisational issues.

Bournemouth University has been concentrating their BA and MA programmes on the practical realities of the 'real world' of the public service in the assignments they have designed.

Lynne Rutter with her particular expertise in this area of practical reasoning was therefore the obvious person to be involved in developing the assignment for this course.

Requirements

1. The assignment needed to academically measure the 'new knowledge' acquired and practical application within the organisational environment.
2. The students who work in very busy and demanding roles had to be able to achieve the above required standards without being overwhelmed, implicitly the assignment needed to be something they could practically relate to in their daily work life.
3. The focus was on using Neurolinguistic programming (NLP) which has an underdeveloped researched evidence base and therefore the assignment requirement needed to take this into consideration.
4. As a pilot it essentially had to successfully address all the component elements and inform leadership development both locally and nationally.
5. This necessarily had to be more than a tick box exercise.

Involvement

Lynne was involved in an initial meeting to discuss the background, approach and concepts, aspirations, nuances and practical implications. Implicitly, the difficulties meeting a perceived 'theory and practice gap', incorporating NLP and being able to measure a practical change in both application and evidenced through an academic assignment.

Lynne provided the initial thoughts and guidance in the form of a comprehensive draft proposal which also listed the key aspects of 'practical reasoning' gathered from her research to meet the particular focus and needs of this programme.

This also formed the framework to incorporate the focus of a two part assignment which involved the development of two objectives, one organisational/professional, the other a personal behavioural change which would impact on practice.

The intended learning outcomes remained the same. The content requirement areas also stayed mainly the same as did the important advice regarding anonymity and confidentiality.

Lynne then provided further advice regarding the changes made and the following are some of the examples:

1) The importance of referring to relevant theory in addition to 'incorporating knowledge of health and social care policy, research and developments in the field';

2) Suggested the addition that 'both parts of the assignment should extend beyond the practical detail and integrate appropriate theory, methodology, policy and research where appropriate to inform, explain or explore ideas in a wider context and in more conceptual terms';

3) Some of the content was moved to better fit the assignment areas;

4) Areas of the document were re-worded to more precisely describe what was expected of the students;

5) Excessive repetition of comments was also identified and these were subsequently removed;

6) The sequencing of points made were re-ordered to better reflect form and process.

Other areas discussed and changed

Lynne had identified that the expectation of students to achieve the proposed objectives may not be practical. This was in reference to a discussion in the assignment document which emphasised the importance of organisational objectives, in terms of leadership in top down establishments, and how each person in the organisation was 'key' to the achievement of the objectives.

Lynne pointed out the importance of the critical reflection and learning rather than an emphasis being placed on simply the successful accomplishment. This important distinction would be discussed with the students as part of the face to face pre-assignment dialogue. The wording in the document was also changed to reflect this important distinction.

Lynne also advised that quite often students can become stuck in providing background detail and context in order to frame the arguments made. This type of descriptive wording, who said what, when, and where, would not gain any marks for the student although important for the marker to understand the context. She suggested that students could write these types of accounts and incorporate as appendix, referred to in the body of the assignment, but not included in the word count. This was an important piece of advice particularly as the individual students often work in complex multidisciplinary teams and for complicated service streams.

The original guidance regarding the word count had described a range for example, 3000 to 4000 words. Lynne suggested that this range could be misleading to students and a definitive word count with an accepted 10% leeway was less confusing.

Lynne also discussed the benefits of face to face tutorials to discuss the students' objectives, providing the right support and direction at a crucial time in the assignment 'life cycle'.

She demonstrates a significant experiential knowledge base of student problems in terms of interpretation and abilities to follow guidance and produce the required standard of assignments.

Evaluation of guidance provided

The guidance, advice and support provided by Lynne was crucial to the development of an appropriate standard of descriptive and oral guidance for assignment writing. This guidance was timely, matched well to the issues which needed to be addressed and importantly incorporated the practical reasoning required for the successful achievement of the essential academic level for an award of credits for the above programme. The guidance was also sufficiently detailed, pertinent and very clear.

She particularly spotted any ambiguity, over emphasis, and the ordering of sentences to match better the natural sequence of the process from implementation to evaluation.

Lynne's input ensured the above particular requirements were met with the development of an assignment which would focus on practical reasoning. She ensured that the guidance was not only more robust, but also more helpful and pertinent for the students.

Jane Holroyd

Glossary of terms

BU - Bournemouth University

CPD - Continuing Professional Development

CPD Review – Continuing Professional Development Review: one of the CPSP programme's key written assessed pieces of work in the portfolio

CPL - Continued Professional Learning - (Webster-Wright 2009)

CPSP - Consolidation and Preparation for Specialist Practice programme

EWBL - Enabling Work-Based Learning Unit

EBP - Evidence Based Practice

EP - Exploratory Practice (Allwright 2003; 2005)

FHEQ - Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

GSCC - General Social Care Council

GCPA - Graduate Certificate in Practice Assessment programme

HE - Higher Education

HPC – Health Professionals Council

ILO – Intended Learning Outcome

L&EO - Leading and Enabling Others Unit

NOS – National Occupational Standards

PA – Practice Analysis: one of the CPSP programme's key written assessed pieces of work in the portfolio

PCF - Professional Capabilities Framework

PQ - Post Qualifying

QAA – Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

SWRB - Social Work Reform Board

SWTF - Social Work Task Force